



AMERICA OUTDOORS

2023 OUTFITTER TRENDS REPORT





Letter from the Executive Director

Like the unpredictable swirls of an eddy, the instability of the mid-winter snowpack, or the success of a hunt, sectors of the guided outdoor industry sector have been unpredictable and highly localized. In some parts of the country, like the Boundary Waters in Minnesota and Pigeon River in Tennessee, post-Covid interest has sustained.

Three years after a global pandemic that crushed the outdoor economy, a recovery that boomed, and the inevitable return to earth afterward we now see interest in outdoor recreation activities stabilizing, with some sectors still showing contraction.

On one hand, industry-wide responses show high profitability. 72% of the industry profited, 11% broke even, and 17% suffered losses. When comparing year-over-year profitability, however, the picture is less rosy. 24% of respondents to our survey reported increased profits, 38% were about the same, and 25% were down compared to 2022.

While businesses are still reporting profitability, the profitability margins are narrowing. Many outfitters point to increased labor costs, increased permitting fees, increases in the cost of insurance, and natural events such as wildfires and mudslides as impeding their operations and profitability.

A sector-by-sector analysis reveals more about diminishing revenues. For daytrip paddlesports providers, 39% anticipated revenues to be down. For overnight rafting or paddling trips, 33% anticipated revenues to be down. For land tours, 32% anticipated revenues to be down. For cabins & rentals, 39% anticipated revenues to be down. For each of these sectors about as many reported revenues to be flat, as well, though 54% of land-based adventure tours and 22% of cabin rentals anticipated flat revenues.

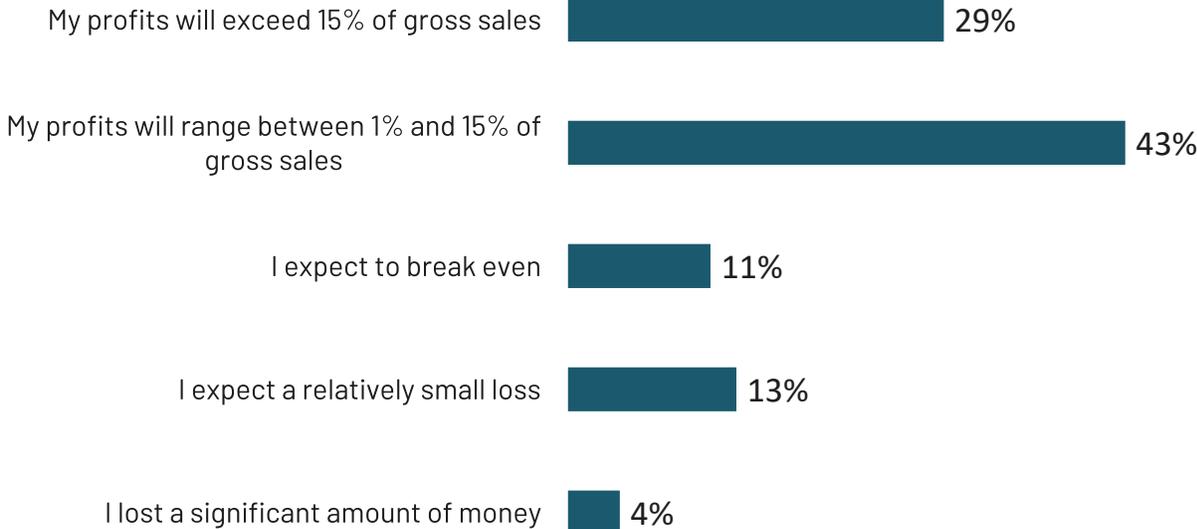
Given the headwinds that the outdoor sector faced in 2023, outfitters fared relatively well. International travel drew much of the market, high gas prices suppressed regional travel, and continuing high inflation put a damper on many family travel plans. Looking into 2024, weather permitting, economic conditions may favor a growth year.

Aaron Bannon
Executive Director
America Outdoors

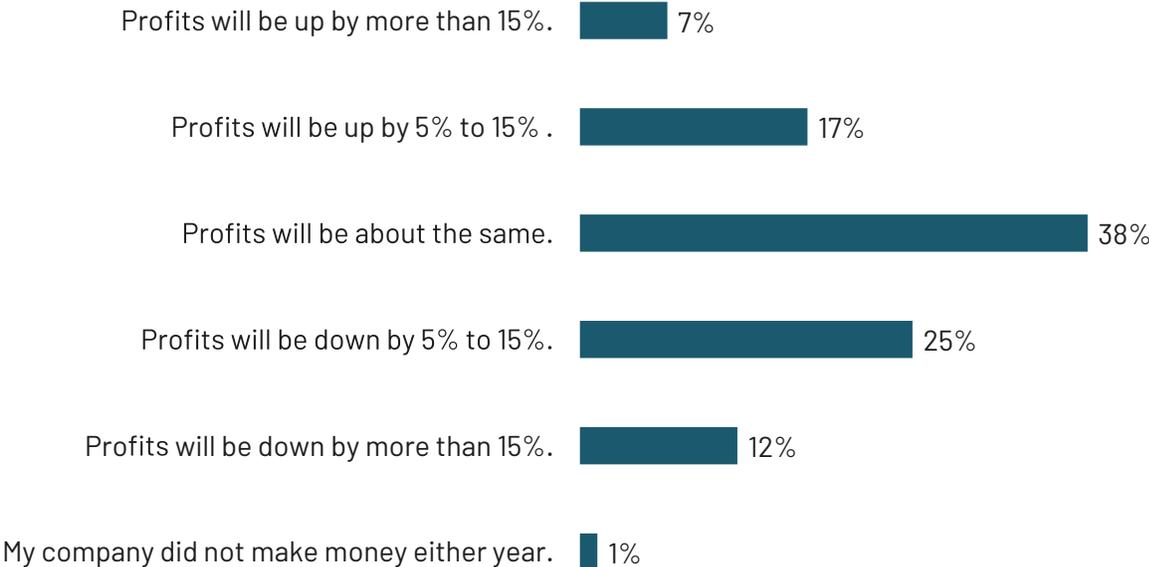


INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Estimate the outcome of your 2023 season.

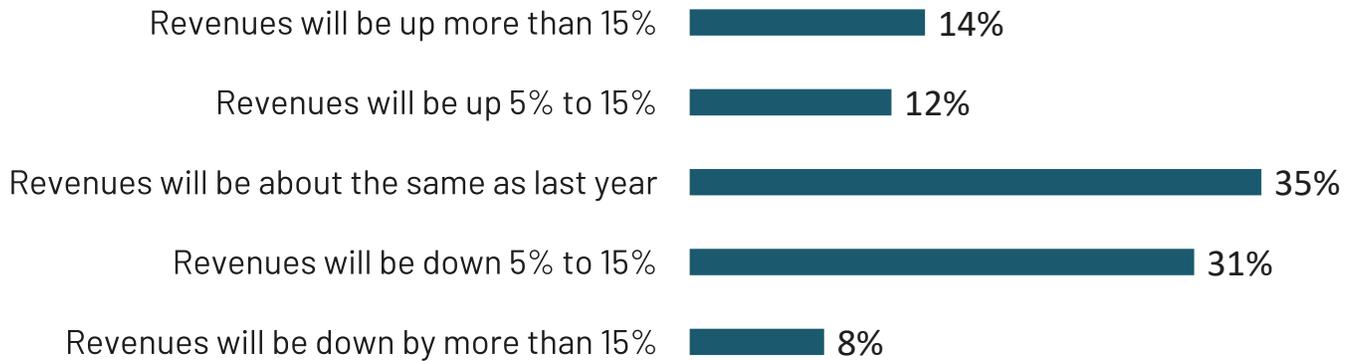


Compared to last year, how would you characterize the projected outcome for business in 2023?

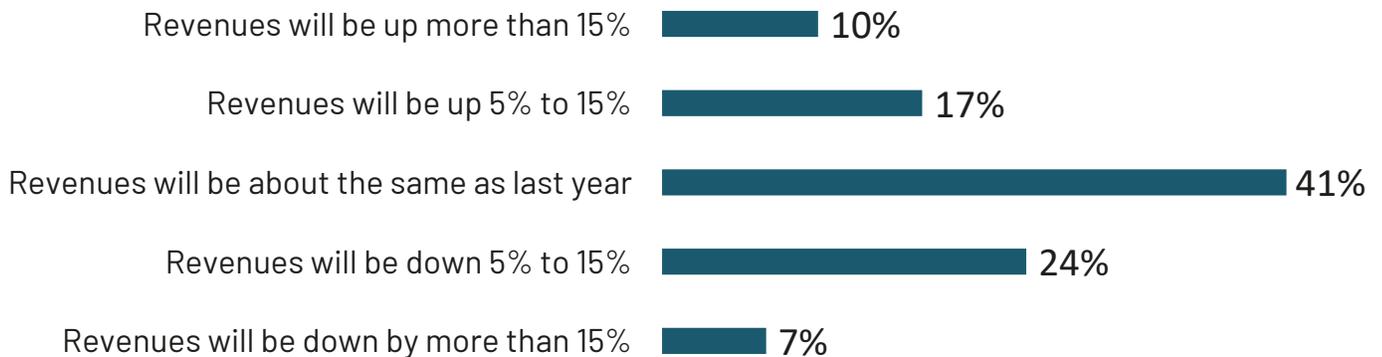


LINES OF SERVICE REPORTS

If you offer whitewater rafting or paddling day trips, compared to 2022 what is the projected outcome for this segment of your outfitting business in 2023?

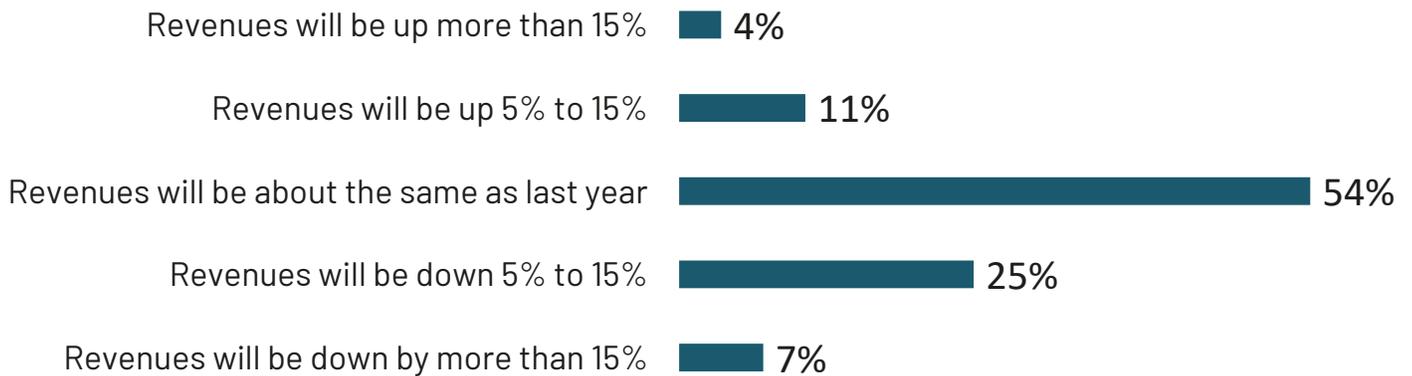


If you offer whitewater rafting or paddling overnight trips, compared to 2022 what is the projected outcome for this segment of your outfitting business in 2023?

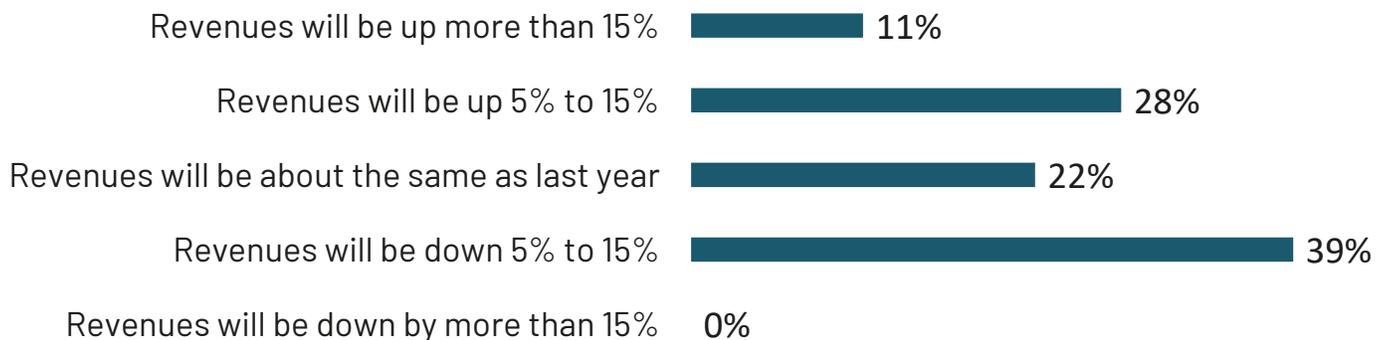


LINES OF SERVICE REPORTS

If you offer land-based adventure tours (other than aerial, rafting or paddling), compared to 2022 what is the projected outcome for this segment of your outfitting business in 2023?



If you offer cabin rentals or other lodging (other than guest ranch), compared to 2022 what is the projected outcome of your 2023 season?



INDUSTRY COMMENTS

What are the most important trends or issues you see in the industry that will grow or restrain business over the next five years?

“ Economic predictions of a recession is our biggest concern.

“ The impact of climate change.

“ Increased regulation, taxes, wages, inflation, interest rates, fees, costs, and mandated employee benefits. All of these will contribute to a negative outlook unless the current trend makes a U-turn.

“ The hunting industry in Wyoming will be challenged with a reduction in licenses due to lower populations of antelope and mule deer due to the severity of the winter of 2023. It will be years before herds recover and some populations may never recover.

“ All mountain communities are challenged by high housing costs and limited availability.

“ Lack of CDL drivers.

“ Increasing insurance costs.

“ Labor is the number one issue. People need livable wages in order to work in our industry. But industry pricing is based off low wages. I am not sure we can increase prices as fast as we need to increase wages.

“ NPS CUA conditions for backcountry hiking are trending towards more restrictive, with commercial users becoming less able than the general public to access the particular parts of the backcountry.

“ Inconsistent weather that has disrupted business and resulted in more days where we can't run trips due to river or weather conditions.

“ As long as we are providing excellent service and unique adventures we will be able to attract customers.
