

# Top Trends Tourists Prioritize when Selecting a Destination

Posted on

The tourism industry has experienced a fundamental shift in recent years, largely influenced by changing traveler preferences and new insights from Online Travel Agencies (OTAs), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), and digital channel managers. As destinations and providers look to cater to these evolving demands, understanding the primary trends is essential for tapping into the modern traveler mindset.



Tourists seek destinations that encourage them to unplug and reconnect with nature.

## Sustainable and Responsible Travel

**Focus on Environmental and Cultural Impact:** One of the most significant shifts in tourism preferences is the focus on sustainable and responsible travel. According to the WTO, an increasing number of tourists are seeking eco-friendly destinations and are willing to pay more for services that minimize environmental impact. This preference is fueled by heightened awareness of issues such as climate change, wildlife conservation, and the preservation of local culture.

What Tourists Look For:

- ✓ Eco-certifications on accommodations and attractions
- ✓ Carbon-neutral or low-impact transportation options
- ✓ Support for local businesses and indigenous communities

Insight: Many OTAs now highlight eco-friendly properties and experiences, making it easier for travelers to make responsible choices. Additionally, sustainability ratings or icons have been added by several channel managers, helping environmentally conscious travelers identify suitable options at a glance.



A cooking class with a local chef allows to learn and experience different flavors.

Top Destinations by Travel Trend (Based on Bookings and Search Data)

Trend	Top Destinations	Data Source
Sustainable and Eco-Friendly	Costa Rica, Iceland, New Zealand	Expedia, WTO
Wellness and Holistic Tourism	Bali, Thailand, Switzerland	Booking.com, Wellness Tourism Association
Slow Travel and Extended Stays	Italy, Portugal, Mexico	Airbnb, OTAs
Technology and Convenience	Japan, South Korea, Singapore	OTA Analysis, Expedia
Adventure (Surfing, Wildlife)	Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka	Adventure Travel Trade Association, OTA Reports

Purpose: This table showcases the top destinations for each travel trend, based on search and booking data from OTAs and tourism organizations. It's a quick reference for readers interested in specific types of travel experiences.

Unique, Authentic Experiences

**Shift from ‘Seeing’ to ‘Experiencing’:** Modern travelers are moving away from traditional sightseeing tours, seeking instead to immerse themselves in the unique, authentic aspects of a destination. This trend is particularly popular among millennials and Gen Z tourists, who value genuine connections with local culture, food, and traditions over typical tourist activities.

What Tourists Look For:

- v Opportunities to interact with locals (cooking classes, artisan workshops)
- v Tours led by community guides
- v Cultural festivals, local markets, and other regional events

Insight: OTAs and channel managers now feature “experiences” as a key search category, allowing travelers to book activities directly. According to recent data from channel managers, destinations with a strong emphasis on local engagement experience a boost in demand, especially among younger demographics.

Wellness and Holistic Tourism

**Emphasis on Mental and Physical Well-being:** Wellness tourism has surged in popularity, with travelers seeking destinations that offer a respite from the fast-paced, high-stress routines of daily life. According to the WTO, wellness tourism is growing at nearly twice the rate of general tourism, reflecting an increased demand for experiences that foster mental and physical rejuvenation.

## What Tourists Look For:

- v Resorts with spas, meditation programs, or yoga retreats
- v Destinations known for their natural landscapes, like beaches or mountains
- v Wellness-focused itineraries that include outdoor activities and healthy cuisine

Insight: OTAs have capitalized on this trend by curating wellness travel packages and promoting accommodations that provide spa facilities or offer wellness-focused services. Channel managers have observed a noticeable rise in bookings for destinations that emphasize relaxation and mindfulness.



Yoga session outdoors captures the essence of wellness tourism.

Growth in Wellness Tourism by Destination (Annual % Growth)

Destination	Wellness Tourism Growth (%)	Popular Wellness Activities	Data Source
Bali	20	Yoga retreats, spa therapies	Wellness Tourism Association, TripAdvisor
Thailand	15	Meditation, herbal therapies	Booking.com, OTAs
Switzerland	12	Spa resorts, mountain retreats	WTO, Wellness Reports
India	18	Ayurveda, yoga, spiritual retreats	TripAdvisor, Local Sources
Costa Rica	16	Eco-resorts, nature-based wellness	OTAs, Wellness Tourism

Purpose: This table highlights the growth of wellness tourism by destination, showing popular wellness activities at each location. It uses data from wellness tourism associations and OTAs to provide insights into the rising demand for wellness-related travel.

## Tech-Integrated Travel Experiences

**Desire for Convenience and Customization:** As technology becomes integral to everyday life, travelers expect the same level of integration and convenience when planning and experiencing their trips. This trend includes everything from virtual reality previews of destinations to AI-driven itinerary planning and digital concierge services. Travelers now look for destinations and accommodations that offer seamless tech solutions for added convenience and flexibility.

What Tourists Look For:

v Digital booking and check-in options

v Mobile apps for local guides, navigation, and real-time updates

v Personalization through AI-driven recommendations and services

Insight: OTAs and channel managers leverage AI and data analytics to offer more personalized recommendations and a seamless booking experience. Mobile-friendly interfaces and AI-powered suggestions have become standard, and destinations without these features often fall behind in popularity.





Tourist Priorities When Choosing a Destination (Survey Results)

Priority Factor	Percentage of Respondents (%)	Source
Sustainability and Eco-Friendliness	65	WTO, Expedia
Unique and Authentic Experiences	70	TripAdvisor, Booking.com
Wellness and Relaxation Opportunities	55	WTO, Wellness Tourism Association
Safety and Health Protocols	80	OTA Survey, WTO
Technology and Convenience	45	OTA Survey
Adventure (Surfing, Wildlife)	50	Travel Pulse, Airbnb

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## Slow Travel and Extended Stays

**Preference for Deeper Exploration:** “Slow travel” emphasizes quality over quantity, where tourists opt to spend more time in a single destination rather than hopping from place to place.

The increase in remote work has bolstered this trend, with many travelers now combining work and vacation in “workation” setups that extend the duration of their stays.

What Tourists Look For:

- v Options for long-term rentals or flexible accommodation bookings
- v Destinations with reliable internet and conducive work environments
- v Opportunities to delve deeper into the local lifestyle

Insight: Channel managers have reported an uptick in demand for extended stay options, prompting accommodations to offer weekly or monthly pricing. OTAs now feature “workation-friendly” properties and highlight destinations ideal for longer stays, such as those with strong infrastructure, stable Wi-Fi, and conducive work environments.



A “workation” environment while connecting with nature.

## **Safety and Health Protocols**

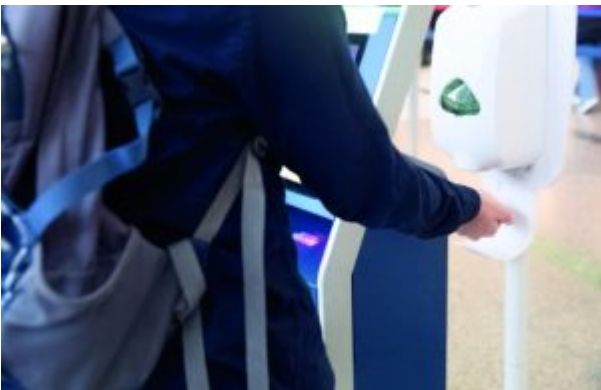
**Prioritizing Health and Peace of Mind:** Since the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists have become highly attuned to safety and hygiene standards. Destinations that can reassure travelers with clear health protocols and safety measures are more likely to attract cautious tourists. This trend has become a top factor in choosing destinations, as tourists prioritize places with visible and effective safety protocols.

What Tourists Look For:

- v Clear health and safety information on OTA platforms
- v Flexible cancellation and refund policies
- v Destinations with good healthcare infrastructure

Insight: OTAs and channel managers prominently display health and safety

information, allowing travelers to make informed decisions. This trend has spurred a demand for transparent policies, as tourists seek destinations that offer both a memorable and safe experience.



Man at the airport washes his hands using hand sanitizer dispenser in the airport to combat flu, cold and coronavirus.

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Experiences that Support Mental and Digital Detox

**Disconnecting from the Digital World:** A growing number of tourists are seeking destinations that encourage them to unplug and reconnect with nature. Digital detox experiences are becoming increasingly popular, especially among travelers



looking to escape their technology-heavy routines. Destinations known for serene landscapes, such as mountains, secluded beaches, and forests, are particularly appealing to those prioritizing mental rejuvenation.

What Tourists Look For:

- v Remote locations with limited or no Wi-Fi
- v Outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and stargazing
- v Minimalistic accommodation options like cabins or eco-lodges

Insight: OTAs and channel managers now feature “digital detox” and “nature retreat” filters, allowing travelers to select locations that facilitate this disconnect. Providers catering to these preferences are seeing increased interest and bookings from stressed urban dwellers looking to recharge.



A solo traveler enjoying a break from the digital world.



Tourists planting trees in a local community.

## **Adventure Tourism: Surfing and Wildlife Experiences**

### **Thrill-Seekers and Nature Enthusiasts Drawn to Authentic Outdoor**

**Encounters:** Adventure tourism has seen a strong resurgence, with surfing and wildlife experiences becoming major attractions for travelers eager to reconnect with nature and enjoy adrenaline-fueled activities. The growth in interest toward outdoor experiences is driven by a desire for unique, unforgettable encounters that also allow travelers to stay active and explore natural surroundings.

**Surfing Tourism:** Surfing is becoming a sought-after adventure activity, particularly among younger travelers and sports enthusiasts looking for unique, wave-rich destinations. From Bali to the beaches of Portugal and Costa Rica, tourists are selecting destinations based on the quality of surf spots, availability of surf schools, and even eco-conscious surf lodges that contribute to environmental preservation.

What Surfing Enthusiasts Look For:

- v Access to surf beaches suitable for different skill levels
- v Sustainable surf schools and eco-friendly accommodations
- v Destinations with a vibrant surf culture and community

Insight: OTAs are increasingly curating lists of “top surf destinations” and even offering packages that include surf lessons and equipment rentals. Channel managers are collaborating with surf lodges and beach resorts, promoting them as year-round destinations for surf enthusiasts of all skill levels.



Surfers catching waves at Arugambay.

**Wildlife Tourism:** Wildlife encounters are another strong draw, as travelers look for authentic experiences that allow them to observe and learn about animals in their natural habitats. This trend reflects the growing awareness of wildlife conservation and responsible tourism practices. Destinations in Africa for safaris, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, and South America's rainforests are popular choices, attracting visitors who want to immerse themselves in nature and see rare species up close.

What Wildlife Enthusiasts Look For:

- v Eco-conscious wildlife tours with minimal environmental impact
- v Local guides knowledgeable in animal behavior and habitats
- v Opportunities to support conservation efforts through their visits

Insight: Many OTAs now highlight wildlife conservation programs, while some channel managers offer wildlife-focused packages, allowing travelers to contribute directly to preservation efforts. Additionally, properties near protected wildlife areas often partner with conservation organizations, which appeals to tourists interested in meaningful and sustainable travel experiences.

Today's tourists have a refined set of preferences that influence their destination

choices, shaped by environmental consciousness, wellness priorities, tech integration, and a focus on authentic experiences. The role of OTAs, WTO insights, and channel managers in identifying and adapting to these preferences has been instrumental in reshaping the tourism landscape. As travelers continue to seek destinations that align with their values and lifestyles, tourism providers who embrace these trends are well-positioned to meet the evolving demands of the modern tourist.

With surfing and wildlife tourism on the rise, destinations that promote these activities in a sustainable, respectful manner are seeing increased interest. Tourists today are not only seeking adventure but also looking for experiences that offer a sense of purpose, whether that's through catching waves or contributing to wildlife conservation. As OTAs and channel managers further promote these outdoor adventures, destinations embracing surfing and wildlife experiences are well-positioned to attract this growing segment of thrill-seekers and nature enthusiasts.



An eco-friendly hotel surrounded by lush nature, with solar panels and visible sustainability features.

### **Global Average Across All Tourist Types and Destinations**

The global average daily expenditure for tourists is approximately USD 137 USD. This includes a balance across all traveler types and regions, from high-end to budget-conscious travelers.

These estimates vary with fluctuating exchange rates, inflation, and recent changes

in travel habits, such as increased spending on wellness and sustainable tourism.

Tourism Spending by Type of Experience

Experience Type	Average Spend per Tourist (USD)	% Of Total Spending	Source
Accommodation	40 - 60	30 - 40	WTO, OTAs
Food and Dining	20 - 30	15 - 25	OTAs, TripAdvisor
Activities (e.g., tours, classes)	15 - 25	20 - 30	OTA Analytics, AirDNA
Shopping and Souvenirs	10 - 20	10 - 15	WTO, Local Surveys
Transportation	10 - 15	10 - 20	WTO, Expedia

Purpose: This table shows the distribution of spending, providing insight into where tourists allocate their budget. Data from OTAs, WTO, and travel surveys make it a practical reference for readers curious about travel costs.

Average Daily Tourist Expenditure by Region and Traveler Type

Region/Destination Type	Budget Travelers (\$)	Budget Travelers (\$)	Luxury Travelers (\$)
Developed Countries (e.g., USA, Europe)	50 - 100	50 - 100	300 - 500+
Developing Countries (e.g., Southeast Asia, Latin America)	20 - 50	50 - 150	200 - 400
Luxury Destinations (e.g., Maldives, Bora Bora)	150 - 250	300 - 600	700+

Purpose: This table provides a global overview of daily spending, helping readers understand budget requirements for different regions. Data can be gathered from OTAs, WTO, and travel expenditure reports to present realistic averages.