

Special Edition | September 2021

TOURISM 360°

Health & Wellness



tourism
northernireland



Section 1:

Wellness in a Global Context

Health and wellness have long been a focus for consumers, with many seeking ways to pursue healthier lifestyles through diet, hobbies or other everyday choices. However, the range of new challenges associated with COVID-19 – including the virus itself, remote working, social distancing, travel restrictions and enforced lockdowns – have given the topic greater prominence.

With [McKinsey](#) reporting that 79% of consumers worldwide now think wellness is important, it's clear the pandemic has given people a new understanding of the need to maintain and enhance their physical and mental health.

What is Health & Wellness

The terms “wellness”, “wellbeing” and “happiness” are often used interchangeably, but there are subtle and important differences between them. ‘Wellness’ is defined as, *“the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.”* ‘Wellness’ is about more than physical health, with the following aspects contributing to a broader understanding of the term:



Physical



Mental



Emotional



Spiritual



Social



Environmental

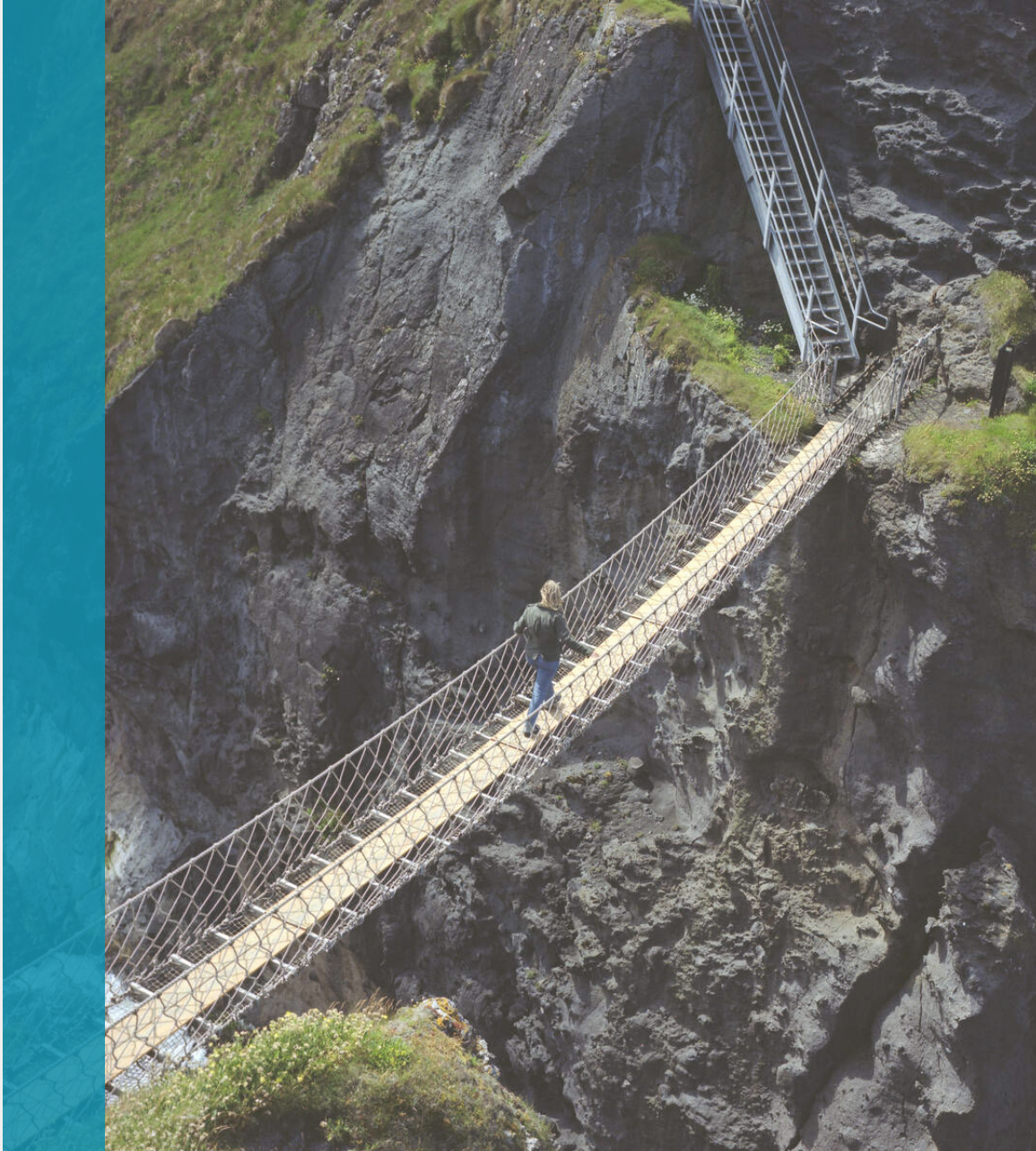
Wellness is distinguished by not referring to a static state of being (i.e., being happy, in good health, or a state of wellbeing). ‘Wellbeing and happiness’ have a more predominant mental/emotional dimension and are associated with feelings of satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment.



Tourism NI's most recent [consumer sentiment research](#) shows that consumers continue to feel much more content engaging in outdoor activities.

Imagery depicting, green, open spaces, walking, hiking and outdoor activity will resonate across all target markets.

Utilise [Tourism NI's Content Pool](#) to maximise impact in your messaging.



Section 2:

Tourism for health and wellness

Practical health considerations will likely remain a priority for travellers in the near future, as expectations around enhanced hygiene measures will linger even after the pandemic ends. But looking after health and wellness is also in itself an important motivator for travel, and tourism can bring a range of health benefits.

By 2022, the Global Wellness Institute predicts the market for 'wellness travel' will reach **\$919bn**, accounting for 18% of all global tourism.



Practical health considerations will remain a key priority. Tourism NI's latest consumer sentiment research found **69%** of travellers would be more inclined to visit a tourism business with the **'We're Good to Go' Mark**. Ensure this mark is clearly visible in your marketing campaigns. More information on the WGTG Mark can be found [here](#).

Benefits of Tourism



Getting away from it all

Escaping the everyday routine of work and home is good for our mental health – even more so after extended periods in lockdown. A change of pace and the opportunity to spend time in new places, whether in urban environments or among breath-taking natural backdrops, can rejuvenate the mind and alleviate stress.



Being active

Travelling takes people outdoors. Whether visiting local attractions, trying new activities or simply sightseeing, visitors have the opportunity to be active throughout the day, improving fitness and contributing to better sleep.



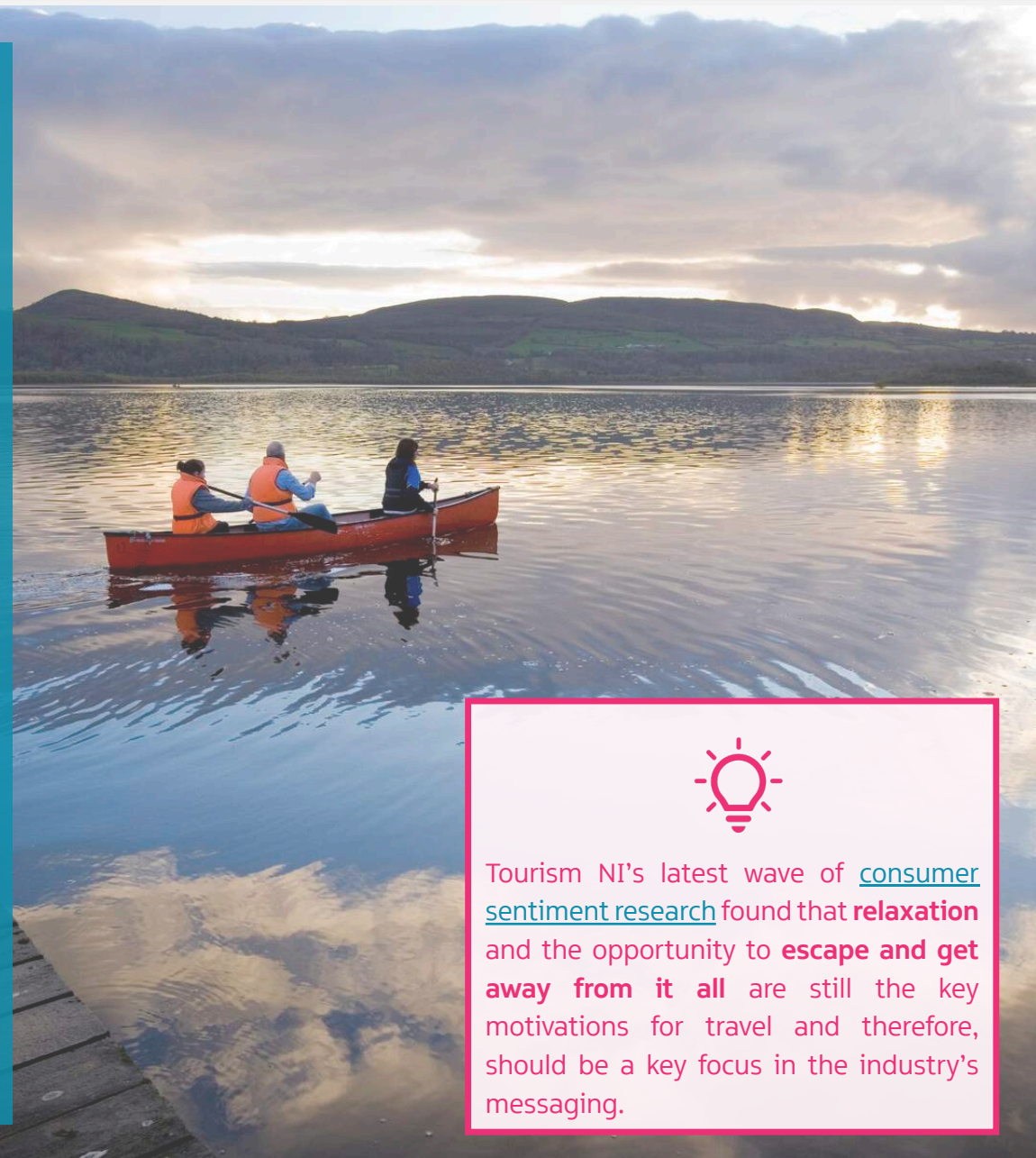
(Re)connection

Travel allows the time and opportunity to reconnect with friends and loved ones – a crucial missing factor during the pandemic – as well as the chance to try new things and connect with different people, places and cultures.



Regeneration

As well as benefiting visitors, travel and tourism can allow destinations, communities and environments to thrive too. Travellers are increasingly conscious of tourism's potentially negative impacts and want to see how travel benefits host communities as well as themselves.



Tourism NI's latest wave of [consumer sentiment research](#) found that **relaxation** and the opportunity to **escape and get away from it all** are still the key motivations for travel and therefore, should be a key focus in the industry's messaging.



Highlighting the local food and drink offer and related experiences will continue to differentiate Northern Ireland in a very competitive market.

The health & wellness traveller

Many tourist activities are already wellness-orientated, such as visiting a spa resort, or going on a mindfulness retreat. But the pursuit of health and wellness cuts across visitor segments as tourists increasingly seek to **integrate health and wellness elements into their trips in multiple ways**. For some visitors, this might mean choosing a hotel that offers healthy menus, optimised sleeping arrangements or fitness facilities. Other wellness-conscious visitors might look for sustainably sourced dining experiences or gentle walks in natural settings, while thrill-seekers will want to throw themselves into unforgettable outdoor experiences.

Types of wellness-related tourism experiences



Adventure:

For those keen to try something new and a bit different, activities on water or land – from cycling to kayaking to bouldering – offer exhilarating experiences that boost fitness and are also by nature socially-distanced.



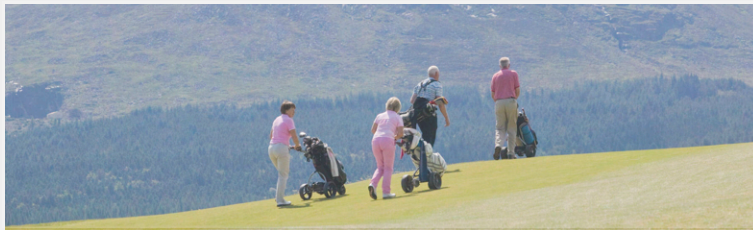
Digital Detox:

Unplugging is a rare luxury in the era of working from home, so the idea of switching off and slowing life down, perhaps while on a mindfulness, yoga or Pilates retreat or while glamping/camping, can be hugely appealing.



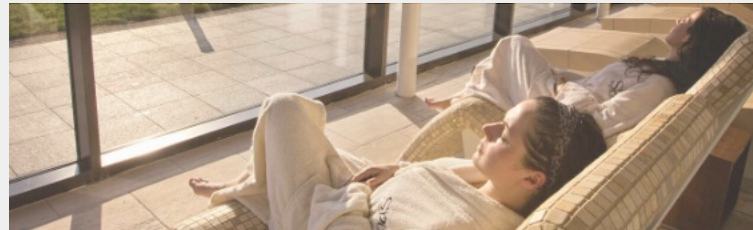
Food & Drink:

Travellers increasingly want to enjoy new culinary experiences while also maintaining their healthy lifestyles. This could translate into increased interest in alternative diets such as vegetarian, vegan or gluten free, and/or demand for organic or locally sourced ingredients.



Golf:

For many people, golf is a great way to reduce stress, and while players may not feel like they're getting an intense workout, teeing off can provide health-benefiting physical activity and safe social interaction in a low-risk environment.



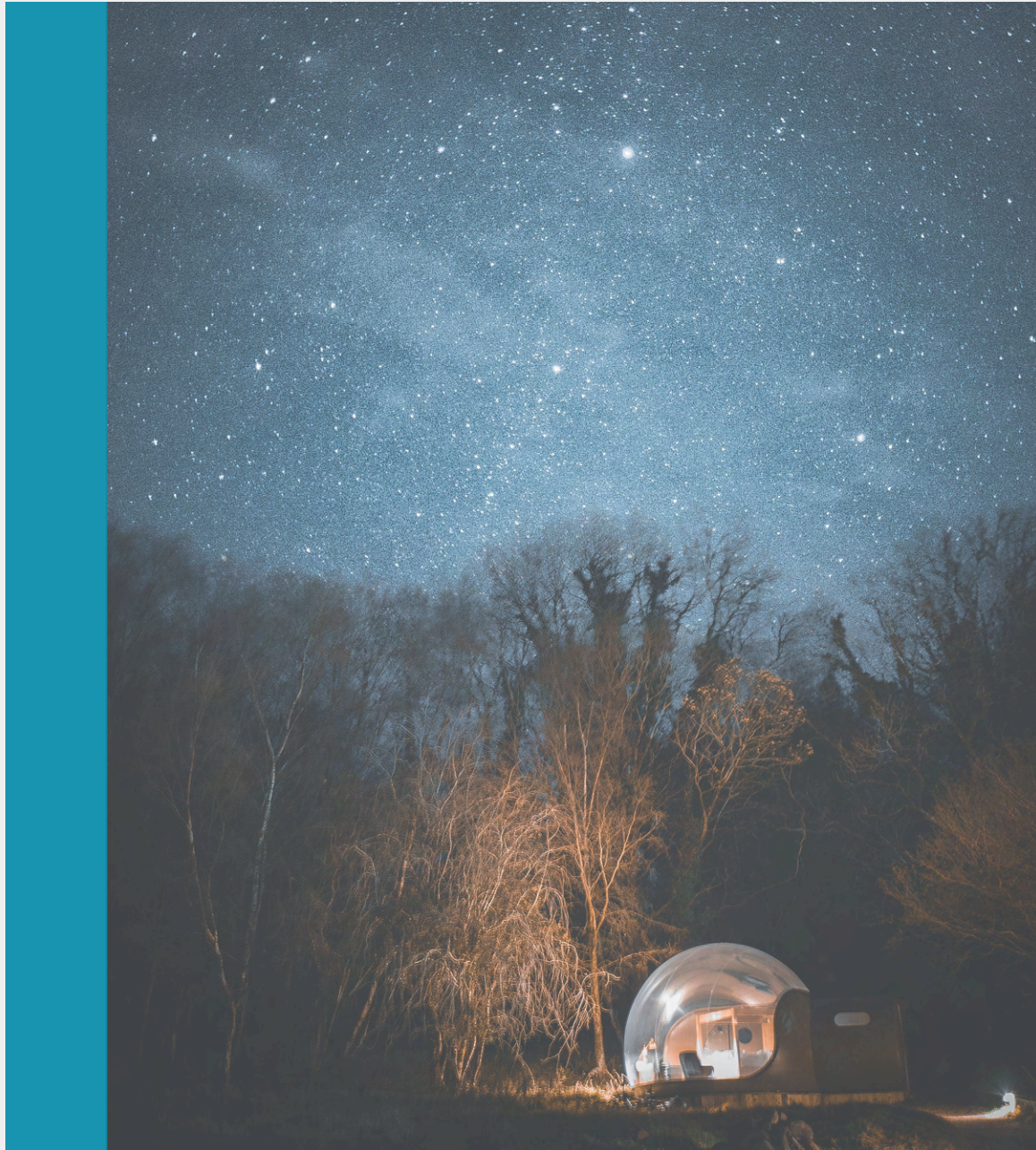
Spas:

Spending time in a spa is an ideal way to relax and unwind, away from busy everyday schedules. Stress-busting treatments can help people feel relaxed and soothe sore joints and muscles, with benefits lasting for days after.



Walking & Hiking:

From easy-going strolls in parks that can be enjoyed with the whole family to more challenging treks, taking the time to explore a destination on foot can be both an energising and a mindful experience.



Section 3:

Industry Insights

1.

Wellness experiences in NI should be built around our unique locations, scenery and sense of place. This will be our hook and is what will give us stand out and differentiate us in a very competitive, growing market. We will succeed in this market segment by taking global health and wellbeing practices such as Swedish saunas, Shinrin-yoku Japanese Forest Bathing or Thai yoga practice, giving them a distinctive Embrace a Giant Spirit twist, and fully immersing them in our unique landscape and sustainability credentials.

***Finn Lough (left)** has capitalised on its location on the edge of the Fermanagh Lakes, to create a world class wellness experience that is distinctively of the place. For further information see www.finnlough.com.*

Industry Insights

2.

Your visitors will expect the highest level of customer service, which is highly personalised to them, yet discreet and unobtrusive. Staff training will be a critical success factor, a “make or break” element which needs to be carefully planned and considered alongside the experience delivery.

Customer communication and engagement is a vital element of your Customer Service Plan. Clear explanation of the offer and what to expect, what is included in the basic price and what is additional, any specific terminology, your accreditations, degree of difficulty and even simple instructions of what to bring with you, will contribute to the overall enjoyment of the experience. Consider how you will seamlessly communicate across your website, social media and other communication platforms. Don't presume anything – customer preconceptions or misconceptions will translate to a poor review and negative feedback.

***Ann Ward**, an experienced meditation and wellness practitioner based in the Ring of Gullion, set up Xhale to deliver immersive, mindfulness experiences, delivering courses and retreats using the gifts of meditation and nature all over NI. On her website, Ann clearly and simply explains the practices of Shinrin-yoku (Japanese Forest Bathing) and other mindful and immersive experiences on offer. These are supplemented by regular, informative blogs. For further information see www.xhale.biz and [click here](#) for details of Ann's Embrace A Giant Spirit Awakening your Senses experience.*



Industry Insights

3.

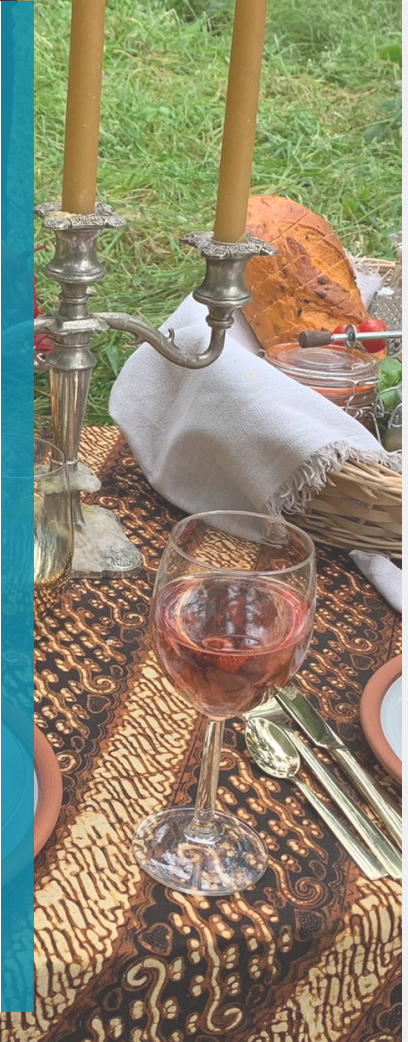
Wellness experiences must be seamless at all stages of the customer journey. Carefully think through every element of your offer, from the welcome drink, the décor, the daily itinerary and food offering, and consider how they will cumulatively contribute to the overall experience and the unique feeling of wellbeing you have set out to deliver. This type of experience requires meticulous attention to detail and an in-depth and intuitive understanding of your customer needs and motivations.



Other destinations are already successfully harnessing the wellness trend. Have a look at www.visitfinland.com/wellbeing to see how this is presented and packaged at a national and local business level.

4.

Food and drink are fundamental elements of the wellness experience i.e. will you offer wild berry drinks, local spring water or healthy snacks after activities? Breakfast is elevated to the most important meal of the day, with the evening meal part of the night-time ritual in preparation for sleep. Customers will expect locally produced, seasonal dishes served in unique locations, with an emphasis on quality over quantity – this is as much a sensory as a taste experience.



Burrenmore Nest is a new luxury forest wellness experience, set to launch in Autumn 2021, situated in the forest in the historic Downhill Estate grounds and Mussenden Temple, in the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). As part of their experience development, Burrenmore Nest are planning a collaboration with Tones, another local business offering gourmet bohemian picnics, to create a unique forest dining experience. For further information see [@burrenmorenest](https://twitter.com/burrenmorenest) and [@tones](https://twitter.com/tones).

Industry Insights

5.

Stunning photographic imagery and immersive videography will be your most powerful selling tools. Investment in this vital element of your marketing mix will reap huge dividends and will be particularly important at the launch and growth stage of your business. Work closely with your chosen provider to ensure they can effectively capture your vision and your USPs. A library of daytime, night-time and seasonal imagery is vital, with sound and lighting important elements to get right. Spend time researching and talking to the growing number of providers, request to see previous work and follow up references to ensure they are the best “fit” for you.

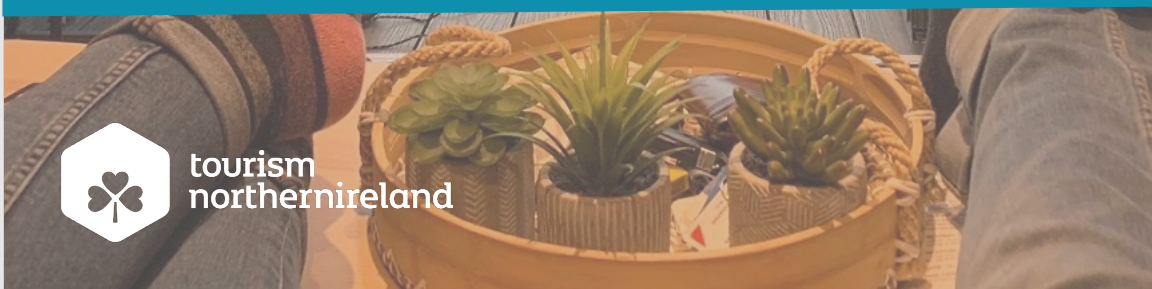
***Finn Lough (right)** is a very good example of how stunning photography and imagery, which appeal to the heart and all the senses, has been harnessed to tell the story and differentiate the experience. The offer is regularly updated with new packages and experiences, tailored to the seasons. For further information see www.finnlough.com.*





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



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