



## President and CEO Report January 2023

National Public Radio ran a story this week offering up a summary of what various “experts” were predicting in 1923 of what life would be like in 2023. These visions included four-hour workdays, 300-year-old people, mental telepathy as a useful form of communications, “watch-size radio telephones”, and --- perhaps the most audacious out of all of them --- a gender studies anthropologist who made the bold prediction that in 2023, it would be common for men to have curly hair.

Now, on to the accuracies. I know plenty of curly-haired men who wear watch-sized radio telephones (talking to you, Kory Eberhardt). The others? Hmmm. We in the visitor industry know all too well the (un)realities of an eight-hour workday, let alone a four-hour workday. In fact so many are putting in such long workdays that by the end of the day/night they might *feel* like they are 300-years old.

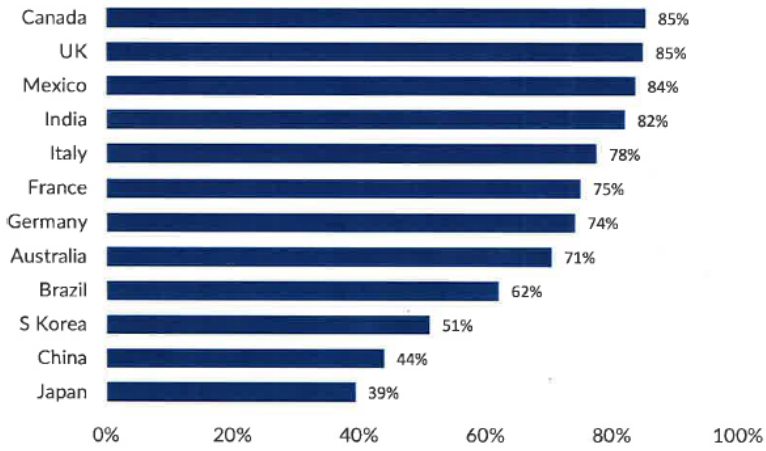
Here at Explore Fairbanks, we’re pretty confident that what we’re forecasting for 2023 will be a little more accurate than what those in 1923 offered up, at least in terms for our industry. No crystal ball is perfect in this day and age. We work with our local partners and statewide industry colleagues, research and analyze national industry data and forecasts, and talk to domestic and international travel trade to determine what the next year is going to look like, then build our strategic marketing plan around those forecasts.

Our [2023 Strategic Marketing Plan](#), developed with input from our various departmental committees and our board of directors, represents a combination of tried and true markets/tactics as well some new initiatives that we feel will make our destination and industry better in the years to come.

Take, for example, international marketing. A bulk of our efforts there will go into the German-speaking Europe market where we have been so fortunate to have our European coordinator Elke Handschug-Brosin represent us for well over a decade. This was the first of the international markets to return last year, and the future of that market looks quite promising, especially with Condor returning this summer for their 21<sup>st</sup> year of service between Frankfurt and Fairbanks. On the new side, we are making investments in both the India and Latin America markets for the first time ever. These have been emerging markets for us for quite some time, and as the chart

## International visits to US in 2023

Share of 2019



from the U.S. Travel Association indicates, are both strong ones for the U.S. this year. You'll note on the chart also that what used to be two of our biggest international markets --- Japan and China --- are at the bottom of the list for return to the U.S. for this year, so efforts that would normally be made there can be shifted to those markets that can deliver us the biggest return on investment.

2023 will also see an investment in new destination research, the first time in many years in which we have embarked on something this comprehensive and specific to us. We're partnering with Madden Voyage on this initiative that will allow us to better capture marketing performance and insights, visitation intelligence (where are visitors are coming from and where they are going while they are here), hotel and lodging data, and competitive intelligence. We look forward to sharing those reports with our partners and stakeholders this year, and then using that research to better solidify future marketing decisions.

Speaking of sharing, I encourage you to attend, either in person or virtually, our Annual Interior Tourism Conference on February 1<sup>st</sup> at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel. We'll be sharing more information on the current and future state of the industry, and more importantly, hearing from subject matter experts on current and future topics related to the industry, to include the role of climate change, regenerative tourism, Alaska's economy and labor shortage, and more. Watch for registration information next week.

Thank you for your continued partnership with Explore Fairbanks and for all that you do.



Cheers,

Scott McCrea, President and CEO