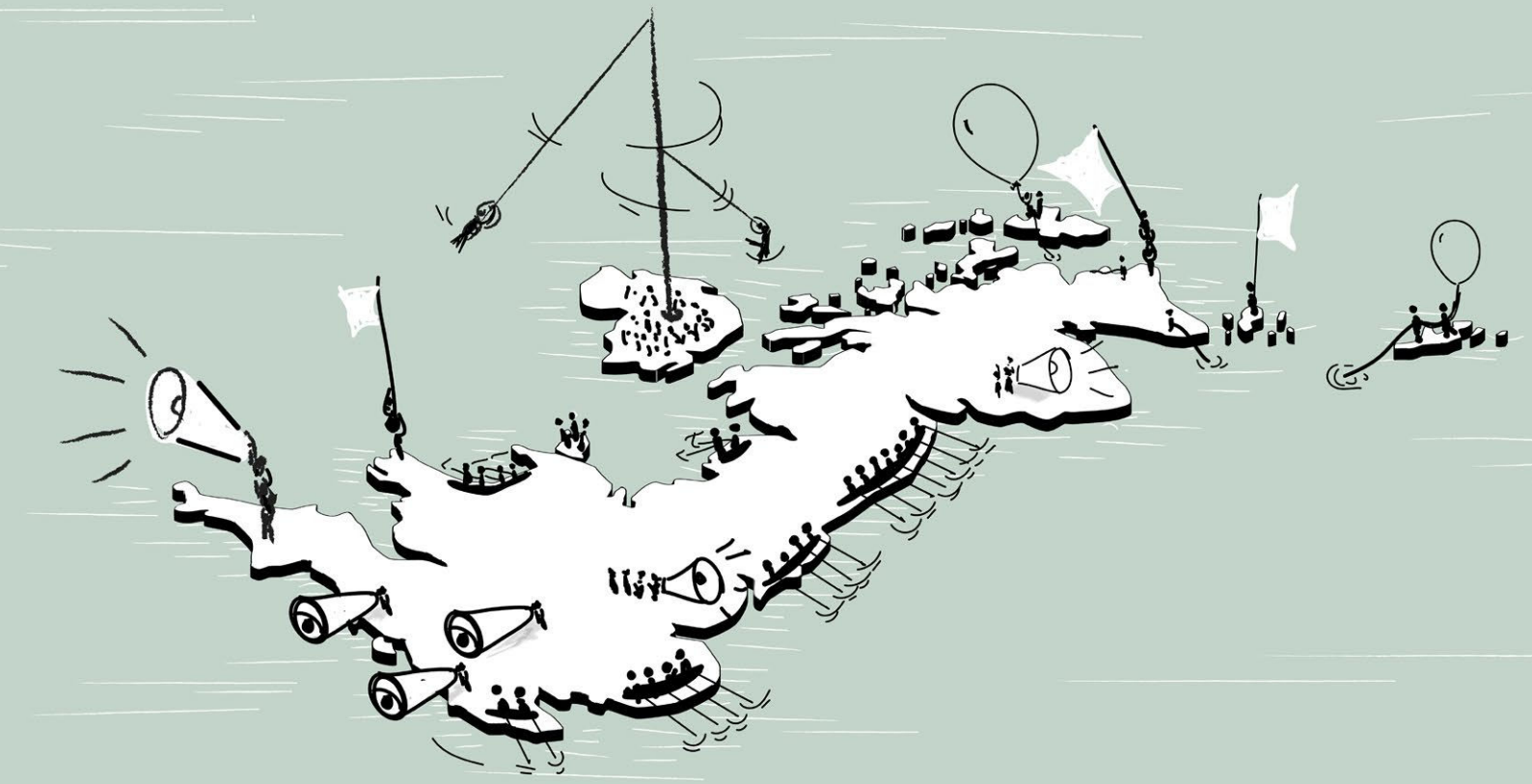
DIVE INTERNATIONAL TOURING TOOLKIT UNITED KINGDOM

SUSTAINABILITY ON THE ROAD: TOURING WITH PURPOSE



This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

CIRCO STRADA
ARTCENA
Co-funded by the European Union
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HEAR IT FROM THE EXPERT: INTRODUCTION TO THE TOURING LANDSCAPE IN THE UK BY NICOLE A'COURT-STUART

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the DIVE International Touring Toolkit : United Kingdom — a practical guide for circus and outdoor artists and companies looking to bring their work to audiences across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Touring internationally is exciting, rewarding and often challenging. Whether you're just starting to explore the UK or you've already performed here and want to come back, this guide is designed to help you navigate the practical, cultural and logistical realities of presenting circus and outdoor arts work in the UK.

Just like the other DIVE guides, this guide is grounded in real touring experience. It gathers insights from artists, programmers, producers and venues working across the UK and beyond. But this is not an exhaustive "how-to" manual — it's a flexible tool you can dip in and out of, full of questions, answers, and tips for finding your own way.
You'll find information about:

- The UK's performance landscape and how to get booked
- Touring logistics, visas and contracts
- How to talk money with UK presenters
- Marketing, audience engagement and outreach
- Sustainability
- Access, diversity and inclusion — key values in the UK context

Every international tour is different. Your needs, your show and your approach will shape your experience. But one thing is clear: the UK has an appetite for bold, visual and emotionally resonant circus and outdoor arts, and there's space here for international voices — especially those who come prepared, curious and open to collaboration.

Thank you: We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the many contributors around the world who participated in the development of these toolkits: JD Broussé, Max Calaf Sevé, Rachel Clare, Steve Cowton, Danielle Devery, Jan Lennox, Collectif Malunés and everyone else who contributed.

And a special thank you to Minnie Boardman for her invaluable assistance in proofreading the toolkits.

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CIRCOSTRADA

Circostrada, the European Network for Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Arts, is dedicated to fostering the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and best practices across Europe and internationally. As part of this mission, we are excited to introduce the DIVE Touring Toolkit, a comprehensive resource designed to equip artists and cultural professionals with the essential knowledge and tools for successful and sustainable international touring.

International touring presents unique challenges and opportunities, particularly in the fields of contemporary circus and outdoor arts. The DIVE Touring Toolkit is specifically tailored to these sectors, addressing key considerations such as national and regional networks, touring logistics, financial and administrative management, sustainability, accessibility, and cultural adaptability. By providing valuable insights and practical guidance, this resource empowers artists and cultural professionals to navigate the complexities of international mobility while fostering more inclusive, diverse, and eco-conscious touring practices.

This toolkit is also the result of key learnings from the first edition of Perform Europe (2021), an initiative supporting international networking and promoting inclusive, diverse, and sustainable touring projects across 40 Creative Europe countries. Circostrada is proud to be part of this consortium, contributing to the development of innovative touring strategies.

What's Inside the DIVE Touring Toolkit?

The toolkit is divided into two main sections:

1. An introduction to International Touring: This section provides a foundational understanding of key concepts related to international touring and sustainability. It offers a broad overview and addresses fundamental considerations for artists embarking on such journeys.

2. Country-Specific Content: This segment features a series of sub-guides tailored to specific countries or regions. Each guide delves into the unique nuances and requirements of its respective locale, offering in-depth insights, practical tips, and resources to help artists navigate the complexities of international and sustainable touring.

Over the next three years, as part of the activities within our new UE funded project, CS VOICES, Circostrada will collaborate with deeply rooted local partners to host a series of international gatherings—Annual General assembly and our flagship FRESH events. These meetings will enrich the toolkit, ensuring that by 2028, it evolves to focus on specific countries that the network will visit, including France, the United Kingdom, Tunisia, Romania, Sweden, and Latvia.

We invite you to be part of this exciting journey as we continue to support and empower cultural professionals in their international touring endeavors!

The Circostrada Coordination Team

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THE AUTHORS

When we first embarked on writing these toolkits, we were both excited and aware of the responsibility that came with it. Touring internationally presents unique challenges and opportunities for artists and companies. Our goal was to create a resource that not only demystifies these processes but also provides practical tools for companies navigating this landscape.

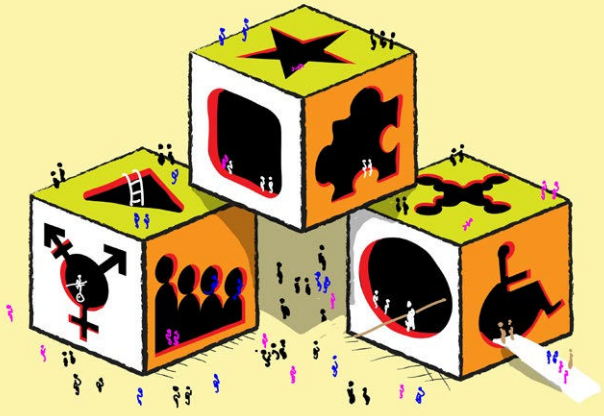
From the outset, we were struck by the diversity of cultural ecosystems covered in the toolkits. However, we also encountered many intricate layers of administration, logistics, and cultural practices that can feel overwhelming for those unfamiliar with them. These toolkits are our attempt to make that journey more accessible.

The content you'll find here is grounded in research, conversations with experts, and input from artists,producers and programmers who have successfully worked internationally. It's packed with practical advice on everything from booking venues and managing finances to understanding cultural etiquette and accessibility.

To make it as user-friendly as possible, we've broken down complex topics into straightforward FAQs, highlighted key takeaways in Top Tips, and provided insights from those with first-hand experience in the field.
These toolkits are designed to be flexible: you can dip in when a question arises or read in full to gain a comprehensive understanding of touring internationally. We hope they serve as practical companions for companies at every stage of their journey, empowering you to connect with venues, festivals and audiences all over the world.

Happy touring!

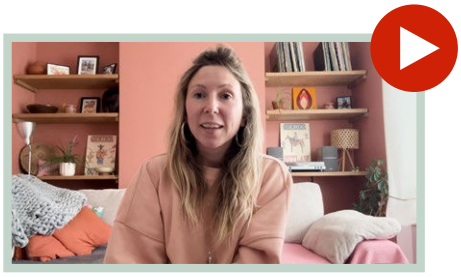
Axel Satgé & Déborah Boëno



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HEAR IT FROM THE EXPERT: INTRODUCTION TO THE TOURING LANDSCAPE IN THE UK BY NICOLE A'COURT-STUART

Video interview with Nicole A'Court-Stuart, Artistic Director at Circus City Bristol:
#gettingbooked #experttips



Top Tip: UK vs England vs Great Britain… Wait, what?
#TopTip

Before you hit the road, get clear on this: **"England" is not the same as "the UK."** And if you're touring in the UK, calling everywhere "England" might land you in awkward territory — or worse, offend your hosts.

Here's the breakdown:

- **United Kingdom (UK)** = England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- **Great Britain (GB)** = England, Scotland, and Wales (but not Northern Ireland)
- **British Isles** = A geographical term that includes both the UK *and* the Republic of Ireland, plus islands like the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands
- **England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland** = the four nations that make up the UK

If you're performing in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, don't refer to it as "England." Not only is it incorrect — it can come across as dismissive of national identity and culture. Respect goes a long way when you're a guest in someone's country.

In this guide, we use "UK" to refer to the whole of the United Kingdom—unless we're talking about something specific to one of the nations.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT TOURING IN THE UK

1. WHAT IS THE TOURING LANDSCAPE LIKE IN THE UK?

#gettingbooked #venues #festivals

1.1 Where do circus and outdoor arts happen in the UK?

Rather than listing every circus and outdoor arts-friendly venue or festival, the section below offers an overview of the types of touring partners you'll find in the UK, and how to spot the ones that are right for your work.

1.1.1. Specialist Circus and Physical Theatre Venues

These venues have a strong focus on circus, physical theatre and/or outdoor arts.

- Ideal for: Circus-focused or hybrid physical performances
- Staff usually familiar with circus-specific technical needs (rigging, floor surfaces, etc.)
- More open to new, international work and experimental formats
- e.g. **Jacksons Lane (London), Circomedia (Bristol)**

Multi-Arts Centres and Contemporary Performance Venues: Multi-disciplinary spaces that programme theatre, dance, visual arts, live art — and sometimes circus as part of a broader offer.

- Ideal for: Cross-artform shows, innovative or narrative-driven circus
- Strong audience development and marketing teams
- Often part of the Arts Council England National Portfolio (NPOs)
- e.g. **Lowry (Salford), HOME (Manchester), Battersea Arts Centre (London), Attenborough Centre (Brighton)**

Regional Theatres and Receiving Houses: Larger venues that mainly present touring shows.

- Ideal for: Mid- to large-scale productions that can adapt to proscenium arch or studio settings
- May require box office split deals or box office guarantees
- Programming circus is still relatively new, but interest is growing
- e.g. **Theatre Royal Plymouth, Warwick Arts Centre, Theatre by the Lake (Nottingham)**

1.1.2. Specialist Outdoor Arts Festivals

Outdoor performance is a major and accessible route into the UK market. Here's a breakdown of the main types of outdoor arts events you might encounter:

Urban Outdoor Arts Festivals: These large-scale events often take over city centres with curated programmes of **high-quality outdoor performance**, including international circus, spectacle and site-specific work.

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- Ideal for: **tour-ready shows** with strong visuals and large audience appeal
- Often part of networks like **Without Walls**, with co-commissioning opportunities
- Some may offer artist development or UK residencies for international artists
- e.g. **Greenwich+Docklands International Festival (GDIF, London), SIRF (Stockton-on-Tees), Birmingham Festival, Out There Festival (Great Yarmouth)**

Rural and Small-Town Events: Often coordinated by **local authorities, rural touring schemes or arts charities**, these events bring performance to small towns, villages and non-urban spaces.

- Ideal for: **portable, low-tech shows** that are flexible and can adapt to any location
- Opportunities often arise through personal contacts or regional networks
- Audiences are intergenerational and community-based, with a strong appetite for engagement
- e.g. **Festival of Thrift (Billingham), local council summer events, village fetes with professional programming**

Themed or Cross-Arts Festivals with Outdoor Programmes: These festivals have broader themes (e.g. ecology, wellbeing, experimental performance) but include curated outdoor arts strands. The environment is often **immersive and eclectic**.

- Ideal for: **site-responsive**, **participatory**, or **unusual formats**
- Often welcome international artists with a unique voice or concept
- Shows may happen in **forests, parks, tents, or unconventional spaces**
- e.g. **Brighton Festival**, **Green Man (Powys, Wales)**, **Shambala (Northamptonshire)**, **Timber Festival (The National Forest)**

Community and Culturally-Focused Events: These are hyper-local or culturally specific events designed to celebrate diversity, community identity, or grassroots participation. Some are artist-led; others are coordinated by councils or community organisers.

- Ideal for: **small-scale, inclusive, family-friendly, or culturally resonant work**
- Programmers may be looking for **interactive or participatory formats**
- Booking processes are often informal — relationship-building is key
- e.g. **Certain Blacks' Ensemble Festival (London)**, **Fun Palaces (UK-wide)**, **local Mela events**, **Carnival weekends**, **refugee arts days**, **Pride events**

Council-Led One-Off Events: Often programmed directly by **local authority events teams**, these may not be part of a "festival" but offer high footfall and valuable visibility.

- Ideal for: **walkabouts**, **short-form or repeatable work** and **non-verbal shows**
- Often hard to find via open calls — watch social media or where peers have performed
- Programming may happen **last-minute**, so flexibility is key
- e.g. **Heritage Day performances**, **public space animations**, **seasonal city centre programming**, **Christmas lights switch-ons**, etc.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

Read *Subverting The Rational – A Rebellious Rise Of Uk Outdoor Arts And Contemporary Circus*, an article written by Sho Shibata, the Director of OutdoorArtsUK, and published by Circostrada.
→ Read the article

Read an interview with Joe Mackintosh, Artistic Director and CEO of Out There Arts, and published by Circostrada.
→ Read the Interview

Read an interview with Sho Shibata, Director of OutdoorArtsUK:
→ Read the Interview

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1.1.3. Indoors and outdoors Festivals

The UK is home to **hundreds of festivals**, ranging from large-scale commercial music events to intimate artist-led gatherings:

Large-Scale Music Festivals: These are major multi-day events, attracting tens of thousands of people, often with camping and large headline acts. Many have dedicated **theatre, circus, or "alternative performance" areas** programmed alongside the music stages.

- Great for: **high-energy outdoor shows**, **walkabouts** or **visually arresting work**
- Programming often run by **specialist curators** within the festival
- Can offer **broad exposure** but require **self-sufficient touring models**
- e.g. **Glastonbury (Somerset), Latitude (Suffolk), Boomtown (Hampshire), Green Man (Wales)**

International Performing Arts Festivals: These are curated, multi-disciplinary festivals focused on **high-quality international work** across theatre, dance, circus and more.

- Great for: **tour-ready productions**, especially if you're looking to connect with UK programmers
- Usually offer **formal performance slots**, marketing support and press visibility
- Some are ticketed and indoors, others include free outdoor programmes
- e.g. **Belfast International Arts Festival, Brighton Festival, Edinburgh International Festival**

Circus and Outdoor Arts Festivals: These festivals specialise in outdoor performance and/or contemporary circus and often present **free-to-access shows** in public spaces.

- Great for: **physical, visual, or family-friendly work**, especially non-verbal shows
- Often part of networks like **Without Walls** or **Circostrada**
- Some offer **co-commissions or touring opportunities** as part of artist development
- e.g. **Out There Festival (Great Yarmouth), Greenwich+Docklands International Festival (GDIF, London), SIRF (Stockton-on-Tees), Surge (Glasgow, Scotland), Bristol Circus City**

Artist-Led and Community-Based Festivals: These are smaller in scale and more intimate, often focused on **social engagement, experimentation and inclusion**. Some are grassroots, others are run by producing organisations with a strong identity.

- Great for: **smaller-scale, flexible shows** or those with a **participatory or outreach component**
- Programming decisions may be driven by **local relevance, equity and access goals**
- Often open to **new relationships with international artists**
- e.g. **Certain Blacks' Ensemble Festival (London), Shambala (Northamptonshire), Strike A Light Festival (Gloucester), Fun Palaces (UK-wide), local council-led events**

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: What about the Edinburgh Fringe?
#toptip

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the world's largest arts festival, taking place every August in Scotland's capital. It features thousands of shows across hundreds of venues — everything from theatre, dance and circus to comedy, music and experimental work.

Here's how it works (in a nutshell):

- It's an open-access festival — anyone can take part, as long as they find a venue and register their show
- You're responsible for all your own costs: travel, accommodation, venue hire, marketing, tech, PR…
- Shows usually run for multiple dates (often the full month) and rely heavily on audience ticket sales and word of mouth
- There is no central curator — success depends on strategy, visibility, and often, stamina!

The Fringe is not a typical touring opportunity. It's a huge investment of time, money and energy, and it works best for artists with a clear reason to be there (e.g. launching a show, seeking press exposure, making UK industry contacts).

A guide to the Edinburgh Fringe could fill a book on its own. If you're curious, we recommend speaking to other international circus companies who have performed at the Fringe. They'll give you the most honest insight into what it takes — and whether it's right for your work.

1.1.4. Rural Touring

One unique feature of the UK touring scene is its **strong rural touring network** — a system of small venues, community halls, and non-traditional spaces that bring live performance to towns and villages across the country.

What is rural touring?

- Shows are presented in **village halls, schools, churches, libraries**, or other community venues
- Performances are often organised in partnership with **local volunteers**, who help with promotion and front-of-house
- Touring is usually **lightweight and low-tech**, designed to travel by car or van
- Audiences may include **first-time arts attendees**, and the atmosphere is often intimate and informal

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

Touring regionally in the UK can sometimes feel disheartening — drawing large audiences for dance and circus in traditional venues is often a real challenge. But rural touring has been a game-changer. Even though it takes more effort to organise, performing in town halls and quirky, off-the-beaten-path spaces has been incredibly rewarding. We've seen bigger, more enthusiastic crowds, and the community engagement — before and after the show — has been truly energising. Get ready to eat Josie's amazing shepherd's pie while staying in a 1500s-era farm. We've made amazing memories on those tours.

JD Broussé, performer and Artistic Director, Nikki & JD Company

What kinds of shows are programmed?
Rural touring audiences enjoy a wide variety of work — including contemporary circus, physical theatre, storytelling, live music and family shows. Adaptability and direct audience connection are key.

Who coordinates rural touring?
There are over 25 Rural Touring Schemes across the UK, many of which are members of the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF).

- Each scheme covers a region and works closely with local communities
- Some have funding to support artist fees and travel
- Many are interested in international work, especially when it can connect with rural audiences through movement, visuals, humour or storytelling

→ Visit the website: ruraltouring.org

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Circus Around and About
#toptip

One exciting example is Circus Around and About — a project developed by Take Art, Applause Rural Touring, Arts Alive and Crying Out Loud. The project specifically supports touring contemporary circus and outdoor arts to rural communities across England and Wales.

Now in its second phase, it offers paid touring opportunities, artist support and direct connections to village halls and community-run spaces that might not otherwise programme circus. International artists have also been involved, making it a unique and welcoming route into rural touring for companies from abroad.

Keep an eye on ruraltouring.org and the participating schemes' websites for future calls and project updates.

Top Tip: Can rural touring be part of international touring?
#toptip

While rural touring is usually associated with small-scale, local programming, many schemes are interested in international work, especially if:

- It is visual or non-verbal, making it accessible across language barriers
- It brings new perspectives or cultural exchange to communities that rarely see international artists
- It is suitable for intimate, flexible and low-tech touring formats
- It fits into a longer tour (e.g. between festivals or venue dates in larger cities)

Some schemes have hosted artists from Europe, Canada, Australia and beyond, often through partnerships with UK-based producers or festivals. A few are also involved in European networks or co-commissions that include rural stops as part of a broader UK tour.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

1.1.5. Independent producers:

There are a handful of **independent producers and programmers** in the UK who play a key role in bringing international companies to British audiences. These organisations often operate outside the traditional venue model, working across festivals, co-productions, tours and artist development. Here's a list of some of the key players:

- **Crying Out Loud:** A pioneer in presenting contemporary circus and outdoor arts in the UK, Crying Out Loud has long been the go-to partner for international companies.
  → Visit the website: cryingoutloud.org

- **Strike A Light**: Based in Gloucester**,** Strike A Light programmes bold, inclusive performance with a strong emphasis on community engagement. While not exclusively circus-focused, they have supported and toured international and UK-based contemporary circus, often in partnership with other programmers.
  → Visit the website: strikealightfestival.org.uk

- **Certain Blacks**: A London-based arts development organisation championing diverse voices and underrepresented artists. They programme circus and street arts with a focus on international work and cultural exchange, often in public or non-traditional spaces.
  → Visit the website: certainblacks.com

- **Articulture Wales**: A key outdoor arts advocate in Wales, supporting both Welsh and international artists. Often co-produces circus or site-specific work for festivals and rural touring. Strong emphasis on bilingual and place-based work.
  → Visit the website: articulture-wales.co.uk

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

At Crying Out Loud, we are passionate about developing and producing world-class, boundary-pushing visual performance work, including circus and outdoor arts, in the Solent (where we are based), UK and globally.

Our mission is to:

- *connect artists, programmers and communities across local and global borders and inspire cross-cultural exchange*
- *discover and develop new artistic talent on our doorstep and across the globe through a producing model that centres innovation, risk and careful collaboration*
- *produce world-class, boundary-pushing artworks, performances and creative projects for and with communities and audiences of all nationalities and ages everywhere*

We do this by developing a strong and dynamic creative community that connects and collaborates across borders, often rooted in our long-standing relationships with Circostrada members. These collaborative relationships enable a unique forum where local, national and international artists and programmers can have the courage and support to work together and pursue ambitious projects that push at the boundaries of what creativity can do. Brexit has made this more difficult, but we continue regardless.

Rachel Clare, Artistic Director, Crying Out Loud

These independent producers can be key entry points into the UK market, thanks to their strong relationships with venues, festivals and local communities. Many focus on a specific artform, audience, or curatorial interest, and they tend to work selectively — supporting only a few projects at a time. But if your work aligns with their vision, they can become powerful collaborators, helping you navigate funding, logistics and partnerships — and ultimately bring your show to UK audiences.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

1.2. Where can I find venues and festivals that programme circus and outdoor arts?

There's no central list for venues presenting circus and outdoor arts in the UK, but you can research the following resources to find venues and festivals that present work that may match your style:

- **Without Walls**: Consortium of UK festivals that programme outdoor arts, many of which include circus.
  → Visit the website: withoutwalls.uk.com

- **Outdoor Arts UK**: A national membership network with a searchable directory of festivals, artists and presenters.
  → Visit the website: outdoorartsuk.org

- **Organisations which receive regular public funding**: In all four UK nations, multi-year public funding is distributed to key venues, festivals and arts organisations — but circus is not listed as a standalone artform in any of them. Instead, it's often supported under Combined Arts, Outdoor Arts, or cross-artform categories. We list here the organisations that receive multi-year funding from their respective national arts councils. These organisations are more likely to have the resources to support international work:

  - England: National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs)
    → artscouncil.org.uk/npo-directory
  - Scotland: Multi-Year Funded Organisations
    → creativescotland.com/funding/regular-funding
  - Wales: Investment Review Portfolio
    → arts.wales
  - Northern Ireland: Annual Funding Programme
    → artscouncil-ni.org

- **Circostrada**: Use the Circostrada member list to identify UK organisations that are already connected to the international circus community.
  → Explore the network: circostrada.org/en/members

- **Word of mouth and peer networks** – Many UK presenters build relationships through artist recommendations, European networks (like Circostrada), or past touring successes.

- **Check the tour dates of some of the UK-based circus and outdoor arts companies** whose work aligns with yours. There is a plethora of successful UK-based companies touring the UK - do your research to find where they tour to.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Is there a ministry of culture in the UK?
#toptip

Not exactly! Unlike some countries where culture is handled by a central Ministry, the UK's cultural sector is devolved — meaning responsibility is split across the four nations, each with their own government and funding structures.
Here's how it breaks down:

- **England**: Arts Council England (ACE) handles funding and policy, supported by the UK government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- **Scotland**: Creative Scotland is the national funding body
- **Wales**: Arts Council of Wales oversees cultural funding and development
- **Northern Ireland**: Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the main agency here

Touring across the UK often means working with different funders, systems and regional priorities. A show in Cardiff (Wales) might involve different contacts and funding pathways than one in Glasgow (Scotland) or Manchester (England) — even if it's part of the same tour.

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2. HOW TO APPROACH LOCAL FESTIVALS AND VENUES?

#gettingbooked #venues #festivals

You've found a venue whose artistic programme aligns with your work, but neither of you know each other. How do you make the first move? Let's explore the best approach.

2.1. Emails

Emails are the most effective way to reach UK programmers, provided you structure it well. Here's a suggested approach:

- **Subject Line**: Use a clear, punchy subject line that includes your company name and the timeframe for your tour, for example: *"Company XX on Tour in the UK in 20XX"* or *"Invitation: Company XX in Town X on Date X*
- **Introduction**: Start with a concise introduction about yourself, your company and the specific show you're looking to present
- **Establish Context**: Mention any mutual connections or relevant experiences, such as previous work at UK festivals or performances elsewhere in Europe, this gives the programmer a frame of reference
- **Include a Dossier**: Share a link to your show's dossier and ensure it's visually engaging and includes key details like a synopsis, duration and technical requirements.
- **Video Link**: Provide a video link to a full performance, programmers often expect this to experience the show in its entirety before considering it
- **Live Invitation**: If you're performing at a nearby festival or venue, include an invitation to see your work live, this is a strong motivator for programmers
- **Fees (optional)**: You can include your fees in the email, but it's not mandatory, refer to the relevant section of this guide for more on presenting fees
- **Support Available for Touring**: If you have access to funding to help bring the show to the UK (whether it is a grant you already have, or one you can apply for) mention it in the first conversation
- **Length**: Keep the email short — around 10 lines, programmers often have busy schedules, so brevity is key
- **Follow up**: If you don't hear back, follow up within two weeks, programmers balance full schedules, and a polite reminder can be helpful. If there's still no response after the second email, it's best to move on. This likely means the programmer is either too busy or your proposal isn't suitable for their current programming priorities

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

I often get emails from artists hoping I'll book their work based on that first message. But I wouldn't programme a show I haven't seen or don't know anything about. For me, the email is just the starting point. If the work seems potentially suitable, I might ask to see a full video — nothing fancy, just something clear and watchable.

If it's still of interest, I'd want to see the work live, ideally at a festival, or maybe on a dedicated trip. In some countries like Belgium or Spain, regional agencies even help cover costs for programmers to travel — which is hugely helpful.

And finally, it's worth saying that programming often happens well in advance. I might not book something for this year — or even next. It could be two years later. So if a company can keep a show touring beyond a single season, that really helps build long-term relationships with venues and programmers.
Jan Lennox, Director, Watermans / Bell Square London

In the UK, email is definitely the preferred first point of contact when approaching venues or festivals.

Steve Cowton, Head of Theatre Operations, Lowry (Salford)

Top Tip: Language considerations
#toptip

English may be the main working language in the UK, but that doesn't mean you need to be fluent to tour here successfully. People in the UK are generally very tolerant of non-native English speakers — especially in the arts. Clear, simple communication is more important than perfect grammar. Most venues, producers and technicians are used to working with international artists and will meet you halfway.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

2.2. Word of mouth

If you already have a good relationship with a programmer or colleague in the UK, consider asking them to introduce you and your work to their peers. A recommendation from a trusted colleague can be a huge asset, as UK programmers value personal and professional references.

Expert tips:
#experttip

The best way to approach a UK venue or festival is through someone who already has a relationship with them.

Danielle Devery, International Theatre Booking Agent, Aurora Nova

There's no central system for booking in the UK—it's all about building relationships over time. Visibility matters, but in the end, it comes down to conversations, meetings, and being present. Festivals and pitch sessions help, but real touring still happens through personal connections

Max Calaf Sevé, artist

2.3. What tools do I need to approach a venue or a festival?

Before reaching out, make sure you have the following tools ready to maximise your chances of success:

- **A comprehensive dossier:** Include essential details about the show (synopsis, themes, duration, etc.), a bio of the creative team and high-quality visuals - a visually appealing and well-organised dossier is your key introduction to programmers
- **A trailer:** Prepare a 1- to 2-minute video showcasing the show's key moments, it should be engaging, concise and representative of your work
- **A full-length performance video:** Most festivals expect a complete recording of the show to assess its quality and how it aligns with their programming - ensure this is easily accessible via a private link or download
- **Live invitations:** If you're performing at another festival or venue, extend invitations to potential bookers - seeing the show live often helps programmers make decisions
- **Tour calendar:** Provide a calendar of upcoming dates, especially performances in the UK or nearby, so programmers can plan to see the show in person
- **Additional resources (on request):** Have other materials, such as technical specifications, press reviews, or high-resolution photos ready to send upon request - don't overload your initial communication — share these only when asked
- **A technical rider**: for more information see section *4.5 What are the technical specificities in the UK?*

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: How to write a dossier for the UK
#toptip

Keep it short, clear and practical — UK programmers are often time-stretched and appreciate information that gets straight to the point.

Here's what your dossier should include (ideally in one concise PDF or folder):

- Show description (100–200 words max): What is it? Who is it for? Why does it matter?
- Practical information: indoor or outdoor, running time, target audience (family or adult), touring party
- High quality photos: Choose 2–3 strong, print-ready images (landscape format is often preferred)
- Trailer and full length video link: Include clickable links — YouTube or Vimeo is fine
- Technical rider: Keep it realistic and clearly labelled and for outdoor work, include space and surface requirements
- Company bio: Brief background, location, languages spoken
- Tour availability: Dates, format options, flexibility
- Contact details: Easy to find, ideally for both admin and artistic contact
- Length: 3 to 4 pages

You can also include these optional extras:

- Audience testimonials or reviews
- Access notes
- Budget range or fee guidance

UK programmers often scan quickly — therefore a clear layout with headings and minimal text make a big difference. You don't need to impress with poetic language — just make it easy to understand and easy for them to imagine your show in their space.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

Programmers want a clear dossier covering the scale and type of show, the kind of space it needs, what it's about, the target audience, how many people are touring, get-in and get-out times, how many performances you can do per day, and any special requirements like fire, screens, or nudity. If you already have a tech spec, even better.

Jan Lennox, Director, Watermans / Bell Square London

In the UK, dossiers often highlight the most marketable aspects of a show — starred reviews, audience reactions and clear, simplified descriptions. Co-producers and partners are prominently credited and programmers expect to see how the show engages with audiences and communities. Practical details like age range, accessibility and content warnings also carry more weight here than in many EU countries.

Max Calaf Sevé, artist

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

2.4. When to approach UK venues and festivals?

#gettingbooked

2.4.1. Venues

Most venues programme 6–12 months in advance, and some plan even earlier — especially for large-scale or international work.

- Autumn touring: Contact between January and April of the same year
- Spring touring: Contact between September and December of the year before
- Co-productions or funded partnerships: Start conversations 12–18 months ahead

Some venues have fixed programming cycles (e.g. autumn and spring seasons), while others book on a rolling basis — especially for festivals, artist-led events, or last-minute opportunities. If you are not sure, ask the programmer, they'll tell you when it is best to contact them.

2.4.2. Festivals

UK festivals — especially outdoor ones — often work on longer timelines than venues. It's common for programmers to start scouting **12–18 months in advance**.

- **Summer festivals (May–Sept)**: Make first contact between **August and November** of the year before
- **Indoor or fringe festivals (year-round)**: Reach out **9–12 months in advance**, unless there's a formal open call

Festivals that are part of **Without Walls**, for example, follow a shared commissioning and selection timeline, usually opening their calls **in autumn** for the following summer.

Top Tip: Tips for good timing
#toptip

- Don't wait for an open call - **direct outreach** is welcome in the UK, especially with a strong dossier
- **Follow festivals and venues on social media** to spot callouts, deadlines and pitching opportunities
- If you're already coming to the UK for one date, let others know — programmers love a low-carbon, multi-stop tour!

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3. HOW TO MANAGE ADMINISTRATION & FINANCES?

3.1. How to best present your fee to presenters?

#gettingbooked #finance

There is no single standard for presenting fees to UK venues and festivals. Whether you're sharing your quote via email, a separate budget document, or a "financial conditions" style breakdown, the most important thing is that your figures are clear, transparent, and realistic.

UK presenters are often working with tight budgets and complex funding situations. Providing a well structured fee proposal helps them plan and can make your project easier to support.

What to include in your fee proposal:

- **Fee**
  - 1 performance: XXX Euros/GBP net of all taxes
  - 2 performances over 2 days: XXX Euros/GBP net of all taxes
  - 3 performances over 3 days: XXX Euros/GBP net of all taxes

- **Other costs to be covered by the presenter**
  - **Planning**: Indicate when technicians and artists arrive
  - **Accommodation**: X double room(s) and X single room(s), from X day(s) before the first show to 1 day after the last show
  - **Travel**: Train travel in second class for X people travelling from [country]
  - **Local transport**: Transfers from home to station and station to accommodation
  - **Freight**: 1 van from [city and country] (or excess baggage costs)
  - **Per diem**: For X people, from X day(s) before the first show to 1 day after the last show, at the local rate
  - **Author's rights**: Specify whether music or any aspect of your work is registered with a collecting society
  - **Technical rider**: The presenter will provide all equipment listed in your technical rider
  - **Visa/work permits**: If applicable for your country and team members

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Do UK venues pay fees?
#toptip

It's important to understand the financial context. Touring the UK is challenging — but not impossible. To the question "Do UK venues pay a fee?" the answer is: yes, but not always in full.

Just like in other countries, UK venues and festivals operate under a variety of business models, and there's no one-size-fits-all approach to how shows are booked and paid for. That said, there are some important general patterns to be aware of:

- Many UK venues, even those receiving public funding, can't always pay full presentation fees, especially for international work. Their funding often covers core operations and limited programming, but not the full cost of touring companies
- UK-based artists usually need to raise additional funds themselves to cover the gap between what a venue can offer and the true cost of the tour. This often means applying for project-based grants from Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, or independent trusts and foundations
- For international companies, access to these funds typically requires a UK-based partner, venue, festival, or independent producer — who can apply on your behalf or collaborate as a co-producer
- A small number of larger-scale venues and well-funded festivals are able to cover full fees and costs for international artists — but these are the exception, not the norm - festivals in particular are often your best bet for fully funded international bookings

Expert tips:
#experttip

Plan for all additional costs before signing the contract — it's very difficult to renegotiate anything afterwards. If you're receiving transport support from your home country for the tour, make sure it's clearly stated during negotiations and in the contract that these costs are subject to the approval and disbursement of that subsidy, to make renegotiation easier if needed.

Déborah, Tour Manager, Collectif Malunés

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Common follow-up questions from UK presenters:
Due to ongoing financial pressures, many UK venues and festivals will ask for further detail before confirming a booking. Expect questions like:

- Can you provide an **all-inclusive quote** (fee + travel + accommodation + per diems)?
- Are you able to access **funding from your home country** (e.g. for travel or freight)?
- Is there any **flexibility in your costs** or fee structure?
- Are you open to a **longer decision-making timeline**, while the presenter waits for funding confirmation?

Top Tip: Talking fees with UK presenters
#toptip #negotiation #finances

- Be **100% clear and specific** about what you expect the presenter to cover, if something isn't written down, it likely won't be included in their budget
- Don't assume venues are used to hosting international companies — **spell everything out** (including visa, carnet, or travel documentation costs)
- If you're unsure what to include (e.g. freight, work permits), **ask the presenter for guidance** — they may not have all the answers, but they'll help you find them

Top Tip: Per diem rates in the UK
#toptip

There's no official per diem rate in the UK, but there is sector guidance:

- The Independent Theatre Council (ITC) publishes reference rates, including per diems, which many UK venues use as a benchmark
  → itc-arts.org/resources/rates-of-pay

You can use ITC rates as a guide when quoting per diem, or agree on a flat rate that feels fair to both sides.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Alternative fee structures
#toptip

While many of the bookings covered in this guide are based on a **guarantee (direct sale)**, here are some other fee structures you might encounter when touring in the UK:

Guarantee: The organiser agrees to pay the producer a fixed sum for their services, regardless of the number of spectators or box office income. Any ticketing revenue above the guaranteed amount goes back to the venue.

- **Box office split**: Box office income is shared between the organiser and the producer according to an agreed ratio. An 80:20 split in favour of the company means the company receives 80% and the venue 20% of the ticket revenue. Several ratios can be agreed upon. For example, the producer can receive 60% of the first €10,500 in box office revenue and 70% of any income above this amount.

- **Minimum guaranteed**: Box office income is shared between the organiser and the producer according to an agreed ratio. Still, the company benefits from a minimum payment (generally lower than the fee requested). For example, the company can receive €10,000 or 70% of box office income, whichever is greater, regardless of ticket sales.

- **Split after guaranteed minimum**: The producer or organiser receives a fixed amount, after which the rest of the box office income is shared according to an agreed ratio. For example, the producer may receive the first €1,500 out of a total box office revenue of €6,000, and the remaining €4,500 is split in a 60:40 ratio, with €2,700 going to the producer, giving them a total of €4,200.

These are just a few common variations. In practice, every agreement is bespoke, and the numbers will depend on the scale of the venue, the show's ticket potential, and whether public funding is involved.

Before signing a contract, make sure you fully understand the financial implications. If you're unsure, ask questions or seek advice from someone with UK touring experience. Transparency helps avoid misunderstandings — and protects your company's bottom line.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.2. Are there taxes you need to be aware of?

#gettingbooked #finance

The UK applies a 20% withholding tax on payments made to non-resident artists performing in the country. This means that if no action is taken, the presenter is legally required to withhold 20% of your fee and send it directly to HMRC (His Majesty's Revenue and Customs).

How to request a tax exemption (and keep your full fee):
You can apply for an exemption from UK withholding tax by submitting documents to the Foreign Entertainers Unit (FEU) — a department of HMRC that handles international performers.

What you need to do:

- **Complete the FEU8 form**
  This must be filled in by you (the artist) or your company
  → Download FEU8 form (PDF)
- **Ask the UK presenter to complete the FEU2 form**
  This outlines your contract and payment terms
  → Download FEU2 form (PDF)
- **Include a Certificate of Tax Residence**
  This must be issued by your local tax authority (in your country of residence)
- **(Optional but helpful)**: Attach a **copy of the contract** or invitation letter

Timing is crucial: All documents must be sent to HMRC at least 30 days before the performance. This gives them time to process your request and confirm that no tax should be withheld. Submit all documents by email to: feu.unit@hmrc.gov.uk

What if you miss the deadline? If you don't submit the documents in time, **the presenter must withhold 20% of your fee** and send it to HMRC. You can **still apply for a refund later**, but the process is longer and more complex.

Top Tip: Helpful links
#toptip

- Full HMRC guide: Pay tax on foreign entertainers in the UK
- FEU8 Form (artist/company): Download PDF
- FEU2 Form (presenter): Download PDF

Expert tips:
#experttip

The FEU tax process can catch you off guard—but it's manageable if you're not touring the UK too often.

Danielle Devery, International Theatre Booking Agent, Aurora Nova

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.3. What does the contracting process look like?

In the UK, performance contracts vary widely depending on the size of the event and the professionalism of the presenter.

Some may be very short (just two pages) and cover only the essentials, while others — especially from larger venues or festivals — can be up to 15 pages long and include detailed clauses covering responsibilities, technical specifications, insurance, copyright, cancellation and more.

Top Tip: Who issues the contract?
#toptip

In the UK, the venue or festival usually issues the contract, not the company. This is standard practice and reflects the fact that UK presenters are typically responsible for defining the legal and financial terms of the engagement.

As an artist or company, you'll usually be sent a draft contract to review and sign. Make sure to:

- Read it carefully and check that it reflects your agreement (dates, fees, tech, etc.)
- Request any necessary changes or additions — especially around payment terms, cancellation, or copyright
- Keep a signed copy for your records

If a presenter doesn't offer a contract, or only sends an informal agreement, don't be afraid to ask for one — a written contract protects everyone involved.

At a minimum, your contract should include:

- Clear identification of the parties involved (artist/company and organiser/presenter)
- Detailed description of the show (date, location, duration, number of performances)
- Fee amount and payment terms (when and how you'll be paid, currency and payment method)
- Cancellation terms and any penalties
- Mutual responsibilities (who handles what, before, during and after the show)
- Liability limitations
- Applicable law and jurisdiction: Contracts will generally state that English law applies and that any disputes will be handled by a court in the UK, this means any legal issues will be governed locally

Common additional clauses include:

- Force majeure (in case of strikes, pandemics, or other disruptions)
- Technical requirements (linked to your rider) and added as an addendum to the contract.
- Accommodation and hospitality
- Copyright and authors' rights (if not handled separately)

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

- Exclusivity clause in your contract that limits where and when you can perform your show before or after the engagement, often within a specific geographical area and/or timeframe.

If something isn't in writing, don't assume it's agreed — always clarify key details in the contract, especially around payment, tech and rights.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.4. What paperwork will I need to perform in the UK?

#logistics #admin

For a smooth and professional tour in the UK, it's important to have your core administrative documents ready, regardless of where you're coming from.

For more context on international touring documentation, refer to the Administration section of An Introduction to International Touring.

Below is a quick overview of the key documents you should carry with you:

- **Authorisation to enter the UK:** visa, PPE paperwork, ETA (see section 4.4.1. for details)
- **Authorisation for goods to enter the UK**: if you travel with set, you may need an ATA carnet (see section 4.4.2. for details)
- **Contract with the venue**: This is your official engagement agreement — essential for travel, tax exemption and payment.
- **Contracts with touring staff**: If you're touring with a team, you may be asked to show proof of legal relationships (especially for posted workers from the EU).
- **Author's rights certificates**: If you or your company claim royalties, carry documentation from your collective management organisation or clearly outline terms in your contract.
- **A1 Certificate (for EU-based companies only)**: This proves that your team remains covered by your home country's social security system while working temporarily in the UK.
- **Insurance certificate**: Public liability insurance is often requested by UK venues or festivals, especially for performances in public space or outdoor arts.

Expert tips:
#experttip

Some UK presenters are hesitant to book international artists — not because of the work, but because they're unsure how to handle the admin. Even when there's strong interest, fear of complexity can get in the way. That's why preparation time is crucial.

Max Calaf Sevé, artist

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.5. What are the working hours in the UK?

#admin

If you employ local workers (technicians, artists, production staff) during your UK tour, you must comply with UK employment law.

Similarly, if you are posting workers (sending salaried employees) from an EU country, you are required to respect the basic protections of UK labour law, particularly those outlined in the Working Time Regulations.

Key working time rules in the UK:

- Maximum 48 hours of work per week (averaged over a 17-week reference period), unless the worker signs an "opt-out" agreement allowing longer hours
- 11 consecutive hours of rest between working days
- 20-minute break if working more than six hours in a day
- At least one day off per week

Specific conditions for the performing arts sector:
In the UK, the live performance sector benefits from adapted agreements, particularly under the Equity Fringe Agreement (for small-scale touring and fringe contexts). These guidelines include:

- Rehearsal period: Maximum 35 hours per week over five days
- Performance period: Maximum 35 hours per week over six days
- Production week (tech week): Up to 43 hours over six days, once per production
- Maximum daily working time: 10 hours per day, including breaks, between 8:00 AM and midnight
- Breaks:
    1. one-hour meal break between morning and evening work sessions
    2. 15-minute break every three continuous working hours
- Daily rest: Minimum 11 hours between working days
- Weekly rest: At least one full day off after six consecutive working days
- Maximum number of performances per week:
    1. Up to 12 performances per week if each show is under 50 minutes
    2. Up to eight performances per week if each show is over 50 minutes

These rules apply over a rolling seven-day period and are designed to reflect the realities of rehearsal, performance and touring schedules in the UK.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: The Equity Fringe Agreement
#toptip

The Equity Fringe Agreement is a model agreement designed to set minimum working conditions for artists working in the UK's independent live performance sector.

It applies mainly to festivals, small venues and "fringe" productions (those operating outside major institutional or commercial circuits).

→https://www.equity.org.uk/media/15moxpyu/equity-fringe-agreement-2023.pdf

Top Tip: Hire staff in the UK
#toptip

In some cases, especially with co-productions or self-productions, you may need to hire local staff (e.g., technical, maintenance, or audience management).

For more information on this topic, please refer to the Circostrada Guide "Touring, Programming, and Funding Big Tops in Europe" (p.44-46)
→https://www.circostrada.org/en/ressources/touring-programming-and-funding-big-tops-europe

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.6. How do author's rights and royalties work when performing in the UK?

#administration #authorrights

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the Berne Convention and the TRIPS Agreement (WTO), meaning that any work created in a member country (including EU countries) is automatically protected in the UK.

Two scenarios depending on your situation:

- **If you are affiliated with a Collective Management Organisation (CMO)**: If you are a member of a CMO in your home country (e.g. SACD, SABAM, SACEM, etc.), you do not need to register separately in the UK. However:
    - Check that your local society has a reciprocal agreement with the relevant UK organisations (such as PRS for Music, PPL, DACS, or Equity for performers' rights)
    - Inform your society of your performance dates and venues in the UK
    - Make sure your show is registered in their database (title, authors, duration)
    - Declare your performances in advance or shortly afterwards according to your society's process
    - The UK organisation (e.g. PRS for Music) will collect royalties locally and transfer them back to your national society, who will then pay you

- **If you manage your copyright directly (self-management)**: If you manage your rights independently, you need to explicitly include copyright terms in your contract with the presenter or producer. You should:
    - State that author rights exist over the show
    - Specify that part of the performance fee relates to the use of those rights
    - Agree a separate royalty payment if it's not already included in the main fee
    - If you don't specify this, a UK presenter may assume that all rights are included in the agreed fee (full assignment implied)

Top Tip: Always spell out royalties clearly in your contract.
#toptip

Here's a sample clause you can adapt:
"The presented work is protected by copyright. The producer agrees to respect the moral and economic rights of the creators. Any recording, broadcast, or adaptation of the show requires prior written consent. Royalties related to copyright are payable in addition to the performance fee, unless otherwise stated in the contract."

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

3.7. In which currency do I quote?

#gettingbooked #finance

You can invoice in your local currency (such as Euros), even when working with a UK presenter.

However, to avoid confusion or issues linked to exchange rate fluctuations with the British pound (GBP), it's important to specify a few key points clearly in your contract.

- **Specify the invoicing currency:** clearly state that your invoice will be issued in Euros (or whichever currency you use)

- **Include a clause about the exchange rate:** to protect yourself from financial loss due to exchange rate fluctuations, you can define how the currency conversion will be handled. Two common options:

    - Exchange rate at the date of invoice: State that the amount will be converted into GBP using the exchange rate in effect on the date the invoice is issued → *This approach fixes the rate early and avoids later variations*
    - Exchange rate at the date of payment: State that the payment will be made in GBP, but the conversion will use the rate in effect at the time of payment → *This approach reflects real-time fluctuations, which could benefit or disadvantage you depending on the market*
    - Example clause: "The invoice amount will be calculated in euros (EUR) and converted into pounds sterling (GBP) according to the exchange rate in effect on the date of payment."

- **Consider a safeguard clause for major fluctuation**: if you're worried about significant currency movements, you can add a small adjustment margin to protect against exchange rate risk.

    - For example: "In the event of a significant fluctuation in exchange rates between the date of contract signature and the date of payment, the agreed amounts may be adjusted by up to X% to reflect these changes."

    - **Specify payment method and related fees**: clarify how the payment will be made (e.g. international bank transfer, card payment). If there are additional costs for international transfers or currency conversions, state who will cover these fees (normally, the payer, i.e. the presenter should cover them, but this must be clear)

Payment issues are one of the most common headaches in international touring. Being clear, precise and transparent from the start protects both you and your presenter and helps avoid unpleasant surprises later.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

4. HOW DO I TRAVEL TO THE UK?

4.1. How to enter the UK as an artist?

If you're planning to perform in the UK, you'll need to make sure your entry to the country is aligned with UK immigration rules. Unlike in some European countries, you can't just come in as a tourist and perform, even for a single show.

Expert tips:
#experttip

Many EU artists still worry that touring the UK post-Brexit will be complicated, but in reality, it's very manageable. We handle most of the paperwork and just send them what they need for border control. So far, we've had no reported issues. Don't assume it's difficult — it really isn't.

Jan Lennox, Director, Watermans / Bell Square London

There are three main pathways international artists use to enter the UK legally for performances that we present below.

Top Tip: PPE, Visa, etc.: What do I need to enter the UK?
#toptip

To find out if you need a visa or not to enter the UK, check the official website with the latest updated information depending on your situation:

→ Visit the website:
https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

Make sure you also check the following resources to get the full picture of the complex situation with visas:

→ Arts Info Point UK:
https://artsinfopointuk.com/arts-infopoint-uk-visa-guide
→ Arts Info Point UK: XTRAX List of post-Brexit resources:
https://xtrax.org.uk/brexit-resources/

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

4.1.1. Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE)

Since Brexit, EU nationals can no longer automatically enter the UK to work—even for short performances. However, there is a specific exception for performing artists (from the EU and some other countries): the Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE) route.

Key points about the PPE route:

- Maximum stay: One month
- No UK sponsor required
- Must be invited by a recognised organisation (e.g. festival, venue, university)
- For most EU nationals and non-visa nationals:
    - No visa application needed in advance
    - No fee, but you must carry all the required documentation
- For visa national countries:
    - You must apply for a PPE visa in advance, and pay a fee of around £100
- No extension possible once in the UK
- Best suited for festivals, one-off performances, or very short tours

Documents you will need for your PPE visa application:

- A **valid passport** with at least six months remaining after your date of entry
- An **invitation letter or contract** from the UK organisation inviting you
- Proof of your **artistic qualifications** e.g. biography, CV, website, reviews
- **Proof of financial means** for your stay e.g. bank statements, contract showing your fee
- **Proof of accommodation** e.g. hotel booking, letter from a host
- **Return travel tickets** or proof of planned departure

How to apply?

- If you are a national of a country that does not usually require a visa to visit the UK (e.g. most EU countries, USA, Canada, Australia), you do not need to apply for a PPE visa in advance - you must still carry all the required documentation and show it at the border to be admitted under PPE rules
- If you are a visa national, you must apply for the PPE visa before travelling

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Do I need to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) if I come to the UK under PPE?
#toptip

An ETA is a digital permission required for some non-visa nationals to travel to the UK. It's a pre-travel authorisation, not a visa, and is linked to your passport. Essentially, it's an online application that must be completed and approved before you travel.

The UK government is phasing in a system where most people who don't need a visa to enter the UK for short stays (like tourism or visiting family) will need an ETA. This includes citizens of many countries, including those in the EU (excluding Ireland).

If you come to the UK under PPE, you will need an ETA.

At the time of writing, this is a new system recently put in place.
For more information:
→ Visit the website:
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta

4.1.2. Temporary Work – Creative Worker visa (T5)

This is the best option for longer or multi-stop tours.

- Requires a UK-based sponsor (usually your presenter or producer)
- Sponsor must issue a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)
- Valid for up to 12 months (extendable)
- Application must be made in advance from outside the UK
- Visa fees and healthcare surcharge apply

Ideal for: multi-week tours, residencies, or working with multiple UK partners
More info: gov.uk/temporary-work-creative-worker

4.1.3. Visitor visa (not recommended for performance)

A **standard tourist visa or visa-free entry** does not allow you to perform, even if unpaid. Performing on a tourist visa may lead to **entry refusal or penalties**. Always use the correct route.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: I tour with my children. Can I bring them to the UK? #toptip

If you're planning to bring your children (under 18) with you while touring in the UK, and you're entering on a visa (such as a Creative Worker visa), your child must be included in your application as a "dependent child". Their visa will match the duration of yours (e.g. if your visa is valid for 6 months, so is theirs). To apply for a dependent child visa, you'll need to provide:

- Proof that you have sufficient financial resources to support your child (without public assistance in the UK)
- Evidence of your legal parental status, plus either written consent from the other parent or documents showing sole custody
- Supporting documents such as birth certificates, your child's passport and proof of relationship

Schooling during your stay: Children on a dependent visa can access public schooling in the UK free of charge, but this depends on:

- Availability of places at a local school
- Your declared place of residence in the UK

UK schools often ask for supporting documents, such as:

- Proof of address
- Visas and passports
- Previous school records (if applicable)

We strongly recommend starting the school registration process as early as possible. Factors like zoning rules, waiting lists, or term dates may prevent even short-term enrollment if left too late.

Don't forget your obligations at home: In most countries, taking your child abroad for schooling - even temporarily - requires notifying (or getting permission from) their current school or educational authority. Failing to do so could be considered a breach of compulsory education laws. Always check with your child's school or education authority in your home country before your tour begins.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Permit Free Festivals
#toptip

The UK maintains a list of Permit Free Festivals — approved events where artists can perform without needing a work visa, even if they're from a visa national country.

This can simplify your entry process and make your application much easier.

→ Full list and eligibility: gov.uk/guidance/permit-free-festivals-in-the-uk

Even if the festival is permit-free, you may still need a PPE visa or carry documents, so always check the specific entry requirements in advance.

Top Tip: What's the difference between a visa and a work permit in the UK?
#toptip

In the UK, the terms "visa" and "work permit" are sometimes used interchangeably in casual conversation, but they refer to different things in the immigration system.

Visa: A visa is an official entry document issued by the UK government. It allows someone from outside the UK to enter and stay for a specific purpose, like work, study, or tourism.

- You only need a visa if you are from a visa national country, or if your activity in the UK requires one
- Some visas also act as work permits (e.g. the Temporary Work – Creative Worker visa)

Work Permit / Permission to Work: This refers to whether you're allowed to perform paid work in the UK, regardless of whether you need a visa to enter the country.

- Even if you don't need a visa (e.g. EU nationals coming under PPE), you still need to have the right permission to work, which usually means entering under the correct route and carrying proof of your activity (contract, invitation letter, etc.)
- If you enter on a standard visitor visa or as a tourist, you are not allowed to work, even for a single performance

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

4.2. What are the requirements to bring my set to the UK?

#logistics #admin #travel

Since the UK is no longer part of the EU Customs Union, bringing professional equipment into the country now counts as an international import — even if you're not selling anything. If you're touring with instruments, set pieces, technical gear, or costumes you'll need to understand how to declare your items at the border to avoid delays, taxes, or fines.
For most artists, the simplest and most widely accepted tool for doing this is the ATA (Admission Temporaire / Temporary Admission) Carnet.
An ATA Carnet is an international customs document — essentially a "passport for your gear" — that allows you to bring professional equipment into the UK without paying customs duties or VAT.

It proves that:

- Your equipment is for temporary use only
- You will re-export the items after your tour
- You are not selling, leasing, or transferring the goods in the UK

Key facts:

- Valid for up to one year, with multiple entries and exits allowed
- Covers all types of professional touring equipment used in live performance
- Issued by your local Chamber of Commerce or equivalent authority
- Must be presented at UK customs on both entry and exit
- Simplifies customs procedures, no deposit or security required
- You are responsible for ensuring all listed items return in the same condition

If your equipment is lost, damaged, or not re-exported, you may face fines or penalties from customs authorities.

Why it's worth it: The ATA Carnet is the most reliable way to avoid unexpected customs delays, fees, or paperwork issues. It ensures your gear is treated as a temporary import, not a commercial shipment, and proves you're not making sales or transfers in the UK.

Top Tip: Cabotage Restrictions
#toptip

Be aware: The UK has tightened cabotage rules since leaving the EU. If you're touring with a vehicle registered in an EU country, it can only make up to two additional loadings/unloadings within the UK in the seven days following its first delivery.

Exceeding this limit can result in fines or penalties, so plan your logistics carefully, especially if your set or equipment requires multiple stops across the UK. If you're planning a multi-date UK tour using an EU-registered vehicle, speak to a customs broker or specialist logistics provider to ensure you're staying compliant.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Plan ahead
#toptip

For more information on this topic (procedures, relevant authorities by country, etc.), please refer to the Circostrada Guide "Touring, Programming, and Funding Big Tops in Europe", Page 83, section 5.7 Carnet ATA

→https://www.circostrada.org/en/ressources/touring-programming-and-funding-big-tops-europe

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

4.3. I tour with animals. Can I bring them to the UK?

The UK has very specific regulations for bringing animals. This includes both pet travel and animals involved in performance.

In general, rules and regulations will depend on the nation (England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland) where you perform. Talk to the presenters you are working with to get details or know which rules you should follow.

In general, here's what you need to know:

Key requirements:

- **Microchipping**: Your animal must be microchipped
- **Rabies vaccination**: Your animal must be vaccinated against rabies and have valid certification
- **Animal Health Certificate (AHC)** or **EU Pet Passport**:
    - From within the EU: An EU Pet Passport issued in an EU country is usually accepted
    - From outside the EU: You'll likely need an AHC issued within 10 days of travel
- **Approved entry route**: You must enter the UK through an **approved carrier and route**
- **Tapeworm treatment (for dogs)**: Must be administered 24–120 hours before entry

If the animal is part of your show, you also need to know the following:

- In general, wild animals are not allowed to perform in the UK
    - England: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travelling-circuses-wild-animal-performance-and-exhibition
    - Wales: https://law.gov.wales/wild-animals-and-circuses-wales-act-2020-0#:~:text=The%20Wild%20Animals%20and%20Circuses,dangerous%20wild%20animals%20are%20licensed.
    - Scotland: https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-wild-animals-travelling-circuses-scotland-act-2018/pages/2/
    - Northern Ireland: There is no ban by law, but different counties apply different rules
- The definition of 'wild animals' will differ from one nation to another. Check the links above to find out more
- If the animals in your show are permitted, you will still need additional documents (check the links above for more details):
    - A **specific import licence or permit**, depending on the species
    - To meet **animal welfare standards**, including safe transport and housing
    - Extra documentation for **non-domestic species** or animals listed under CITES regulations

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Key elements to keep in mind
#toptip

First and foremost, check with your UK presenter in advance, they may need to help coordinate venue or travel documentation.
And bear in mind:

- You cannot bring animals into the UK on foot, via certain ferry or rail services
- Quarantine may apply if you don't follow the entry rules exactly
- Rules differ between Great Britain and Northern Ireland - check which applies to your entry point

For the latest guidance:
→ https://www.gov.uk/bring-your-pet-to-great-britain

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

4.4 What are the practicalities of life on tour in the UK?

Touring in the UK is generally smooth and comfortable, but like anywhere, a few cultural and logistical quirks can make your experience easier if you're prepared. Here's what to expect day-to-day while touring across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Meals and Food

- **Post-show meals**: Many UK restaurants, especially outside of cities, close by 9 or 10pm. If your show finishes late, ask the venue in advance about food options or organise catering
- **Dietary preferences**: Vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options are common, especially in larger cities. However, options can be limited in rural areas or local pubs. Clearly communicate dietary needs in advance

Transport

- **Public transport**: Trains and buses are generally reliable but can be expensive, and services may stop early in the evening, always check your last transport options in advance
- **Regional travel**: Coach travel (e.g. National Express, Megabus) is a low-cost alternative for intercity trips. In cities, local transport is good, especially in London (Oyster/contactless system), Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh
- **Taxis**: Outside of urban centres, don't expect to find taxis waiting after the shows, alternative services like Uber or Bolt might be a better option.

Accommodation

- **Hotels and B&Bs**: Most venues will book accommodation for you, but always confirm details, especially if you need early check-in, late check-out, or ground-floor access
- **Breakfast**: Is often included in hotels, if not, let the venue know your preference

Dressing rooms and hospitality

- **Snacks and drinks**: Tea, coffee, fruit and biscuits are often a staple, but always ask in advance if you have specific hospitality needs
- **Backstage facilities**: Access can vary greatly by venue, some theatres have full dressing rooms, others may offer multi-use community spaces - don't assume mirrors, towels, or showers unless confirmed

Expert tips:
#experttip

Do some research! It only takes two minutes to google Lowry and discover some basic information (such as we're in Salford and not Manchester...!).

Steve Cowton, Head of Theatre Operations, Lowry (Salford)

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

5. WHAT ARE THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICITIES IN THE UK?

UK venues and festivals are generally well equipped and professionally managed, and technical teams are used to working with a wide range of shows, including international companies. In most cases, technical set-ups run smoothly and are handled with flexibility and professionalism.

5.1. What are the practicalities of performing in the UK?

#logistics #technical

Before anything else, make sure you prepare a clear and concise technical rider in English, using correct technical terminology.

This will save a lot of back-and-forth with venues and festivals and demonstrate your professionalism.

Top Tip: Technical vocabulary in English

#toptip

Theatre Craft put together a handy list of technical words and their definition, this a very useful tool to translate your technical rider in English.

→ Visit the website: https://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/glossary-of-technical-theatre-terms/#google_vignette

Health and Safety

The UK has very strict health and safety regulations, particularly under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974). Any organisation welcoming the public must show they have taken reasonable steps to protect participants, staff and audiences. As part of this, you will almost certainly be asked to provide a Risk Assessment for your show.

A Risk Assessment is a document (or process) that identifies, evaluates and proposes measures to manage potential hazards linked to your activity, event, or venue. It's a vital part of health and safety management in the UK, especially for public performances such as festivals, street shows, or site-specific work.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Cultural etiquette
#TopTip

The UK is made up of four nations — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — each with its own distinct cultural identity. But across the board, a few social norms and sensitivities will help you navigate professional and day-to-day interactions more smoothly.

Politeness is part of the fabric

- The UK has a strong culture of indirect communication. Feedback and requests may be softened ("Would you mind…", "Perhaps you could…") and criticism is often wrapped in politeness
- A simple "please", "thank you" and "sorry" goes a long way, even in backstage environments
- Queueing (lining up) is a near-sacred ritual. Cutting a queue, even accidentally, can offend

Timekeeping matters

- Being on time means being five minutes early. This applies to meetings, rehearsals, get-ins — everything
- If you're going to be late or miss a train, a quick message is both expected and appreciated
- Venues and festivals often operate on tight schedules, especially when touring teams share spaces

Humour is cultural glue

- British humour tends to be dry, ironic, or self-deprecating. It's often used to diffuse tension or connect socially
- Don't feel pressured to joke back — it's okay to smile and move on if you're unsure

Diversity and inclusion

- The UK is culturally and ethnically diverse, especially in cities, and there is growing awareness around inclusion
- Be respectful and open-minded around gender, sexuality, religion, disability and neurodiversity — many venues have clear policies in place
- Language continues to evolve, so don't be afraid to ask or clarify what's appropriate

Local identities run deep

- People may identify strongly as Scottish, Welsh, English or Northern Irish — not just "British"
- Cultural pride is often tied to language (like Welsh or Scots Gaelic), music, history and sport
- Show interest and avoid generalising; it'll be appreciated whether you're in Glasgow, Cardiff, Belfast or Brighton

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Expert tips:
#experttip

I was surprised by the request for a risk assessment — we'd never encountered that for a show before. We had to plan ahead and work with our technical team, as we didn't have an equivalent document.

Déborah, Tour Manager, Collectif Malunés

A Risk Assessment serves two main purposes:

- It provides **proof** that you have actively considered and reduced risks
- It helps **venues and festivals plan** for your technical and safety needs

In case of an accident, organisers must show they did everything reasonable to manage known risks. Insurers also often require a valid Risk Assessment before covering an event. Without it, festivals risk being uninsured.

What should a Risk Assessment include?

- **Description of the activity** e.g. pyrotechnics, participatory theatre, aerial rigging
- **Identification of potential risks** e.g. fire, trips and falls, cuts, public interaction hazards
- **Assessment of severity and likelihood** of each risk
- **Preventive or control measures** e.g. fire safety plans, protective gear, safety briefings
- **Roles and responsibilities** who is responsible for what on the team
- **Emergency procedures** what happens if something goes wrong

Top Tip: Risk Assessment template
#toptip

For more information on Risks Assessments and templates, consult Equity.

→ Visit the website: https://www.equity.org.uk/advice-and-support/health-and-safety/risk-assessments

Beyond legal requirements, a Risk Assessment also **helps you communicate clearly** with the organiser, allowing them to anticipate your technical needs, specific risks and to plan accordingly.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Technical tips for touring in the UK

Here are some small but important technical points to keep in mind when touring in the UK:

- Electricity supply:
  - 230V / 50Hz
  - Plug type G (three rectangular pins) – make sure you bring adapters!

- PAT Testing:
  - Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) is mandatory for all electrical equipment used at events
  - Some festivals and venues will require proof of PAT testing, even for simple items like extension leads
  - Tip: If you can't have your equipment PAT tested before arrival, discuss it with the venue or festival early, they may arrange on-site testing or suggest alternatives

Expert tips:
#experttip

Don't ask for a pre-rig and a two day get-in! UK Venues can't afford dark days at the moment so we need shows to be light on their feet. We insist on providing our own rigger. We also insist on PPE (Personal Protective Equipment): hard hats and steel toe caps during the get-in.

Steve Cowton, Head of Theatre Operations, Lowry (Salford)

Top Tip: Imperial or metric? Don't panic.
#toptip

In the UK, you might notice a confusing mix of measurement units — miles on the motorway, pints at the pub, feet in everyday conversation… but when it comes to theatre and technical work, you're in metric territory.

Most UK theatres and technical teams use meters and kilograms when it comes to:

- Set dimensions
- Rigging heights
- Lighting positions
- Weight loads
- Stage plans and tech riders

Expert tips:
#experttip

Don't assume there's a rain plan, many UK festivals don't have backup venues or covered spaces. Even with heavy rain forecast, shows are often cancelled rather than relocated. It can be a surprise if you're used to more flexible or weather-proof setups elsewhere.

Max Calaf Sevé, artist

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

6. HOW DO I MARKET MY SHOW TO AUDIENCES?

Most UK venues and festivals will lead on marketing your show to local audiences, but they rely on you to provide strong, ready-to-use assets. The earlier you share your materials, the more effective and far-reaching their campaign will be.

6.1. How will the venue market my show to audiences?

#marketing

UK presenters often expect a **Marketing Pack** - a document or folder separate from your artistic dossier that brings together all key marketing elements in one place. This is typically a Word document with links to downloadable assets.

Here's what to include:

- **Marketing copy**: Two versions, one short (~50 words) and one long (~150 words), this may be edited by the venue to suit their style, but they will usually check factual details with you
- **Credits**: Full list of creative and producing partners, as required by your funders and collaborators
- **Practical info**: Duration, age guidance, content warnings, and any access details
- **Photos**: High-resolution (300 dpi), print-ready images, ideally in both landscape and portrait formats
- **Trailer**: 1–2 minute trailer that gives a strong impression of the show, some venues will also ask for vertical/portrait format for social media
- **Press quotes and testimonials**: if available
- **Trigger warnings or content notes**: If your show includes strobe lighting, nudity, loud noises, or sensitive material, flag this so the venue can communicate with audiences appropriately
- **Links**: Website, social media handles, and booking/contact pages

Top Tip: Prints
#marketing

Printed materials like flyers and posters are usually **optional**. Most UK venues handle their own print production, using the assets you supply. However, they'll welcome **ready-to-print files**, especially if you have a distinctive visual identity. If you're touring a festival or street event, printed handouts may still be useful on the day.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Trigger warnings or content notes
#marketing

Unlike in some countries, UK venues and festivals often display detailed trigger warnings to help audiences make informed decisions. Be upfront about anything audiences may need to know and if your show has no trigger warnings, say that too. Include these in your Marketing Pack. Most venues categorise them as follows:

- **Format-related**: Smoke, haze, bright/strobe lights, total darkness, loud noises, confined space, sudden effects
- **Content-related**: Nudity, sexual content or language, depictions of violence, death or grief, mental health themes, strong language, substance use

Venues may list these on:

- Their website
- Printed brochures or digital programmes
- Venue signage e.g. a poster outside the theatre or at box office

Being transparent about content helps ensure the right audience comes to your show and avoids causing distress for others. It also helps venues professionally manage complaints, safety protocols and audience expectations.

6.2. How can I engage with audiences in the UK beyond the performance?

#audienceengagement #outreach

Outreach and engagement activities are highly valued in the UK arts landscape. Many venues and festivals look for artists who can connect with their audiences beyond the performance, especially in ways that are inclusive, accessible, or community-focused.

6.3. Types of outreach activities

Here are some of the most common formats requested by UK venues and festivals:

- **Workshops for the general public:** Open sessions for children, families, or curious adults which are often focused on creative exploration, not professional technique and may be tied to local events or school holidays
- **School and education workshops:** Many venues have strong links with local schools and colleges, short, accessible workshops that connect with the curriculum (e.g. storytelling, movement, teamwork) are highly valued
- **Professional masterclasses:** Technique-based sessions for emerging or established artists, often organised through local circus schools, youth companies, or regional networks

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

- **Post-show discussions / artist Q&As:** Informal conversations with the audience after the show which can be artist-led or facilitated by a staff member
- **Community co-creation or residencies:** Some venues (especially in rural or community-led settings) may invite you to spend time with local residents or artists to co-create a small performance, installation, or exchange
- **Access-focused engagement:** Workshops or events designed for specific groups e.g. D/deaf audiences, disabled participants, or groups facing barriers to cultural access

You don't have to offer every type of outreach — choose what feels natural to your company, and what can genuinely add value to the audience experience.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

6.4. How to incorporate outreach into your proposal

If you offer outreach activities, make sure this is clearly communicated early in your pitch or conversation. UK presenters often have separate budgets for engagement or education work and may be more inclined to book your show if they know you can support these goals.

Here's how to do it:

- **Include a dedicated section in your dossier:** Outline what you offer, who it's for, and how it links to your show or company values
- **Provide logistical details:** Number of participants, age range, duration, space requirements, any technical needs, language spoken and accessibility info
- **Mention flexibility:** If you can adapt your format to different communities, age groups, or access needs, say so - it's a big plus
- **Include an outline fee:** You can offer a separate workshop fee, or let the venue know that engagement is included in the overall offer (if that's the case) and some venues have standard fees they'll offer you instead
- **Add a note in your initial email or pitch:** Even a short line e.g. *"We also offer workshops and outreach — details in the pack"* helps flag your interest in engaging with the venue's community
- **Ask the venue what they need:** Some presenters will have very specific outreach goals, asking them early on shows you're open and collaborative

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: What's the difference between Outreach and Engagement? #marketing

These terms are often used side by side — and sometimes interchangeably — but they refer to slightly different approaches:

Outreach usually means taking the work or artist outside the venue to meet communities where they are. It's often about access, inclusion, or education, and may involve groups who wouldn't normally attend theatre or circus performances.

Common forms of outreach:

- School workshops or artist talks
- Community centre visits
- Free taster sessions or performances in public spaces
- Co-creation with local groups

Engagement is about building ongoing relationships with audiences or communities — before, during and after a performance. It's often more collaborative or long-term, and involves inviting people into a shared experience.

Examples of engagement:

- Post-show discussions
- Social media or digital storytelling campaigns
- Participatory installations
- Co-designed events or audience development projects
- Continuing conversations between artists and audiences

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

7. HOW CAN I TOUR SUSTAINABLY?

While there are **no legal sustainability requirements** for touring companies, artists are increasingly expected to **consider the environmental impact** of their work and many UK presenters will appreciate seeing this reflected in your planning and communication.

Top Tip: The UK is Leading the Way

#sustainability

The UK is considered a pioneer in sustainable practices for the performing arts. Organisations like Julie's Bicycle and Theatre Green Book are internationally recognised for shaping how the cultural sector responds to the climate crisis—with practical tools, data, and community-led action.

Many UK venues and funders are already using these frameworks, and artists who arrive with sustainability in mind will find themselves speaking the same language.

Check out some of the UK organisations specialising in the intersection between creative industries and sustainability:

→ Julie's Bicycle: juliesbicycle.com
→ Theatre Green Book: theatregreenbook.com
→ Culture for Climate Scotland: cultureforclimate.scot
Creating a Green Rider is a small step that sends a strong message: you care about your impact and you're ready to work collaboratively.

7.1. What are the environmental requirements in the UK?

#sustainability #logistics

Most expectations are not mandatory, but rather encouraged as part of good practice. Here's what you might encounter:

- Some venues will ask how you're reducing the carbon footprint of your tour, or request environmental data as part of their funding reports
- Festivals may encourage or require the use of LED lighting or low-energy equipment
- You might be asked to avoid single-use plastics, or adjust your hospitality requests (e.g. bottled water, meat-heavy catering)
- You may be invited to adapt your technical rider to lower power consumption or suit venues working with sustainable infrastructure

If you're already touring sustainably, include this in your dossier — it shows awareness and aligns with many presenters' own commitments.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

7.2. How can I tour sustainably in the UK?

#sustainability #logistics

For a broader overview of sustainability in international touring, we encourage you to refer to the Sustainability section in the Introduction to International Touring guide.

That said, it's worth noting that the UK is at the forefront of the green transition in the performing arts. Organisations like Julie's Bicycle and Theatre Green Book offer practical tools, benchmarks and data to help venues, festivals, and companies make meaningful changes in how they produce and tour work.

Across the country, there is growing momentum toward more environmentally conscious touring and production. Some key developments include:

- A shift to LED lighting in theatres to reduce energy consumption
- Most venues no longer provide bottled water, instead they offer water coolers or refill stations backstage
- An extensive rail network makes it possible to tour almost entirely by train, avoiding internal flights
- Many presenters are measuring their carbon footprint and may ask for sustainability info in your tech rider or evaluation forms
- A growing number of festivals and venues use green power sources, minimise single-use materials, and work with local suppliers for food, print and logistics
- Some venues offer carbon literacy training to staff and artists, encouraging shared responsibility for sustainability

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Create a Green Rider
#marketing

In the UK, it's becoming increasingly common for venues and companies to use a **Green Rider** — a short document outlining the environmental commitments of your production and any requests or expectations you have of your presenters.

If you don't have one yet, consider creating one! It can be as simple as a page outlining:

- Your touring choices (e.g. low-emission travel, reduced freight)
- Your requests (e.g. no single-use plastic backstage, vegetarian catering)
- Your flexibility (e.g. adapting your tech rider to reduce energy use)

Some venues will have their own Green Rider and may ask you to align with it, or collaborate on sustainable solutions together.

For inspiration and templates, visit:
→ theatregreenbook.com/sustainableproductions-toolkit/greencontractridersfortouringcompaniesandvenues
Creating a Green Rider is a small step that sends a strong message: you care about your impact and you're ready to work collaboratively.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

8. WILL MY ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS BE MET?

The UK stands out in Europe as a country where disabled artists and audiences have a strong voice and growing influence. Many venues, festivals, funders and support organisations are committed to access and inclusion not only as a legal requirement, but as a core value.

8.1. What accessibility support is available for disabled artists touring in the UK?

#gettingbooked #logistics #accessibility #inclusion

Support will vary from one presenter to another, but in general:

- **Step-free access** is standard in most modern venues and many rehearsal spaces
- **Accessible toilets and dressing rooms** are commonly available
- Some festivals and venues may provide **relaxed environments**, quiet rooms, or support staff for neurodivergent or chronically ill artists
- Many venues are open to adapting their schedules or logistics to support artists with **fatigue, chronic pain, or mental health needs**
- Presenters are increasingly familiar with **Access Riders** (see Top Tip below) and welcome conversations about access early in the process

If you're unsure about a venue's facilities or working practices, **ask them directly**. Most programmers will appreciate the chance to make arrangements in advance and will take your needs seriously.

Top Tip: Create an Access Rider
#toptip

In the UK, companies are often expected to have an Access Rider, this is a document like a technical rider, that outlines the access requirements of you or your team. It's an increasingly common tool in the UK and is widely respected across the sector.

Your Access Rider might include:

- Mobility, rest, or travel needs
- Sensory preferences (lighting, sound, communication style)
- Neurodivergence-related access
- Assistance requirements (e.g. support worker or interpreter)
- Mental health or chronic illness accommodations
- Preferred ways of working or communicating
-

Sharing your Access Rider early in the booking process helps presenters prepare, avoids awkward last-minute adaptations, and ensures your needs are met with care and respect.

For templates and resources, check out:
→ https://www.accessdocsforartists.com

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

8.2. How do venues in the UK accommodate disabled audiences?

UK venues and festivals are legally required under the **Equality Act (2010)** to make their spaces and events accessible and many go far beyond the minimum.
Here are just some of the things UK presenters commonly offer:

- **Step-free access** into performance spaces, foyers and front-of-house areas
- **Wheelchair spaces** in auditoriums, including at festivals and pop-up events
- **British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation**, **audio description** and **captioning** for selected performances
- **Touch tours** and **relaxed performances** for neurodivergent audiences
- **Discounts or free tickets** for access companions or Personal Assistants
- **Accessible marketing materials** (e.g. large print, plain text, captioned trailers)
- **Staff training in disability awareness** and inclusive practice

Many venues and festivals also **work directly with access consultants and disabled-led organisations** to improve their approach.

If your show has built-in access features (e.g. captioning, audio description, relaxed format), mention this early — it could be a deciding factor for some presenters.

Top Tip: Language and terminology
#toptip

Language around disability in the UK is thoughtful and evolving. If English isn't your first language, some terms and expressions may not be obvious, but getting them right shows respect and awareness.

Here are a few things to know:

- **"Disabled person" vs. "person with a disability"**: In the UK, many people prefer the term "disabled person", because it emphasises that society creates barriers, rather than the individual being "less able." (In contrast, "person with a disability" is more common in North America.).

- **Use specific, empowering terms** like:
  - *Disabled person*
  - *Wheelchair user*
  - *D/deaf*, *blind or visually impaired*, *neurodivergent*, *non-verbal*, etc.

- **Avoid relying on older terminology you may have learned elsewhere** even if well-intended, some words that were once common are now considered inappropriate or outdated in the UK (and if you're not sure, don't assume a word you heard somewhere is okay — do your research).

- **Ask, don't assume**: If you're unsure how to describe someone's access needs or identity, it's OK to ask them politely what language they prefer.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

8.3. How can I work with UK presenters to make my show more accessible to audiences?

In the UK, access isn't just something that happens **around** the show, it's increasingly seen as something that happens **within** it. Making your work more accessible to audiences doesn't mean changing your creative vision, it means **inviting more people into it**.

8.3.1. Set up a meeting with the venue's Access Team

Most UK venues (and many festivals) have **access managers** or **audience experience staff** dedicated to inclusion. Arrange a short call or email exchange to discuss:

- Who their audiences are
- What access services they already offer
- What they need from you to support BSL interpretation, captioning, touch tours, or relaxed performances
- How they promote accessible performances in their marketing

Be ready to invest time (and learn): Improving access isn't always quick but is always valuable. You might need to:

- Make time for a **conversation with a BSL interpreter**, to help them understand your show's rhythm and humour
- Provide **cue sheets** or script highlights to an audio describer
- Support the venue in planning a **touch tour** (a guided, tactile introduction to props, costumes or set, for blind and visually impaired audiences)
- **Test lighting or sound** levels with the venue to see how they impact neurodivergent attendees

If your show isn't yet accessible, that's okay. Start where you are and work with presenters to figure out **what's possible now** and **what could grow in future tours**.

8.3.2. Create an Access Pack

Just like a technical rider or marketing pack, your **Access Pack** brings together everything you already have — or can provide — that could support audience accessibility. It doesn't need to be perfect or complete but the more you can offer, the easier it is for presenters to plan access support.

Your pack might include:

- A **link to a full-length video** of the show, so BSL interpreters or audio describers can prepare
- A **downloadable script or cue sheet**, especially helpful for captioning, interpretation, and audio description
- Any **pre-recorded access versions** (e.g. captioned video, audio introduction, subtitled trailer)
- Notes on **how the show is structured**, especially helpful for relaxed performances or for audiences with anxiety or sensory processing needs
- Details of **trigger warnings** or intense sensory moments (e.g. loud noises, sudden darkness)

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

8.3.3. Create a Visual Story

A Visual Story (also known as a Social Story) is a friendly, visual guide that shows what an audience member can expect when attending your show. It's especially helpful for neurodivergent audiences, young people, or first-time attendees who may benefit from preparation.

It might include:

- Photos of the venue, foyer and auditorium
- Images from the show (especially any intense or unfamiliar visuals)
- A short breakdown of the story or structure
- Any audience interaction or participation
- Notes about light, sound, or other sensory information
- Practical info (e.g. latecomer policy, quiet spaces, toilets, etc.)

Many UK venues already provide visual stories but offering to make one collaboratively shows initiative and care.

Top Tip: Example of a visual story
#toptip

Want to see what a good visual story looks like? Here's a great example created by **Unicorn Theatre** (London) for their family production of *The Tempest*:
→ The Tempest – Visual Story (2023)

This visual story was developed **in collaboration between the artist and the venue**, and it offers a detailed, audience-friendly guide to the performance and environment.

While this version is extensive, not every visual story needs to be as long. You can **adapt the format and length depending** on your audience, the context of the show, or the venue's existing access practices. If you're unsure what's expected, simply ask the venue. The team will be happy to advise or help co-create the document with you.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

8.3.4. Create a relaxed version of the show

In the UK, **relaxed performances** are designed to welcome audience members who might find traditional theatre settings challenging, such as **neurodivergent people**, those with **sensory sensitivities**, people with **learning disabilities**, or **young children and families**.
A relaxed performance allows for:

- **Freedom of movement and sound** during the show
- **House lights partially on**
- A **less strict attitude to noise or disruption**
- A **calmer or adjusted environment** (e.g. lower sound levels, no strobe lighting)
- A **Visual Story or Access Guide** to help audiences prepare for what to expect

How can I adapt my show?
You don't have to completely redesign your piece. Many companies simply:

- **Adjust lighting or sound levels** slightly
- Offer a **modified version of the show** with certain moments softened
- Create **space for audiences to leave and return** as needed
- Provide a **Visual Story or short introduction** to explain the show's structure

Talk to the presenter about what's possible for their audience and venue. Some may offer a dedicated **relaxed performance slot** as part of your run.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Touring with a Relaxed Performance
#toptip

You don't need to have already created a relaxed version of your show in order to tour the UK but it helps to be **open to the conversation**.

Many UK venues and festivals offer relaxed performances as part of their access offer, and they may invite you to **adapt your show slightly** to make it more inclusive for neurodivergent audiences or people with sensory access needs.

If you've already developed a relaxed version of your show, make sure to:

- **Mention it clearly in your dossier**
- **Include details in your Access Pack**, including what has been adapted and who it's for
- **Share any visual stories or access guides** you've created
-

If you haven't done this yet, that's okay. You can still express **willingness to explore** options with the presenter and in many cases, they'll guide you through the process.
Being relaxed-ready isn't a requirement to tour the UK but being **re-laxed-curious** can go a long way.

What if my show isn't suitable? Not every show can (or should) be adapted for relaxed performance and that's okay. Some shows may rely heavily on audience interaction, intense sensory input, or emotional content that doesn't lend itself to a relaxed format.
In that case:

- Be honest in your conversations with presenters
- Let them know you're open to future adaptations, even if the current version isn't suitable
- You can still provide **access info** or alternatives like pre-recorded materials or **a more informal Q&A** in place of a full relaxed performance

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

9. WHAT IS THE UK'S APPROACH TO DIVERSITY?

The UK stands out across Europe for its **active commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion** in the arts. While no country is perfect, the UK arts sector has made meaningful progress in recognising, supporting, and amplifying **marginalised voices on stage, behind the scenes and in the audience.**

Many UK venues, festivals and funders now embed diversity into their **core values**, programming priorities and funding criteria. International artists coming to the UK may find the cultural expectations around **representation, language and identity** more explicit and, at times, more progressive than in other parts of Europe.

9.1. What is the approach to diversity in programming in the UK?

#diversity

Diversity in UK programming doesn't mean ticking a box, it's about genuine representation and relevance.

Presenters are increasingly expected to:

- Programme work by artists from underrepresented backgrounds, including Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse artists; LGBTQIA+ artists; disabled artists; and others
- Consider how the stories they present reflect the local communities they serve
- Create safer, more inclusive spaces for both artists and audiences

Funders like Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, and Arts Council of Wales actively promote diversity and inclusion through their funding strategies. This is reflected in the programming of many UK venues and festivals, particularly those that are publicly funded. If your work speaks to issues of identity, inclusion, or cultural exchange, highlight this in your pitch or dossier — it's likely to resonate with many UK programmers.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Equal Opportunity forms
#toptip

If you're working with UK venues, festivals, or funders, you may be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form also known as an Equality and Diversity Form. This is standard practice in the UK arts sector, but it can take some international companies by surprise.
These forms ask about things like:

- Ethnic background
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability status
- Religion or belief
- Socio-economic background

It's important to know:

- The forms are anonymous and used for data collection only
- They help organisations report to funders on how inclusive their programming and artist engagement is
- Completing the form is voluntary, and you can always select "Prefer not to say" if you're not comfortable answering

Don't be put off by the personal nature of the questions, these forms reflect the UK's commitment to inclusion, accountability and fair representation across the arts.

Top Tip: Language and terminology
#toptip

Language around identity and inclusion evolves quickly and UK audiences and programmers are often very tuned-in to it. If English isn't your first language, it's okay not to know all the terms, but making an effort to use respectful, up-to-date language shows you care.

Some quick pointers:

- Terms like LGBTQIA+, Global Majority, neurodivergent and non-binary are increasingly common in UK arts contexts
- Avoid assumptions based on nationality, gender, or ethnicity
- If you're unsure, it's okay to ask someone what language they prefer or to say you're open to learning

You don't need to be fluent in every aspect of UK cultural discourse. Just be thoughtful, open, and willing to adapt your language as needed.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

9.2. How can I ensure my work will be received positively?

There is no one way to guarantee a perfect reception but here are some things that can help:

- **Know your audience**: UK audiences can be diverse, progressive and politically aware. Take time to understand the cultural context of the city or region where you're touring
- **Be transparent in your marketing**: If your show includes sensitive themes, flag this in advance (e.g. race, gender, trauma, colonial history)
- **Frame your work clearly**: Include a short artistic statement or context in your dossier or programme notes to help audiences and programmers understand your intent
- **Connect with local partners**: UK presenters often have relationships with community groups, access consultants, or cultural leaders who can help frame your work and build audience trust

9.3. How can I ensure my team will be safe while on tour?

For most artists, touring the UK is a safe and positive experience. But it's still important to consider how your team may be perceived or treated in different regions—especially if your group includes **people of colour, visibly queer or trans artists or disabled performers**.

- Ask your presenter about **local context** and any specific concerns
- Speak to other artists who've toured there
- Make a **clear plan for support and escalation** within your team

If anything feels unsafe, it's okay to speak up and most venues will respond quickly and constructively.

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Top Tip: Legal protections and support
#toptip

The UK has strong anti-discrimination laws that protect individuals based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability — both in the workplace and in public spaces.

If your team encounters harassment or discrimination:

- Ask the venue if they have a designated safeguarding or access lead
- Contact the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS) for advice: → www.equalityadvisoryservice.com
- In an emergency, call 112 (EU-wide emergency number) or 999 in the UK

Many venues and festivals also have staff debriefs and feedback processes. If anything concerning happens during your visit, let them know — your feedback can improve conditions for future artists.

9.4. How can I work with venues to support diversity in audiences?

UK venues aren't just thinking about who's on stage—they're working to ensure **the audiences in the room reflect their communities**. As a touring artist, you can help by:

- Being open to **community engagement** activities (see Outreach section)
- Asking the venue if there are **local networks or community leaders** who could help frame or introduce your show
- Offering to take part in **post-show discussions** that speak to your work's themes
- Sharing your own story — how your background, culture, or values shape your work

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ABOUT US

CIRCOSTRADA - Commissioner

Circostrada is the European Network for Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Arts.

Created in 2003 with the core mission of furthering the development, empowerment and recognition of these fields at European and international levels, over the years the network has become an important anchoring point for its members and a key interlocutor in the dialogue with cultural policy makers across Europe.

In a few words, Circostrada is:

- A community of contemporary circus and outdoor arts professionals linked together by common values and aspirations, who advocate for greater recognition and more structured cultural policies.
- The voice and reference network of contemporary circus and outdoor arts in Europe.
- A group of passionate and committed individuals who meet several times a year at the network's events.
- A network dedicated to its members, engaged in facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and good practices at European and international levels.
- A digital resource platform that provides thematic publications, observation tools and news on contemporary circus and outdoor arts, available to all free of charge in English and French.

→ Visit the website: www.circostrada.org

ARTCENA - Commissioner

ARTCENA is the National Center for Circus, Street and Theatre Arts, supported by the French Ministry of Culture. It coordinates Circostrada and is a permanent member of its steering committee. It works in close collaboration with professionals in the sector and offers them both publications and digital resources via its web platform. It also develops mentoring and training actions, tools and services to help them in their everyday practices. It supports contemporary creation through national support programs and encourages the international development of these three sectors.

→ Visit the website: www.artcena.fr

Axel Satgé - Co-author

Born in France, Axel has been involved in the international contemporary circus sector for over 15 years. He began his career in 2009 in Brussels as a producer at the Halles de Schaerbeek. In 2014, he moved to London to join Crying Out Loud, organising UK and international tours.

Since 2019, Axel has worked as a freelance producer, collaborating with artists including Nikki & JD, Kalle Nio, House of Circus, and many more. He also manages international development and tour booking for London based companies Gandini Juggling and The Place. Axel is the director of Yellow Everything, a company focused on touring circus artists in the UK and internationally.

→ Visit the website: www.yelloweverything.com

This document is a temporary version; the final interactive version will be released shortly.

Déborah Boëno - Co-author

Deborah began her career as a producer for a Scène Conventionnée in France before dedicating herself to supporting artists in 2017. She joined the circus collective Cheptel Aleïkoum, where she focused on the distribution and production of their projects. She later worked as a support officer for circus and outdoor arts at ARTCENA (National Centre for Circus, Street, and Theatre Arts), an organisation with which she remains actively involved by offering professional training.

Since 2022, Deborah has returned to working exclusively on artist support. She specialises in assisting teams working under big tops, especially the Franco-Belgian collective Les Malunés, and provides advice to teams new to the big top touring model. Additionally, she supports MMFF - Mathieu Ma Fille Foundation as an administrator and tour manager.

Aïcha El Beloui - Illustrator

Born in Casablanca, Aïcha El Beloui is a trained architect working as an illustrator, creative director, and graphic designer. Responding to a need to express the invisible urban experience, Aïcha uses research, interviews, drawing, and animation to represent the unwritten narratives present in urban human habitat through its inhabitants; works produced are displayed in public space.

→ Visit the website: https://aichaelbeloui.myportfolio.com

Alice Underwood - Video editor

Alice is a filmmaker and photographer with a background in contemporary dance and a focus on the arts and movement led projects. Behind the camera, Alice finds her voice, weaving stories through the lens and immersing herself in the art of video editing. Each project is an opportunity to meet new people, to understand their stories, and to bring them to life on screen.

→ Visit the website: https://www.aliceunderwoodfilms.com/

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CREDITS

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For further information, please get in touch with Circostrada through the Contact page on: www.circostrada.org

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TO BE RELEASED SOON

An Introduction to International Touring - coming in October 2025

More countries to follow soon (dates to be confirmed):

- France in June 2025
- Romania in June 2026
- Sweden in February 2027
- Tunisia in October 2027
- Latvia in August 2028

HOW TO NAVIGATE THIS TOOLKIT

If your company is already experienced in international touring but looking to break into one of the countries covered here, these toolkits are designed to give you the additional tools and insights needed to successfully market your work abroad.

For those new to international touring, we recommend reading the toolkits alongside "An Introduction to International Touring". Together with the country specific toolkits, these resources will provide you with the foundational knowledge and practical advice to approach touring internationally with confidence.

You can navigate this guide in two ways: read it from start to finish for a comprehensive understanding, or use CTRL + F (on Windows) or Command (⌘) + F (on Mac) using the hashtags (#) to jump directly to the topics that interest you most.

#accessibility #admin #diversity #finance #funding #gettingbooked #logistics #marketing #sustainability #toptips #negotiation #experttips #venues #festivals

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