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The results are in:

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN EVER

To explore what MICE professionals really value when it comes to booking destinations and experiences, *C&IT* teamed up with Business Events Perth on a survey. This is what you told us...

With the world and events industry fully opened up again in the wake of the pandemic, the needs of event planners are evolving. Rising operating costs, tight budgets, demanding delegates and the increasing importance of sustainability means that event planners are

having to be more considered than ever with their choices.

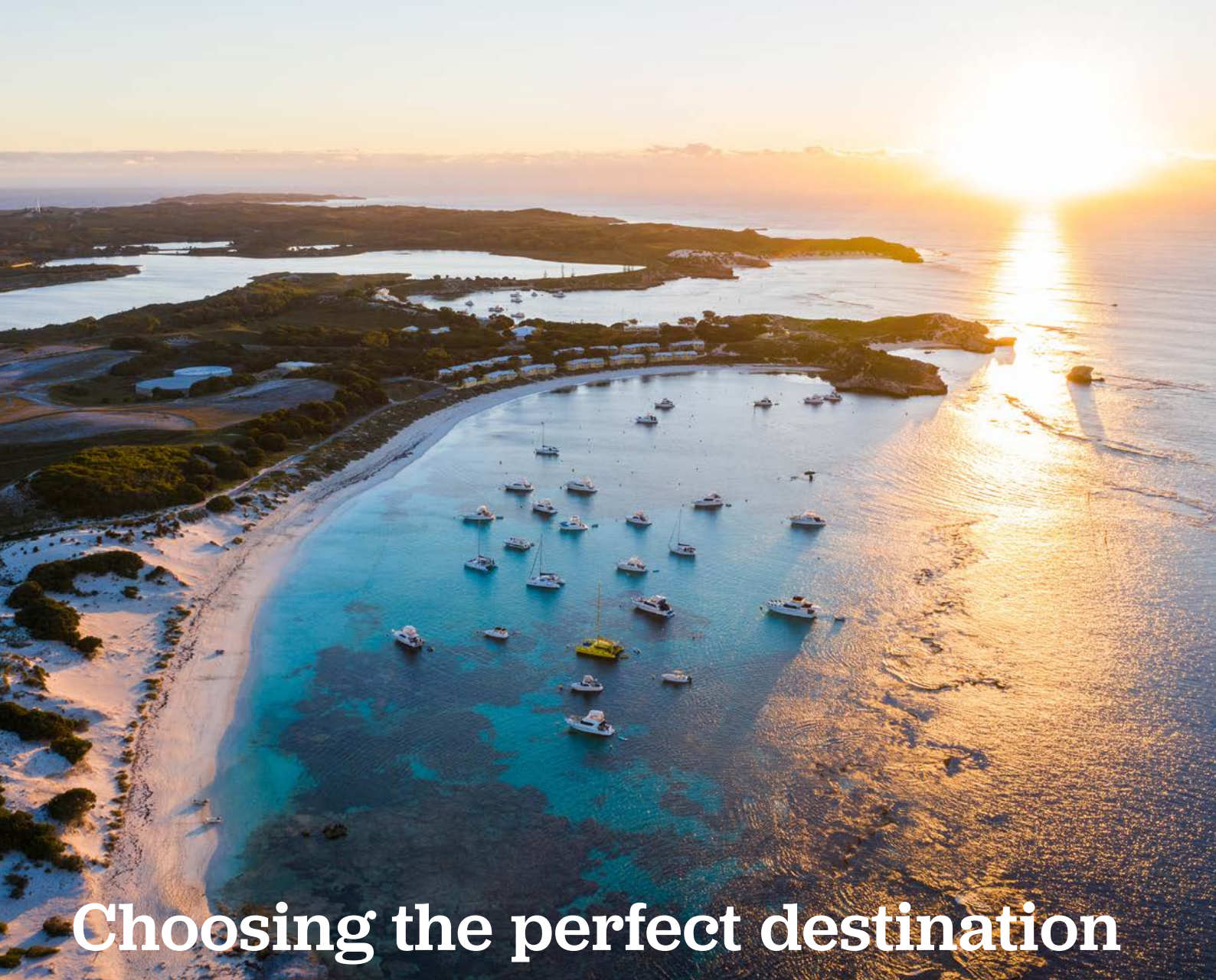
To understand what event planners are looking for around destinations and experiences, C&IT partnered with Business Events Perth on an exclusive survey of MICE professionals. Here is what we found...



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Choosing the perfect destination

When we asked event planners what they considered to be the most important factors when choosing a destination for an event, ease of travel and desirability of the destination city came out on top. Other important considerations are affordability, desirability of the specific venue and desirability of the destination country.

While sustainability was not ranked top by any respondents, it was chosen as the third most important factor by event planners. This suggests sustainability is becoming an ever more important issue and is a key decision-making criteria. "Sustainability is an important focus with our event planners today," agrees Gareth Martin, CEO, Business Events Perth.

"There are myriad ways to be sustainable... It needs to be about more than just what we do; it's about how we think"

As an example of how this need for more environmentally-friendly events is being met in Western Australia, Martin adds that the state has a commitment to leading sustainability practices.

"This includes comprehensive work by government and industry across a diverse range of planning, project and policy areas to deliver development that facilitates sustainable environmental, social and economic outcomes," Martin says.

Seasoned event planner Tom Branton says sustainability is "hugely" important to him personally, and needs to be genuinely embedded in every stage of the events process. "There are myriad ways to be sustainable: hired assets, reduced travel, carbon offsetting and so on," he says.

"It needs to be about more than just what we do; it's about how we think. All the way through the planning stage, at every step, we need to be conscious of the decisions we make and how they'll impact the wider world."

The TOP 5 most important factors when choosing an event destination

- 1** Ease of travel for delegates
- 2** Desirability of destination city
- 3** Affordability of destination
- 4** Desirability of venues
- 5** Desirability of destination country



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We asked survey respondents to expand on some of the specific attributes that matter to them when choosing an event destination. Here is some of what they said:

“Safety and public transport infrastructure”

“Walkable”

“Local knowledge and reputation for excellence”

“Experiences on offer”

“5* dining options”

“Gastronomy, showcaseability, culture or heritage”

“Activities”

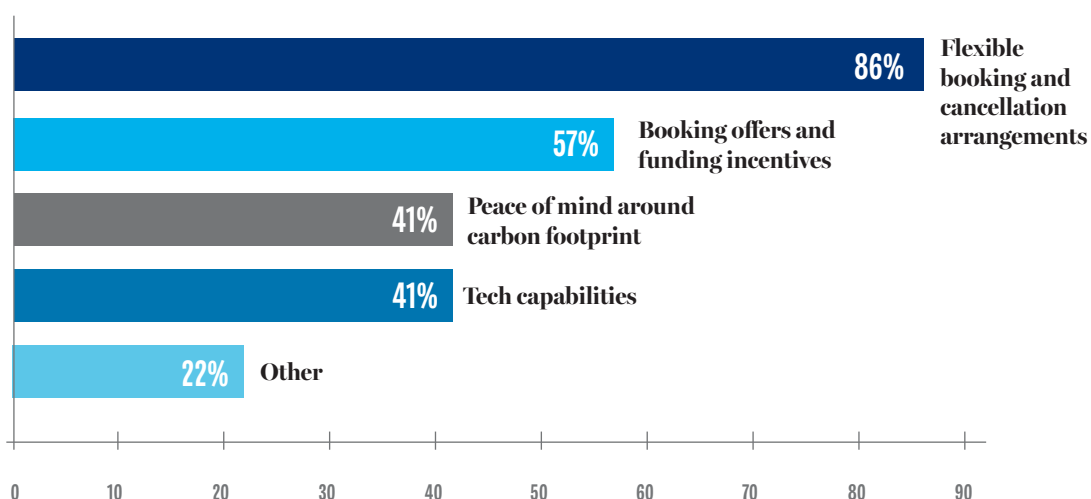
Event planners are increasingly looking for somewhere that offers ‘it all’ for delegates, at an attractive price point and without causing a negative impact on the planet. When it comes to the most important things destination countries could do to offer the most value, bookers are asking for a lot. Booking incentives, sustainability off-setting and tech capability (for instance, live streaming events) are all rated as important, but flexibility comes out overwhelmingly on top – and given the constant uncertainty of the past three years, perhaps this is no surprise.

Other value-adding ideas raised by respondents included assistance with visas and customs, help connecting with trusted local suppliers, help with safety and security, and providing high quality destination information to delegates.



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What can destination countries offer to **ADD VALUE** to bookers?



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Venues: are hotels still king?

The short answer is: yes. According to the event planners we surveyed, hotels still come out on top when it comes to choosing a venue, with 41% of respondents ranking hotel meeting spaces as the number one type of space they would be most interested in, and a further 21% ranking hotels in their top three. As Abigail



of respondents placed hotels in their bottom three choices, meaning many event planners are keen on more 'unique' venues

Wren, senior director, strategic events at HR technology firm Ceridian points out, block booking hotel rooms means finding another venue adds a layer of logistical complexity. "Costs can run higher with empty shell venues and I'd rather pay for content than carpet," she adds.

Yet, a quarter (25%) of survey respondents placed hotels in their bottom three choices, proving there is a not insignificant number of event planners looking for something a little different when it comes to choosing a venue.

The survey suggests a growing interest in more unique venue options, with private restaurant rooms, museums, private resorts and wineries also sparking the interest of respondents. Overall, respondents were slightly less interested in sports-related venues such as race courses and stadiums.

"I'm a firm believer that events should be experiences, even if it's a 'fiscal strategy update conference,'" says Branstion. "What's the point of investing in an event if no one remembers it? The events I aim to deliver are built on the 'creation of memories', and that includes the venue."

Most POPULAR VENUE types



1. Hotels (ranked in top 3 by 62%)

2 Private restaurant rooms (ranked in top 3 by 50%)



3. Rooftop restaurant/bar (ranked in top 3 by 44%)

4. Private resorts (ranked in top 3 by 42%)



5. Museum (ranked in top 3 by 34%)





Bringing people together again

With the world opened up again after the worst of the pandemic, event bookers are keen to take advantage of the ability to bring people together in person. Booking a destination can be the best and easiest way of bringing large numbers of people together in one location. But there are other important

benefits as well, such as fuelling creativity, enabling focus and creating camaraderie, something that we need more than ever when working more remotely. Planners also called out “enjoying the freedom of being away from regular work” and “creating lasting memories” as something that can only be achieved through booking a destination.

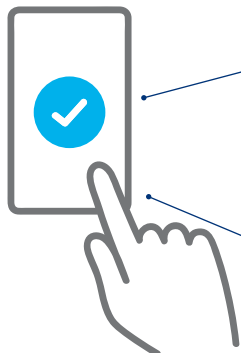
What is the **MAIN PURPOSE** of booking a destination right now?

83%

It's the best way to bring all your people together in one location

45%

It helps fuel creativity



42%

It's easier to focus away from the distractions of the office

37%

It's a great way to get to know your colleagues

Event planners are most likely to choose **ALTERNATIVE VENUES** for...



49%
Networking sessions



59%

Team bonding



49%

Conferences

Event planners view alternative venues as being best for team bonding, conferences and networking events, suggesting the importance of bringing people back together in-person, creating opportunities for meaningful connection and maximising relationships. Choosing a more unique venue can help create lasting memories by giving people something to talk about and experience together.



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The value of experiences

More than half (55%) of event bookers say incentive experiences are essential and that they would not book a destination that wasn't able to provide a wide and unique range of experiences. Yet, a further 34% admit that while incentive experiences are a definite 'nice to have', they are the first to go if cash is tight. But with only 7% saying incentive

experiences are of no importance at all, the value of offering delegates additional experiences is clear.

Branston says that, post-pandemic, delegates expect far more. "Expectations are that events will deliver the extraordinary," he says. "Delegates now know how to maximise their experiences. They could spot a lazy solution at a 100 yards. We need to ensure

we're a step ahead of them, if we're to 'create memories'. It's not enough for us to provide quality: we have to create more. How is food served? When? Where? What is the story behind it, and how does it feed into the event story we're trying to tell?"

So, what types of experiences are event planners most interested in offering, according to the survey? Authentic, local experiences come out overwhelmingly on top, followed by luxury experiences such as fine dining and CSR-related and environmentally-friendly activities. "We're noticing a growing interest for meaningful and unforgettable experiences, particularly involving nature and wildlife immersions," adds Martin from BE Perth.

MOST POPULAR incentive experiences



95%

Authentic, local experiences



68%

Luxury experiences, such as fine dining



57%

CSR and environmentally-friendly experiences



47%

Beach and coastal experiences



26%

Adrenaline and excitement (e.g. sports and adventure)



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The importance of offering authentic, local experiences was further emphasised when respondents were asked how important it was for delegates to learn about and engage in the local culture during their visit. The majority (65%) said it was a key component, helping the team to connect to their destination, compared to 29% who said it wouldn't affect their choice of destination.

"Having something unique, even a drinks reception with a locally sourced craft drink or chef experiences, adds an element you will remember and talk about," says Wren. "For larger events bringing people together in a unique way to experience the location around them is beneficial not only to the attendee but also the surrounding economy."



MOST APPEALING food and drink experiences for event planners



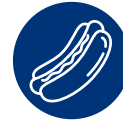
1
Fine dining



2
Visiting local
breweries/
vineyards



3
Catching your
own seafood



4
Food
festivals



5
Street
food



said helping the team
to connect to their
destination was
a key component

As Wren points out, food and drink experiences can elevate an event for delegates. Respondents choose fine dining experiences and visiting local wineries/breweries as their top experiences, although there is also interest in quirkier options such as food festivals, street food and catching your own seafood.

Overall, the outcome of the survey is clear: unique experiences are essential to event planners today. The majority of respondents (64%) rated the value of being able to incorporate unique experiences into their meetings as more than seven out of 10. And the comments from respondents really bring this to life...

"It needs to be special"

"Delegates want an experience they can't have anywhere else"

"The landscape has changed into experiences"

"Without these kinds of experiences, you could be at any venue, anywhere in the world. It adds depth to the event"

"Unique experiences are what delegates use to discuss and share the content learned. They remember these experiences sometimes more than the meeting"

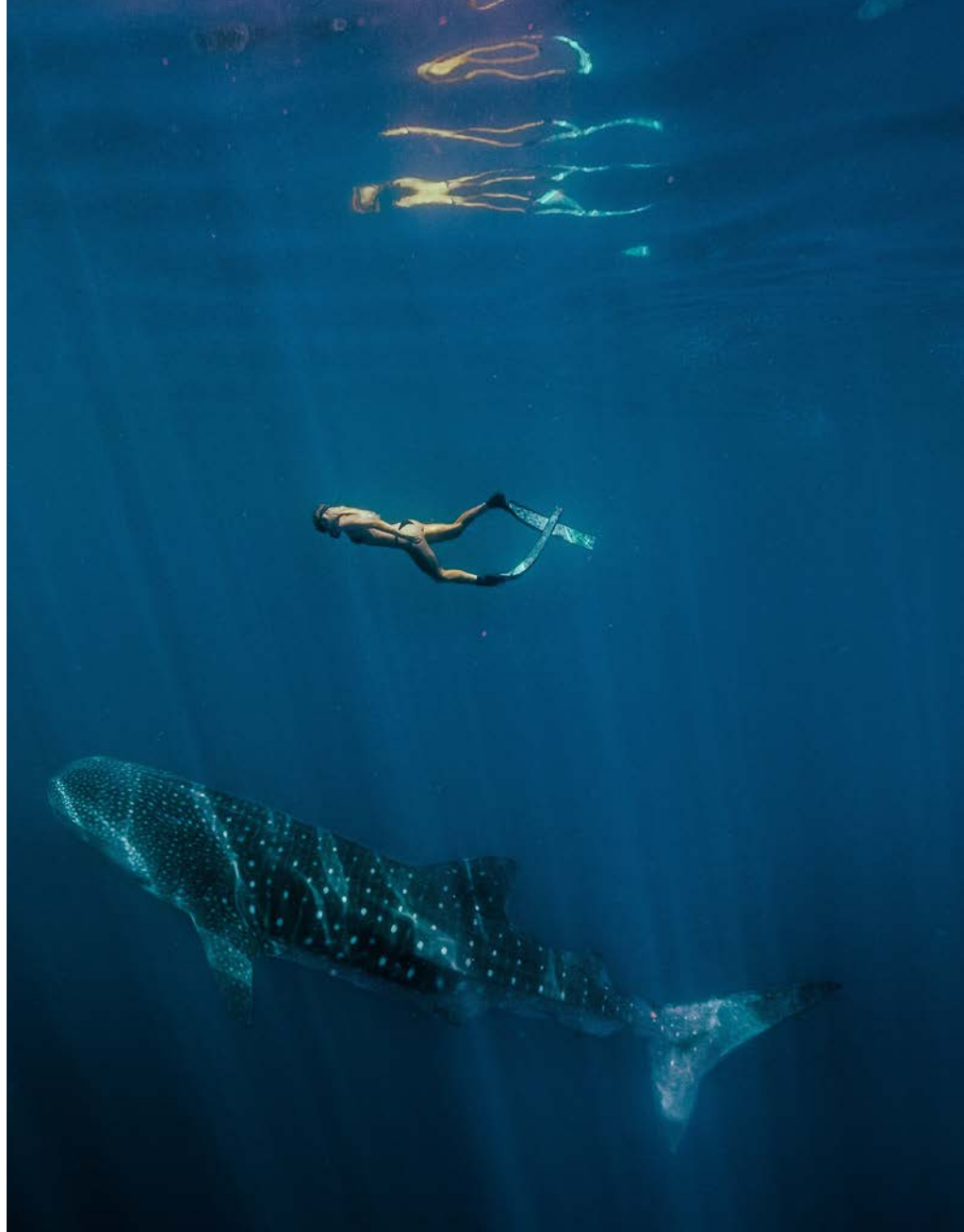
With the world opened up again, delegates are after in-person experiences that offer something special. Event planners are in the business of creating memories and offering unique experiences is a sure-fire way to achieve this. With the power of technology meaning so much can now be delivered virtually, it's all about maximising the value of getting together in person, in a special location, to experience something truly impactful and memorable.



Why Perth is the home of unique experiences

Delegates visiting Western Australia can always expect to leave having seen or learnt something new and inspiring. From aquatic playgrounds and outback oases to bustling city precincts, Western Australia boasts incredible regional diversity. That means delegates can tick off every Australian experience from their bucket list, including...

- Visiting the famous pearling town of Broome in Western Australia's Kimberley region
- Getting to know popular tourist town Margaret River, where old growth timber forests and world-renowned vineyards meet world-class surf breaks
- Spotting whale sharks basking on the Ningaloo Reef near Exmouth
- Swimming with dolphins in Rockingham
- Watching kangaroos laze on the snowy white beaches of Esperance
- Exploring Perth, Australia's sunniest capital city, where urban cool blends effortlessly with raw natural beauty
- Sipping some drinks in Australia's oldest wine region
- Sitting by the Indian Ocean in an island paradise, soaking up a famous Western Australian Sunset
- Engaging with Western Australia's Aboriginal heritage on an authentic Aboriginal tour or at an art gallery



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Only in Western Australia can delegates step out of a business event straight into a dreamlike, unique and truly memorable experience



Perth itself is perfect for business travellers and events planners, thanks to an array of new public spaces and revitalised buildings. New hotels such as The Ritz-Carlton Perth and DoubleTree Hilton Perth Waterfront offer river-front views, premium event spaces and a selection of dining options, and Perth's hospitality sector continues to thrive. It is a vibrant, connected, progressive, friendly and beautiful place to visit and has seen major growth and development in recent years.

Home to modern museums and galleries, captivating street art, outdoor murals, heritage buildings and the world's oldest living culture, Western Australia's unique art and cultural offerings are reflected in its sheer diversity of natural landscapes and cultural heritage. In fact, Western Australia is set to become the nation's premier destination for authentic Aboriginal cultural experiences, with extensive opportunities for business event visitors to immerse themselves in signature indigenous cultural experiences.

Only in Western Australia can delegates step out of a business event straight into an unexpected, spectacular, dreamlike, unique and truly memorable experience.



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Business Events Perth's bank of in-house expertise and industry knowledge ensures that a meeting, incentive or exhibition planner will have access to current market intelligence, local support and assistance to help bring an event to Western Australia. We know what our great State has to offer and we know what you need to stage a successful event. So, let us help you make your next conference the huge success you want it to be.

