

SHAPE SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY

Travel Blogger Case Study – Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

‘Biosphere Experiences’

Nowadays it is impossible to understand the world of travel & tourism without the opinion of bloggers; what they say on Facebook, Twitter and other social networks matters. The blogger is a key influencer in the tourism industry, a communicator who knows the sector first-hand, is well connected, keeps sources and contacts, and can do a good job offering relevant content and quality stories.

There is a travel blogger for every consumer type, a very important detail when you consider that the profile of travellers is increasingly segmented, and the competitiveness of destinations depends on an ability to develop and market specific tourism products.

Choosing the Right Travel Blogger

To achieve our goal, which was to raise the profile of our eco-tourism initiative ‘Biosphere Experiences’ and the profile of our Biosphere as a sustainable destination, we needed the right blogger. First thoughts were to approach a ‘macro-influencer’ with a large following, but after seeking advice we decided on a ‘micro-influencer’, with a smaller, but more targeted following.

The Travel Blogger – Watch Me See

Our choice of blogger was *Watch Me See*, run by Kathi Kamleitner. Kathi’s website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts had a good following but what stood out was her ability to create engaging content, great photographic images and achieve our ultimate goal: to inspire travel to our Biosphere and to raise awareness of eco-tourism and sustainable travel. Kathi’s brand personality and values matched very well with our sustainable values as a Biosphere.

Developing the Brief

A three-day ‘Biosphere Experience’ was developed for Kathi. Most of the elements of the experience were sourced for free as the businesses offering those services and accommodation would be given media exposure through Kathi’s travel blog posts and a short film which formed part of the brief. It was agreed that Kathi would use sustainable travel to both arrive at and travel around the destination. A very clear itinerary was developed for Kathi’s three-day experience so things went as smoothly as possible and Kathi could have the best possible experience to blog about. The brief requirement was what is referred to as a ‘destination’ piece. Travel Bloggers like working to briefs but also need to be allowed a degree of flexibility to be creative and consider the article target audience.

Key campaign points:

- Three-day/two-night visit to the biosphere utilising sustainable transport (train + e-bike).
- Focus on Biosphere experiences (Dark Skies, water/land-based activities, wildlife/cultural guide).
- An objective to promote eco-tourism and sustainable travel.
- An aim to create engaging, visual content about the trip to the biosphere and raise awareness for the project on social media.

Use of Hashtags

Today's traveller looks for experiences through travel blogs, which have become a source of inspiration for destination search and vacation planning. Experiences increasingly carry more prestige over items and travellers share their holidays online. So to capitalize on this we wanted to encourage the use of a branded hashtag in social media posts. We agreed hashtags with Kathi to use throughout social media channels:

#BiosphereExperiences
#ShapingEcotourism
#UNESCOUK

Social Media Channels

Bloggers either write on their own site and share or write for your website and link to theirs. For the brief we agreed the use Watch Me See's travel blog website as the platform to share the article on Kathi's experience in our Biosphere' as Kathi's profile is much greater and we could then link to our website.

<https://www.watchmesees.com/blog/galloway-southern-ayrshire-biosphere/>

Impact

Social media impact was measured approximately two weeks after the experience took place.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/watchmesees/>

The five posts on Facebook reached over 8,540 users and encouraged over 500 engagements. The video uploaded to Facebook in particular reached over 3,400 people and received well over 180 engagements.

Twitter <https://twitter.com/watchmesees/>

Kathi's tweets reached over 10,500 impressions on Twitter, which resulted in over 350 engagements such as retweets, likes and hashtag clicks. The average engagement rate lies at 3.3%.

Instagram Stories: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18078162760131881/>

The four Instagram grid posts reached over 5,200 users, received 540 likes and encouraged more than 70 comments and interactions such as shares via direct messages and image saves. The Instagram stories posted during the campaign had over 17,000 impressions and 200+ interactions in total. Each reached between 300 and 600 people and provoked numerous direct messages, reactions and responses.

Among the questions and comments Watch Me See received across social media, there was a particular interest in what a Biosphere is, the bike hire and how the e-bike in particular enables more people to travel actively, the stargazing experience and the idea of Biosphere holiday packages.

YouTube Film Watch Me See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbtWKjAqwP8>

Concluding Thoughts

Working with travel bloggers is a great way to reach new audiences on a personal level and convey an authentic point of view through creative and engaging content. Bloggers are the new media and some say the journalists of the new century, with specific characteristics such as freshness, immediacy, interactivity, and personality. Kathi from Watch Me fulfilled all those specific characteristics and more.