



A guide to awakening our Giant Spirit

Northern
Ireland
Embrace
a Giant
Spirit





What is the guide for?

You've heard about the Giant Spirit of Northern Ireland. You've seen how we ask people to 'embrace' it. But what exactly is this spirit? What's it made of? How would you embrace it? And what has it got to do with you?

This guide aims to answer those questions.

Northern Ireland is special place, one that stands tall in the world. It's a unique mixture of some very special ingredients. There's that warm welcome we're famous for. There's our pioneering outlook. Our rich and diverse culture. Our incredible landscape, full of breathtaking scenery and unspoilt nature. That giant spirit we talk about? That's the thing that those special ingredients add up to. It's what makes us, us – and this place, the place it is.

The wonderful thing is that when we share this spirit of ours with our visitors, it does something to their own spirits. It awakens them. Well, let's just say it rubs-off on them. It can help them to feel bigger-hearted and more welcoming themselves. More pioneering, more creative, closer to nature. That giant spirit of ours is very powerful!

Who is this guide for?

The following pages are a guide for anyone that wants to share their Giant Spirit with the people that come to visit us.

If you work in tourism and hospitality, culture, education, business or voluntary work, it's for you. If you're involved in local policy or you're a proud citizen of Northern Ireland, it's for you. If you'd like some ideas on how we can all connect with, engage, surprise and delight our visitors, this guide is for you.

Throughout this guide we talk more about the things that make up our Giant Spirit - and give examples of how we can use them to give us a steer or a helpful nudge when we're with our visitors.





How can
this guide
benefit
you?

The world knows us as big-hearted hosts. Whether we're driving a bus, serving behind a till, welcoming guests at a B&B or just offering directions, we can demonstrate our own Giant Spirit, everyday - and awaken it the people we meet.

That's because the biggest differences are made in the real world, where our Giant Spirit can be truly seen and felt.

The Guide is designed to be a handy reference tool to help you make that difference when you meet our visitors. It's got ideas that will inspire you in your own activities and help you to unlock the Giant Spirit in the people you meet, wherever they're from.

Hopefully it will also help to instil a sense of pride – pride in us all, the uniquely welcoming people that get to call this wonderful place 'home'.

Since the launch of Northern Ireland: Embrace a Giant Spirit in 2019, the tourism landscape has changed dramatically. As it evolves, however, our Giant Spirit has grown stronger. It continues to set us apart in the national and international arenas as the 'north star' for what our visitors want.

So come with us, and let's truly awaken that spirit – amongst ourselves and in our visitors too.



Understanding
our visitors

The joy of travel, the importance of experience.

People have been travelling since the beginning of time. Initially to find safety and security. But as civilisations evolved, travel became an important part of the human experience.

Today, people also travel to relax, refresh, explore, learn, be inspired and to feel connected to the world they live in. In a fast-paced world where people can get pretty much anything they want, when they want it, the role that travel plays in enriching people's lives has never been more important.

Whether a visitor is looking for fun and adventure or refreshment and relaxation they also like to get to the heart of the place they visit. They want to feel an emotional as well as a physical connection. They want to meet the locals and get a flavour of local life. To feel what it's really like to live in a place.

So they're explorers and wanderers as well as holiday-makers. They want to get off the typical tourist trails and find something real, unique. Maybe a bit unusual, quirky. They seek experiences that surprise and stimulate their senses. They don't want to watch things from a distance, they want to get hands-on, stuck-in and immerse themselves in the moment.

That's why it's so important that we give our visitors a real, authentic, emotional experience when they come to visit us. We need to be a true experience destination, not just a place that 'people come to see'.

We need people to feel our Giant Spirit.



what is the main thing our visitors want?

In a world filled with constant distraction and stimulation, people don't want to just go and 'see a place.'

They want to experience it, feel it, understand it and cherish it in a real and authentic way.



what do we promise to do for our visitors?

We will share the Giant Spirit of Northern Ireland.

By sharing it we will awaken our visitors' own giant spirit.



What's the pledge we're making to our visitors?

Because our Giant Spirit has the power to transform how the world sees us, we promise to share it with the people we meet.

Because it will change how they feel when they're here.

Because it will enhance the memories they take with them and how they talk about us to other people after they leave.

Because it is a promise of adventure, authenticity and rich experiences that stir the senses, stimulate the mind and enrich the soul.

Because it's our magic ingredient - and it's everything visitors want a place to be.



The how

When we share our giant spirit with our visitors, it awakens their own spirit.

That's the experience they're looking for. That's why they've come here.

So how can we share our giant spirit? What actions can we take to make that happen?

What small changes can we make to what we say or do that will make the difference between a visitor having a nice time - and enjoying the trip of a lifetime?



What would we like
our visitors
to understand
about us?

Ours is a land built by a giant spirit.

It's in our soil, our seas and everyone you meet.
It's what puts the warmth in our welcome, and
inspires us to go that extra mile.

A giant spirit that builds our cities, shapes our
landscapes and flows through our words, music
and craft.

You'll always find it close to hand, much like every
discovery in this vivid, mythic place.

Ours is a land built by a giant spirit.

Let us awaken yours.



Our giant spirit is made up of **four** different things. We're calling them the 'inspirers'.

1. Big heartedness

2. Legends & Stories

3. Originality

4. Land, water & sea

The way to share our spirit is to deliver on each of these 'inspirers' for our visitors.

Each one is a signpost that can guide us in the small changes we make.

Each one shows us how we can awaken our visitors' own spirits.

Big heartedness

This is the first and the most important thing that we can share. It means being warm, friendly and down-to earth. It means being polite but informal, like we're with friends rather than just customers. It means being generous, hospitable, and going the extra mile to make people feel welcome.

Being big-hearted is something we all do. The next slides detail how our visitors can come into contact with our big-heartedness - and how we're delivering on it in various particular ways right now.



Big heartedness

- Meeting people who do extra and go further for you
- Receiving personal, bespoke service
- Encountering local people who show passion and share enthusiasm
- Contact with down-to-earth NI people
- Having warm, generous and hospitable hosts
- Being invited to join local events and activities
- Enjoying NI wit and humour

Big heartedness

Three examples of how to 'do' big heartedness - and deliver on that Giant Spirit.

By being Yourself

James McCloy awakens the Giant Spirit in his visitors by immersing them in the stories of four generations of hill farming in the Sperrin Mountains. James, a real shepherd and farmer, offers a genuine warm welcome to all of his guests, sharing his natural passion and charisma and making visitors from all over the world feel part of the family whilst they get to know his sheepdogs Moss, Tess and Jess.



By being Passionate

Going on a music walking tour across Belfast with Dolores Vischer is a memorable, interactive experience like no other. Dolores inspires people with her Giant Spirit by sharing her passion for all things music and makes her experiences unforgettable through tales of playing Bodhran at an early age, drums as a teenager and even jumping on the stage in the Ulster Hall to play with The Stranglers!



By being Local

The story of who we are is important and at DC Tours visitors can learn about life in Belfast during the Troubles and step into history at the actual sites of important events during the conflict. Visitors are transported back in time to learn about the history of the place whilst the guides bring the experience to life, go the extra mile and truly share their Giant Spirit by recounting their own personal stories.



Legends & Stories

We're famous for our stories. Sharing them means tapping into the legend, myth and history of our home and showing how exciting and inspirational our culture and creativity is.

Telling stories is something we all do. The next slides detail how our visitors come into contact with our story-telling talent - and how we're delivering on it in various particular ways right now.



Legends & Stories

- Discovering ancient stories of the land - myths and folklore
- Enjoying local story-telling and story-making
- Being wrapped up in newer stories and sagas - Narnia, Game of Thrones
- Hearing about NI national heroes
- Encountering local everyday heroes
- Discovering great NI writers
- Becoming a legend
- Being moved - experiencing emotion, imagination and inspiration

Legends & Stories

Three examples of how to 'do' legends & stories - and deliver on that Giant Spirit.

By being Proud

Storytelling is a family tradition for Mark Rogers, who was inspired to share the stories of the people of the Causeway Coast by his father-in-law on a sunny June evening. Now a proud guide along the Causeway, Mark brings to life the stories of people past and present using a mix of old world skills and modern techniques, keeping the local history alive for generations to come.



By being Legendary

Donna Fox draws upon our fantastic myths and legends for Unearthing Macha, awakening the Giant Spirit by recounting stories of Ard Mhacha, the Celtic warrior queen and goddess, from whom Armagh takes its name. Visitors hear about her fateful curse on the men of Ulster and of Cú Chulainn, who escaped the curse and went on to defend Ulster against Queen Maebh of Connaught whilst exploring venues across the city.



By being Celebratory

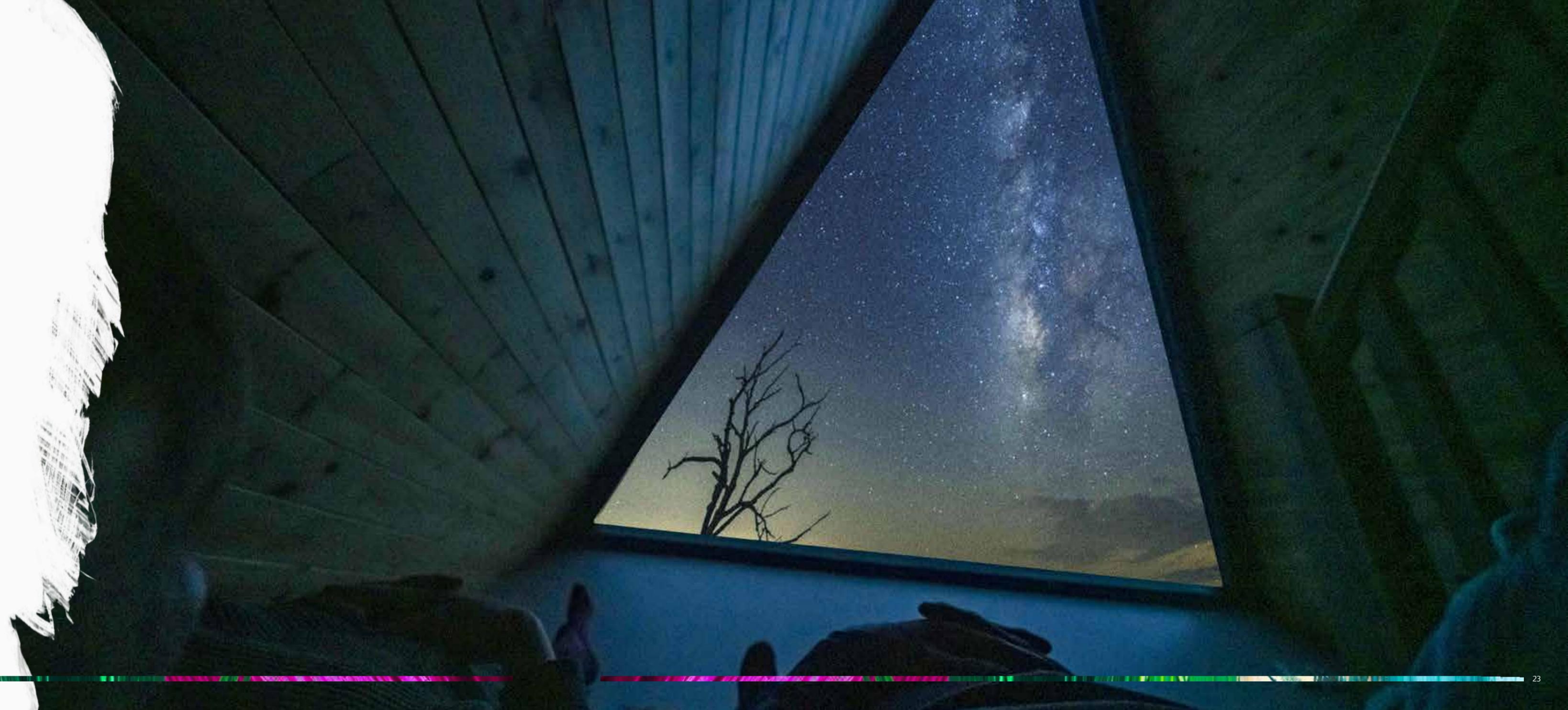
Seventh generation farmer, Brian Hoey, inspires visitors' Giant Spirit with masterfully shared stories of the millennia-old traditions and secrets of the magical ring of Gullion. Walking in the footsteps of ancient herds, warriors and fairies through abandoned famine fields, Brian's stories awaken an emotional connection. The experience is Brian's way of celebrating his ancestors, their traditions and way of life and how as pioneering people they survived and thrived in hard times



Originality

We have a talent for being pioneering in Northern Ireland. Sharing that talent means showcasing our ability to be forward-thinking, imaginative, creative, ambitious, hard-working – and to demonstrate our excitement about what’s happening here.

Being original is something we all do. The next slides detail how our visitors come into contact with our originality - and how we’re delivering on it in various particular ways right now.



Originality

- Sharing new and different experiences
- Enjoying the quirky
- Experiencing distinctive local culture
- Encountering the inventiveness of NI people
- Participating in imaginative and creative activities
- Taking a different angle
- Seeing new connections
- Being surprised by the unexpected
- Making new discoveries
- Celebrating the unique

Originality

Three examples of how to 'do' originality - and deliver on that Giant Spirit.

By being Creative

A day spent listening to Pádraig at Bluebell Lane will fill your heart with goodness. A craftsman of many hidden talents including music, song and language. Visitors are enlightened by his passion for sharing the rich hidden heritage of Slieve Gullion in rural Armagh. A welcome into his craft workshop will lead to discovering the craft of turning, shaping and sanding wood from his local woodland and awakening your own sense of creativity.



By being Collaborative

The spirit of partnership enriches the experience of the Mourne's Trails & Ales Tour. An adventure through one of Northern Ireland's most beautiful regions, with the added buzz of electric bikes and great locally produced ales! The two-wheel adventure refreshes the mind and then reveals the sights, smells and tastes of the local brew whilst learning about the art of brewing and distilling in the local area.



By being Unique

An encounter with Hugh at Embrace Tours will have you way back in time when early settlers made their mark at Beaghmore Stone Circles nestled in the boglands in Derry. His rich storytelling and animation brings to life the significance of this stone formation and their renaissance will fire the imagination. Visitors awaken their Giant Spirit retracing the steps of pioneering ancestors and uncover this rich and authentic tapestry of early history.



Land, water & sea

Sharing our unique landscapes, nature and produce. We believe in preserving and nurturing it in a sustainable way so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

An appreciation of nature and landscape is something we all have. The next slides detail how our visitors come into contact with it - and how we're delivering on it in various particular ways right now.



Land, water & sea

- Discovering diverse NI landscapes
- Connecting with nature
- Getting off the beaten track
- Having outdoor adventures
- Eating local food
- Having your senses enlivened by the elements
- Meeting producers (e.g. fishers and farmers)
- Experiencing solitude, tranquility and inspiration
- Living with the elements - NI rural life

Land, water & sea

Three examples of how to 'do' land, water & sea - and deliver on that Giant Spirit.

By being Celebratory

For County Down chef Paul Cunningham, there is no place like home. Paul, introduced to foraging in his hometown of Dundrum by his grandfather Paddy at a young age, shares his Giant Spirit through foraged and locally sourced ingredients throughout his cooking and celebrates his passion for the local area through a series of secret dining experiences.



By being Adventurous

By spending a day with Richard at Aquaholics, visitors get a once in a life-time experience to explore the wonders of the sea. Discover his passion for the Atlantic waters that surround the rugged Causeway Coast. Hosting visitors from all over the world in his sea-vessels, they come away with lasting memories and are encouraged to go beyond their everyday boundaries and tap into their spirit of adventure.



By being Natural

Barry at Erne Water Taxis was inspired to showcase his beautiful homeland of Fermanagh and wanted to give visitors a chance to become immersed in the spectacular Lakeland. On his all-electric boat and often linking in local food and drink, visitors can connect with nature and enjoy an outdoor adventure off the beaten track exploring the history, beauty and significance of the Erne Waterway.





Summary

What is the main thing our visitors want?

In a world filled with constant distraction and stimulation people don't want to just go and 'see a place.' They want to experience it, feel it, understand it and cherish it in a real and authentic way.

What do we promise to do for our visitors?

We will share the Giant Spirit of Northern Ireland. By sharing it we will awaken our visitors' own Giant Spirit.

What's the pledge we're making to our visitors?

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Because it will change how they feel when they're here.

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Because it is a promise of adventure, authenticity and rich experiences that stir the senses, stimulate the mind and enrich the soul.

What actions can we take?

Our Giant Spirit is made up of four different 'inspirers'. We can deliver on each of them by acting in particular ways:

- 1.** Big heartedness - delivered on by being yourself, being passionate and being local.
- 2.** A rich heritage of legends & stories - delivered on by being proud, being legendary and being celebratory.
- 3.** Originality and a talent for being pioneering - delivered on by being creative, being collaborative and being unique.
- 4.** Land, water & sea - delivered on by being celebratory, being adventurous and being natural.

SUPPORT and RESOURCES

We hope you have found this guide helpful.

We are confident and passionate about inspiring everyone to share their Giant Spirit. To help with this further we have developed a range of supports and resources.

Other Embrace a Giant Spirit resources.

Embrace a Giant Spirit – Experience Development Toolkit.

A resource that guides industry on how they can develop brand-aligned experiences for visitors.

Embrace a Giant Spirit Brand Guidelines.

A companion publication to this Brand Book that covers how to use the brand in communications, including guidance on design, using the brandmark and tone of voice.

Tourism Industry Support.

We have a range of online industry support and guidance on our website including business guidance, industry opportunities and insights at www.tourismni.com



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