

Travel in 2024 & beyond: It's bespoke, it's alone, it's tech-driven but also so much more

By Anton Gillis

19 Feb 2024

Trends - on both a local and global scale - reveal a lot about the zeitgeist of the time. And while trends may be fluid, and sometimes even arbitrary, travel trends in particular say a lot about our aspirations, our desires and even our values.



Source: Kruger Gate Hotel

For a while now there's been a move towards a more wholesome kind of travel experience - one that prioritises silence and tranquillity, one that considers the impact of travel on the environment and the community, and travel that makes the experiential element the hero - in line with a growing global consciousness around the value of experience over things.

Travelling solo - but not alone

Once perhaps the preserve of the young backpacker or the individual in search of him- or herself, a la Eat, Pray, Love, solo travel today is widely embraced, more luxurious, more adventurous and a great way to meet like-minded people from around the world.



3 trends shaping the solo travel experience

14 Sep 2022



The solo travel trend has been on the rise for a while now and is likely to continue. Rather than wait on others, the solo traveller knows the time to travel is now and that while they may be on their own, they're not alone as they can easily join a tour group or at their chosen accommodation. This kind of travel offers travellers the flexibility to be part of a group when they want and to go off on their own when they need a bit of "me-time".

It also caters to one of the biggest concerns any traveller has when considering travelling alone - safety. Solo but not alone travel allows people to easily connect with locals, immerse themselves in the local culture and enjoy activities with people who share the same interests.

Solo travel also allows room to embrace the calm-cation trend, whereby people are looking for opportunities to truly relax. A calm cation is more likely when one is alone, unshackled by the need to consider the preferences of others.

Water-centric travel

Climate change will continue to be one of the biggest disruptors in the near future, and the travel industry is certainly not immune to its impact.

2023 alone was one of the warmest on record according to the United Nations, and it will only get warmer still. So, as temperatures rise, travellers are going to adjust their travel plans to accommodate their need to cool off.

From oceans to rivers and lakes, the allure of water-centric travel is set to captivate these travellers looking to not only keep cool but also take advantage of the tranquillity that being near water offers. We can expect to see travellers taking more ocean cruises along scenic ocean shores, participating in adrenaline-fuelled water activities such as wakesurfing or river rafting, or simply relaxing at secluded destinations overlooking the water such as the Kruger Gate Hotel, for example, which is situated on the banks of the Sabie River.



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A bespoke travel experience

As travellers look for more immersive experiences that cater to their specific needs and personal tastes, they're gravitating towards the personalised experience of curated travel.

There's a keen overlap between these bespoke travel experiences and passion-focussed niche travel that invites travellers to immerse themselves in their passions while travelling. Whether your passion is mountains, wine or vampires, there's a travel experience in the world waiting to welcome you.

Often falling under a specific theme or style of travel where every part of the journey is particularly tailored to each person's individual preferences, a curated trip offers a unique journey for every explorer while ensuring optimum convenience every step of the way.

This travel experience is usually put together and managed by a travel curator who partners with hotels, restaurants and relevant attractions to give travellers a special travel experience focused on anything from culinary exploration, history and culture, to the wonders of the animal kingdom via a safari holiday at the Kruger, for example, while also skipping any queues, avoiding any tourist traps and gaining exclusive access to any events.

Technology and travel

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is often touted as one of the most transformative forces in the modern world and though its impact can at times be a little exaggerated, its impact on the travel industry cannot be ignored.

And while technology in general, and AI in particular, appears to stand in contrast to trends like slower travel and calm-cations, it can help ensure the travel experience is calm, thanks to the tools it offers for planning and organising - often the less zen part of travelling!

More and more people are leveraging AI systems like OpenAI's ChatGPT to take on the mental and time-consuming load of putting together diverse and experiential travel plans. This is the least exciting part of anyone's holiday, requiring extensive research and planning to feel like you've put together a trip that lets you experience as much of a new place as possible. Now, AI is doing this for travellers within minutes, generating schedules, restaurants, and accommodation options, as well as activities.

Platforms like TikTok are also gaining traction, where people rely on other people's recommendations and experiences to guide them. What makes TikTok such an attractive platform for finding new travel ideas and experiences is that it gives users a direct and clear visual of what that experience would feel like before even going there. Additionally, it is also helping to give a lot more exposure to smaller and lesser-known destinations, accommodations, restaurants, and experiences.

In 2024 and beyond, the travel landscape is set to embrace a more curious, adventurous, and independent traveller, promising an array of opportunities to satiate any traveller's wanderlust whether through a mindful retreat, an adrenaline-pumping escapade, or an immersive cultural experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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