



How to Embrace the Low Season

10 Low Season Strategies to Prime Your Tour and Activity Company for Success

Seasonality is a fact of life in the tourism industry. Every person, company, destination, and activity in the tourism sector is affected to some degree. Instead of dreading the changes that come with the low season, successful tour and activity companies learn to embrace them. In this ebook we'll walk you through some proven low season strategies.

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Introduction

If you run a tour and activity company, you'll be well aware of how demand for specific destinations and activities rises and falls during the year. It's a seasonal business.

Seasonality affects things like access to and demand for certain destinations and activities, how much people spend, and the availability of staff. It could be "natural" seasonality—the four seasons and associated weather changes. Or "institutional" seasonality that depends more on consumers' decision-making around when and where they travel—school, national, religious, and other holidays, festivals, and events.

Key low season challenges

Decline in revenues

The effect on cash flow

Problems covering fixed costs

How to retain key staff

Unused accommodation, equipment, and facilities

Less engagement with consumers

While seasonality inevitably brings these and other challenges for tour companies, it isn't necessarily a bad thing. Even if your activities are highly seasonal, such as mountain sports or wine tourism, there a number of strategies you can employ to make the most of your off-season and limit some of the negative effects of seasonality on your business.

With the right strategies you could turn your low season into more of a shoulder season, or even another peak season.

01.

Make the most of your shoulder season

One of the first things you can do to offset the effects of the low season on your business is make the most of your shoulder season—that in-between time when things start to slow down. Like low season you can approach it in one of two ways: **1) give in to it and live with the slow down or 2) look for and create opportunities.** Doing some of these shoulder season strategies can help make the low season less of a challenge when it arrives.

› Target a different audience:

Some people actually prefer to travel during the shoulder season. Prices can be lower, there are more accommodation options, and it's less busy. While schools might be back, couples or empty-nesters could be worth targeting.



› **Adapt your marketing:**

Create messaging that resonates with people looking to make the most of their budget and enjoy a slightly more relaxed travel experience.



› **Create different tours and activities:**

The weather can impact shoulder season travel. If it's likely to be slightly cooler, start promoting more of a Fall feel in your photography and the types of activities you offer.

› **Offer shoulder season pricing:**

Lower prices slightly or create offers tailored to your shoulder season audience.

› **Form shoulder season partnerships:**

Partner with accommodation providers and activity companies that also want to boost their business during the slower period.



Action point

Pick one or two shoulder season strategies to try, and combine them with some low season strategies.

02.

Plan your year ahead

The low season is the perfect time to plan for the year ahead. A marketing calendar supports your marketing strategy by acting as a road map for all of your marketing activities for the year ahead, as laid out in your marketing plan. It documents:

› **Your marketing messaging:**

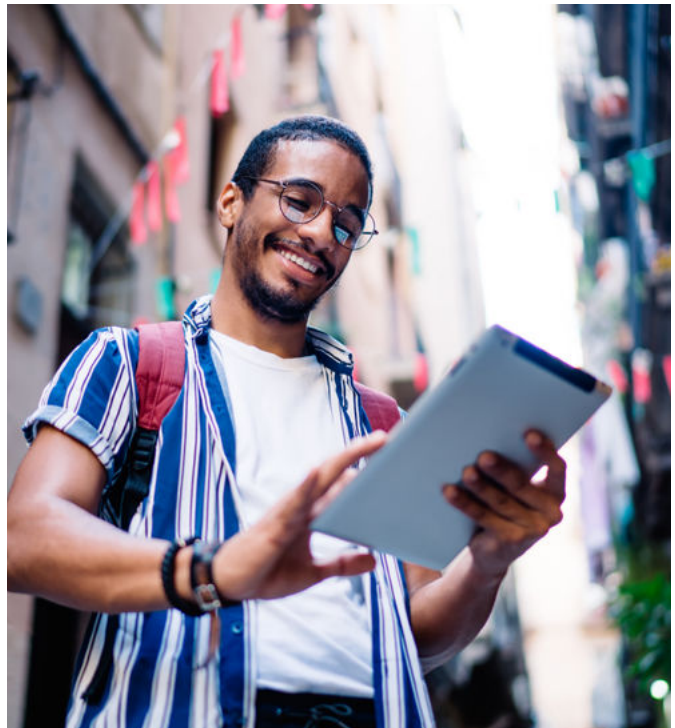
What you want to say to your audience

› **Your marketing channels:**

Where you reach out to your audience

› **Your marketing activity and cadence:** When and how often you communicate with your audience

To create a marketing calendar, consider your business and audience needs during the whole year, including the low season. **Write down all the seasons, events, public holidays, and school holidays relevant to your tours and activities, customers, and destinations.**



You should also start thinking about future travel trends and ideas, like we do in these two articles:

- [The Future of Tourism: 10 Things Tour Companies Need To Prepare For in 2022](#)
- [Workcations, Travel Bubbles, and Glampervans: 15 Innovative Tourism Business Ideas 2021](#)

Then look at your tours and activities and work out the best times to promote them, and what you need to do to promote them—messaging, channels, frequency, etc. Some gaps will appear, inevitably during the low season. This is when you can start thinking about repackaging tours for the low season and some other low season strategies to help fill those gaps.



Action point

At Rezgo we like to keep our nose to the ground for new trends and ideas for tour operators. Check out our Article Library for ideas.

03.

Collect feedback and reviews

Customer feedback can be an invaluable tool for your business, both internally to help you refine and improve your tours, and externally in terms of providing social proof and building your reputation.

Why gather reviews and feedback?

- › Improves customer relationships
- › Generates excitement for potential customers
- › Reassures potential customers
- › Improves your business



Social Proof

Social proof in the form of testimonials and reviews help reassure potential customers of your ability to deliver great experiences. Ideally, you should surface customer reviews on your own website, so people read them while actively considering making a purchase.

Verified Reviews

If you haven't done so already, the low season is as good a time as any to set up Verified Reviews with Rezgo. Your customers receive an automated invitation to spend a couple of minutes writing a short review on your Rezgo site after their tour or activity. The reviews then appear where they'll matter most: where the bookings happen.

Reviews on Google

Be proactive about collecting tour and activity feedback. Encouraging customers to leave you a review through Google is another good option. Google is highly visible and used by most consumers, and it prominently features reviews. **Customer feedback also provides valuable insights into the customer experience that can improve your tours and even help you to develop new ones.**

In addition to review websites, you can encourage staff—in the office and out on tours—to document the feedback they receive daily and to be proactive about asking for feedback. You can also collect feedback by sending customers a link to an online survey and inviting them to complete it.



Action point

Activate Verified Reviews to help convince customers to book without leaving your website to check out external reviews or your competitors.

04.

Build business relationships

Tour and activities businesses are all about relationships. As the low season affects most tourism businesses, consider using the time to build partnerships and relationships with hotels, activities, and other businesses that are in the same boat. **There may even be the potential to share marketing expenses, for example if you combine a discounted activity with a cut-price hotel stay.**

Connect with local concierges

Guests rely on concierges to provide recommendations for restaurants, activities, transportation, and practicalities. They need to be experts about their locales so they can point guests toward the best local deals and experiences. To do their job well, they need to work closely with tour operators, activity providers and other local businesses.



Rezgo's Hotel Concierge Software can help you with your concierge program, but you should also consider using the low season to forge good relationships with local concierges:

- › Meet them in person to go through your tours and activities
- › Agree commissions and referral fees if appropriate
- › Enable concierges to book activities for guests through the Rezgo booking system
- › Maintain a good relationship over the long-term

How to build great business relationships

1. **Regularly keep in touch**
 2. **Stay true to your word**
 3. **Be honest and up front**
 4. **Deliver a personal touch**
 5. **Educate instead of sell**
-

Get in touch with VICs and activity desks

The low season is a good time to turn your attention toward the local market. As companies found out during the COVID-19 pandemic going local can be a great way to boost revenues. As well as other local businesses, activity desks and visitor information centers (VICs) are a big source of local bookings for many tour and activity companies. VICs are often the first stop for many visitors, and most of them go there looking for ideas for things to see and do. It's a great way to reach the right audience at the right time.



Connect with smaller distributors

Use the low season to connect with companies who can sell your tours and activities to their customers—or to resell the inventory of other suppliers. This quieter period is a great time to move smaller distributors into Rezgo so they can benefit from Rezgo's Reseller System with:



- › Live availability
- › Easy inventory importing
- › Features to optimize reselling



Action point

Make full use of Rezgo's Hotel Concierge Software to track every part of your hotel concierge program, and the Reseller System to streamline reseller relationships.

05.

Optimize your email marketing

Far from disappearing due to the growth of social media and instant messaging, email has remained one of the most trusted ways for consumers to communicate and stay up-to-date. That means it is still a very reliable—and profitable—communication channel for businesses. In fact, according to Hubspot (Source: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/email-marketing-stats>) email generates \$42 for every \$1 spent. Use the low season to whip your email marketing strategy into shape.

Focus on your data

Try to build your email database year-round using sign-up forms on your website and calls to action through social media. Rezgo also collects email addresses of current customers for you, along with marketing consent. Ensuring those are up-to-date in your email system is a good starting point.



Segment your database

Data-driven email marketing means using segmentation to reach the right people with the right messages at the right times. Successful targeting can dramatically increase open and clickthrough rates among recipients according to Mailchimp data (Source: <https://mailchimp.com/resources/effects-of-list-segmentation-on-email-marketing-stats/>). Here are some types of customer data you could look at during the low season to help you figure out some new email strategies:

- › **Repeat customers:** Who buys from you most often?
- › **Bargain hunters:** Who takes advantage of discounts?
- › **Referrers:** Where do your customers come from?
- › **Purchase source:** Who books online, and who prefers the phone or in person?
- › **Location:** Are your customers local or from far away?
- › **Inventory:** Which tours are the most, and least, popular?

Create a follow-up email strategy

Your relationship with your guests doesn't have to end when they go home after a tour or event. Repeat customers are a great source of income, and a fantastic source of word-of-mouth referrals. If you don't have the time or staff to craft custom, personalized follow-ups for each guest, automated follow-up emails are an easy and effective way to build customer relationships. Here are a few ideas for follow-up email content:

- › Be personal
- › Ask for feedback –negative and positive
- › Request a review
- › Ask how what you could have done better or what else they might need
- › Promote other ways to stay in touch, like social media
- › Ask for new tour or activity ideas



Tips for email marketing success

Be personal

Write effective subject lines

Don't always sell

Automate everything

Segment your database

Test, test, test

Respect recipients' time

Stay compliant

Start an email newsletter

It might seem a little old school, but an email newsletter can still be a highly effective marketing tactic, especially when combined with a strong content strategy (see below.) Email marketing services like MailChimp and ConstantContact can help you turn your email database into a powerful marketing tool.



The low season is as good a time as any to sit down and strategize around your email marketing. There are basically three types of email newsletter:

- › The content is all accessible through links and short descriptions
- › The content is all contained within the newsletter
- › There is some content in the email and other content promoted with links



When figuring out the best newsletter format for your audience and business, consider the following questions:

- › Are your customers a good target for your newsletter?
- › Do you need different newsletters for different customer segments?
- › Is your content relevant to your customers?
- › Can you create enough content on a regular basis?
- › Can you measure the results of your efforts?

Action point



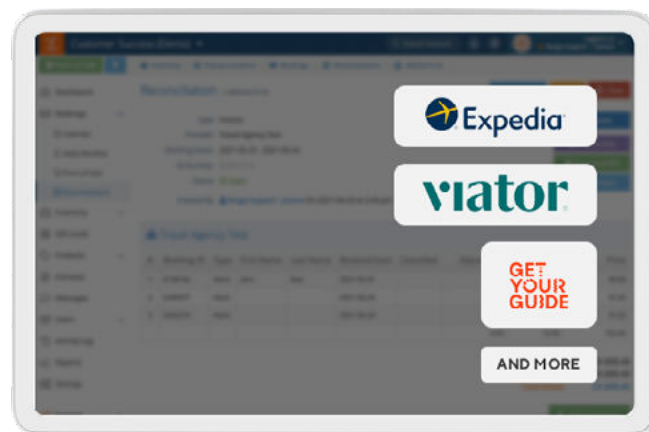
Find your most loyal customers by running a booking report in Rezgo. Then create an email segment specifically for them. Recognize their loyalty in your emails to them.

06.

Integrate your sales channels

If your tours and activities are listed on sales channels like Viator and Expedia, use the low season to ensure they are properly integrated into your booking system. That way you can manage them all in one place, ensuring that your availability and reporting is consistent—and making life a lot easier when peak season rolls around.

With sales channel integration, when a customer books your tours or activities through another website, the booking is pushed directly to your Rezgo account. The sales channel also checks your availability in real-time to make sure that you have the space available for the customer who is booking.



Action point

Integrate Rezgo with Expedia, Viator, and GetYourGuide to manage your availability and revenues in one place and ensure a smooth customer experience.

07.

Improve your online presence

People are used to doing everything online these days, including researching and booking travel. An effective website, including a convenient and customer-friendly online booking system, is a key part of being a successful tour operator. The low season is a great time to review, update, and optimize your online presence.

Set up Google My Business

As the world's biggest search engine, Google is likely to be your main source of online referrals. That makes Google My Business (GMB) a great source of local bookings in particular. If you have an office, storefront, or other physical location that's open to the public, taking control of your GMB listing is an important step in building your business locally. Here's how to do it:

1. **Sign up for Google My Business** to take control of your listing as it may already have been added through Google Maps or created by someone else
2. **Ask your customers for Google reviews** (see above) and respond to reviews, even just with a thank-you
3. **Add photos** that enhance your brand image
4. **Use Google Posts** to keep customers updated on promotions, new inventory, and other exciting opportunities
5. **Monitor your listing** to ensure it's always up-to-date



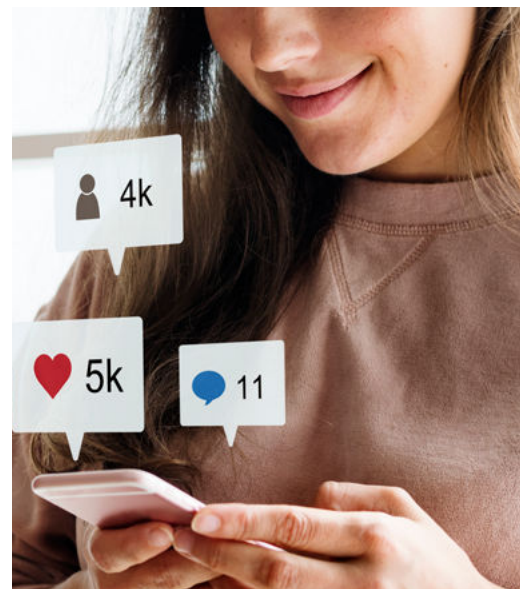
Create the best booking site you can

An online booking system meets one of the main needs of your customers, which is a convenient and easy way to book your tours. Modern booking systems let you do much more than offer online bookings. Most offer a range of features that cater to both customer and business needs, including:

- › A mobile app
- › Mobile check-in
- › Email marketing features
- › Customized reporting
- › Waiver management

Beef up your social media

Social media can be an excellent way to reach prospective customers and help them get to know your company. Use the low season to review your channels to see which ones are generating the most activity. Facebook has the most users of all ages, but Twitter and Instagram tend to mostly attract people under 50, so make sure you're spending time and effort on the right channels.



You can also try to build more connections with social media “influencers.” Influencers are social media users with large numbers of followers, such as travel bloggers or Instagrammers. The content they post can influence the buying behaviour of their followers. Before joining forces with a tourism industry influencer to promote your tours, do your research to make sure they, and their followers, are the right fit for your brand. The low season is a great time for this, as travel influencers may also have some downtime.

Optimize your website

Your website needs to be a marketing, sales, bookings, and customer service superhero. Use the low season to conduct a thorough review of your website, especially how effective it is at:

- › Communicating who you are and what you do
- › Attracting visitors through Google and other search engines
- › Converting visitors into leads, prospects, and ultimately customers
- › Engaging with prospects and customers online
- › Helping you to deliver better customer service
- › Helping you to manage your business more effectively through integrated online travel booking software and other tools



Action point

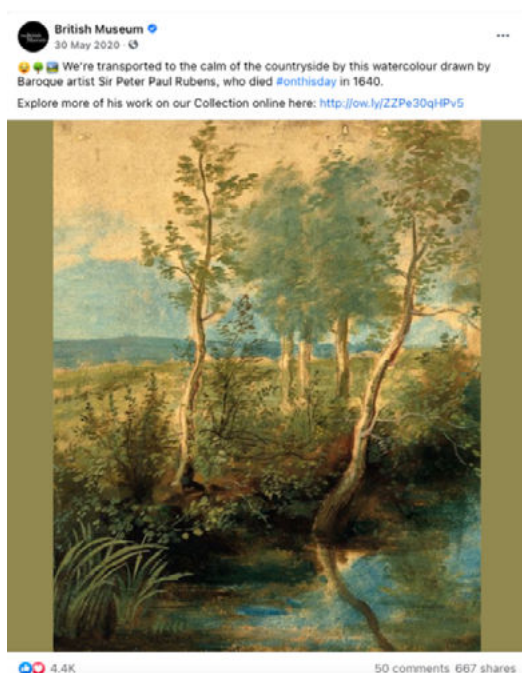
Reviewing your website can be an onerous task. Create a spreadsheet with a list of all the pages to help you keep track of all the content on your site.

08.

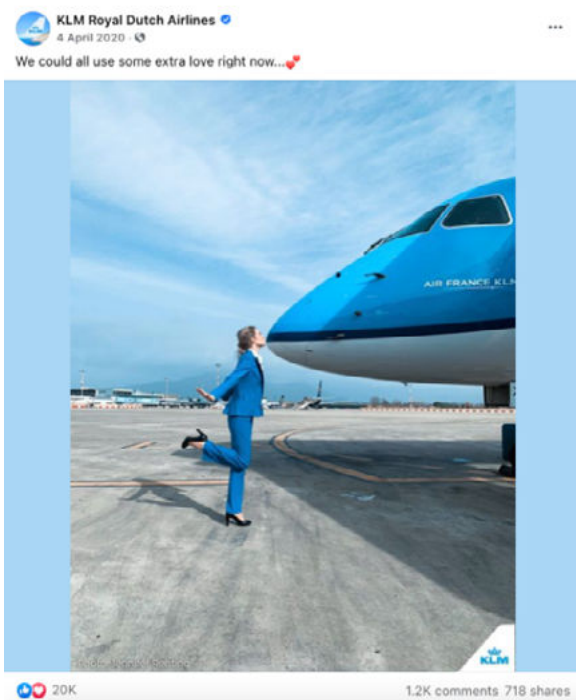
Continue creating content

Don't stop creating social media and other content, such as articles, videos, and blog posts, during the low season. It's especially important for search engine optimization purposes as **Google and other search engines love fresh content.**

Aside from the SEO benefits of content marketing, the COVID-19 pandemic threw up a number of great examples of how travel companies can keep in contact with customers when virtually no-one is travelling. For example, the British Museum continued to engage with their audience while closed:



And KLM earned kudos for their social media posts aimed at grounded travellers:



The pandemic is an extreme example. During a regular low season, demand is merely lower than peak season, so continuing to create content and engage with customers and prospects can still be a good use of time and resources. As well as posting content to your social media channels, consider creating a home for your content on your website, such as a blog. Regularly updating your site with content, even during the low season, helps you to:

- › Drive traffic from search engines and your social media channels to your website
- › Encourage visitors to spend longer on your site and return more often

Part of what makes effective content is that it is timely and resonates with your audience. Try to tailor your content to the off-season, and the changing needs of your customers. For example, you could get people dreaming about what the possibilities for the peak season could hold.



Action point

Create a content hub or blog on your website to drive traffic from search engines and social media, and keep people on your site longer.

09.

Create low-season promotions

If your attention turns to locals during the low-season, consider enticing locals to become tourists in their own area by offering them promotional deals. This is a great way to generate some more revenue during the low season, as well tapping into a potentially profitable new market. As well as targeted deals for locals, other low season promotions to consider include:

- › Discount coupons for repeat customers who book an activity during the low season
- › 2-for-1 discounts during the low season
- › Selling gift cards
- › Partnering with hotels and activity companies to offer deals
- › Reaching out to prospects who didn't buy with offers for the upcoming peak season



Action point

To attract locals, try using highly targeted Google Ads to let locals know about the promotional activities.

10.

Take stock and prepare for peak season

The low season can also be a time for taking stock of where your business is now and where it could get to in future. During the peak season there's often very little time to take a step back and reflect. However, time spent doing just that can be very useful for the health of both you and your business.

Pull up a comfortable chair and consider the following:

- › **Where have you been?**

Maybe you've taken the long road to success or you enjoyed rapid growth. Consider what went worked and what didn't, and what you might have done differently.

- › **Where are you now?**

What's the current state of play in your business, including staffing, revenues, profits, and inventory, etc.

- › **Where do you want to get to?**

This is the fun part. Consider where you'd like to be five or 10 years down the line. What new markets could you tap, or what new audiences could you reach?

- › **How will you get there?**

This involves prioritizing your goals and figuring out the best route to achieving them, and then documenting it in a roadmap.



As well as long-term thinking, as the low season transitions into the shoulder season, it's a good idea to start preparing for your peak season as early as possible. Put some thought into the following:

› **Prepare your inventory**

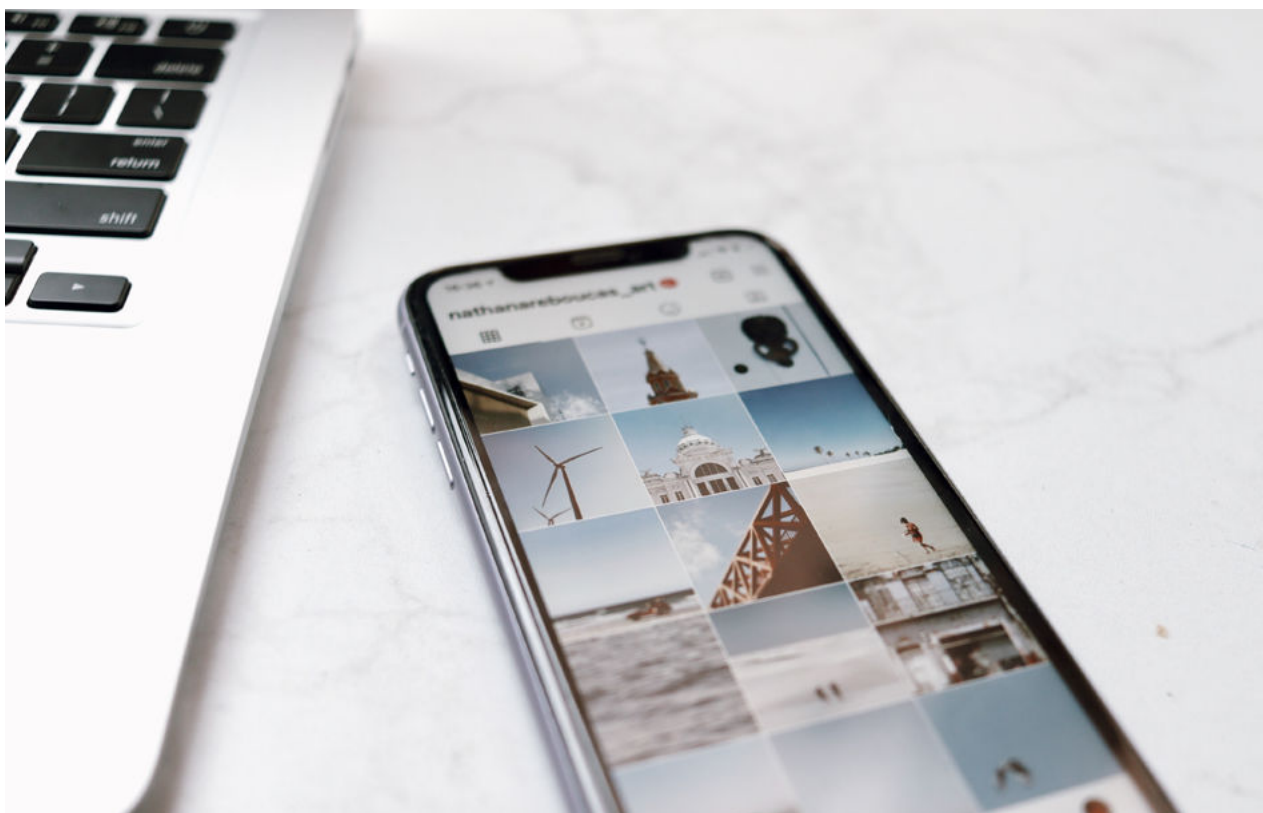
Audit your tour and activity inventory and make any necessary changes

› **Get to know your software**

Take a look through your booking software to see what's changed. Have any new features been added, for example?

› **Fire up your social feeds**

After keeping your social media feeds and other content marketing ticking over during the off season, start ramping up your activity as peak season approaches



› **Check your reviews**

Take a look through your reviews to see if you need to respond or address any feedback

› **Build anticipation**

Use your email list to get in touch with your customers to tell them about any upcoming tours and activities for the upcoming peak season

› **Create early bird offers**

Create promotions for early bookers, especially loyal, repeat customers

Peak season can sneak up on you. Spending your quiet period planning and readying yourself for the deluge can help you enjoy not only a productive low season, but also look forward to a more profitable peak season.

And remember, while the peak season might be full of surprises, Rezgo is here to make your job easier. With powerful and simple-to-use automation tools to help you manage your inventory, resources, customer communication and more, Rezgo can help keep you ready for anything the peak season will throw at you.



About Rezgo

Rezgo is the world's leading **subscription-free booking software for tour and activity operators.**

Our mission is to help tour and activity providers thrive by giving them the tools and guidance they need to work efficiently and expand their business.

Rezgo has flexible tools designed to help you manage your business efficiently, market more effectively, process payments faster and more securely, and make smart decisions informed by real-world data—**no matter your scale or the volume of your business.**

From our founding, Rezgo has operated independently, with a team that's laser-focused on making the best possible software for tour, activity, and experience providers. We work with our clients to craft innovative features that meet their real-world needs and solve everyday problems.

For more information: rezgo.com

Follow us on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Youtube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



Discover what Rezgo can do for your business.

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