



*wetravel*

Purchasing Habits:

# **The Future of Travel Bookings and Payments**

*WeTravel's Annual Travel Trends Report, 2023*

# Table Of Contents

CEO Address .....	2
WeTravel's Internal Data - Bookings and Payments .....	3
External Data - The State of Travel Bookings .....	6
Qualifying data - Survey Results .....	8
Tour Operator Data .....	10
Group Travel Organizer Data .....	15
What The Data Says - Takeaways .....	33
About WeTravel, Contact Information .....	35



WeTravel's CEO:

## A Reflective Moment Of Gratitude; A Nod To What's Ahead

To all readers, to the travel industry:

The past three years have presented us in the travel industry—travel business owners, those employed by travel businesses and travelers alike—with exceptionally challenging obstacles, unlike we've faced in our lifetime.

In mere weeks, the world halted international and, often, domestic travel, millions of hard-working people lost employment, tourism's GDP fell lower than it has in our lifetime, governments supported, when they could, travel businesses—but the support often wasn't enough—and global inequities deepened, as we struggled with deplorable unemployment disparity, vaccine inequity, and heightened pandemic impacts on underrepresented groups.

While the pandemic's casualties are unparalleled—shattering an entire industry and eliminating decades' worth of progress in travel—it also shone a light on improvements the industry needn't potentially make, but must make for an equitable industry – and world. As borders opened and flights resumed in 2022, we saw the public's commitment to connecting with each other and with the world, as traveler traffic accelerated to nearly 60 percent of pre-pandemic numbers, [according to UNWTO](#). We saw businesses collide and connect to empower and support each other, a unity that continues now. With companies like Intrepid Travel launching [vaccine equity campaigns](#) and, for the first time, the tourism industry participated in COP27, setting industry-wide carbon reduction goals to reach a 1.5C future.

To all of you—like us—who did all you could to press through an industry standstill: I commend you for moving through the challenge and clinging to the industry's progress so as for it to not be forgotten, while accelerating the need for tourism to be a stronger force for good.

Now, we enter 2023, a New Year for travel and we know much has changed – and that includes how travelers book and purchase travel. With this in mind, as the industry's leading booking and payment platform for travel businesses, we wanted to speak with our network of travel businesses to better understand what's ahead.

Beginning this year, WeTravel will annually report on the Payment and Booking trends shaping the travel industry. By surveying hundreds of group travel organizers and tour operators, we'll understand what travel purchasing decisions are shaping the industry; we'll cogitate on the findings and use the data as navigation into the year ahead.

In this reporting, our aim is to continue to support the tour operators and group travel organizers that collect into the tourism industry. We'll use the information to help these operators make guided business decisions to support their operations – and their travelers.

Without taking too much of your time, as I want you to dive into the report, I want to conclude this address with my sincerest thank you; thank you for being a valued contributor to the travel industry – your operations have an economic, social, environmental impact on all who interact with your business. Now, alas, I wish you happy, insightful reading ahead...

Yours in travel,



**Ted Clements** (he/him)  
WeTravel's CEO



We Traveled In 2022:

## A Look At WeTravel's Data

**3,000+**

travel companies used the platform

**100,000**

trip pages created through the platform

**500,000**

travelers booked and paid through the platform

### OF THOSE BOOKINGS

**60%**

Were by female travelers; female bookings increased by nearly 10% in 2022 compared to 2019

**32%**

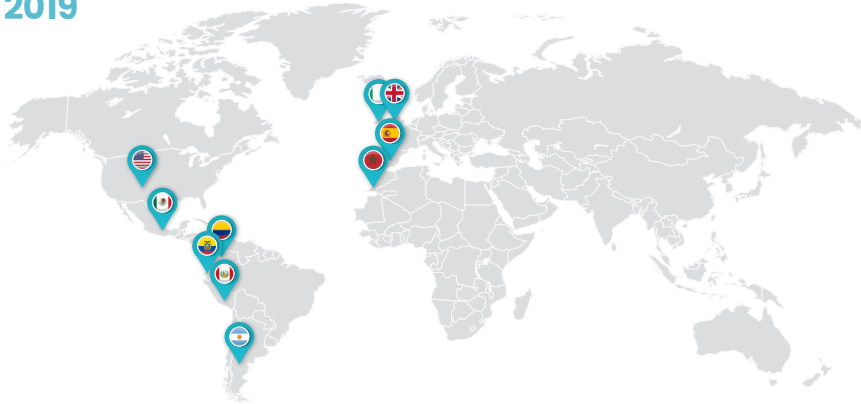
More female traveler bookings than male bookings in 2022

### INDUSTRY RECOVERY, SEEN THROUGH WETRAVEL'S DATA

- 200%** Increase in traveler transaction volume through WeTravel's platform in 2022 compared to 2019
- 25%** Increase in group sizes for tours in 2022 compared to 2019
- 70%** Increase in group sizes for group travel (including wellness and student) in 2022 compared to 2019

## TOP TRAVELED-TO DESTINATIONS?

2019



Ecuador, U.S., Peru, Argentina, U.K., Mexico, Morocco, Colombia, Spain, Ireland

2022



Ecuador, Chile, Peru, U.S., Argentina, Mexico, U.K., Morocco, Costa Rica, Colombia, Italy

January, February, March, April,  
May, June, July, August, September,  
**October, November, December**

Top booking month for tours, accounting for **25%** of the entire year's bookings



Top booking month for group travel, accounting for nearly **20%** of the entire year's bookings



## We Traveled, But What Did It Cost?

**\$1,071 USD**

The average trip cost of the **nearly 50,000 trips** created by tour operators through WeTravel's platform in 2022

↓  **16%**

Decrease in average trip cost for tours in 2022 compared to 2019; however, of the tour operators surveyed, most claim to raise their prices by 10% or more in 2023

↑  **10%**

Increase in average trip cost for group travel in 2022 compared to 2019

**\$1,346 USD**

The average trip cost of **more than 50,000 trips** created by group travel organizers through WeTravel's platform in 2022

## A Glimpse At 2023: Global Bookings

**30%**

\$1.6 billion dollars in tourist arrivals in 2023 compared to 2022, nearing pre-pandemic levels, according to research by EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit).

The travel industry is expected to amass

**1.6 billion**  
international tourist arrivals in 2023

This year may be considered the **final phase before a full recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**, following 2022's **60% increase** in global travel.

### EXTERNAL, GLOBAL CHALLENGES IMPACTING TRAVEL BOOKINGS

- Russian invasion of Ukraine and its toll on gas prices across the world
- An impending economic recession and slowdown due to inflation
- China's rising COVID-19 cases and mitigation strategies

### WHAT ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Travelers may **reconsider air travel or vouch for eco-friendly options** that have carbon offsetting programs.

According to data gathered by the European Investment Bank, **22% of European and American travelers say flights will not be their chosen transportation while traveling this year, while a majority of Americans also state they expect to pay more for sustainable travel options.**

# Despite The What-Ifs, Travel's Back; What Experiences Are Being Booked?

[Booking.com conducted research on 24,000 respondents](#) from across 32 countries to create a report on upcoming travel trends. Here are some of the experiences travelers will be on the lookout for in 2023:

## **Off-Grid Travel**

55% of travelers will be looking for experiences that feel **more simple and down-to-earth** experiences where they can disconnect from everyday life and learn new skills like lighting a bonfire from scratch, sourcing clean water, foraging for food.

## **Culture-Centered Travel**

Travelers are also on the lookout for destinations and experiences that exposes them to **different cultures and ways of seeing the world**. 50% of travelers say they are actually looking forward to **experiencing complete culture shock**.

## **Nostalgia-Focused Travel**

The yearning to **go back to simpler times is at an all-time high** with Millennials (91%) and GenZ's (90%) looking for travel experiences that bring them back to memories of a pre-digital era. 61% of travelers are actually looking forward to traveling to places such as theme parks, or indulging in activities like escape rooms or scavenger hunts, where they can **feel like kids again**.

## **Wellness Travel**

Travelers are still looking for **fully-immersive travel experiences** where they can rest, relax, and recharge. 44% of travelers will be adding **meditation and mindfulness retreats** at the top of their bucket lists for 2023. 42% of travelers will opt for **health-focused retreats** that will help them navigate chapters of their life such as pregnancy, menopause, or better mental health.

## **Company Retreats**

With the rise of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift this had of the perception of in-person work, employers and employees are **looking for ways to reconnect or get to know their coworkers**. 44% of respondents stated that their employer is planning a **company-wide retreat for 2023**.





# We Asked Nearly 150 Travel Companies About Booking And Payments; Here's Who The Companies Are Before We Dive Into What They Said

65%

Of respondents are Tour Operators, including custom/FIT and luxury



35%

Of respondents are Group Travel Organizers\*

\* Student Travel | Wellness | Sports and Expeditions  
Travel Advisors/Agents and Consortiums | DMC

72%



Of respondents are considered SMBs, employed in a travel business with **less than 10 employees**

51%



Of respondents work in a business with a monthly revenue **exceeding \$25,001 USD per month**

60%



Of respondents are **female**

76%



Of respondents are **executive, c-suite or founder level**

## THE RESPONDENTS OPERATE BUSINESS FROM

50%

North America

14%

Latin America

9%

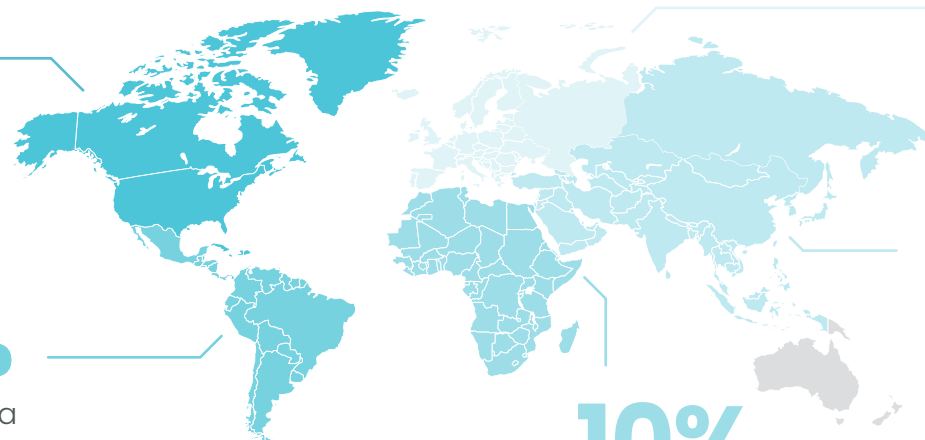
Europe

10%

Asia

10%

Africa



The Average **Revenue Growth** Expected From All Respondents Is **58%** By 2025



- Most likely reason for growth: Increasing travel demand (**42%**)
- Least likely reason for growth: Increasing trip costs

### What challenges will be faced in growth:

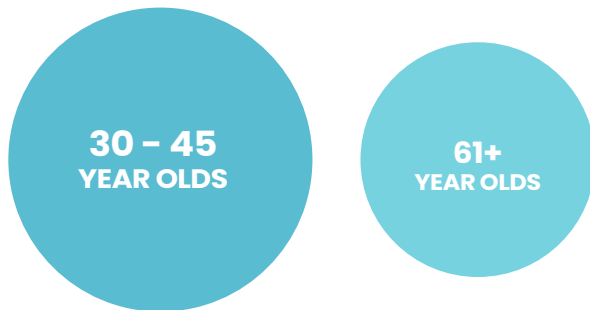
- Most likely: External factors like recession, inflation and pandemic (**60%**)
- Least likely: Lack of back-end operational support and IT, inefficient front-end customer experience

## Tour Operators:

# What's Booking? It's Good Looking

\*includes custom/FIT businesses and luxury tour businesses

### THE AGE-OLD BOOKING QUESTION: WHAT AGE GROUP IS DOMINATING TOUR BOOKINGS?



The age group with the **highest increase** in bookings for 2023 departures compared to 2019 is **30 to 45 year olds**, then **61+ year olds**

↓ **5%**

Decrease in **30 and under** travelers booking tours for 2023 departures compared to 2019, also the slowest age group to rebound in travel bookings

### WHILE MOST TOUR OPERATORS ARE REACHING BOOKING CAPACITY, CONCERNS REMAIN FOR SEVERAL OPERATORS ABOUT BOOKING CAPACITY IN 2023

**25%+**

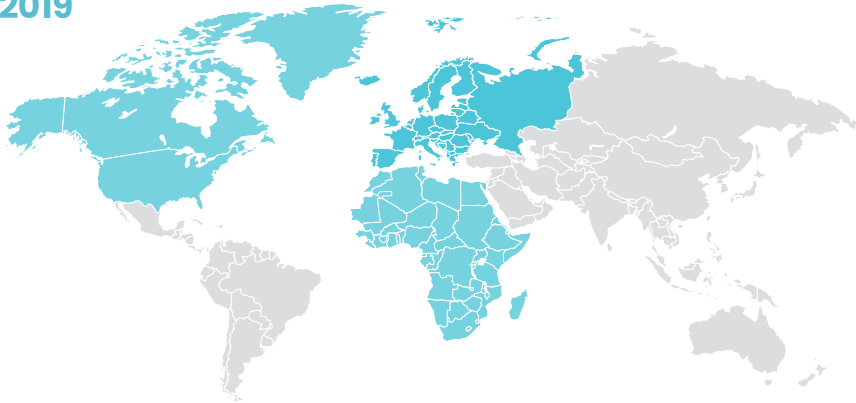
Of tour operators claim their 2023 tours are **more than 75%** sold out

Of operators are concerned their tours **won't sell to capacity** in 2023

**10%**

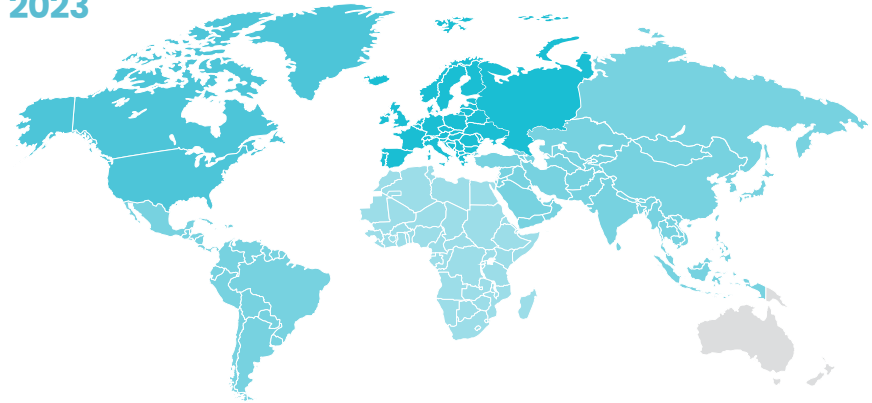
## WHILE EUROPE TOURS REMAIN STRONG, AFRICA FALLS IN BOOKINGS; ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA PICK-UP

2019



Europe (**40%**); Africa (**25%**); North America (**25%**)

2023



**55%** Europe; North America (domestic), Asia, Latin America (all **15%**) and Africa (less than **10%**)

# HALF

Of all tour operator bookings come direct from **website** or **phone**

# BOOKINGS

BOOKINGS?

From travel agents/  
advisors **doubled**  
compared to 2019

Through Online  
Travel Agencies  
declined by  
nearly **10%**  
compared to 2019

# BOOKINGS

**UNSTEADY GLOBAL LANDSCAPE LEADS TO SHORTER BOOKING TIMES, BUT HYPER CUSTOMIZATION REMAINS TRAVELER PREFERENCE CAUSING STRAIN ON LOCAL OPERATORS and DMCs**

More than

**50%**

Of respondents state they expect travelers to book **closer to departure date** to reduce cancellations/refunds

**60%**

Of respondents said travelers are booking less than three months prior to departure, more than a 20% increase compared to 2019, when the most common booking lead time for tours was six months+



**"Last year and into this year, we noticed booking lead times are much shorter than pre-Covid. In 2022, we saw travelers confirm their trips on average 2-3 months before arrival, requiring quite a bit of flexibility and quick reaction from our team."**

*Experience Morocco*

**65%**

Said travelers are requesting add-ons to itineraries compared to 2019  
59% (up 15% compared to 2019) of add-ons are activities or excursions; 30% are meals (up 5% compared to 2019); 20% are airport transfers (up 15% compared to 2019)

Less than  
**20%**

Of travelers are booking six months in advance, which is **down 15%** compared to 2019

Tour Operators:

## How Are Travelers Paying?

↓ **10%** Decrease in total up-front payment for tours in 2023 compared to 2019

### INSTEAD, MORE CUSTOMIZATION IN THE PAYMENT PROCESS

- **46%** Of bookings are completed with **one deposit** payment and **one final** payment, up 10% compared to 2019
- **18%** Increase in bookings completed with **more than four installment** payment options in 2023 compared to 2019
- **20%** Increase in **Credit Card** payments for 2023 departing tours, more than **60%** of travelers paid by **Credit Card** for 2023 departures to date
- **30%** Of travelers still pay for tours by **cash** or mailed **cheque**

### OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS

**30%** of businesses expect their travelers' payment methods to **change** to crypto and other online payment options by end of 2023

**30%** of businesses expect their travelers to ask for **installment** or **book now, pay later** options to offset high up-front costs by end of 2023

More than **75%** of respondents have **increased** the costs of their tours by more than **10%** in 2023 compared to 2019; nearly **10%** of respondents have **increased** their costs by more than **25%** in 2023 compared to 2019

## Are Cancellations Impacting Travel Growth?

In 2019, only

**70%** Of tour operators  
offered refunds

In 2023, that number increased by **15%** with more than **85%** offering refunds

In 2023, most businesses expect to process less than five refunds per month (**76%**)

**80%** Of tour operators  
don't expect to  
process more  
refunds in 2023



"We still offer fully refundable deposits for all of our trips for families (groups of over 10 are a different matter); we see this as an integral and necessary component of giving clients peace of mind nowadays, and we've had very little abuse of this policy where clients would book and then cancel for no valid reason.

I think for most B2B clients they're expecting flexibility from ground operators especially when hotels are still offering very flexible cancellation policies - we have to be able to at least match that or we're giving the clients every reason to book hotels directly and deal with ground arrangements at a later date."

*Experience Morocco*

# Wellness And Retreat Travel Organizers: A Glimpse Into 2023

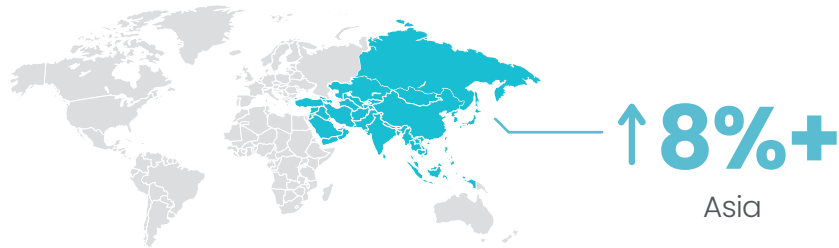
## WHICH AGE GROUP IS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR WELLNESS TRAVEL?

In 2023, travelers age **31 – 45 represent 61%** of the wellness segment bookings, followed by travelers aged **46 – 60 representing 33%** of all bookings. The **46+ segment increased by nearly 10%** compared to 2019.

### Three Regions Remain At The Top Of Wellness Travelers' Minds Since 2019...

	North America	Europe	South America
2019	57%	29%	24%
2023	52%	29%	33%

The continent with the highest increase in bookings in 2023 compared to 2019 is **Asia**, which in 2019 accounted for **less than 2%** of wellness bookings and now accounts for **more than 10%**.



### The Race To Fill Traveler Capacity: How Are Wellness Travel Businesses Preparing For 2023

**76% of Wellness and retreat businesses** started collecting bookings for 2023 during 2022

Out of this pool...

- **29%** said their bookings are at a **24% capacity or less**
- **19%** stated to have their wellness tours between **25 and 49% capacity**
- **14%** claimed to be **surpassing a 75% traveler capacity** for their wellness tours and retreats

### OPTIMISM IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH WITHIN THE WELLNESS TRAVEL SEGMENT!

**62% of businesses** are confident that their tours will fill up throughout the year.

Nevertheless, **29% of wellness businesses remain weary** of what this new year will bring regarding optimal traveler capacity.



## HOW ARE WELLNESS TRAVELERS PAYING FOR THEIR TOURS AND RETREATS?

The reigning payment option for wellness travelers in 2023 is the **deposit + final payment 30 days before departure combination**.

While paying in full at the time of booking remains high on the list, 2023 is seeing an increase in travelers looking for more flexibility, like more than 28% of year-to-date Wellness travelers **paying in up to 4 installments before departure**.

### Booking Channels: Direct Bookings Are On The Rise

**Over 60% of bookings** for wellness trips and retreats in 2023 **were made directly on the seller's website**, revealing the **same pattern as in 2019**.

The **second most popular booking channel** within this segment is a **direct phone call**, with over **12% of travelers opting for it**.

While **booking through OTAs has remained consistent from 2019 to 2023**, we can see a **5% increase** in bookings made through **travel agencies or advisors** for this new year.

### Preferred Payment Methods: Out With The Old, In With The New

Wellness businesses have seen a very similar payment pattern from 2019, with a few preferred methods on the rise...

- **19% increase** in payments made with credit cards (including AMEX)
- **10% increase** in debit account transactions
- **9% increase** in payments made through PayPal

... compared to 2019 data.

	Credit card	PayPal	Debit Account Transactions
2019	52%	19%	9%
2023	71%	29%	19%

**57% of wellness businesses expect no change** in these payment methods, but **19% expect to see changes** in favor of more flexibility like **"Book Now, Pay Later"** or pay in more installments **throughout the year as inflation and recession roll out**.



## HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE THE WELLNESS TRAVELER TO BOOK?

In 2019, wellness travelers were divided between booking their experiences between...

43%



One to three months in advance

43%



Four to six months in advance

For 2023, there's a clear tendency thanks to a **5% increase in bookings made one to three months** before the departure date, reducing the planning and investigation timeframe.

Despite this, **52% of wellness travel businesses expect booking timeframes to extend in 2023** as travelers seek to seize payment installments.

## A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION: HOW HAVE REFUNDS CHANGED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS?

Back in **2019, 62% of wellness travel businesses offered refunds**. Now, for 2023, we can see a **4% increase in refund processing** as an **alternative to providing future travel credit**.

**58% of businesses process less than 5 five refunds per month**, and 100% aren't expecting an increase during 2023.

## HOW HAS INCREASING DEMAND AFFECTED PRICING?

48%

Of wellness travel businesses have **increased their tour prices by less than 10%** in 2023 compared to 2019.

33%

Have **increased their prices by less than 25% but more than 10%**, in light of a higher demand for wellness-oriented retreats and tours.

## WHAT'S CALLING MORE TRAVELERS TO YOUR WELLNESS OFFERINGS?

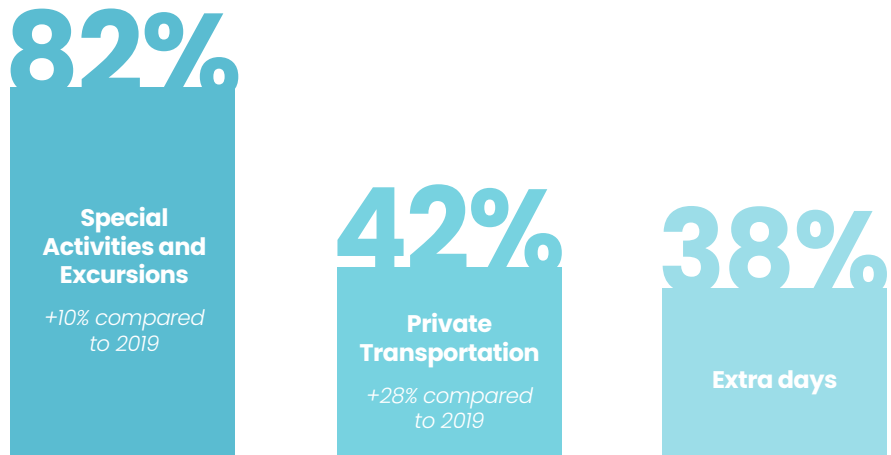
**90% of wellness travel experiences and retreats** can be customized by travelers via **add-ons in 2023**. This represents a 14% increase from 2022 numbers.

**72% of wellness businesses promote these add-ons on their booking page** for travelers to explore their customization options from the get-go.

Nevertheless, having a lot of customization options isn't on top of the wellness traveler's mind due to the nature of the experiences they are looking for. **62% of respondents state that they have not seen an increase in demand from add-ons since 2019**.

**Customization for the Wellness Travel segment is more geared toward enhancing an already existing experience rather than changing it.**

Some of the **most popular add-ons wellness travelers are on the lookout for in 2023** are:



## EXPANDING GROUP SIZES

In 2023

**48%**

of wellness businesses are expanding their group size between 11 to 20 travelers per trip

matching the ones that are offering these experiences for 10 or fewer travelers.

This segment decreased by

**↓ 9%**

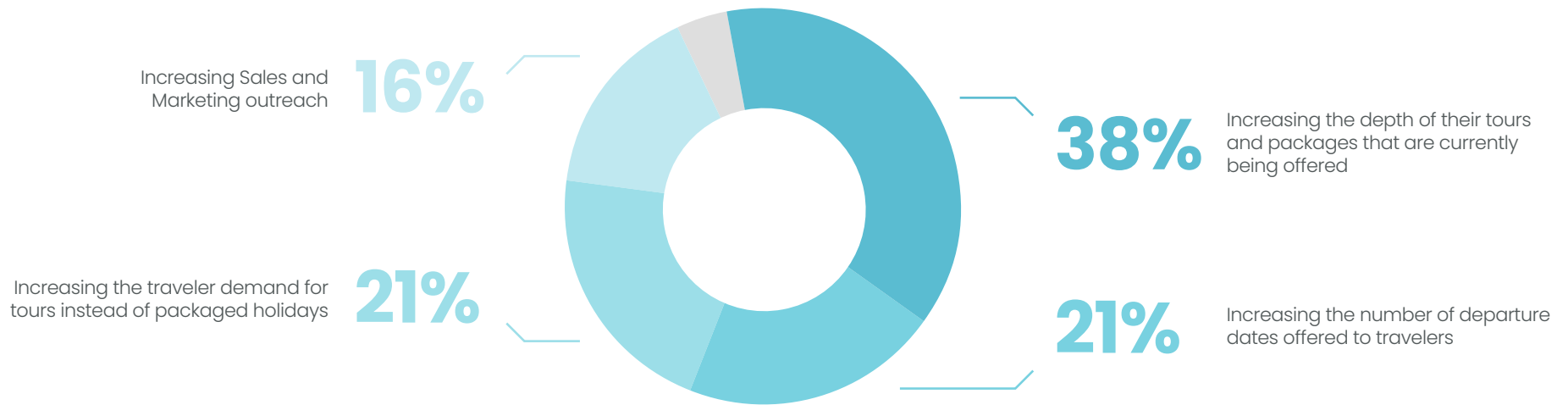
From 2019

As more people attending retreats are looking for more community-oriented experiences.

## The Opportunities Ahead:

# How Is Growth Perceived By Wellness Businesses

Wellness businesses expect to have **an average of 56% growth in revenue by 2025**.  
Some of the **main contributors to this growth** are expected to be:



As for hurdles, wellness businesses expect these to be their **main challenges when trying to grow their revenue**:

**57%** Recession, inflation, economic slowdown, ongoing pandemic, and extreme weather conditions based on climate change

**19%** Lack of financial access to support their operations

**17%** Operational issues derived from staffing shortages, supply crisis, or accommodation availability

# Destination Management Companies: What's Ahead For 2023?

## HOW ARE BOOKINGS LOOKING FOR DMCS IN 2023?

Destination management companies started an early race to attract travelers in 2023.

**40% of respondents are already surpassing a 75% traveler capacity** for programs offered in 2022 with departure dates in 2023. At the same time, **30% are already reaching the 50 to 74% range.**

# 89%

**Of Destination Management Companies are confident that their programs will reach their maximum capacity by 2023**

## POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR DMCS ARE CHANGING

Based on travelers' demand, the ever-popular **Europe has decreased by 10% from its 2019 numbers (20%).**

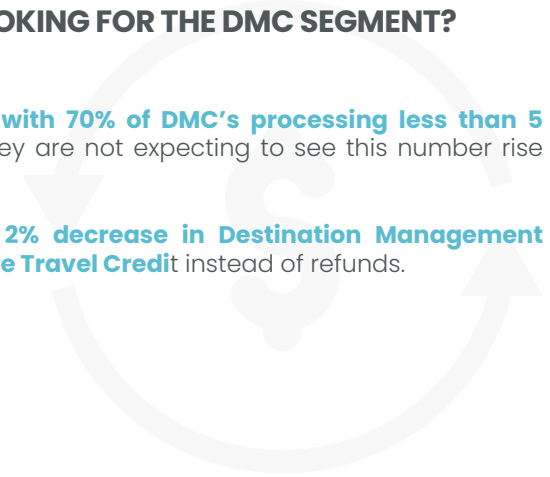
On the other hand, we've seen an **impressive increase in demand for travel experiences based in Asia, with a 20% increase from 2019 (40%).** Another interesting surge comes from **Australia, which has amassed a substantial 10% demand for 2023 from scratch.**

North America (30%), South America (10%), and Africa (10%) maintain the same demand they had in 2019.

## HOW ARE REFUNDS LOOKING FOR THE DMC SEGMENT?

Travel is finally stabilizing, **with 70% of DMC's processing less than 5 refunds per month,** and they are not expecting to see this number rise throughout 2023.

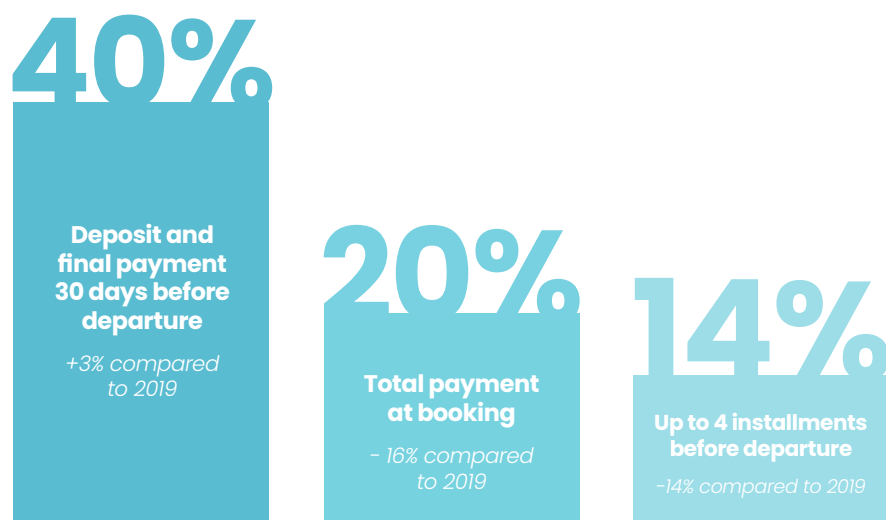
There has been a slight **2% decrease in Destination Management Companies that offer Future Travel Credit** instead of refunds.



## FLEXIBILITY IS KEY: PAYMENT PLANS ARE ON THE RISE

Destination Management Company's customers are seizing the broader array of payment options that has surged in the past couple of years.

Compared to 2019, this is how preferred payment plans have changed:



For 2023, **20% of DMC's travelers are choosing to pay in more than 4 and up to 8 installments** before their departure day; this wasn't a popular option back in 2019, with 0% requests.

**56% of Destination Management Companies expect this tendency to increase** or evolve into new alternatives like "Book Now, Pay Later" as 2023 unfolds.

## SEEKING EXPERTISE: BOOKINGS THROUGH ADVISORS AND AGENCIES ARE ON THE RISE

For Destination Management Companies, **direct bookings have increased by 18%**.

Nevertheless, the winner within booking channels is still Travel Agencies and Advisors. **57% of their 2023 bookings came from this source**, revealing a 7% increase compared to 2019.

The ERP and OTA channels saw a **26% decrease in bookings for 2023**.

## FLEXIBILITY IS KING: PAYMENT PLANS ARE ON THE RISE

	Cash or mailed cheques	Credit Card payment
2019	40%	40%
2023	30%	50%

We can observe the same tendency as other markets in favor of more current and convenient payment methods.

## THE DMC SEGMENT IS EXPERIENCING SHORTER BOOKING TIMEFRAMES

Booking timeframes have also decreased significantly. **In 2019, 56% of bookings were made 6 months or more before the departure date.**

In **2023**, this timeframe has been reduced to **4 to 6 months, representing 60% of DMC bookings.**

**50% of bookings are made within 1 to 3 months before the departure date**, representing a 28% increase.

## WHAT ARE DMC CLIENTS ADDING TO THEIR TRIPS?

Back in 2019, **87% of Destination Management Companies offered their customers to personalize their programs via add-ons.** 80% offer this option on their booking or itinerary pages so clients can choose how to enhance their experience.

For 2023, **100% of respondents offer this option** based on increased demand. 80% of DMC's have seen an increase in customization requests for their tours.

These are the most requested add-on options:

**80%**

**Special Activities and Excursions**

*+13% compared to 2019*

**50%**

**Private Guides**

*+28% compared to 2019*

**30%**

**Meal Plans**

*-14% compared to 2019*

Also, **40% of travelers request extra days** to be added to their program.

## DEDICATED AND EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES: SMALLER GROUP SIZES FOR PERSONALIZATION

**70% of Destination Management Companies carry out their tours with less than 10 travelers** as people seek more personalized and dedicated experiences. This represents a **30% increase compared to 2019.**

Based on demand and market stability, **56% of DMC's have raised their prices between 10 and 25%** since 2019. **33% have only raised their prices up to 10%.**

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS: HOW DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANIES PERCEIVE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Destination Management Companies **expect to grow their revenue by an average of 57% by 2025.**  
Contributing to their growth, we can pinpoint the following:

**40%**

Increasing the depth of the tours and packages offered to customers.

**30%**

Increasing traveler demand for tours instead of all-inclusive packages.

**88%**

Increasing sales and marketing outreach.

As for challenges ahead, DMC's considered these as their main concerns:

**89%**

Recession, inflation, economic slowdown, ongoing pandemic, and extreme weather conditions based on climate change

**17%**

Operational issues derived from staffing shortages, supply crisis, or accommodation availability

**17%**

Inefficient front-end customer experiences, including automated marketing strategies, booking and payment gateways, client management, and customer support.



## Travel Advisors:

# What Does 2023 Have In Store?

### NEVER STOP EXPLORING: WHAT'S THE AGE OF TRAVEL ADVISORS' CLIENTS?

**50% of Travel Advisor's clients for 2023 trips are aged 31 to 45 years old.** This represents an 11% increase compared to 2019 numbers and a shift in the tendency.

Back in 2019, **travelers aged 46 to 60 were Travel Advisor's main clients;** nonetheless, this segment **decreased to 44% for 2023.**

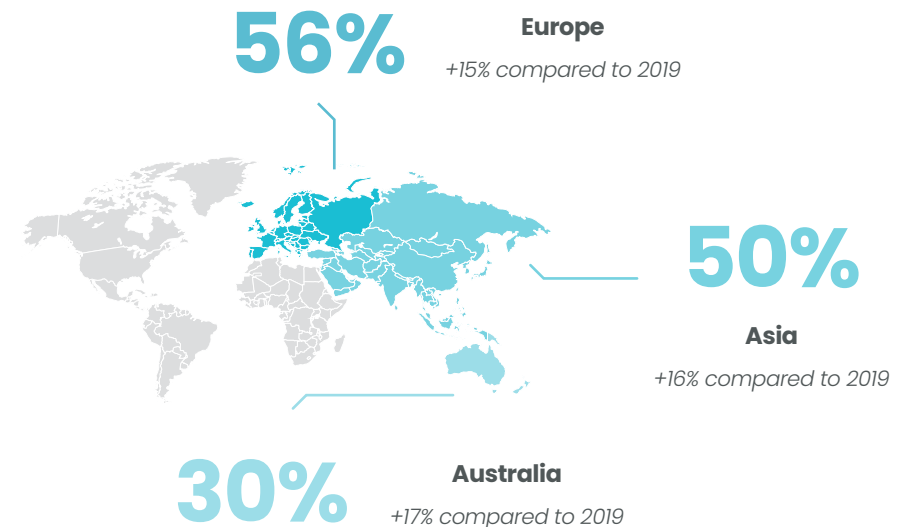
Other age segments that saw **an increase for 2023 are travelers aged 61+,** with 11% of bookings. This shows a 6% increase compared to 2019.

### SMALLER PARTIES: AVERAGE GROUP SIZES FOR THE TRAVEL ADVISOR SEGMENT

The most popular **group size with Travel Advisor's clients has 10 or less travelers (50%).**

### LOOKING FOR WONDERS: ON-DEMAND REGIONS FOR TRAVEL IN 2023

There's a slight shift in destination popularity for Travel Advisors in 2023, with a few regions on the rise and others taking a secondary role in travel experiences.

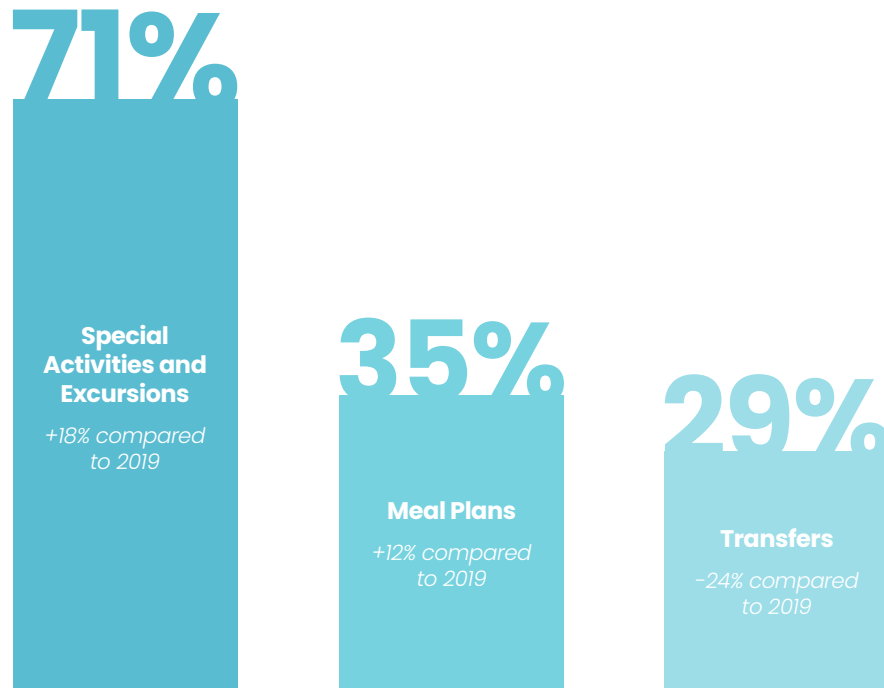


A region that has suffered **a significant decrease in popularity is South America,** which used to boast the second spot in popularity with 41% in 2019. Now, for 2023, **which is sitting at 22%**

## TAILOR-MADE EXPERIENCES FOR TRAVELERS ARE HERE TO STAY

Customization is still rising, with **94% of Travel Advisors offering the option to enrich a tour via add-ons. 67% of Travel Professionals state that they have seen increased demand** for these additional trip components compared to 2019.

The most popular add-ons for Travel Advisors' clients are



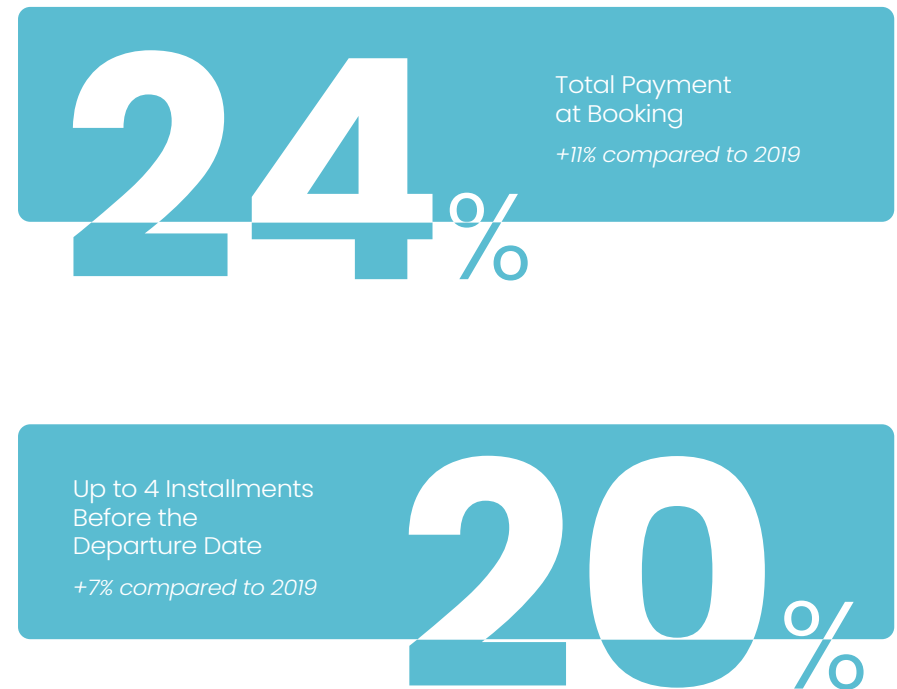
**47% of travelers are requesting additional days for their travel experiences in 2023.**

## HOW ARE TRAVELERS PAYING THEIR ADVISORS?

Travelers who book through Travel Advisors have been **more inclined to the deposit + final payment 30 days before departure date combination since 2019.**

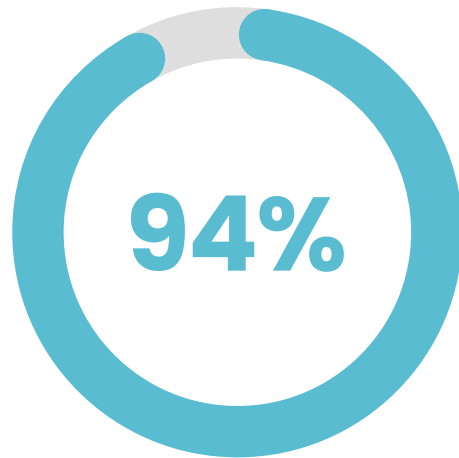
**53% of travelers choose this option** when paying their advisor for their tour, **boasting a 13% increase in demand since 2019.**

Other payment methods that are on the rise represent two sides of the same coin:

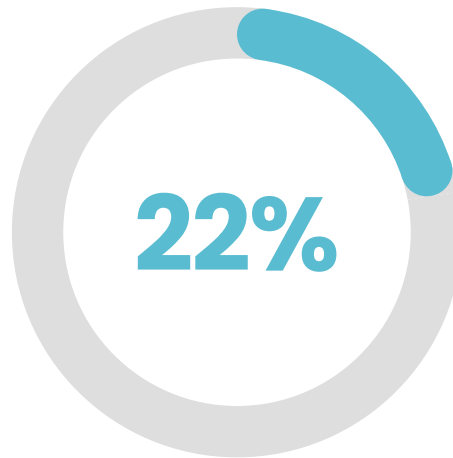


## HOW ARE TRAVELERS PAYING FOR THEIR TRIPS?

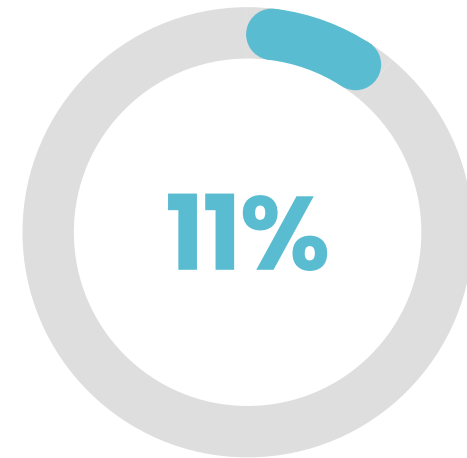
Three payment methods are the most used by Travel Advisor's clients:



**Credit Cards**  
(including AMEX)



**Debit Account Transactions**



**Cash or Mailed Cheques**

Credit Card transactions **increased by 16%** and Debit Account Transactions **by 5%**. Interestingly enough, Travel Advisor's clients **seem not to be aligned with other segments' trends**.

This payment option had a **5% increase in demand for 2023 tours**.

**61%**

**Of Travel Advisors agree that these preferences will not change anytime soon since their customers are traditional payers.**

## REFUNDS AND CANCELLATIONS: HOW ARE TRAVEL ADVISORS COPING?

**56% of Travel Advisors processed less than 5 refunds per month in 2022;** nevertheless, this number has seen a decrease since 2019. Back then, **this segment's metric was 61%.**

What happened? There's an **increase in Advisors who are processing between 6 and 10 refunds per month** (17%, 11% more than in 2019).

The tendency to offer Future Travel Credits has decreased over the years; nevertheless, it still has a strong presence within this market, with **22% of Travel Advisors using this as an alternative to refunds.**

### What's The Average Booking Timeframe?

**50% of Travel Advisor's clients still book their tours six months or more in advance.**

Bookings made **one to three months in advance** are slowly rising, presenting a **5% increase from their 2019 numbers (17%).**

**72% of Travel Advisors expect their clients to book further in advance** to seize more convenient payment plans.

## HOW HAVE PRICES CHANGED SINCE 2019?

44%

Of Travel Advisors have raised their prices by **less than 10%** since 2019.

28%

Have increased their prices by **less than 25%** but **more than 10%.**

17%

Have **not increased their prices** at all.

## WHAT'S THE STATUS OF TRAVELER CAPACITY FOR 2023

**51% of Travel Advisors started accepting bookings for 2023 in 2022.** 17% are already surpassing a 75% traveler capacity for their tours.

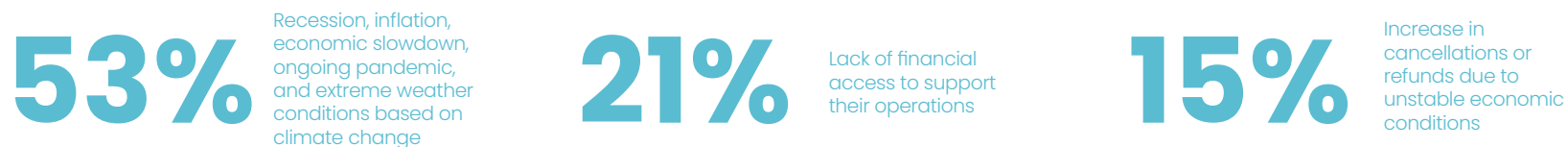
While **47% of Travel Advisors expect their tours to fill throughout 2023,** 41% are unsure if they will attain this goal.

## THE ROAD AHEAD: WHAT DOES GROWTH LOOK LIKE FOR TRAVEL ADVISORS?

Travel advisors expect their **revenue to grow by an average of 71% by 2025**.  
They'll employ these strategies to reach this ambitious goal:



However, Travel Advisors know there might be some challenges along the road.  
These are the main obstacles they have identified on their path to growth.



# Specialty And Custom Operators: A Roadmap For Growth

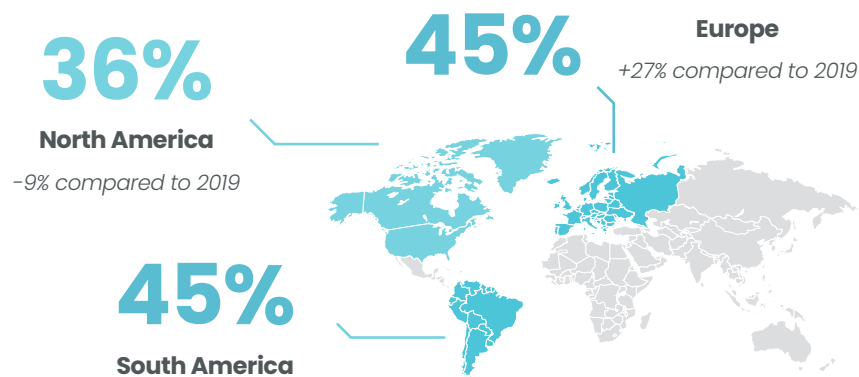
## WHO IS THE CUSTOM OPERATOR CLIENT?

**64% of Custom Operators' travelers are aged 46 to 60 years old.** This percentage is **10% higher than it was in 2019.**

The age group that follows is conformed by **travelers aged 31 to 45, with 36% of the bookings.** However, this shows a **9% decrease** compared to 2019 data.

## POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR CUSTOM OPERATOR TRAVELERS

Travelers within this segment are keeping an eye on Europe for their 2023 adventures, while commonly popular regions like North America are slowly decreasing in popularity.

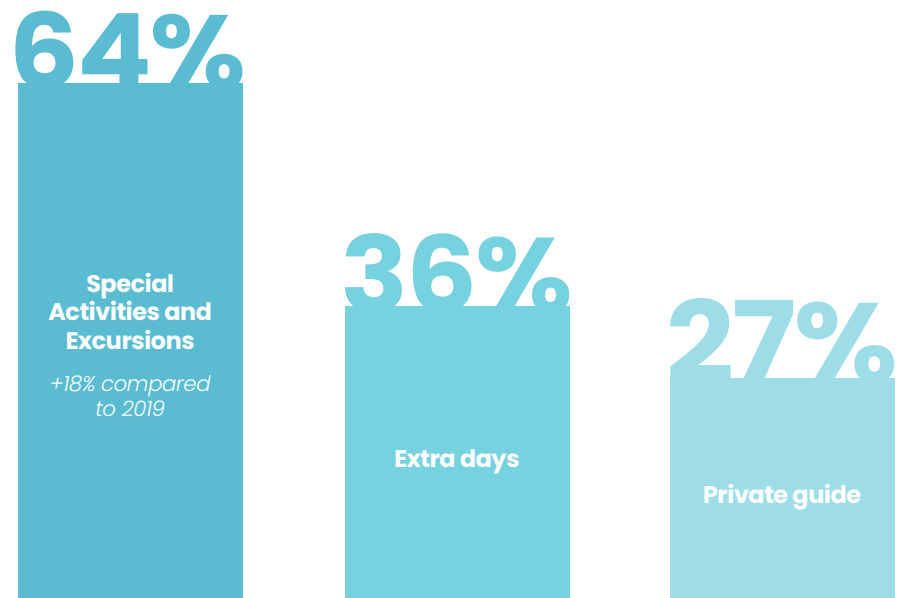


Asia is starting to gain the attention of this market segment, holding 9% of travelers' requests. There was no demand for this destination back in 2019.

## THE IDEAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: HOW ARE TRAVELERS CUSTOMIZING THEIR TOURS?

**45% of add-ons are being offered through booking pages or itinerary descriptions** on Specialty and Custom Operators' websites. Nevertheless, **27% are focusing on securing the initial sale and then offering program enhancements through upselling strategies.**

The most popular customization components are:



## THE BOOKING PROCESS: PAYMENT PLANS, METHODS, AND CHANNELS?

**63% of travelers prefer to give a deposit and make final payment 30 days before departure.** Interestingly enough, this payment plan has **decreased by 8% in popularity compared to 2019**, making room for other non-traditional methods to attract travelers.

**29%** of Custom Operators' clients prefer other options like **"Book Now, Pay Later"**. **25%** of travelers prefer to pay for their trips in up to **4 installments before the departure date**.

## WHAT'S THE PREFERRED BOOKING CHANNEL?

**50% of bookings for Specialty and Custom Operators come directly through their website**, yet, this booking channel has suffered a **10% decrease in popularity when compared to 2019**.

The **second strongest booking channel** for Custom Operators for 2023 breaks the tendencies of other segments within the travel industry. **30% of bookings are being placed by phone**, representing an **18% increase compared to 2019**.

Finally, the third most popular booking channel is **Travel Agencies or Advisors, with 25% of bookings** (+10% since 2019).

Another shift we can observe is the **decrease in the OTA and ERP channels for booking**. In 2019, these channels enabled 14% of bookings. Now, for 2023, there's **no existing demand here**.

## HOW ARE TRAVELERS PAYING FOR THEIR TRIPS?

**Credit card payments are still the preferred payment method** for Custom Operators' clients, **with 73% opting for this type of transaction**.

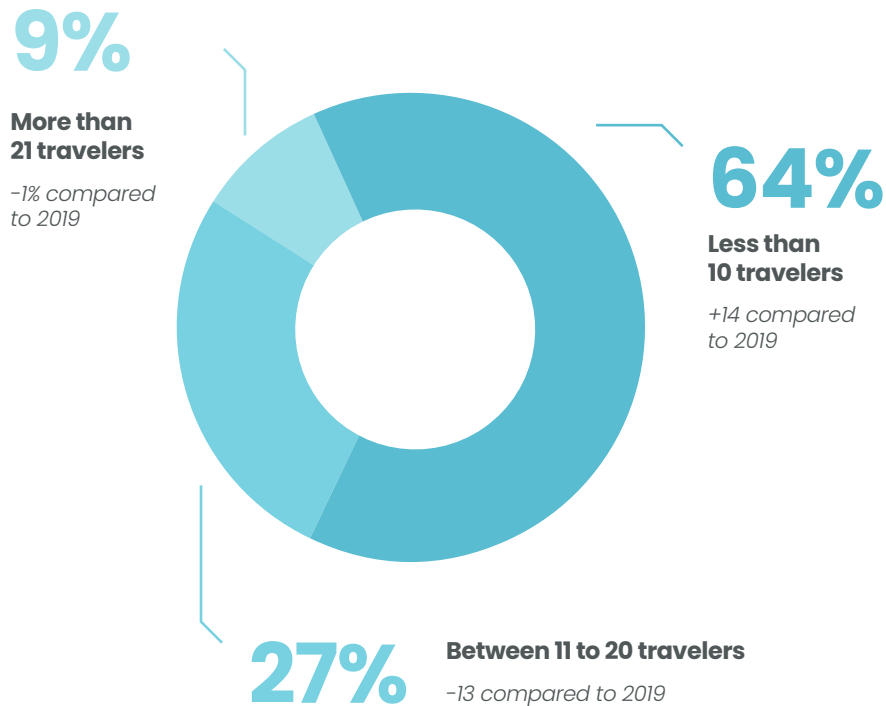
Both **Paypal payments and cash or mailed cheques have an 18% demand** in this travel segment.

**82%**

**Of Operators do not expect this pattern to change because their travelers are traditional payers**

## SMALLER GROUPS ARE ON THE RISE: HOW ARE CUSTOM OPERATORS MEETING DEMAND?

Custom Operators' customers prefer smaller group sizes in favor of more personalized experiences on the ground.



Operators are steadily closing the gap in their traveler capacity for tours in 2023. **45% are between 50 and 75% traveler capacity, and 27% are already over 75%.**

**91% of Custom Operators are confident that they'll fill their trips throughout the year.**

## WHAT'S THE AVERAGE BOOKING TIMEFRAME?

Back in 2019, **50% of travelers booked their experiences one to three months before their departure date.** Now, only 45% do.

The new booking trend among Custom Operators' clients is to book **four to six months before the departure date, with 55% of travelers doing so.**

There are mixed feelings among operators, with **50% claiming that they expect timeframes to reduce** to avoid cancellations and refunds and the other **50% leaning towards increased booking timeframes** for clients to make the most out of payment plans.

## REFUNDS ARE SLOWLY RETURNING AS TRAVEL STABILIZES

82% of **Specialty and Custom Operators are offering refunds for 2023, with 64% processing less than 5 refunds per month.**

**18% are still using Future Travel Credit** as an alternative to refunds; however, there's been a **12% decrease in operators offering this option** compared to 2019.

**HOW HAVE PRICES CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?**

**45%** of Specialty and Custom Operators have raised their prices by less than 10% since 2019.

**36%** have raised their prices by less than 25 but more than 10% since 2019.



## NAVIGATING GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITIES

Specialty and Custom Operators expect to **grow their revenue by 38% by 2025**.  
This is how they plan to shorten the gap to this goal:

# 56%

Increasing traveler demand for tours instead of all-inclusive packages

# 25%

Increasing the number of departure dates offered to clients

# 16%

Increasing the depth of the tours and packages offered to customers

As Custom Operators get ready to make the most out of 2023, they have also **identified what could be a potential threat** to reaching their growth goals in the long run



**89%** Recession, inflation, economic slowdown, ongoing pandemic, and extreme weather conditions based on climate change

**22%** Operational issues derived from staffing shortages, supply crisis, or accommodation availability

**15%** Lack of financial access to support their operations

# What Can We Take Away? Part One.

## It's All About Personalization

### WHO TO APPEAL TRAVEL OFFERINGS TO?

#### WOMEN

Women booking more travel than men; women account for 60% of all tour operator bookings through WeTravel's platform, more than 250,000 bookings from women in 2022.



"Heart of Travel is a proudly womxn-owned and operated travel company. We could not be happier to see a steady increase in bookings by female travelers since we opened our doors in 2016. In 2022 alone, more than 77% of our travelers were womxn and we've recently aligned with other womxn-owned travel companies, such as Girls LOVE Travel, to offer womxn-only tours that have been carefully curated for small groups to experience destinations including Guatemala, Cuba, México and Ecuador. We look forward to welcoming what we project to be 500+ new female travelers into our community in 2023," *Chelsea Glass, Heart of Travel Co-Founder and Travel Curator*

#### TRAVELER AGE IS MATURING

Average age of travelers is slowly increasing to 35+, the average age was nearer to 30 in 2019.

### HOW TO HANDLE BOOKING OPTIONS?

#### SHORTER LEAD TIME AVAILABILITY OR DISCOUNTS FOR FURTHER LEAD TIME

Booking preferences are changing - less lead time, more options for customizing tours.

More than 15% of all tours are booked in October and November

**90% of wellness travel experiences and retreats** can be customized by travelers via **add-ons in 2023**. This represents a 14% increase from 2022 numbers.

**72% of wellness businesses promote these add-ons on their booking page** for travelers to explore their customization options from the get-go.

#### OFFER TOP DESTINATIONS

For tour operators: Top-booked destinations shifting from Europe to Latin America. Domestic U.S. still strong in post-pandemic travel

For DMCs: Based on travelers' demand, the ever-popular **Europe has decreased by 10% from its 2019 numbers (20%)**.

On the other hand, we've seen an **impressive increase in demand for travel experiences based in Asia, with a 20% increase from 2019 (40%)**. Another interesting surge comes from **Australia**, which has **amassed a substantial 10% demand for 2023 from scratch**.

#### INCREASE DIRECT BOOKING OPTIONS WITH INTERNAL STAFF AND WEBSITE FUNCTIONALITY

60% of all tour operator bookings come direct, but higher reliance on travel agents/advisors for bookings in 2023, less reliance on OTAs for bookings in 2023.

**Over 60% of bookings** for wellness trips and retreats in 2023 **were made directly on the seller's website**, revealing the **same pattern as in 2019**.

#### OPTIMISM AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH

**62% of Wellness travel companies believe tours will fill in 2023; more than 75% of tour operators say their tours are already 75% booked for 2023; 40% of DMC respondents are already surpassing a 75% traveler capacity** for programs offered in 2022 with departure dates in 2023; **89% of Destination Management Companies are confident that their programs will reach their maximum capacity by 2023**.

## What Can We Take Away? Part Two.

# Travelers Expect Customization

### HOW TO HANDLE RISING COSTS AND INFLATION?

#### INCREASING PRICING IS NATURAL, BUT START SLOWLY

Tour costs are rising, slowly, with most operators increasing prices by 10% in 2023.

**48% of wellness travel businesses have increased their tour prices by less than 10%** in 2023 compared to 2019; **33% have increased their prices by less than 25% but more than 10%.**

#### OFFER FLEXIBILITY WITH YOUR PAYMENT OPTIONS, YOU'LL SEE BETTER CONVERSION

Customizing payment options will help business increase revenue - more than 60% of tour operators expect more reliance on installment, book now, pay later and options like crypto payments.

More than 28% of year-to-date Wellness travelers **expect to pay for their tours in up to 4 installments before departure.**

More than 60% of travelers are purchasing tours by Credit Card, up significantly from 2019, which was higher interact payments.

#### REFUNDS ARE BEING OFFERED, BUT BUSINESSES AREN'T SEEING AN UPTICK IN USAGE; AS A VALUE PROPOSITION, OFFER THE REFUND

More than 80% of tour operators offering refunds in 2023 than 2019, up more than 10% compared to 2019

Back in **2019, 62% of wellness travel businesses offered refunds.** Now, for 2023, we can see a **4% increase in refund processing** as an **alternative to providing future travel credit.**

**58% of businesses process less than 5 five refunds per month,** and 100% aren't expecting an increase during 2023.

**FEAR OF RECESSION MAKING TRAVEL BUSINESS OWNERS WEARY OF 2023 REVENUE, BUT MOST BUSINESS OWNERS EXPECT MORE THAN 50% REVENUE INCREASE BY 2025**

# We Are WeTravel

Founded in 2016, WeTravel was built as a platform to support travel businesses by digitizing and simplifying the travel booking process. Now used by more than 3,000 travel companies—to transact with nearly 500,000 travelers and thousands of suppliers annually—the business has revolutionized how the travel industry manages their businesses with a suite of integrated SaaS and FinTech solutions that fit into an intuitive platform.

For further information visit

 **wetravel.com**

Or email [info@wetravel.com](mailto:info@wetravel.com)

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