

Expanding experiences | in 2021



Abbe McCabe

Director of Experiences
BI WORLDWIDE

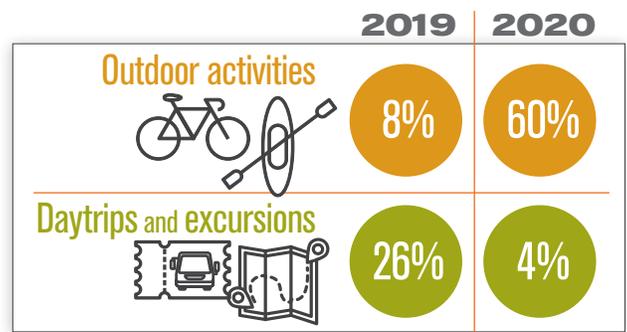
Our circle for exploration became smaller and smaller in 2020. When we compare booking habits from 2019 and 2020, we saw this decline in both travel and experiences (tours and activities).

Given the state of the world, that's no surprise.

A look at recent trends

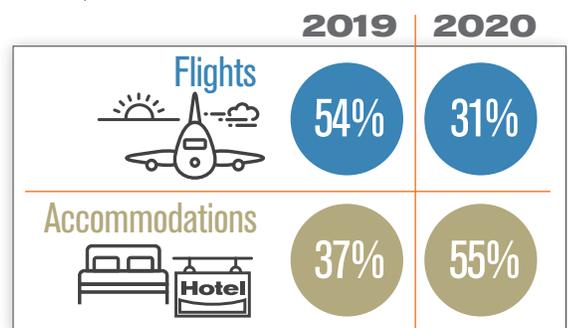
As our social circles got smaller, we saw the popularity of certain types of experiences rise, like socially-distanced and outdoor activities.

We also saw a trend towards bookings of outdoor adventures, such as the Chicago Architectural river cruise. When we compare this to the previous year, we saw 60% of people chose outdoor or water experiences in 2020 as compared to 8% in the same timeframe in 2019.



Bookings for experiences that traditionally last longer also changed from 2019 to 2020. Only 4% of people booked daytrips and excursions in 2020 as compared to 26% in 2019.

These trends remain consistent when looking at the distance in which people are traveling as well. In 2019, 54% of people who redeemed points for travel booked a flight and 37% used points for accommodations (hotels and vacation rentals). These percentages were nearly reversed in 2020, when 31% of people redeemed for flights and 55% chose accommodations. This change in preferences is indicative of the global concern for cleanliness and safety.



Where experiences are headed

The new year brings a new outlook and the desire to expand our circles again.

Expedia Group Media Solutions recently conducted research with a global audience to gather insight into how the pandemic has affected the mindset of traveling (*Expedia Group Media Solutions –Traveler Sentiment & Influences 2020/2021*). Many of their findings correlate with what we see for points redemption on BI WORLDWIDE's Experiences Marketplace platform.



Expanding experiences | in 2021



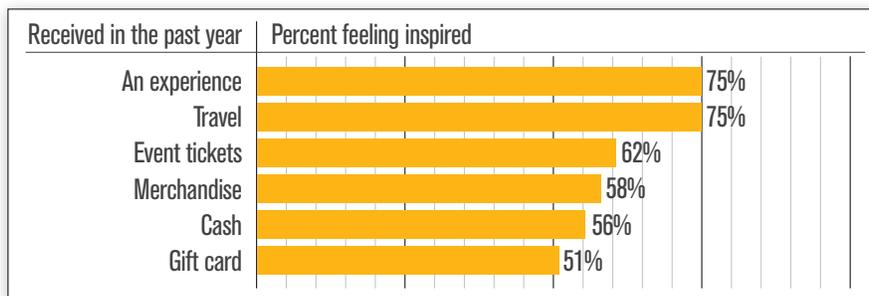
They found that 7 in 10 travelers are willing to drive up to 6 hours for a leisure trip during COVID-19.

In addition, their research found that travelers are more likely to plan trips for the time period of April to September 2021. There are variances geographically with some travelers more likely to travel sooner, specifically those from South America, Asia and Mexico.

The appeal of experiences

Experiences continue to be at the forefront of ways to motivate employees and sales teams. Our research from June 2020 confirms that travel and experiences are inspiring and given the chance to earn them, people will go the extra mile and fully commit to their work.

We found that people who felt their organization's incentives were exciting were **eight times more likely** to find work inspiring. What makes an incentive exciting? We looked at what incentives people had earned in the past year and compared that to whether they felt inspired at work. What we found is rewards like experiences and travel were the most associated with feeling inspired.



2020 New Rules of Engagement® Research

For companies with employees who do not qualify to earn incentives, experiences are still a great option to continue to engage and inspire employees. Our Experiences Marketplace offers 85,000 experiences that are \$100 or less.

As we head further into 2021, we predict we'll see people expand their circle of exploration at their own pace and comfort level. And whether it's an experience just down the street or a dream vacation in a faraway place, we know we'll see experiences and travel continue to inspire performance.

Visit our blog to read or share this article.