

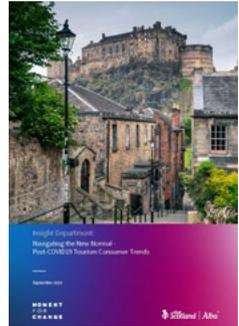


Insight Innovation:
Voluntourism

NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL

The challenges faced by the global community during the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted many societal issues and opportunities for self-improvement. A sense of community and responsibility for those around us led to development of simple and accessible ways people can help each other - such as donating to foodbanks or volunteering time to engage with isolated or lonely individuals. This is likely to have a lasting impact on visitors' desire to give back to the communities they are visiting, whilst enjoying other activities such as visiting attractions or taking part in outdoor pursuits.

This paper is part of the Innovation Insight series looking at trends developing in tourism today from consumer demand and business innovations around the world. It is through innovation we can adapt and deliver a responsible future for tourism and the communities it supports throughout Scotland.



THE BASIC NEED

Consumers want to travel more sustainably and manage their interactions with a destination and its residents in a thoughtful manner. Volunteering time and energy to a related cause will help deliver the mindfulness and engagement drivers many visitors seek through travel.

Over half of UK residents feel they can count on their neighbours more than at the start of 2020 ([loydsbankinggroup.com](https://www.loydsbankinggroup.com))

7 in 10 of those living in the UK have volunteered at least once ([ncvo.org.uk](https://www.ncvo.org.uk))

76% of Scottish tourism businesses had to reduce staff numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic ([STERG Industry Survey \(visitscotland.org\)](https://www.visitscotland.org))

INSPIRATION

“Voluntourism” or working holidays are likely to remain an area of interest for a small number of consumers, however as the global community heals from the trauma of COVID-19, informal volunteering will become front of mind for many. Businesses should consider how they:

- Offer visitors opportunities to offset the carbon footprint of their travel or highlight how this is managed as a business
- Develop products involving authentic experiences such as chatting to an older resident about local history and heritage
- Provide opportunities for active outdoor pursuits blended with voluntary work such as beach cleans

EMOTIONAL DRIVER

Connection “with locals, self, friends & relatives”

For more on emotional drivers look at **Only in Scotland Toolkit**.

Slow Burn: demand for responsible tourism driven by millennial and GenZ travellers including more conscious consumerism and budgetary considerations have offered opportunity to businesses looking to harness short-term volunteers as part of a holiday experience.

Trigger Change: the “feel good factor” created by informal volunteering and acts of kindness, in times of need during the pandemic, fostered positive sentiment in both the volunteer and those benefitting from the help.

Emerging Expectation: consumers will expect easily accessed, but genuine, opportunities to do good and therefore feel good about their experience in Scotland.

#RESPECTPROTECTENJOY

Activities associated with voluntourism will enable visitors to meet these pledges, as part of their Responsible Tourism Promise:

- Slow down and savour every moment of what there is to see, do and learn.
- Check the green credentials of all of the businesses I use to travel, stay and explore.
- Seek out and respect the rich and diverse cultures that are found throughout Scotland.

Responsible Tourism: [Visitor Guide for Businesses](#) | [VisitScotland.org](#)

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY & IDEAS

Charitable communities: Let your guests know about ongoing projects in the local area that they can get involved in or businesses and social enterprises they can support during their stay. This will not only aid the local community but also offer visitors a unique insight into the destination they are visiting and the people that live there.

Skill-sharing: one of the main benefits of voluntourism is the sharing of skills between those volunteering and businesses and residents of the local community. This can range from formalised courses in restoration and conservation to informal opportunities for guests to lend a hand.

Cleaning up: with increased focus on the visitors and destinations working in harmony, many visitors buy into the green ethos of companies they are engaging with. Beach litter picking, waterway cleans and collecting rubbish left at beauty spots are some of the simple ways businesses can enable customers to visit Scotland responsibly.

You will want to consider the impact of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions on any planned marketing and events. Please utilise our COVID-19 Scenario Planning Toolkit. [COVID-19 Scenario Planning Toolkit for Tourism](#) | [VisitScotland.org](#)

MARKET POSSIBILITIES

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|---|---|
|  | <p>Solo travel: those with a passion for travelling in the most sustainable manner will be interested in investigating opportunities to volunteer their time and skills to benefit local communities and gain new skills themselves.</p> |
|  | <p>Adventure tourists: visitors undertaking physical challenges in Scotland and looking for ways to give back during their down time, or as part of their active pursuit.</p> |
|  | <p>Career breakers: with employment rates lower following the COVID pandemic, many will be looking for alternative purposes, new careers or opportunities to learn new skills. Voluntourism is traditionally associated with gap year students, however there is evidence of increasing demand from older generations post-retirement or between jobs.</p> |

*Food
for
thought*

26% of UK small businesses feel it's more important than before the pandemic to have a positive impact on their community GoDaddy 2020 Global Entrepreneurship Survey (slideshare.net)

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Scottish Tourism Statistics & Research | [VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitscotland.org)

www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus

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