

Special Edition | March 2022



TOURISM 360°

2022 Spring/Summer Trends



tourism
northernireland

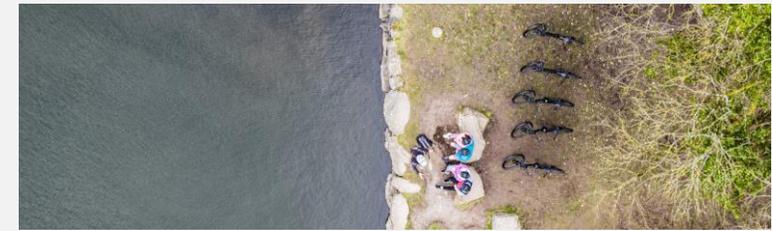
2022

Spring/Summer Trends



Staycation Stays & New Getaways

After two years of uncertainty, it might be hard to imagine a world in which travel has returned to pre-pandemic levels. But with people's appetite for travel undiminished, there are expectations of a significant rebound in the spring and summer.



'Splurge-cations'

The pandemic has curtailed our normal lives, resulting in cancelled and postponed trips. Get ready, then, for the 'catch-up consumer', who's keen to make up for lost time and lost experiences by 'splurging' on their 2022 travelling.



Sustainability – Here To Stay

Momentum has been building behind this trend for many years, with growing awareness of the array of issues around sustainability. The pandemic has led to increased calls to re-evaluate travel and tourism, with the question of how to build resilience now a crucial consideration.



Relax & Unwind

Consumers have a greater appreciation for what's important in life. Activities, products and ways of working that positively impact mental and physical health will be highly sought-after and will remain key motivators in traveller bookings.



Travelling with Confidence

With global travel restrictions easing, we are anticipating a positive change in consumer mood and comfort levels towards travel. However, it is still important to recognise that safety considerations will remain a concern in 2022.



Staycation Stays & New Getaways

After two years of uncertainty, it might be hard to imagine a world in which travel has returned to pre-pandemic levels, but with research suggesting people's appetite for travel is undiminished, **there are expectations of a significant rebound in the spring and summer**. Global sentiment research from TripAdvisor shows encouraging increases in the likelihood to travel both domestically and internationally compared to trips taken in 2019, with the **majority of respondents planning to travel this year**.

A key driver for this enthusiasm for travel is the **'quest for newness'**. Expedia highlights that travellers are craving the experience of new places and cultures: they want to step outside their comfort zone (22%) and immerse themselves in a destination that's entirely different from their day-to-day (19%). From trying new foods (40%) and experimenting with local delicacies (31%), to attending a local music event (14%), and seeking out off-the-beaten-track experiences and destinations (23%), **travellers have a renewed curiosity to learn and experience the world**.

Staycation Stays & New Getaways

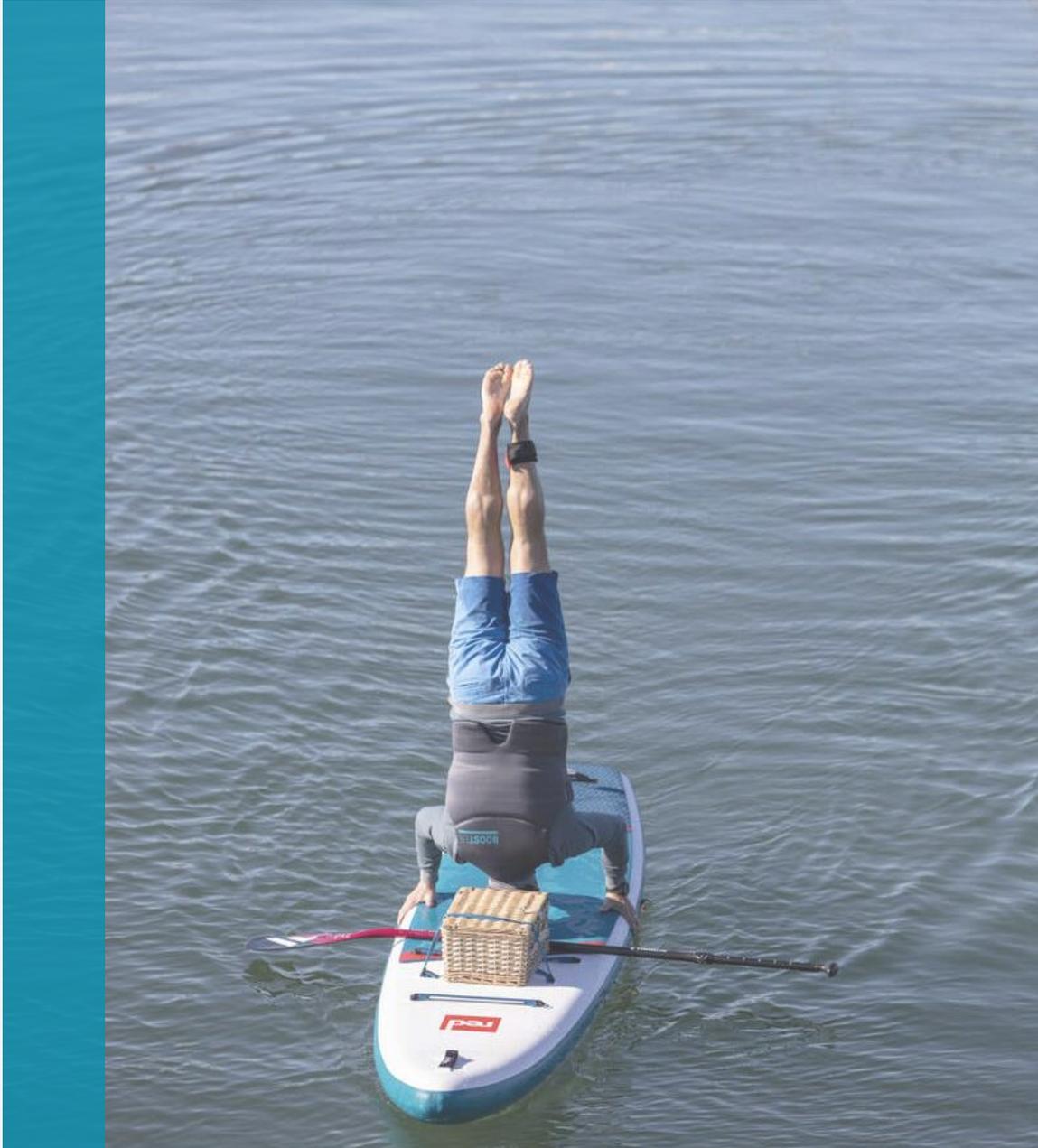
In 2022, we anticipate continued strong demand from the closer to home markets for an NI trip. However, intentions to travel abroad are also likely to increase, and while the easing of restrictions and re-opening of global markets pose a threat of increased competition, NI will also be presented with the opportunity to welcome international visitors in large numbers once again.

What it means for the NI industry:



During the pandemic, the focus for tourism was on the domestic and closer to home markets. Tourism NI's consumer sentiment research reported that there were **greater numbers of ROI tourists visiting NI**, many of whom visiting for the first time. As international travel returns, the NI industry must work hard to maintain the increased numbers of close to home visitors who buoyed performance during the pandemic and attract new and returning visitors from international markets.





Sources: ABTA, Expedia, Skift

'Splurge-cations'

The pandemic has curtailed our normal lives, resulting in cancelled and postponed trips. Get ready, then, for the **'catch-up consumer'**, who's keen to make up for lost time and lost experiences by **'splurging'** on their 2022 travelling. Almost half (49%) of the people surveyed by ABTA say that limited opportunities to travel due to the pandemic have made their holidays more important to them than before. Furthermore, almost half (46%) expect to **spend more money on their holidays** in 2022, and Expedia highlights that luxurious experiences, restaurants and upgraded accommodation are the likely subjects of splurge spending. **NI has plenty of 'giant experiences'** – our culture, our landscapes, our legends, our cities, our coast and our food – that can surprise and awaken visitors.

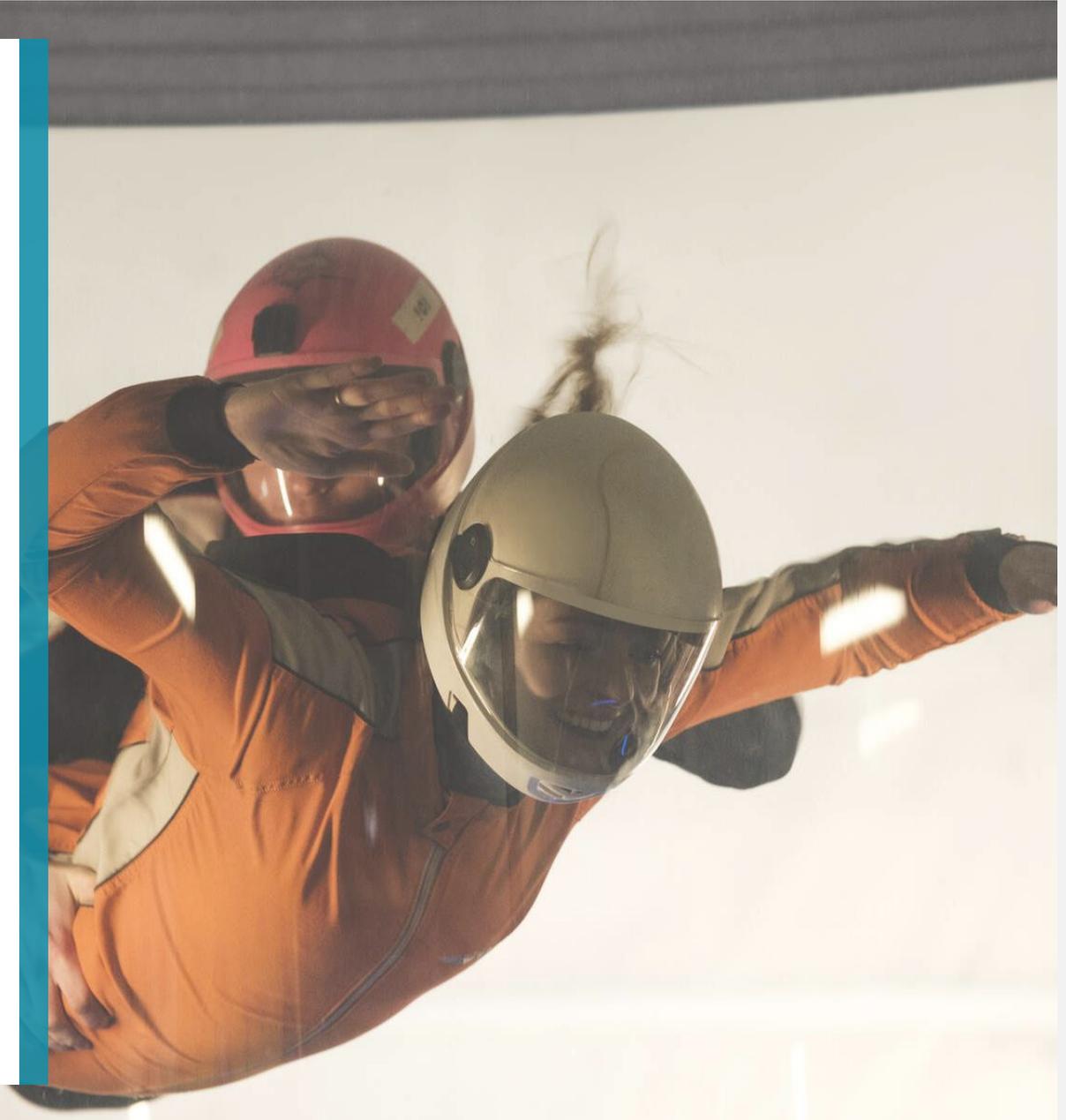
Big trips where **multi-generational family groups and close friends can reconnect** are also expected to be in high demand, with families seeking to recover lost quality time while seeking out great adventures. Importantly, **with increased spend on splurge-cation travel comes greater expectations**: as Skift suggests, as we begin to move on from the pandemic, tourists will be less likely to lower their expectations and accept sub-par service under the guise of 'safety'.



'Splurge-cations'

What it means for the NI industry:

With the evidence suggesting that many consumers want to spend more on memorable, high-quality travel experiences in 2022, the key to success for NI businesses will be to challenge themselves to **invest in their customer experience**, incorporating both the new and old ways of working. Staffing, which has presented problems throughout the pandemic, plays a crucial role in the customer experience so **prioritise training and developing staff** to be able to deliver high-quality service across a range of touchpoints. Emphasise the unique selling point of your business and how your offering adds value to a traveller's experience. Those who can stand out for excellence in customer experience will set themselves up to succeed in 2022 and beyond.





Sustainability – Here to Stay

Momentum has been building behind this trend for many years, with growing awareness of the range of issues that sustainability/regeneration includes – from plastics and biodiversity to tourism’s impact on host communities. The pandemic’s devastating effects have strengthened calls for the re-evaluation of travel and tourism, with the question of how to build resilience now a crucial consideration.

Tourism NI research indicates that **sustainability issues are having some influence on NI and ROI residents’ holiday choices**. Globally, too, travellers are now more focused on holidaying sustainably and, increasingly, on how community-friendly responsible tourism can deliver local benefits. The industry is responding to this new consumer mindset: airlines, cruise ships, travel agencies and other stakeholders launched long term sustainability initiatives at the end of 2021, coinciding with the high-profile COP26 summit.

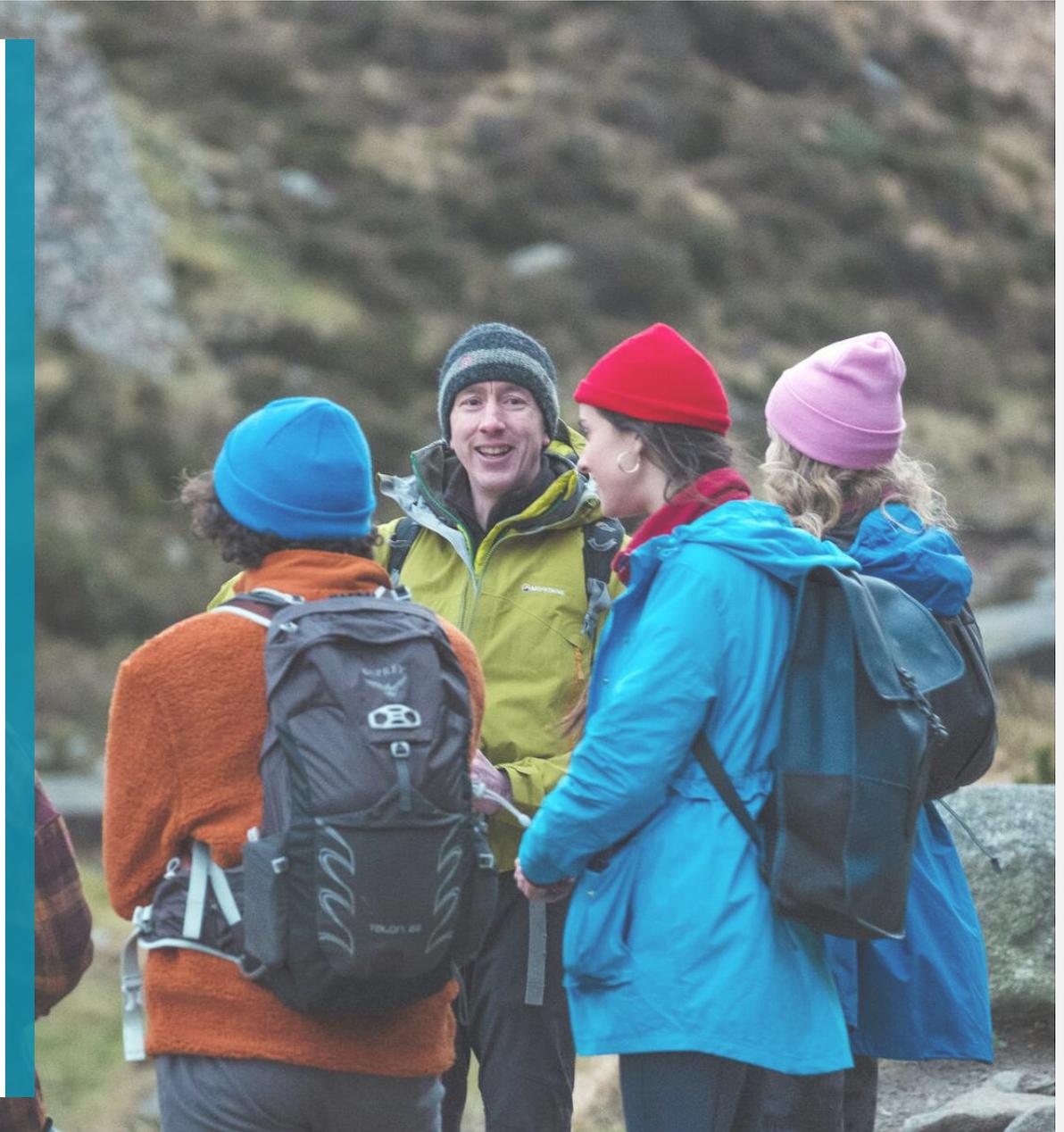
67% of consumers tried to have a **positive impact on the environment** through their everyday actions in 2021, and 77% of global travellers want to be more conscious about **supporting small local businesses** while travelling.



Sustainability – Here to Stay

What it means for the NI industry:

With awareness of sustainability increasing, an opportunity is emerging for NI tourism businesses to cater to these new appetites by providing **authentic, local experiences and eco-friendly options** that reassure visitors that their stay will have a positive impact on the place they are visiting. Tourism NI's recently launched [Sustainability Toolkit](#) can help you see new opportunities, ideas for simple green practices, suggestions on how to package information and more.





Sources: Black Tomato, Skift, TripAdvisor

Relax & Unwind

Research has highlighted that consumers have a greater appreciation for what's important in life – from their health to their work-life balance. Activities, products and ways of working that **positively impact mental and physical health**, such as having the ability to travel while working remotely or pursuing wellness-boosting activities while on holiday, will be highly sought-after and will remain key motivators in traveller bookings.

The health and wellness trend ([previously covered in-depth in Tourism 360°](#)) will remain a priority for travellers as they seek to navigate the ongoing challenges of the pandemic while also seeking ways to look after their physical and mental health.

Beyond this, travellers may increasingly turn to **relaxing trips without devices**, perhaps in the form of 'nature nurtures' that allow escape from the pressures of work and technology.

The pandemic has underscored travellers' yearning to visit destinations that make them pause and be truly present and offer unforgettable experiences, whether exhilarating or more mindful in nature.



Relax & Unwind

What it means for the NI industry:

NI's tourism offering is rich in products that can satisfy the post-COVID traveller's desire to **rejuvenate, destress and connect with nature** – from adventure tourism to spas to restaurants that serve locally-sourced food and drink. Businesses can leverage the NI brand's strengths to appeal to the desire among key markets to seek out invigorating new experiences away from old routines.





Travelling with Confidence

At the time of writing, many countries are easing restrictions. While this is a welcome development, and we anticipate a positive change in consumer mood and comfort levels towards travel, it is important to recognise that safety considerations will remain a concern in 2022. Global research suggests that some travellers don't want to see businesses remove all of their safety measures, even after the pandemic ends.

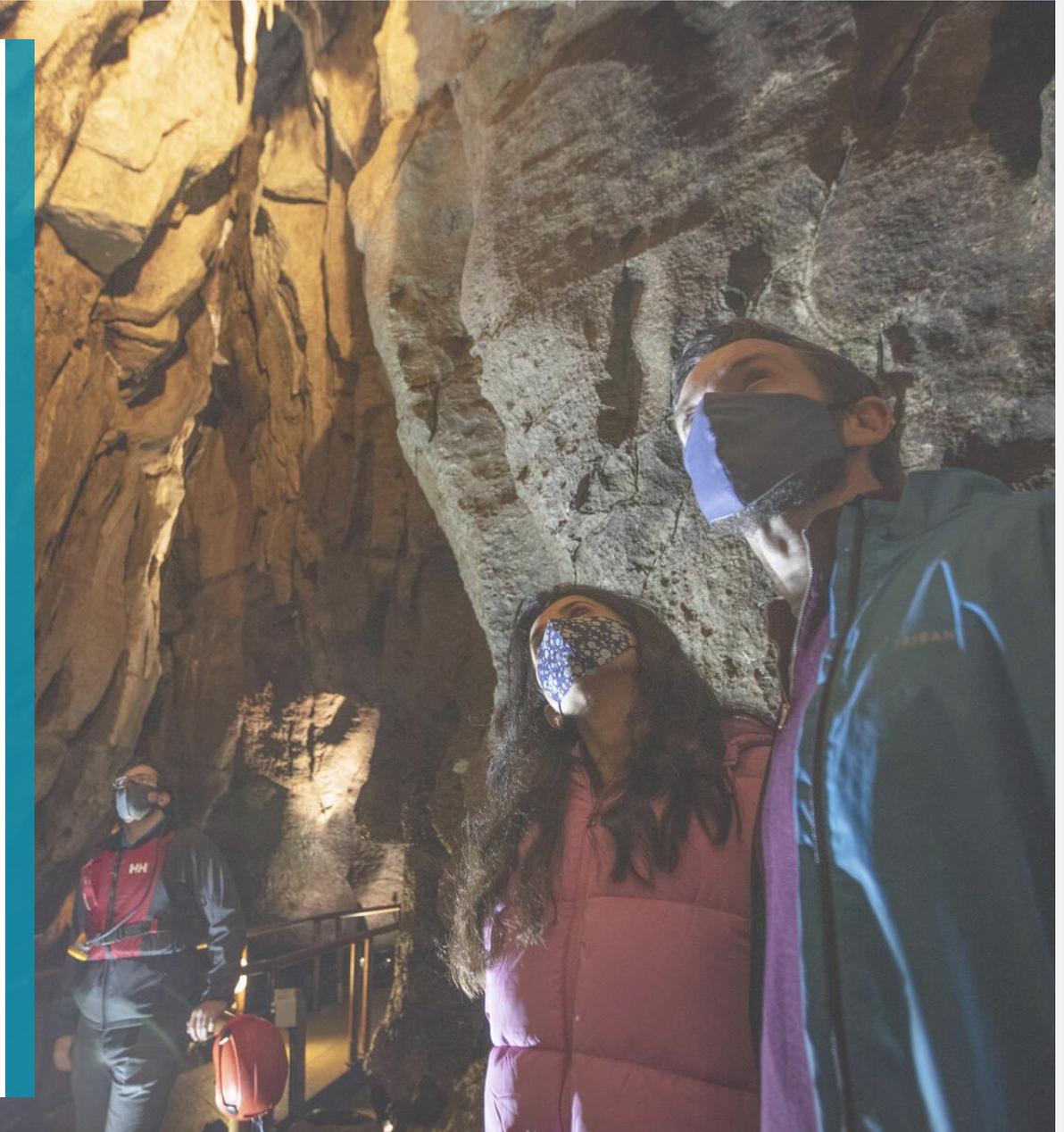
The pandemic has altered travellers' wants and needs in other ways, with consumers demanding greater flexibility and peace of mind. Above all, **travellers want hassle-free trips** and to feel like they're being looked after. Some travellers will therefore be more likely to turn to **travel agents and other trusted advisors** to help them navigate any additional travel requirements and ensure they have the de-stressing break they need.



Travelling with Confidence

What it means for the NI industry:

A continued focus on prioritising the safety and comfort of travellers will be key. While there is a clear demand to see new destinations and enjoy new experiences in 2022, this will only be possible if the traveller feels safe throughout their trip so emphasising your safety and hygiene measures in marketing materials will increase visitor confidence. Businesses will also need to be adaptable and quick to respond to new developments. The emergence of the Omicron variant in late 2021 showed how quickly the pandemic picture can transform, and the industry must be ready to adapt their business activities should the situation change. Having contingency measures in place will minimise disruption in the face of future shifts.



Looking Ahead

The global economic recovery is facing significant challenges amid new waves of COVID-19 infections, persistent labour market problems, lingering supply-chain issues and rising inflationary pressures. The outlook for travel and tourism is also mixed, and while industry experts are guardedly optimistic that 2022 will return better prospects than 2021, reasons for caution remain.



While 61% of the UN World Tourism Organization's experts think 2022 will be better than the previous year, there is acknowledgement that the recent rise in case numbers and the Omicron variant will likely have impacted confidence in the first months of 2022. Domestic tourism is expected to drive recovery in many destinations. A majority of experts (64%) expect international arrivals to return to 2019 levels in 2024 or later. [\(Jan 2022\)](#)



The latest research indicates the travel & tourism sector's contribution to the global economy could reach \$8.6 trillion this year, just 6.4% behind pre-pandemic levels. The sector could create 58 million jobs in 2022, to reach more than 330 million – 1% below pre-pandemic levels. The WTTTC notes, however, that the above relies on the vaccine and booster rollout continuing at pace in 2022, along with the continued easing of international travel restrictions. [\(Feb 2022\)](#)



This publication was produced in **March 2022** by Tourism NI's Insights and Intelligence Service.

To receive future editions of Tourism 360° and other insights publications, email insights@tourismni.com



tourism
northernireland