



# Travel Incentives

The Strategic Role For North  
American Business Growth

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**As the pandemic shrinks in our rearview mirror, most North American companies have resumed their incentive travel activities, with a renewed focus on gaining benefits like increasing employee engagement, retaining talent, building relationships, and improving company culture.**

According to the results of the [2022 Incentive Travel Index](#) survey, 91% of respondents agree that travel incentives will play an important role in strengthening engagement and company culture with a dispersed workforce.

Companies are using incentives to keep their networks alive through travel, rewarding employees, partners, and staff with trips that blend work and leisure and giving them opportunities to meet face-to-face with coworkers and clients.

As rewards industry professionals, our team at Giftbit wants to help you gain the benefits of travel incentives by helping you learn everything you need to know about building a successful travel rewards program.

You can use this guide as a resource for learning about travel incentives, getting ideas for your rewards program, identifying best practices, and understanding how to measure program success.



## What are travel incentives?

Travel incentives are one of the ways organizations reward, engage, and retain talent, whether it's a company-paid trip to an island resort or a digital gift card to cover flights on their next vacation. The goal of these incentives is to encourage connections, engagement, and performance with rewards that delight your employees, partners, and senior management.

In a post-COVID world, travel incentives are becoming a popular way to reunite disconnected business partnerships and build relationships in person rather than through a screen. Luxury travel opportunities offer immense competitive power to stay attractive to your clients, partners, and prospective sales deals — altogether supporting your business.

An Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) study reported that group travel incentives are “very” or “extremely” motivating according to 80% of respondents, and individual travel rewards scored even higher at 84%.

The types of incentives and benchmarks for earning them depend on the company and its goals, values, and industry. For example, a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) company might aim to surpass a certain figure for monthly recurring revenue growth and reward their team with a group vacation if they pull it off. Meanwhile, a pharmacy company may use travel incentives to engage and reward channel partners, strengthening vital business relationships.

As destinations around the world rekindle their travel industries, companies have more exciting reward options for their travel incentive programs.



## What does success look like?

Travel rewards are an effective sales incentive to boost business performance and enhance relationships with key clients and partners.

According to the IRF's Anatomy of a Successful Incentive Travel Program report, travel rewards positively impact motivation, performance, retention, company culture, and profitability.

Successful programs share these traits:

- Reward criteria clearly align with business goals
- Program communication is consistent and transparent
- Destinations and activities are exciting and appealing
- Executives participate as hosts, showing leadership support
- Productivity and contributions of earners are well-documented

Beyond driving sales, travel incentives allow senior leaders to build relationships in relaxing, luxurious settings. These programs help deepen client and partner loyalty by making participants feel valued. They also provide opportunities for meaningful group experiences—cultural tours, fine dining, or once-in-a-lifetime adventures—that foster strong personal connections.

Such shared experiences strengthen bonds among coworkers and clients, improving internal synergy and external partnerships. In this way, incentive travel not only enhances performance but also reinforces networks essential to long-term business success.



## **Top 3 industries in North America that are taking advantage of travel incentives**

According to the Incentive Travel Index, the top three industries taking advantage of incentive travel programs are the following:

- Finance and insurance
- SaaS, information, and communication
- Pharmaceuticals and healthcare

Travel incentives work well in corporate settings, where managers can set clearly defined goals for their team and attach rewards for motivation. Incentives are effective for sparking competition in sales-driven organizations, but they're also great for recognizing and appreciating hard-working employees in healthcare settings.

## **Destinations that North American incentive recipients are traveling to**

When selecting incentive travel destinations, companies must consider rising costs and safety or political concerns. Many North American businesses focus on destinations that maximize value.

Top destinations include:

- Caribbean
- United States
- Mexico
- Western Europe

Over half of buyers surveyed plan to use U.S. and Caribbean locations for future programs. A separate study on employee preferences shows similar trends—U.S., Caribbean, and Western Europe are popular among earners.

## What do travel incentives look like?

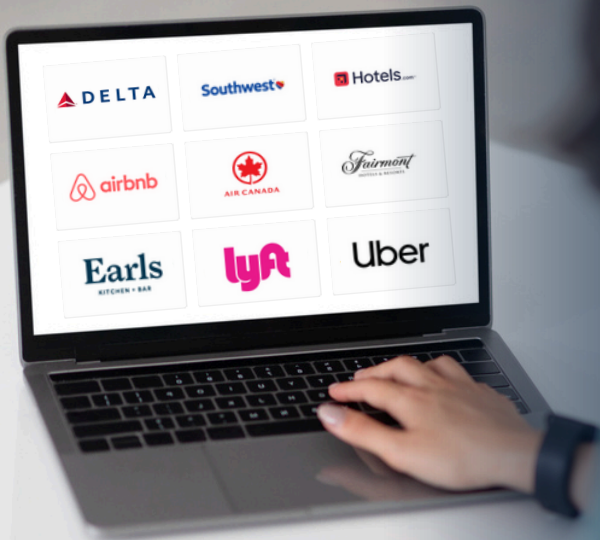
Travel incentives can range from simple perks that enhance a business trip to full vacation packages for employees or clients. Companies might fund a week at a beachside resort or offer digital gift cards to cover flights and hotels.

Gift cards are a flexible, scalable option for travel rewards. Brands like Delta, American Airlines, and Airbnb allow recipients to plan their ideal getaway. These rewards can recognize top performers, celebrate big wins, or offer relaxation to senior leadership.

Visa incentive cards, customizable with your logo, can be used anywhere Visa is accepted—ideal for both employee rewards and client appreciation.

Examples of travel-related gift card incentives include:

- Hotels
- Flights
- Restaurants
- Rideshares
- Travel gear





## How to fulfill travel incentives

Timely fulfillment is critical to the success of your travel rewards program. If employees or senior leaders wait weeks for their rewards, it can reduce engagement and cause confusion or frustration.

Delayed delivery may also weaken trust in the program. To maintain momentum and motivation, have a clear plan to fulfill incentives immediately after they're announced.

### Trips

Trip incentives, whether domestic or international, need ample planning—but you can avoid delays by organizing most of the trip before announcing the reward. Sharing details like the destination, activities, and excursions upfront also boosts excitement and motivates staff to pursue the goals that earn the trip.

### Digital rewards

One of the ways you can introduce instant travel rewards to your incentive program is to look for digital rewards providers that offer solutions like the following:

- Automated rewards
- Personalization capabilities
- App integrations
- Bulk sending
- Redeemable Giftbit links

Bulk-sending features save time when rewarding groups—just upload emails, and gift cards are sent instantly. With Giftbit's automation tools (API, app, or Zapier), rewards are delivered as soon as recipients complete the required action.





# How to build a travel incentive program for your North American Business

A general incentive plan is a good starting point, but your reward strategy should align with your organization's culture, values, and goals. It's also important to choose incentives that genuinely excite recipients, as their engagement is key to the program's success.

Creating and maintaining a travel incentive program involves setting goals, gathering feedback, promoting rewards, and analyzing results.

## 1. Identify your goals

Start by defining who you're incentivizing—employees, clients, leads, or upper management—and what business objectives you're targeting. Whether it's boosting sales, rewarding loyalty, or building partnerships, your program should tie directly to measurable outcomes.

Decide whether the reward applies to individuals or teams and align it with your overall business strategy. Your budget matters, too. High-value incentives like a Caribbean cruise can cost over \$3,000 for a family of four. That investment should yield a return—such as stronger partnerships or increased revenue—that exceeds the cost.

Planning with these factors in mind ensures your program delivers real business value.

## 2. Solicit input from your team

Customizing your travel incentive program to fit your staff, clients, or partners shows you value their interests. It's helpful to ask recipients what they'd like to see in the program.

You can hold meetings or send anonymous surveys to gather honest

feedback. To boost participation, consider attaching small rewards like a \$5 Starbucks e-gift card for attending or responding.

Use this feedback to create a list of top rewards and update it over time. Knowing what excites your team helps ensure your program motivates people and meets your goals.

For example, if senior management prefers outdoor activities like hiking or fishing, include brands like Bass Pro Shops or REI in your gift card catalog, and offer trips to national parks or similar destinations.

### **3. Communicate & track progress**

Your program will only motivate if employees know the rewards and how to earn them. Beyond an initial email, keep updates flowing, like using a leaderboard to spark friendly competition.

Whether rewarding clients, employees, or senior management, share key trip details upfront, such as:

- Trip date flexibility
- Accessibility needs
- Guest policies
- Covered expenses
- Gift card amounts
- Reward limits

Clear communication builds excitement and prevents disappointments that could hurt the program's success.

### **4. Analyze the results**

If you don't monitor the success of your program, your time and money commitment could be going to waste. In 2019, right before the COVID pandemic, U.S. companies spent an average of \$4,260 on incentive travel rewards per person, meaning a company with 10 reward earners might have spent about \$42,600 on incentives.

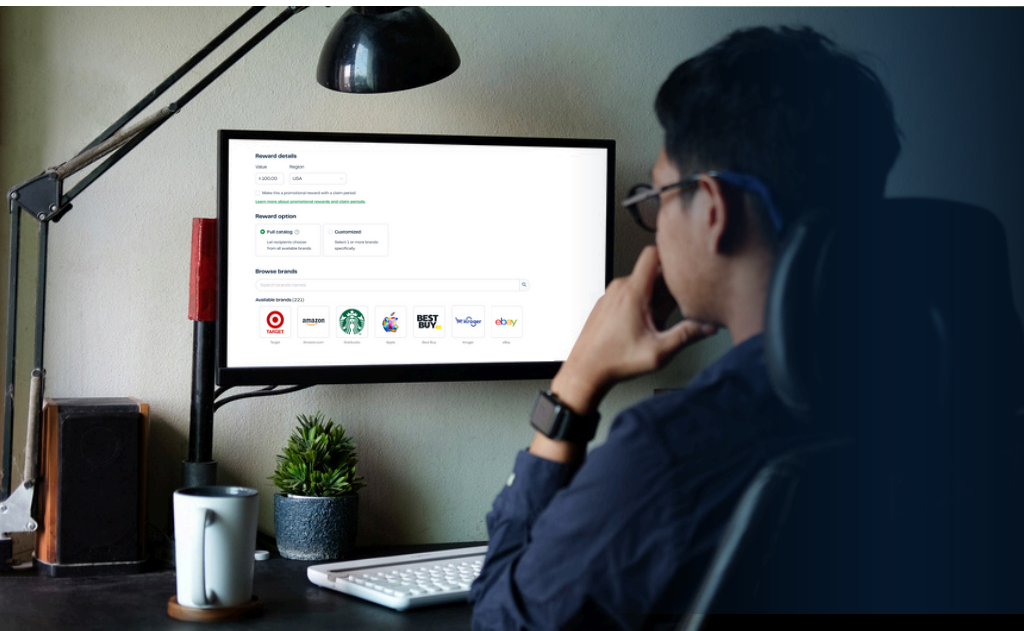
To get a good return on your investment and successfully enhance your

business performance, it's essential to track the results of your travel incentive program and make adjustments to your strategies when things aren't working as intended.

Some of the ways you can examine your program's progress and efficacy include analyzing meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) at different stages of the program and conducting employee surveys about the process of earning the rewards and their satisfaction with the travel incentives.

For example, after a reward earner goes on their trip, you could send them a short survey asking questions like these:

- On a scale of one to 10, how do you rate your experience
- Out of all the activities included in the trip, which was your favorite? Least favorite?
- If you could change one thing about how the trip was planned, what would it be?



# Send travel incentives instantly with Giftbit

Incentives are a powerful tool for building your company's momentum, helping you achieve your goals faster and spur continuous growth. The popularity of travel incentives is rising.

Giftbit is an easy-to-use tool for buying, sending, and tracking digital rewards, with features that allow you to send your personalized travel incentive gift cards instantly.

Our powerful Gift card platform is everything you need to launch a one-time project, need a better solution to replace a clunky process, or are launching a robust incentive program; the Giftbit platform is for you.

- Operational simplicity
- Visibility
- Customization
- Flexible pricing

With flexible reward selection, messaging and branding ability, you can customize, order, send, and track all in one place today!



**We're here to help**

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