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## Start-ups aim to climb on venture capital bandwagon

By Chris Nuttall

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More than 200 English technology start-ups are chasing a potential funding bonanza when Europe's top venture capitalists tour the country this summer.

The European Tech Tour Association, a Geneva-based not-for-profit organisation that has run such tours in 13 countries over the past six years, is staging its first visit to England next month.

After its first tour of 21 Swiss companies in 1998, 13 were subsequently funded, two were acquired and three floated.

More than 200 English companies so far recommended to the selection committee will be narrowed down to 25 before 60 global technology investors and decision-makers carry out detailed assessments during two days of presentations and visits to technology clusters.

Sven Lingjaerde, association president, said: "Given the depth and breadth of the English technology landscape, this tour will be an amazing experience for our international guests.<<

The venture capitalists expect to discover "hidden gems" by exploring areas of England beyond the "golden triangle" of London, Oxford and Cambridge, with Bristol, Bath, Southampton, Manchester and Leeds among the possible destinations.

"I think that the technology footprint in England is evolving from a triangle to something more like a star and we feel it is time to start exploring beyond the well-known technology hubs," said Mr Lingjaerde.

The selection committee consists of leading venture capitalists, technologists, consultants and investment banks including Amadeus Capital Partners, Atlas Venture, Doughty Hanson, Fidelity Ventures, Microsoft, PwC and Cazenove.

During the technology downturn in 2001, the tour visited Scotland when 29 companies presented and four were funded. Companies in England and Wales have until the end of this week to enter themselves on the [techtour.com](http://techtour.com) website for consideration for the shortlist.



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