

Business Plan for

Buddy Up

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buddy Up is an online travel agency which focuses on solo travellers with a safety-first and budget focus. Travellers can authenticate themselves, create a personal profile,

state their preferred travel companions, swipe through trip options and get matched with their perfect getaway and travel companions. The global solo travel market is worth £358 billion, with a 23% increase in solo travellers in 2024, which shows that it is a strong and upcoming market to start a business in.

55% of solo travel searches in the UK are made by women aged between 25-34 and 73% of travel agents have found that women go on more solo trips than men emphasising the strong alliance with Buddy Up's main target market of female solo travellers age 25-34. Buddy Up isn't like any other travel agency as it focuses on experience and community; it is both a matching service and travel agency prioritising safety, budget and social connection.

The total income in the first year is £85,000, with total expenditure being £27,278 meaning that Buddy Up would have £52,722 in profit with £35,000 loans and funding from the Development Bank of Wales and the original Buddy Up pitch. The long-term goal of the travel agency is to establish its brand as an affordable travel agency prioritising the travellers experience and safety.

2. THE BUSINESS IDEA

2.1 The Product/Service

Buddy Up is an online travel agency in the travel and tourism industry for solo travellers to meet. It is a private limited company to limit financial liability and support controlled investment and strategic growth as a startup company (Burns, 2016).

Buddy Up is a safe, personalised way for solo travellers to find compatible travel companions and book trips through verified profiles, shared interests, and curated group itineraries.

Travellers authenticate themselves by uploading identification and recording a video of them saying the slogan 'Travel Together, Explore More' to enhance safety. They then create a profile listing their interests, age, gender identity and photos. Travellers privately state their holiday budget, preferred age range, gender and interests for travel companions. After that they swipe through preferred locations, activities and accommodation and are then invited to be invited to join a group chat with matched travel companions and tailored trip options.

2.2 SWOT Analysis Summary

The SWOT analysis (Appendix A) highlights the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The strengths are a strong relevance to the target demographic meaning the marketing should be effective, low initial staffing costs allowing the company to invest in other areas and a strong safety aspect which is important to both the company and customers.

The weaknesses are no established brand reputation which should grow with the company, operational dependence on one person which is manageable during start up and reliance on strong initial sales which should be achievable with effective marketing.

The opportunities are solo travelling is a growing industry creating space for Buddy Up to position itself as a solo travel safety-focused travel agency, Buddy Up can collaborate with female travel influencers to target their high female market, also collaborating with major travel brands can secure group rates to make trips cheaper.

The threats are competition from other travel agencies however Buddy Up has a USP, potential incidents with matched travellers addressed through in-app safety checks and emergency support features and seasonal fluctuations which can be stabilised through year-round themed trips and off-peak discounts.

3. THE TEAM

3.1 Key Personnel

<i>Name and Company Position:</i> Jasmine Robinson, Founder
<i>Skills and Experience:</i> Previous work experience in a travel agency Skills: Digital Marketing, Risk Management, Logistics, Customer Service and Financial Planning
<i>Role and Responsibilities:</i>
Customer support, booking, operations, marketing, health and safety, supplier and finance manager

3.2 Skills Gaps & Key Partners

3.2.1 Future Possible Staff (Roles and Responsibilities):

- Finance Manager – Financial Planning and Cash Flow Management
- Travel Agent – Support for influx of customers and daily travel admin

3.2.2 Training and Development:

- Financial – LSBA (2026) Advanced Certificate in Financial Management for Travel Agencies £90 2 months - Covers budgeting, forecasting, revenue management and cost control tailored to travel agencies
- Risk Management - LSBA (2026) Professional Certificate in Risk Management in Travel Agencies £90 2 months- Covers crisis management, cybersecurity, compliance, supplier risk, and business continuity tailored to travel agencies
- Marketing – ABTA (2026) Advanced Social Media Training in Travel £269 early bird members 1 day – Covers modern travel marketing, content strategy, social trends and customer engagement perfect for a new travel agency establishing its reputation

3.2.3 Outsourced Support / Key Partners:

- Zoftify (2026) - App Developer – Build the app - £18,000
- ABTA (2026) - Travel Trade Association - Provides financial protection for non-flight packages & is trusted by customers -£100 per month
- ATOL (2026) - Air Travel Organisers' Licensing – Provides financial protection for flight packages - £1,538 to join and £2.50 per customer

4. MARKET RESEARCH

4.1 Market Information, Trends and External Factors

The PEST Analysis (Appendix B) shows that Buddy Up will be a successful company however there are some things the company will have to work through.

Despite people cutting back on travel due to the cost-of-living crisis the global travel market is worth £356 billion so it is a strong market and with companies such as TUI (2026) and National Rail (2026) offering group discounts Buddy Up can get cheap trips for customers who are cutting back which is something that it can market on (Brittany Ferries, 2025; Fountas et al, 2025).

Technology is central in tourism: Over 70% of customers use their phone for booking and planning trips which is why the app is a crucial part of the business plan and 92% of Gen-Z were influenced by social media to book their next trip which shows why social media should play a big part in the marketing plan especially with travel influencers (Statista, 2023; McKinsey & Company, 2024). Travel agents use technology as well, 69% of travel agents use AI for customer support so AI will play a big part in the app with matching customers with their ideal holiday (Statista, 2023).

55% of travel searches in the UK were made by women aged 25-34 which aligns perfectly with the target market and indicates the company will be profitable if marketed correctly (Brittany Ferries, 2025). 60% of women say that safety is the reason they don't solo travel which is why safety is such a major part of the company to make its customers feel safe and their thoughts heard (Yang et al, 2018).

Buddy Up will align with strict safety measures such as FCDO warnings and GDPR regulations so that the customers feel as safe and protected as possible (Buhalis, 2020) (Gov UK, 2026). ATOL and Package Travel Regulations affect how the travel industry operates which is why Buddy Up is both ATOL and ABTA protected (OECD, 2020).

4.2 Customer Profiles

Feature	First Time Female Solo Traveller	Digital Nomad	Gap year student
Demographic	25 - 34, Mid Income (25k – 38k), Full Time Average Job (retail, admin)	23 – 32, remote workers/freelancers, higher disposable income (35k – 55k)	18 – 22, £5k/10k, often first time abroad
Interests & Attitudes	Adventure experiences, safety first mindset, community seeking	Work-life balance (places with WI-FI), open to spontaneity, instagramable destinations	Cost-sensitive, wants to meet new people, wants everything organised
Behavioural Traits	Prefers pre-planned trips, reads reviews before booking	Prefers independence but enjoys group activities, tech savvy, longer trips (4-6 weeks)	Responds well to swipe based decision making, influenced by friends and trends
Preferred Content	Email deals, partnerships with	Aesthetic Travel Reels, Travel Podcasts	Beginner travel tips, posters in schools and colleges

	travel brands to build confidence		
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4.3 Competitor Profiles

Feature	Worldpackers (2026)	Hays Travel (2026)	Expedia (2026)
Differences	Volunteer based	Traditional selling standard packages	Tourists have to organise everything themselves
Strengths	Low-cost	Strong brand trust	Good for independent planners
Weaknesses	Requires tourists to work instead of enjoy	No community aspect	Overwhelming for first time travellers
Competitive Edge	Buddy Up provides stress-free, fully organised trips	Buddy Up focuses on building a community for solo travellers	Buddy Up takes away the stress of planning and organising trips

5. MARKETING PLAN

5.1 Price

Buddy Up is designed to be affordable, and because the app manages the majority of the process the commission rates are reasonable. Buddy Up will keep a 15% commission on each individual booking. Appendices D shows examples of the prices customers may spend. Each group would averagely have around 10 people, so Buddy Up would make a £450 commission on a short haul trip, £1050 on medium haul and £3000 on long haul. These prices cannot compete with Worldpackers who offer free accommodation however it would be able to compete with an average travel company due to group discounts.

5.2 Product

Appendices E shows Buddy Ups logo and product design. The slogan 'Travel Together, Explore More' emphasises the company's core values that travelling with others make an experience more worthwhile. The bright logo shows Buddy Up as a fun friendly travel agency and the backpackers represents friends to be made. Each section of the product design is a key app feature.

5.3 Placement

Everything the traveller needs is on the app so that is where they can book their holiday however there will be a customer email for any questions, they may have and an emergency line to protect the customers throughout their trip. Once their trip is booked, each person will receive email confirmations and/or tickets within 48 hours with their accommodation, flights and any activities they want to do.

5.4 Promotion

Buddy Up will advertise on social media through TikTok and Instagram adverts as it appeals to the target market. People are more likely to be engaged if an advert is interesting and funny which is what Buddy Up will aim to do (Drenik, 2023). If people advertise real adventures and show themselves enjoying their experiences on social media and it gets over 10k likes they will receive 20% off their next holiday as 60% of people said that content by others is the most influential for travel (Rousse, 2019). 48% of travellers want a destination that looks good in photos and videos which is why aesthetic reels showing a destinations attractiveness is a good way to draw attention to the company (Hinton, 2024). Buddy Up will partner with tourism brands such as Tui and Hostel world to establish trust as being seen next to recognisable brands makes Buddy

Up appear more credible (Notso, 2026). This will be part of their social media campaign as it grabs followers of those brands onto the Buddy Up page.

71% of customers expect personalised experiences from brands, email deals can target specific demographics, so it appeals to individual customers and can boost customer loyalty as the customers will feel represented (Bedford, 2026).

Buddy Up will partner with local colleges and universities appearing at fairs and giving out posters to show the company as a viable option for gap years or short trips during breaks to appeal to a younger audience smaller colleges draw around 800 students and larger ones draw thousands so it is an effective way to get the message across to a lot of people at the same time who wouldn't have thought about Buddy Up otherwise (The Insight Collective, 2026).

6. KEY RESOURCES

6.1 Premises

As Buddy Up is a company with only one employee there will be no physical premises as all work will be done from home. However, for company meetings Tramshed Tech (2026) on the Swansea highstreet charges £72 for four hours or £24 for an hour for six people.

6.2 Equipment

A laptop would be required for the travel agency. Three options were considered, Acer Aspire 5, Lenovo IdeaPad Slim 5 and Apple MacBook Air 13-inch whilst the Acer Aspire 5 is the cheapest the Apple MacBook Air 13-inch is the best for Buddy Up as it is the most reliable for all business needs and has the best battery life for long shifts (Acer, 2026; Lenovo, 2026; Apple, 2026).

6.3 Key Suppliers

Zoftify (2026) has offered a quote of £18,000 to develop the travel app, and Google Play costs £20 and the Apple App Store costs £79 annually to have the apps published (Kurita, 2025)

7. FINANCES AND START-UP SUPPORT

EXPENDITURE	Year 1 £
Company Registration	£100
Rent/Rates	£0
Staff Wages	£2,000
Travel/Accommodation	£100
Telephone (mobile)	£83.88
Broadband	£407.88
Utilities	£0
Marketing and materials	£1,500
Insurance	£3,488
Capital Expenditure/Equipment	£1,099
Training & Development	£499
Accounting/Legal	£0
Outside Services	£18,000
Stock/Materials Purchases	£0
Bank Charges	£0
Office Consumables	£0
Loans Repayments	£0
Total Expenditure	£27,278
INCOME	Year 1 £
Short Haul	£4,500
Medium Haul	£10,500
Long Haul	£30,000
Capital Introduced	£5,000
Funding	£25,000
Loans/Borrowing	£10,000
Total Income	£85,000

YEAR ONE PROFIT/LOSS	£
Total Income	£85,000
Total Expenditure	£27,278
Profit/Loss	£57,722

7.1 Financial Summary

These tables show the reasoning behind some of the profit and loss of the business.

There isn't start up support grants only loans so I decided to go with a loan I could trust and just enough to get the business going.

Expenditure	Reasoning
Company Registration	£100 to register a private limited company (UK Gov, 2026)
Phone	3 Sim Only Contract £6.99 per month x 12 (Three, 2026)
Broadband	BT Broadband 300 Mbps (perfect for a company based mostly online) £33.99 per month x 12 (BT, 2026)
Marketing	Good for a beginner business focusing on social media
Insurance	ABTA (2026) £100 per month x 12 ATOL (2026) £1,538 to join £2.50 per customer x 300 customers first year
Capital Expenditure/Equipment	Apple (2026) MacBook Air 13 Inch
Training & Development	LSBA (2026) Financial & Risk Management Courses, ABTA (2026) Advanced Social Media Course
Accounting/Legal	Done by owner
Outside Services	Zofity (2026) to build the app

Income	Reasoning
Short Haul	£45 profit pp x 100
Medium Haul	£105 profit pp x 100
Long Haul	£300 profit pp x 100
Capital Introduced	From Owner
Funding	From pitch
Loans/Borrowing	Development Bank of Wales (2026)

APPENDICES

Appendix A – SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Low initial staffing costs – Only the founder working at early stages
- Strong safety aspect – traveling in groups, verification
- Strong niche – solo travellers
- Big saving through group travel – TUI & National Rail Offer Group Discount
- High relevance to demographic – women aged 25-34 make 55% of solo travel searches

Weakness

- High operational dependency on one person
- No established brand reputation
- High upfront development cost before revenue is guaranteed
- Complex logistics of coordinating group travel, accommodation, and activities across multiple partners
- Dependency on lots of initial sales to make a profit

Opportunities

- Solo travelling is a growing industry
- Expansion into themed trips (LGBTQ+, cultural, digital nomad)
- Partnerships with big brands (Ryanair, Travelodge, Eurorail)
- Demand from female travellers – 55% of UK solo travel searches from women
- Using customers for marketing – 20% discount for posts with 10k likes

Threats

- Competition from other major online travel agencies (Expedia, Hays Travel)
- Dependence on bookings to match big upfront cost
- Seasonal fluctuations making it hard for the company to make constant revenue year-round
- Competition from low-cost alternative – Worldpackers offers free accommodation for work
- Tourism is a sensitive industry due to cost-of-living crisis
- Safety Incidents – Any incidents with matched travellers could damage trust

Appendix B – PEST Analysis

Political

- Travel industry is heavily regulated, so ATOL and Package Travel Regulations affect how companies operate (OECD, 2020)
- GDPR requires strict handling of data protection, especially biometric verification (Buhalis, 2020)
- FCDO warnings can change where people feel safe to travel – this affects which destinations Buddy Up can match people to (Gov UK, 2026)

Social

- Solo travellers are more exposed to theft scams and harassment (Bianchi, 2016)
- 60% of women say that safety is the main reason they don't solo travel (Yang et al, 2018).
- 24% of solo travellers say they worried about meeting people (Hostelworld, 2025)
- 46% of women said that the fear of loneliness prevented them from solo travelling (Brittany Ferries, 2025)
- Travelling in a group can reduce vulnerability to crime and increase overall safety (World Health Organization, 2019)
- Saga Holidays, a UK based travel company has said that they found an 23% increase in solo travellers in 2024 with 20% of their customers planning solo trips (Cherryson, 2024)
- 55% of solo travel searches in the UK are made by women aged between 25-34 (Brittany Ferries, 2025)
- 73% of travel agents have found that women go on more solo trips than men (Brittany Ferries, 2025)
- 69% of people will never skip an advert if its for something that they are interested in and are more likely to be engaged if an advert is interesting and funny (Drenik, 2023)

Technological

- Over 70% of travellers use their phone for planning and booking trips (Statista, 2023)
- 92% of Gen-Z were inspired by social media to book their next trip which is why its so important to use in marketing (McKinsey & Company, 2024)
- 69% of travel agents use AI for customer support (Hinton, 2025)

Economic

- Travelling as a group can often be cheaper, many companies such as Tui (2026) and National Rail (2026) offer group discounts
- The global solo travel market is worth around £358 billion (Brittany Ferries, 2025)
- Due to the cost-of-living crisis people are cutting back on travel because it's too expensive (Fountas et al, 2025)

Appendix C – Copy of Pitch Supporting Material

Have you ever wanted to go solo travelling but the safety risks or the fear of being isolated have prevented you? Introducing the perfect travel companion Buddy Up! Buddy Up is a travel agency app that allows solo travellers to connect with others while focusing on safety and community. The customers will verify themselves once they download the app by uploading a form of identification and recording a video of them saying the company slogan 'travel together, explore more'. They will privately indicate their holiday budget along with the preferred age range, gender identity, and interests of the people they'd like to travel with. They then swipe through locations, activities and accommodation they are interested in. After this, travellers will be invited to join a group chat with their ideal travel companions and trip options offered to them. Behind me are pictures of what the app will look like.

Safety and isolation are two of the biggest issues when solo travelling. Solo travellers are more exposed to theft scams and harassment and 60% of women say that safety is the main reason they don't solo travel (Bianchi, 2016) (Yang et al, 2018). 24% of solo travellers say they worried about meeting people and 46% of women said that the fear of loneliness prevented them from solo travelling (Hostelworld, 2025) (Brittany Ferries, 2025). This is where Buddy Up will come in.

Buddy Up will be more than a travel agency it will be an experience where you will make friends for life, sharing wonderful and exciting experiences with people from all over the world! Travelling in a group can reduce vulnerability to crime and increase overall safety so Buddy Up is sure to keep you safer when you're travelling (World Health Organization, 2019). Travelling as a group can often be cheaper, many companies such as Tui and National Rail offer group discounts (National Rail, 2024). There's no need to worry about splitting costs for travel, accommodation, or group activities. Buddy Up handles all planning and payments directly, so everything is organised in one place and you can simply focus on enjoying the trip. We will take away the normal stresses of solo travelling, so you look like this instead of this.

Buddy Up is a niche travel agency focusing on bringing solo travellers together and it has a whole new market to explore. Saga Holidays, a UK based travel company has said that they found an 23% increase in solo travellers in 2024 with 20% of their customers planning solo trips (Cherryson, 2024). This shows there is a rise in the market for solo travellers and its expanding. The global solo travel market is worth around £358 billion, showing it's a strong and profitable industry with plenty of opportunity to make money (Brittany Ferries, 2025).

There is no set amount on how much solo travellers spend, however, according to research in 2024 63% of solo travellers spend between £790 to £2,370 per trip, with a 15% commission on each booking, Buddy Up would be making between around £119 to £336 per person. Each group would have around 10 people so the profit would be approximately £1,190 to £3,360 per trip.

Buddy Up is designed to be affordable for every solo traveller, and because the app manages the majority of the process the commission is kept at a reasonable rate. Zoftify (2026) has offered a quote of £18,000 to develop the travel app, and Google Pay costs £20 and the Apple App Store costs £79 annually to have the apps published (Kurita, 2025).

The app is designed for a wide demographic, which is part of its appeal, as it brings like-minded travellers together and has a group suited for every type of traveller. However, the target market is women in their twenties and thirties who don't have a lot of experience in solo travelling and want to begin their journey. 55% of solo travel searches in the UK are made by women aged between 25-34, and 73% of travel agents have found that women go on more solo trips than men. This highlights a clear alignment between the travel agency and the target market (Brittany Ferries, 2025).

Buddy Up is not without its competition, like every good business there will be others who offer similar services however there are some clear distinctions.

Worldpackers is one of the most well-known volunteer solo travel companies that specialises in offering free accommodation in exchange for free work and is often chosen by solo travellers for cheap travel (Worldpackers, 2024). Worldpackers could be considered a threat because many solo travellers choose it to reduce their travel costs. However, Buddy Up offers a different experience by providing complete travel packages for a set price, allowing travellers to relax and enjoy their trip instead of spending their time working.

Hays Travel (2026) is the UK's largest independent travel agency, so it can be seen as a competitor. However, it mainly focuses on traditional group holidays or people booking trips alone, rather than bringing solo travellers together.

Expedia (2026) is a major online travel agency similar to Buddy Up. However, Expedia is different as travellers have to book and organise everything themselves, whereas Buddy Up is about organising holidays for travellers to take away the stress of organising it themselves.

Buddy Up will reach customers by advertising on social media through TikTok and Instagram adverts. According to Forbes 69% of people will never skip an advert if its for something that they are interested in and are more likely to be engaged if an advert is interesting and funny (Drenik, 2023). This is the type of advertising that Buddy Up will do, the advert will be humorous and engaging to gain people's attention. There will be a scheme for people who use Buddy Up to get 20% off future holidays if they advertise real adventures that show people enjoying their experiences with Buddy Up on social media and it gets over 10K likes.

The team will consist of just myself and my computer. I have experience working in a travel agency which is necessary for the business to succeed, and at this early stage the business will have low booking volumes, so a larger team is not yet necessary. Starting small also keeps costs manageable while allowing the service to grow as demand increases. However, as the travel agency is more successful more staff will be employed. I will hire a skilled app developer to develop the app and manage everything needed to get it up and running smoothly. The travel agency will be ABTA-protected, which ensures customers will receive financial and travel security throughout their booking. The travel agency will also work with many different companies and businesses such as hotels, transport and activity coordinators to build partnerships and get the best deals for the customers.

I'm asking for £25,000 in exchange for 15% of Buddy Up to launch the app, begin marketing campaigns and brand deals. I believe with the project and your support I can create a community of people experiencing the world stress-free with the support they need. Thank you for listening to my pitch, please let me know if you have any questions.

Appendix D – Price List

Since Buddy Up isn't established yet these are some examples for a full trip including flights activities, food and accommodation based on Tui (2026) and EasyJet (2026).

Trip	Price	+15% commission	Buddy Up Profit
Short Haul (3-5 days)	£300	£345	£45
Medium Haul (7 days)	£700	£805	£105
Long Haul (2 weeks)	£2,000	£2,300	£300

Appendix E – Design



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