

THIS IS NORTHERN IRELAND.  
THIS IS VISITOR INSPIRED.

# 16 simple steps to becoming visitor inspired.

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# > This way please...

Introduction	02
The brand in your hand	03
16 simple steps to becoming visitor inspired	04
Share your thoughts	40
Contact details and useful information	42

# This is where things get interesting.

Tourism in Northern Ireland is evolving. Your hard work is paying off, with spectacular events, innovative attractions and world-class services helping to position Northern Ireland as a place with a difference.

It's our aim to create a blueprint for Northern Ireland tourism that will help to focus our efforts, capitalise on our ongoing work to date, and give us an even greater competitive edge in future.

This blueprint is all about being **visitor inspired**. It is not designed to be a list of dos and don'ts. Instead it should help you create ideas of your own to make your tourism experience even better for you, your staff, your visitor.

By listening to visitors, and placing their needs at the heart of our every action, we will offer a truly unique experience. We want to give visitors excellence, innovation, and authenticity – by building

on our established heritage and embracing the evolving nature of our culture.

Most of us will already take our inspiration from visitors in some form or other. This booklet contains **16 simple steps** that are designed to help you build upon this way of thinking.

We know who we are, what we stand for, and what we value. But we need to spread this message to visitors and ensure we meet and exceed their expectations.

Tourism is big business, globally worth an estimated £300 billion each year. By pulling together in the same direction, we can bring our vision to life – a vision that will make Northern Ireland the destination on everyone's wishlist. And that's something we can all benefit from.

**Exciting, isn't it?**

## VISION

Create the new Northern Ireland experience and get it on everyone's destination wishlist.

We are an emerging destination. We have a unique offering that needs to evolve and be celebrated. We need to take our story to a wider audience.

### KEY

■ BRAND

Confidently moving on. This is the essence of Northern Ireland. We are moving on with confidence. Northern Ireland is changing fast, but we can still take great inspiration from our past. Our past has informed our present, which will in turn create a confident future.

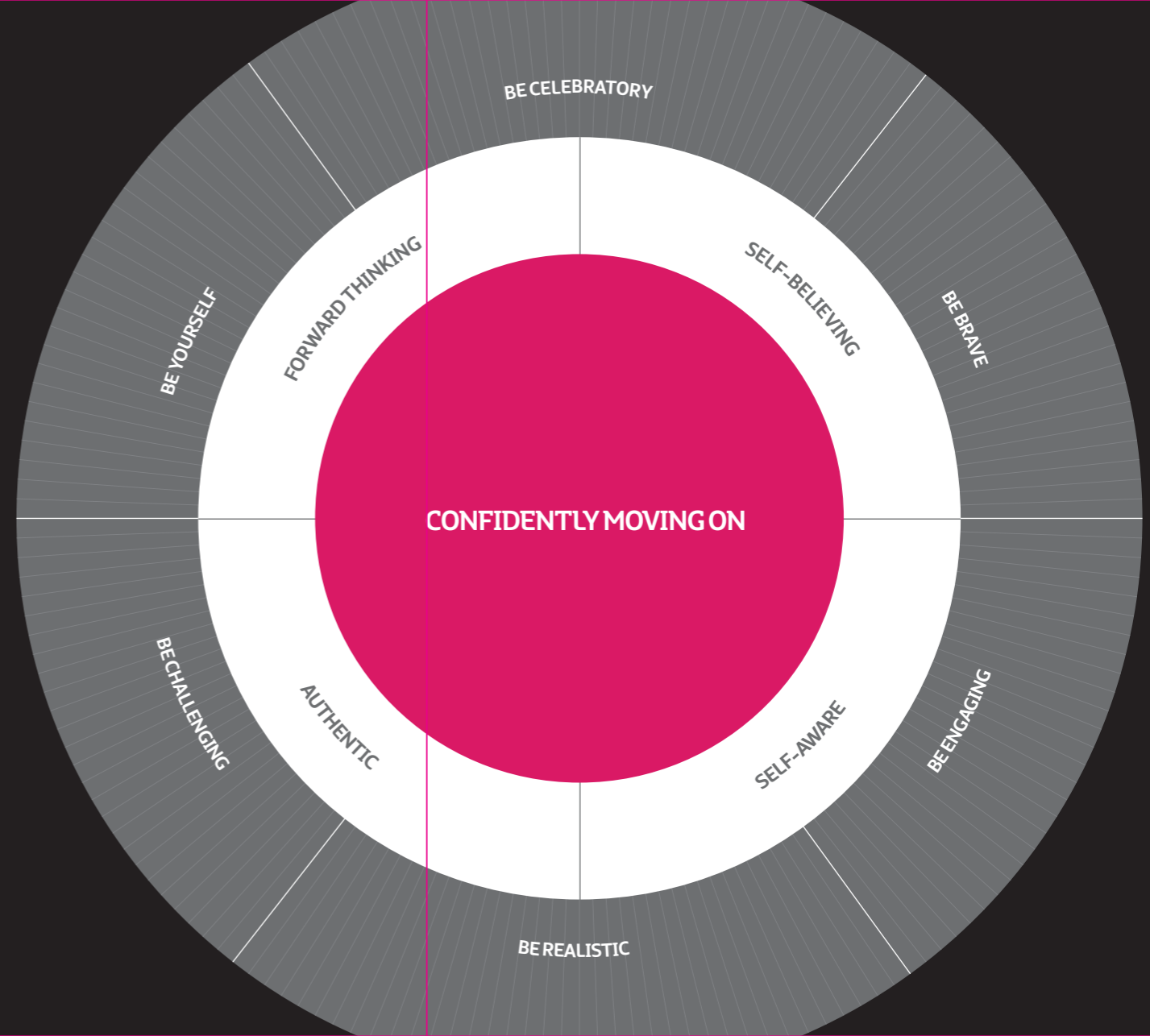
■ VALUES

Our values sum up our character – who we are and how we would like to be seen by visitors.

■ BEHAVIOURS

Visitors come to Northern Ireland for many reasons. We need to give them reasons to come back time and again. By putting these behaviours into practice, we can create new and improved experiences based around our values and who we are as a people.

**This blueprint is just a starting point. It's simple really. We are who we are. So let's start telling people.**



## The brand in your hand.

Collectively, we have defined a set of values that reflects who we are, what we stand for and what we offer. We've defined a way of behaving – a way of **being** – that will make each and every visitors' experience in Northern Ireland truly special and memorable.

By consistently integrating these values and behaviours into everything we do, even in the simplest of actions, we can give visitors an authentic taste of the real Northern Ireland – the place we know and love.

**So, who are we and what do we stand for?**

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16 SIMPLE STEPS TO BECOMING VISITOR INSPIRED

**Ready?**  
Then let's begin...



**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be yourself.

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**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Talk to guests before they arrive, on arrival and during their stay.

Check-in can be a chore. Make it a pleasure. Why not offer your guests a complimentary tea or coffee?

Find out what brought your guests to Northern Ireland. Find out why they chose to visit you. Find out what they hope to see, enjoy and taste.

Develop your own 'best kept secrets' about the things to see, do, explore and taste off the beaten track. Sharing your hidden gems will make your guests feel really special and will showcase the best that Northern Ireland has to offer.

STEP 1/16

## Remember. First impressions really do count.

It's the little things that make lasting impressions. Remembering someone from a previous visit. A cup of tea and a tray-bake while your guests check in. A shared secret on where the best fish rise. A hint on how to break the unbreakable 4th at Royal County Down.

We're caring, we have genuine compassion for visitors and a real love of our homeland. Make sure your visitor experiences Northern Ireland at its best.

# Don't sell the destination. Sell the story.

Help your visitors create their own stories.  
Northern Ireland will be their treasured memory.

Give your visitors the chance to create a memory every step of the way. Use every chance you get to tell your story. Create a conversation piece in the form of a bench inscribed with a local story. Room 21 will become much more memorable if named after someone famous. A journey to the Giant's Causeway via the Causeway Coastal Route is an experience in itself. Sell the journey as well as the destination.

Engage with visitors by creating Kodak moments. Whether you're an attraction, accommodation provider, information centre or local authority; use every opportunity to tell your story in an engaging, fun way: use furniture, artwork, craft, interpretation to create another way to tell your story and get your visitors involved.

Paint a vivid picture of what's on offer and share this with your visitors. Play your part in creating their memories.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be celebratory.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Help your visitors have the best possible experience in Northern Ireland.

Make it your mission to collect local stories and tall tales and share them with visitors – the fact and the folklore.

Share your knowledge of Northern Ireland. Share your favourite places. Recommend the unforgettable.

STEP 3/16

# Be authentic.

We don't have the Empire State Building. We don't have the Pyramids of Giza. But we do have so much to be proud of. Breathtaking scenery, amazing hospitality, superb attractions, a unique culture, and cuisine that is out of this world.

Be authentic, be true and be honest. Be proud of and celebrate all that is unique and special about Northern Ireland.

Is your artwork supplied by local artists; craft by local artisans? Do you play local music? Are there parts of your buildings named after Northern Ireland's scenic, literary and musical greats? Are the materials and fabrics used to build and decorate your place locally sourced?

Don't underestimate how good we are. Northern Ireland's authenticity enhances the visitor experience – and it creates lasting memories.



**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be realistic.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Pay attention to the simple things. Locally-sourced jams with just-baked bread turn an ordinary breakfast into one to remember.

Turn your menu into a storybook. Fill it with information on the traditional and unique methods that your local suppliers use.

Have a Northern Ireland Day. Team up with suppliers to create a menu sourced entirely from local produce.

Don't be afraid to use Northern Irish expressions in your literature: although be sure to provide a translation!

STEP 4/16

# Take pride in being proud.

Northern Ireland is a land of contrasts and contradictions. Moments of great achievement and moments of great tragedy.

When faced with challenges, we are bold, daring and proud. Our confidence, competence and creativity have shaped our history and are at the heart of our future.

Take pride in our heritage and be open with visitors. Be proud, be confident and be yourself.

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**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be yourself.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Uncover some surprising secrets about your local area and tell these stories in new and novel ways. Invite a local character to share stories of 'how life was' with your guests.

Get in on the act! Celebrate great achievements. From Saint Patrick's Day to motorbike racing, from cultural festivals to food festivals, from 'Tall Ships' to small ships, Northern Ireland has a range of events and festivals worth celebrating. Invite your customers to be part of it.

Celebrate your people and make the most of their talents. Ask your chef to open up the kitchen to share recipes and tips on the traditional way of doing things!

Share the myths and legends of your area. And, if anyone asks, of course they're true!



STEP 5/16

# Look at familiar things from a new angle.

Imagine arriving at your hotel, restaurant, museum, information centre, attraction or shop for the first time. What do you make of the décor, the layout, the facilities and the staff? What do you like and what needs improvement?

We all run the risk of getting too close, being too familiar, and missing out on the big picture.

Take a step back. Look at things from a different angle. Take a break. Ask a complete stranger what they think. Be a visitor for a day.

Think about how you could refresh your place to give visitors reasons to return to you time and again. How will you ensure that the experience is as good (or better) in year 10 as it is in year 1?

Take a fresh look at what's around you. You may arrive at some interesting conclusions.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be challenging.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Be a 'secret shopper' in your own establishment and take notes.

Be a 'secret shopper' in a competitor's establishment. What can you learn?

Act on your findings. Address any negative issues and build on the many positive findings.

Develop a plan. How often should your story be refreshed to give visitors reasons to return time and again?

STEP 6/16

# If it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Don't forget that being **visitor inspired** also means celebrating and showcasing to visitors the icons and landmarks that make Northern Ireland so special. The Giant's Causeway. Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. Samson and Goliath. The Walled City. Saint Patrick's Grave. The Mourne Mountains. The Sperrins. Fermanagh's Lakes.

These are just some of the attractions we are most proud of. The things we hold most dear. The special places that no visit to Northern Ireland would be complete without.

Celebrate the great things that Northern Ireland offers and make sure your visitors get the chance to create their own memories.

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be engaging.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Ask visitors in advance what they are most looking forward to seeing in Northern Ireland.

Help them get the most out of their stay. Suggest an itinerary.

Put together a Top 10 list of the classic must-see landmarks in your area.

Ask visitors what they enjoyed most about the classic landmarks. Their experience is bound to uncover another story. You never know, you might just learn something. Build these stories and guest tips into your Top 10 to share with tomorrow's visitor.

# Then raise the bar.

STEP 7/16

## Set high standards.

It's not in our nature to cut corners. Just look at the number of world-class artists, sports people, entrepreneurs, entertainers and scientists to come from Northern Ireland over the years.

If you truly love what you do, surround yourself with a team of motivated, skilled people who share your passion. Work with only the best. Set challenges that will push everyone to their limits. And create something exceptional.

### BEHAVIOUR:

Be challenging.

### SUGGESTIONS:

Simple things make such a difference. Does the layout of a room make the best of the view? Could your guest toiletries better reflect the character and quality of your business?

Engage experts. Your suppliers are experts in their respective fields. Ask them for ideas on how you can offer your visitors even greater levels of excellence. If you have a theme, extend it into the design of street or garden furniture.

Only recommend the best. Be a visitor at home. Gain first-hand experience of everything that your area has to offer and recommend only the things that made a lasting impression.

Learn from others. Experience first-hand how they engage with visitors. Benchmark, set goals and strive to constantly raise your game.

STEP 8/16

# Be world-class.

The Merchant Hotel in Belfast went to extraordinary lengths to acquire an extremely rare bottle of Wray and Nephew Rum, which is one of the key ingredients of its now famous Mai Tai cocktail – one of the most expensive drinks in the world.

The design of the Guggenheim Museum had an unimaginable impact on Bilbao's economic prosperity. Designed with passion, sensitivity and creativity. It works.

Make it work for you. Create show stoppers and it will add real value to your visitors' experience.

A little foresight will put you firmly on the map – both in local terms and around the globe.

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## BEHAVIOUR:

Be challenging.

## SUGGESTIONS:

Put yourself on the map with some original thinking. Offer something exceptional to visitors. And then tell your story to the world.

Look at what other attractions are doing. Take inspiration from them. Always try to add an authentic Northern Irish twist.

You have to be in it to win it. Believe in yourself and enter for relevant awards. If you are lucky enough to win, make sure everyone knows it!



STEP 9/16

# Go the extra mile.

Sometimes you need to go the extra mile to create something that is truly exceptional. This may involve putting in extra hours, travelling further and calling in more favours. But the results will be worth it.

Think about your relationship with your visitor every step of the way. Get to know what they hope to get from their trip to Northern Ireland. Find out why they chose here ahead of other destinations and ensure the reality exceeds their expectations.

Think about ways of making their visit truly memorable. It's the little things that will make your visitors feel really special and make them choose you first time, every time.



**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be engaging.

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**SUGGESTIONS:**

Spend time with your visitors. Get to know them and exceed their expectations.

Arrange airport pickups. Make parking arrangements for visitors with limited mobility. Develop menus for visitors with allergies or those looking for a healthy-eating option.

Offer to put together a picnic packed with local fare and recommend a scenic place to enjoy it.

Cater for children with menus and entertainment. Cater for parents by providing babysitting facilities.

Create a mailing list to keep in touch with visitors throughout the year. Send a handwritten Christmas card, birthday or anniversary greeting – all supported by a package that reflects the character of Northern Ireland.

Offer hand-made truffles with after-dinner coffee, tray-bakes with afternoon tea, or a take-out lunch for family guests setting off on a daytrip.

Know your guest's favourite tippie and have it ready for them on arrival.

STEP 10/16

# Push things to the limit

(and then some more)

Push the boundaries. Challenge the **status quo**.

Increase the capabilities of your entire team and your organisation will deservedly earn a reputation as one that cares.

Empower your staff to deal with every situation. Develop an ideas' culture. Reward staff for generating and sharing **visitor inspired** concepts.

Maximize every opportunity and partnership: your staff, your suppliers, and your partners.

Leave nothing to chance. No detail should be overlooked.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be challenging.

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**SUGGESTIONS:**

Consider offering a monthly award to the staff member who has contributed the most creative **visitor inspired** idea.

Don't just talk about ideas. Put them into action.

Value your staff and they will value you and your visitors. Celebrate their ideas and show how they have made the business better for you, for them, and for visitors. This will keep your team motivated and your visitors inspired.

STEP 11/16

# Yes. We can.

One day in 2009, a message was posted on a social networking website. It called for a group of complete strangers to come together in a specific place in Belfast at a specific time. The ensuing pillow fight became the stuff of legend (and a popular news item).

The people of Northern Ireland are known for being practical. We're pragmatic, hands-on achievers who get the job done. It's part of our heritage. It's who we are.

Think about all the ways you interact with your visitors. Every visitor would prefer to hear "Did you know?" rather than "I don't know." Every visitor wants to hear "Of course we can" rather than "No we can't."

We are honest, authentic, proud and interested. We are doers. We care. We can take real pride in these facts.

Be active.  
Be everywhere.  
Be nice.

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be yourself.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Make friends with the best restaurant in town to ensure that your visitor always gets the best table. Befriend a reliable, visitor-inspired taxi driver.

Knowing your visitors' holiday goals and taking care of their every need will show just how committed you are to making their stay extra special.

Spend time with them if you can. Share your love of Northern Ireland over a brief chat at breakfast or a nightcap.

Be worth your weight in gold!

STEP 12/16

# Get everyone singing the same song.

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be realistic.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Meet regularly with your team to generate ideas on how they could do things better. Encourage them to be **visitor inspired**. Reward and celebrate the best ideas.

Always keep communications open.

Transform your staff into tourism experts.

Get out there and experience Northern Ireland through the eyes of a visitor.

Encourage everyone to sing from the same song sheet.

Encourage staff to play an active role in your business. Define a shared vision. Define the benefits – for visitors, for your organisation, for the economy and for the future of Northern Ireland.

Define staff roles. Ensure your team is satisfied, committed and rewarded.

Keep everyone informed with developments in your business and in Northern Ireland tourism in general.

Happy, empowered, knowledgeable and informed people will care more for the visitor and will be committed to excellence.

After all, tourism is everyone's business.



STEP 13/16

## Plan a celebration. Invite everyone.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be celebratory.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Celebrate your story. Give visitors the opportunity to hear the stories behind your menu, your attraction or your event.

Show you care. Take an interest. Keep up to date with what's on and keep your visitors informed. From road bowls to oyster eating, your recommendations could become the highlights of someone's visit.

Give people a reason to chose you. Start a database and send regular updates to your existing customers. Tell them what's on, what's new and why they just have to visit.

Be proud of your heritage, your history, your culture and your achievements. We know who we are. We know what we stand for. Invite your visitors to join us in celebrating just that.

Think about entertainment, music, food, drink and theatre. Think about daytime activities and evening activities. Create something that will get people talking.

# Start a revolution.

We are living in exciting times. Northern Ireland is emerging as a vibrant, dynamic destination with a culture of its own and an impressive range of facilities. We're moving forward with confidence.

We're in this together. So, we need to work together as one to ensure that every visitor experiences the very best Northern Ireland has to offer.

Tourism is everyone's business. Don't overlook the local community. Involve them in your developments; invite them to celebrate with you. They'll soon be telling your story as they become your number 1 fan.

Now is the time to come together. To share ideas. To share successes. And to share the benefits.

Today's new idea will be tomorrow's success story.



**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be brave.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Share your *visitor inspired* ideas and stories at [nitb.com/visitorinspired](http://nitb.com/visitorinspired)

Get together with a group of like-minded tourism providers to develop and extend the experiences available to your visitors.

Think about a food trail. This could take the form of a week-long programme promoting the best restaurants in your area, with an evening entertainment programme for every night of the week.

You could even include a Sunday morning storytelling celebration. Initiatives like this may encourage visitors in your area to stay longer and spend more.

Engage the local community. Invite them to your celebrations.

# Embrace the next generation of technology.



Just a few years ago, who would have thought you would be able to carry your entire record collection around in your pocket? Who would have thought you could send an email without plugging your laptop into a phone socket? Who would have thought you could record video on your mobile phone?

Today, these things are commonplace. So, what will tomorrow bring?

Embrace new technology. Use it to your advantage.

Let your visitors access information in the way they prefer – whether they want to read a brochure, call you on the phone, or visit a website.

**BEHAVIOUR:**

Be brave.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Embrace technology. Your visitors will thank you.

Start a fan club. Research tells us that social networking is the new 'word of mouth'. Use it to your advantage to spread your message far and wide.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Use good quality, up-to-date photographs of your facilities and the tourist highlights in your area. Paint a vivid picture of what's on offer and make it easy for visitors to find out more or make a booking.

STEP 16/16

# Test, test and test again.

Speak to your guests and encourage them to share their holiday highlights.

Be brave and ask them how you could improve things. Ask what you could do to make them want to return every year.

Share your ideas for change and ask your visitors and staff for their input. If you're thinking of changing your menu, develop tasting plates and ask customers which they prefer.

Throw open your doors. Invite everyone you work with to taste your experience. Ask for their input. Act on their suggestions.

Develop a satisfaction survey and encourage every visitor to complete it. Take on board their suggestions. Adopt their best proposals. Make improvements on your improvements and then play to your strengths.

Create. Deliver. Improve. Repeat.

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Be challenging.

**SUGGESTIONS:**  
Create a customer survey and invite visitors to provide you with feedback.

Encourage staff to share visitors' insights, complaints, queries and suggestions.

Have an open day for the local community and suppliers. Solicit feedback. Take action.

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**Okay.**  
Now it's your turn.

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So as you can see, being visitor inspired is simply about:

- Anticipating what your visitor wants and needs today and tomorrow
- Working with like-minded, great people. Working with the best
- Celebrating the best that your area offers
- Knowing what is unique and special about you and using it as the focal point for your every action
- Encouraging your staff to share your passion for your business and for Northern Ireland tourism
- Keeping it fresh, evolving your story, developing your relationships, developing your people

It's all about being yourself, being engaging, being celebratory, being brave, being realistic, being challenging.

## SHARE YOUR IDEAS

# We're all in this together.

Hopefully, the information in this booklet will have given you some food for thought.

Tell us what you think and share your ideas.

Perhaps you are already thinking of how you could implement some changes in your business that could make it even more **visitor inspired**.

It's our hope to build up an ever-growing library of information and advice on simple ways to become more **visitor inspired**. And that's where you come in.

If so, we'd love to hear your ideas.

If you have any ideas, insight, advice or comments, be sure to log on to [nitb.com/visitorinspired](http://nitb.com/visitorinspired) to share your comments.

These 16 steps are just the start. Something to get the ball rolling. A collection of sound ideas we have picked up from people like you working in the tourist industry. We're sure you will have plenty of tips and advice of your own to share.

That way, we can all learn something new.

## CONTACT DETAILS

# We're here to help.

We want to do all we can to help you, across every business sector and at every level. So please feel free to use any of the resources and contact details listed here.

The website [www.nitb.com](http://www.nitb.com) is packed with research, intelligence and best practice case studies. In addition NITB is presenting an Industry Development 'Visitor Inspired' programme of tailored events to support tourism professionals at this time of huge potential for Northern Ireland.

The series includes Masterclasses, Business Insight Workshops and benchmarking learning journeys. Full details of the programme are available on [www.nitb.com](http://www.nitb.com)

For further information on the brand for Northern Ireland Tourism visit [www.nitb.com/visitorinspired](http://www.nitb.com/visitorinspired)

For further information on the Industry Development 'Visitor Inspired' Programme, please contact:

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**THIS IS NORTHERN IRELAND.**

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