

Travelling for work can be a great way to discover new places. The share of long stays (a fortnight or more) jumped from 20% of all bookings in 2019 to 26% in 2022, although this trend varied across different world regions, with considerably larger increases in Asia-Pacific and North America compared to regions like the Caribbean and the Middle East. Whether it's a quick meeting, a conference in a nearby city, or an extended international trip, business travel can be an opportunity to encounter people and destinations we might not otherwise think of. Crucially, business travel has the potential to bring large quantities of high spending visitors to a destination throughout the year, and so extending the tourism season in many cases. The number of 'Mixed Payment' bookings has increased by a staggering 954% since 2019. For employees, combining work and leisure can make trips more affordable, as components of the journey are covered by an employer. The MICE (Meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) industry is also highlighting opportunities for potential attendees to extend their stay. On Trip.Biz, travellers are increasingly selecting both 'Personal Travel' (for personal spending) and 'Mixed Payments' (to supplement corporate budgets with personal funds). For the employer, allowing staff to combine leisure and business trips can result in higher employee satisfaction and greater workforce retention. A Trip.Biz survey reported that nearly 70% of travel managers are supportive of the idea of mixing leisure with business trips. To take advantage of this growing trend towards blended trips, several governments across the world are introducing specialist visas. Flexible working, which has been accelerated by the pandemic for many, is one of the contributors to the growth of 'blended' trips. Euromonitor forecasts that global spending by travelers combining business with leisure should more than double between 2021 and 2027 – from US\$ 150 billion to about US\$ 360 billion. And what are the emerging opportunities for governments and tourism providers?