

Tulip Cycling

How would you like to take a vacation where you cycle along smooth, dedicated bike paths that run along thousands of kilometers of picturesque canals, fields, towns, and parks? You stop when you like, enjoying the green everywhere, talking with locals (most of whom speak English), and savoring delicious foods in cafes and restaurants in every town.



Tired? Stop when you like and bed down in an intimate hotel in any town, getting to know the rich history as you dine in a room overlooking the main street.

Lost? Use the complimentary mobile phone to check in.

Have kids? If so, they can enjoy riding their own bikes, a tandem bike, or in a trailer bike. Holland is "kid-friendly" - you can stop your bikes at any local park to let the little ones have an unstructured break from cycling...

Sounds good? Well it is even better than it sounds: You can arrange the whole adventure over the Internet from the comfort of your home or office anywhere in the world!

Tulip Cycling is an innovative early user of the Internet to market its services to visitors planning a vacation in Holland. Their web site reflects a professional approach to touring by cycle and provides potential customers with the sense that this is an organization on the Internet they can be comfortable dealing with.

About Tulip Cycling

Tulip Cycling is a cycling and touring company located in Houten, Holland (The Netherlands). Houten is a town about 30 minutes' drive from the country's Schipol International Airport, which is outside the capitol city of Holland, Amsterdam. Houten is near the large regional city of Utrecht. This makes the small town and Tulip cycling easily accessible by highway, train, bike, and even by water. The company was formed in the mid-1990's by Adrian Blok, a cycling enthusiast. The business was first started on a very small part-time basis and has grown to be a full-time venture. Tulip Cycling rents out a complete set of cycling gear and provides detailed itineraries for their customers. They even



provide accommodation bookings. You can choose to take their full set of offerings or pick and choose what services you need and want.

Tulip Cycling has worked hard to ensure that they are the quality leader in the field. All the equipment rented is top quality cycling gear. It is maintained properly and renters get fully equipped bicycles. Each bike comes with an assortment of safety and security features, as well as options like a trip odometer, map holder on the handlebars, and more.

More details on Tulip Cycling are available on the company web site:

<http://www.tulipcycling.com>

Interview with Adrian Blok

The author of this case study had the opportunity to use Tulip Cycling's services for a family cycling tour of the Netherlands. At the beginning of the tour, he interviewed the founder and former owner of Tulip Cycling, Adrian Blok, to get some insights into how the Internet is helping Adrian's company.



Question: When did you put Tulip Cycling onto the Internet?

Adrian Blok: The web site was developed and put up on the Internet in the year 2000. The choice of the Internet as an marketing medium was due to the high costs of setting up a sales organization in the USA. To sell our services to travel agents there we would have to pay high commission costs as well as high costs for trade shows and our traveling expenses. Finally, we wanted to keep the operation close to home for better control.

Question: Is the Internet a cheap way to advertise?

Adrian Blok: Yes, compared to going physically to the USA, but not completely cheap as we must pay to get good hits to our web site.



Question: How did you do the web development?

Adrian Blok: I took a trip to the USA in the summer of 2000 to check out the market. I traveled to San Francisco, which is a very big bicycle city to see how touring companies worked there. In the Fall of 2000 I had the site designed and built by a professional web designer here in the Netherlands. I help him by providing a lot of input.

Question: Where is the web site hosted (location of the server)?

Adrian Blok: The site is hosted locally in Amsterdam.

Question: Will the web site be a big part of your business in the future?

Adrian Blok: Yes, more and more in the future as we learn more about how to use the web site and we make it better and better.

Tulip Cycling has carried on from Adrian's original ownership and is now owned and operated by Peter Vos and Liesbeth van Vulpen and is a family-run business.

Background – Tourism and the Internet

The world-wide tourism industry, valued at trillions of US\$, is one of the largest users of the Internet. Hotels, airlines, tour companies, car rental firms, and many other types of organizations use the Internet to attract interest, provide pre-sale information, and transact



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Questions

1. What kind of customers do you think Tulip Cycling serves? Where are they from?

What they looking for from a tour company? (Why would they use Tulip Cycling's services?)

How old are they?

What do they need in terms of information to help them make a decision and feel comfortable using Tulip Cycling?

Do you think the Tulip Cycling web site matches the needs of these customers?



2. What could Tulip Cycling do to make their web site better?

3. How could Tulip Cycling make more money from their business than by simply offering bicycle rentals and touring plans?

4. Tulip cycling was the first cycling company in Holland to have a complete web site and e-commerce front-end. What advantages and disadvantages did this provide for them that might be playing out now, 18 years after their first web site was created?



5. How much business do you think Tulip Cycling will get through their web site compared to through other forms of advertising? Why?



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