



In the last eight years of offering search marketing services such as SEO, PPC, and Digital PR, the travel niche kind of found us. And we're glad it did. Our knack for creating multilingual, multi-market strategies at scale makes us a natural fit for brands that need content tailored to different languages, cultures, and regions.

The way people book their holidays is changing faster than you can eat a cheese toastie from 7/11 (IYKYK), and while we could have just relied on our own (vast and impressive 😌) data for this report, we wanted to go further. We trawled through major industry studies, scoured the web for emerging trends, and layered in social listening data to build a detailed picture of what's ahead.

We also brought in some of the best in the business. Richard Mellor, freelance travel journalist for The Times, Metro, The Guardian (and more), shares his predictions on where the industry is headed in 2025.

# INTRO



# BEHIND THE SCENES.







### Gabby Buck, Senior Data Insights Executive

"I loved bringing this to life, Gabby did an amazing job on the research and projects like this really remind me how cool the travel niche is. As a big lover of travel myself, a lot of the findings resonated with both me personally and the conversations we've had with clients over the last couple of months. Very cool, I hope you love it!"

Sophie Crosby, Head of Content



We won't dwell on last year, but the following stats are good for context:

- More frequent but shorter trips UK travellers took an average of 3.9 holidays in 2024, indicating a shift away from traditional long holidays towards multiple shorter getaways (YouGov Travel Research Report).
- Search remains the dominant planning tool 57% of Brits relied on search engines to research travel, reinforcing the importance of SEO and content strategy (YouGov Travel Research Report).
- Off-peak travel surged Climate concerns and overtourism drove demand for shoulder season travel, with major tour operators expanding autumn and spring offerings (Globetrender 2024 Report).
- Al's increasing influence Over 60% of travel companies implemented Al tools to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency (ABTA Travel Trends 2024).

## SHIFTING DESTINATION PREFERENCES

The locations travellers are choosing saw a shakeup in 2024.



## THE TOP SEARCHED DESTINATIONS FOR EMEA TRAVELLERS INCLUDED:

LONDON, EN ISTANBUL, T PARIS, FRAN ANTALYA, T DUBAI, UAE NEW YORK, ROME, ITALY ÇEŞME, TÜRI PALMA DE M FETHIYE, TÜ

IGLAND
ÜRKIYE
ÜRKIYE
USA
/
KIYE (NEW TO THE LIST IN 2024)
IALLORCA, SPAIN
RKIYE (NEW TO THE LIST IN 2024)



LAS VEGAS, CANCUN, MI ORLANDO, F LOS ANGELE PUNTA CAN NEW YORK, CHICAGO, IL MIAMI, FLOR BOSTON, MA SAN DIEGO,

NEVADA
EXICO
LORIDA
S, CALIFORNIA
A, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
USA
LINOIS
ASSACHUSETTS
CALIFORNIA

# JOURNEY BOOKING.



Search remains the backbone of travel planning, with 57% of Brits using it as their primary tool when researching holidays (YouGov). Specialised travel websites (23%) and travel blogs/social media (18%) play a role, but they're secondary.

For travel brands, this means search needs to be the priority, and both organic visibility and paid search must work harder than ever. If you're not showing up at the research stage, you're losing potential bookings before they've even begun.

# STRESSE

When it comes to where people book, 50% of travellers use accommodation comparison sites, while only 37% book directly with hotels (YouGov). Hotels need to rethink their direct booking strategy as price parity alone won't cut it. The experience matters: loyalty incentives, exclusive perks, and frictionless checkout could shift the trend back in their favour.

But here's the real challenge: 70% of US travellers find booking stressful, with 46% saying airport transfers are the worst part, followed closely by flights (45%) and luggage allowances (41%) (YouGov). Travel brands need to address this blocker with simplified booking flows, transparent fees, and better user experience.

Booking behaviours are also changing. Black Friday and early-bird bookings are flattening the traditional seasonal peaks, and some travellers are planning as far ahead as 2027 (yes really!) (Globetrender 2024). Meanwhile, 54% of British Airways Holidays customers now search for trips 6+ months in advance, a 10% increase YoY (Globetrender 2024). Brands should be capitalising on this shift. Relying on last-minute conversions could be a mistake.



# Buy now Pay later

Payment flexibility is another major factor. 69% of 25-44-year-olds are interested in interest-free instalment plans, making holiday packages more attractive to younger audiences (Globetrender 2024).

Meanwhile, 30% of UK adults pay upfront, while 20% use credit cards and 18% opt for installments (Globetrender 2024). Offering multiple payment options isn't just a nice-to-have, it's a competitive advantage.

Finally, Google Flights has overtaken all competitors as the UK's preferred method to search for flights, beating airline websites, online travel agencies like Kayak, and even flight comparison giants like Skyscanner (Search volume data).

To assist travellers in understanding additional costs, and to minimise booking stressors, Google Flights displays icons indicating whether hand luggage is included in the ticket price. A strikethrough icon signifies that full-size carryon luggage isn't included, helping users make informed decisions.

If flights are part of your offering, optimising for Google's ecosystem is non-negotiable.





# AIHYPEVS. REALITY

Al is transforming travel, but the experience isn't quite there yet. 46% of vacation bookers using Al-powered recommendations find them 'unhelpful' or neutral, highlighting a clear gap in execution (YouGov).

Despite this, AI adoption is picking up - over 60% of travel companies have already integrated AI tools to "enhance" customer service and efficiency, and the market is set to grow 15% annually over the next five years (GoIndex).



[AI Generated, obviously]

## "FIND ME A BOUTIQUE FOTELIN ONDON WITH ASPA AND A JACUZZI THAT ALLOWS PETS."

## 70%OF RAVELERS USEEULEOR ACTVTES

For search marketing, the shift is even more dramatic. Traditional keyword searches like "hotels in London" are evolving into complex, conversational queries like "Find me a boutique hotel in London with a spa and a jacuzzi that allows pets."

Media).

Buuuuut when AI works, it works well. Over 22% of travellers used Al for trip planning in early 2023, a 40% increase since the previous September (Lifewire). Satisfaction rates are high-82% of users report a positive experience, with 70% finding AI useful for discovering activities and 58% saying it saves them time. Al is also helping travellers find new destinations (40%), make quick adjustments (23%), and even stay within budget (22%) (Digital Dialog).

**Al-powered search engines, such as Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE)**, rely on structured, intent-based data rather than static keywords. Travel brands that fail to optimise their content for Al search engines risk becoming invisible in search results (TTG



When asked his thoughts on how AI will impact the travel industry, Richard told us: "Be it ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Microsoft's Copilot, or even dedicated travel sites like Trip Planner, AI's influence on travel is accelerating.

In this scenario, travel media, influencers, and even holiday companies could become redundant. But I don't think that will happen, simply because AI's great limitations—its reliance on accurate digital information and its inability to be fully 'real-time'—mean that it'll never be able to tell you right away about the amazing European country no one knows about or the fact that the hitherto well-reviewed safari lodge has just lost its brilliant GM.

Al can decidedly augment the personal touch, but I can't ever envisage it offering a sufficient replacement."

So, Al isn't perfect yet, but travellers are already using it - and expectations are increasing. Search is becoming more conversational and intent-driven, making structured data essential for visibility. While Al-powered recommendations need improvement, those who get it right will win customer trust. The travel brands that embrace Al in their content strategy, customer experience, and search marketing will be the ones that win this year.





How soci

I media is shaping the way we travel.



TikTok is now a major driver of travel inspiration. Travelrelated hashtag usage has surged by 250%, and 39% of TikTok users have booked travel or made a purchase after seeing content on the platform (Globetrender 2024).

Discovery is key - 69% of UK TikTok users report finding new travel brands through the app, and 37% actively save travel content for future trips (Globetrender 2024).

But while social-driven travel is on the rise, there's still friction: 50% of consumers say they've wanted to book a trip they saw on their feed but found the process too complex or timeconsuming (Globetrender 2024).

The impact is undeniable. 26% of UK holidaymakers using TikTok for inspiration have booked trips directly as a result of content they've seen (Globetrender 2024).

Travel brands need a solid TikTok presence - whether through influencer partnerships, organic content, or paid campaigns. Having said that, with TikTok's future uncertain in some markets, brands can't afford to rely on a single platform.

The TikTok ban in the US has already sparked a 5,000% increase in searches for alternative apps. If the platform loses traction in key markets, content trends will shift - Instagram may introduce new planning features, and creators could migrate TikTok-style content to YouTube Shorts, Reels, or other emerging platforms.

Travel brands need contingency plans: are influencer partnerships spread across multiple platforms? Can campaign content be repurposed elsewhere? If not, it's time to rethink strategy before reliance on TikTok becomes something that's hard to recover from.





Richard Mellor, Freelance Travel Journalist



# BUDGET OR BOUGIE?

Who's Spending What (and Where) on Travel?



## 80% OF TRAVELLERS AGED 18-34 SAY THEY PREFER LUXURY TRAVEL.

Younger travellers are leading the way when it comes to extravagant trips - 80% of travellers aged 18-34 say they prefer luxury travel, compared to just 56% of over-50s (Expedia).

But while Gen Z and Millennials are splurging more, they're also the most impacted by the cost of living. 93% of 18–24-year-olds say rising costs will influence their travel plans, yet only 4% say they won't travel at all (ABTA 2024).

Instead, they're adapting. 32% plan to book cheaper accommodation, 27% are taking fewer holidays, and 24% are opting for cheaper transport.

# 

In 2024, 47% of Gen Z travellers stayed in five-star hotels.

That said, luxury is still on the rise for younger travellers. In 2024, 47% of Gen Z travellers stayed in five-star hotels, up from 37% last year, and they're the most likely to upgrade their experiences in 2025.

Social media likely plays a role here - we all know the saying "Instagram is a highlight reel" and well, it seems aspirational travel content fuels demand for high-end experiences, even as budgets tighten.

Differences in travel style remain consistent. Baby Boomers prioritise relaxation, looking for serene getaways, while Gen Z craves adventure and unique experiences. Millennials lean towards cultural and historical travel, seeking authentic cultural experiences.

In short, it seems younger travellers are willing to spend but are also feeling the financial squeeze, indicating flexible pricing, installment plans, and wellpositioned luxury experiences will likely win them over.

Social media continues to shape travel bucket lists, meaning brands need a strong presence where Gen Z and Millennials discover and book trips, and understanding the generational split in travel preferences and booking habits is key to delivering the right messaging, at the right time, to the right audience.





# ALL-INCLUSIVE

All-inclusive holidays are all wristbands, cheap booze and dodgy food...or are they?





## AR.

This shift is playing out online-#allinclusive is trending on TikTok, and searches on Hotels.com for 'all-inclusive' jumped 60% year over year (Expedia Unpack 25 Trend Report).

All-inclusive resorts are experiencing a resurgence, and Gen Z is leading the charge.

One-third of Gen Z travellers say their perception of all-inclusives has improved, and 42% now prefer allinclusive resorts over other hotel types (Expedia: Unpack Travel Trends 2025).

# WHAT'S DRIVING THE SHIFT?

So, what's driving the shift? 41% of Gen Z travellers say minimal stress is the biggest reason they're choosing all-inclusives, followed by ease of booking (39%) and the luxury experience (38%) (Expedia: Unpack Travel Trends 2025). With cost-of-living pressures hitting younger travellers, it makes sense, having everything bundled upfront provides financial predictability and removes unexpected costs.

Yet despite this trend, full package vacations (flights + accommodation) haven't taken off at the same rateonly 14% of US vacation bookers opt for packaged deals (YouGov). This suggests that while all-inclusives are growing in popularity, many travellers still want flexibility in how they reach their destination.

"I think this is interesting, as personally an all-inclusive has never appealed to me, but I can understand it from the perspective of knowing exactly how much you're going to be paying without having to budget extra for unknown spends on food/drink etc. It feels sort of lazy, but maybe that ties in with wanting stress-free, easy travels?"

Gabby Buck,

**Senior Data Insights Executive** 





## LAVISH, EXPERIENCE DRIVEN, AN SOCALMED FUELED.

Travel isn't just about the sights anymore. Gen Z is booking trips based on what they can bring home. Whether it's French butter, Japanese sweets, or Korean skincare, viral products are fueling a new wave of travel inspired by TikTok trends. 39% of travellers visit grocery stores on holiday, and 44% specifically shop for local goods they can't get at home (Expedia Unpack 25 Trend Report).

**Top UK based beauty** influencer, Amelia Liana shares her favourite French Pharmacy finds.



US travellers share their UK purchases from brands like Adanola, Hoola Hoops and **ZoFlora cleaning products!** 

#japaneseskincare on TikTok reveals hundreds of thousands of "what to buy" videos.





The appeal isn't just about getting exclusive products, but about the bragging rights that come with them. TikTok and Instagram are full of travel hauls, with travellers showing off the must-have items they've sourced abroad. Visiting a supermarket or a beauty store in another country isn't just an errand-it's part of the travel experience itself.

Retail is becoming a bigger part of travel, and brands should take note. Promoting unique, hardto-find products as part of the destination appeal could help drive bookings.

Hotels and tourism boards could even collaborate with local businesses to create shopping-focused itineraries or guides to must-visit stores. With TikTok trends shaping demand, travel brands should think beyond attractions and tapping into retail tourism.





## DESTINATION DUPES&DET( TRAVEL





## 87% OF UK HOLIDAYMAKERS PLANNING A TRIP IN 2024 OR 2025 SAY THEY WOULD CONSIDER CHOOSING A LESSER-KNOWN ALTERNATIVE DESTINATION.

Over tourism isn't a new issue, but in 2024, it became impossible to ignore.

Protests in cities like Barcelona and Venice highlighted the strain of mass tourism on local communities, with concerns about overcrowding, environmental damage, and lower-income residents being priced out of their own cities (European Travel Commission).

In response, governments and tourism boards have started implementing proactive strategies to limit visitor numbers at hot spots, promoting off-season travel, and introducing new tourist taxes to manage the impact (Condé Nast Traveller).

Off-season travel is also rising-45% of UK travellers plan to avoid peak periods, likely influenced by climate change, a desire for fewer crowds, and increased awareness of over tourism's impact (Globetrender 2024). 78% of travellers over 45 are particularly drawn to lesser-known destinations, seeking fresh experiences beyond the usual tourist trails (Globetrender 2024).



Lorena Sopêna/Europa Press/AP

This trend is driving a rise in "detour travel", where travellers intentionally include off-the-beaten-path destinations in their itineraries. 63% of travellers now plan to incorporate a detour stop into their next trip (Travel Noire), signaling a shift away from the traditional one-city, one-resort holiday model.

With travellers increasingly looking for alternatives to overcrowded hotspots, brands must reposition their offerings to align with this demand. Promoting lesserknown locations, off-peak deals, and curated "detour" experiences will resonate with this new mindset.

Tourism boards, hotels, and travel platforms should also lean into responsible travel messaging-highlighting sustainability efforts, local engagement, and crowd-free experiences that offer both exclusivity and authenticity.





# WHAT DIDNT YOU DO?



0

## JOMO

### [JOH MOH] noun.

The Joy of Missing Out on overpacked itineraries, whirlwind sightseeing, and the pressure to 'do it all.' Instead, it's about slowing down, soaking in the moment, and actually relaxing on your trip. Think long breakfasts, aimless strolls, and guilt-free naps instead of back-to-back tours.

Example: "We embraced full JOMO in Italy- skipped the museum queues, found a cute café, and just watched the world go by with an Aperol Spritz in hand."




# **ONE IN FIVE** ERS ARE AVE OKING TRPS FOR SE DISCOVERY OR MENTAL HEALTH.

list ticking.

Forget packed itineraries and the pressure to see eeeeevery single landmark, JOMO travel (Joy of Missing Out) is the mood for 2025. Unlike its cousin, slow travel, which is about taking your time, JOMO travel is about doing less, feeling more, and fully "holding space" for the experience (Expedia Unpack '25). Think lounging for hours, wandering with no agenda, and actually enjoying where you are, rather than back-to-back sightseeing missions.

And it turns out, embracing the art of missing out is good for us. 62% of travellers say slow-travel-style trips reduce stress and anxiety, while nearly half find they help them reconnect with loved ones (Expedia Unpack '25). The Hilton Trends Report backs this up-more than one in five travellers are booking trips for self-discovery or mental health, prioritising simplicity and spontaneity over bucket-



# BEACH CLUBS OU BREATHWORK IN.



"Forget seaweed scrubs or deep tissue massages. Aided by everbetter tech, the focus of the wellness industry—all the way down to dynamic spas—is on personalised longevity programmes that have a long-lasting effect on participants' health. We are increasingly focused on better health and clean living. But there's been an equal stress on the value of slowing down and on disconnecting from our fast-paced, tech-tastic lives. When it comes to longevity, successfully accomplishing that feels just as critical."

> Richard Mellor, Freelance travel journalist writing for The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Guardian, Metro, Mail on Sunday, Condé Nast Traveller, and more.





# OF18-24

Instead of late nights and hangovers, Gen Z is prioritising selfcare, movement, and experiences that leave them feeling better, not worse, after a trip.

Wellness tourism is surging as a result. 2024 was named the year of Rest and Relaxation, with an explosion of sleep retreats, silent getaways, AI-powered wellness escapes, and cultural well-being experiences (Hotelbeds). The shift isn't just about relaxation-it's about mental health. 93% of Gen Z travellers say travel positively impacts their mental well-being, and 89% feel less anxious and more positive after a trip (Timeout).

Gen Z is reshaping the way young people travel, and the classic booze-fueled first holiday to Zante or Magaluf might be on the decline. 39% of 18-24-year-olds now don't drink alcohol at all (YouGov/The Grocer), and the rise of "dry vacations" means more travellers are swapping bottomless cocktails for wellnessfocused getaways (TravelPerk\*).

And it's not just a trend-it's big business. Wellness travellers spend more than typical tourists, dropping an average of \$1,764 (£1,426) per international trip, and the sector is projected to hit \$1.41 trillion by 2029, growing at 9.6% CAGR (Business Research Company).

At the same time, workplace stress is keeping people from taking breaks. 20% of UK adults took time off due to mental health reasons in 2023, yet 42% of UK adults don't even take their full annual leave (Globetrender 2024). Travel brands should position holidays as a necessity, not a luxury-an investment in well-being rather than an indulgence.





# WELLNESS TF

Nothing Screams "I'm in My 30s" Like Booking a HYROX holiday.



Wellness travel has officially burpee-broad-jumped into 2025. Forget poolside cocktails-sports tourism is booming, and 18% of Brits are now planning trips purely to take part in fitness events (Accor Trend Report). Searches for "workout holidays" have jumped 50% in the past year, proving that protein shakes are replacing Bloody Marys as the go-to holiday staple.

And if you're in your 30s, you already know the deal: first, you try climbing. Then, you sign up for a marathon. And before you know it, you're booking flights for an international HYROX event and telling everyone it's just for fun (it's not, you're trying to beat your PB). With 21% of Britons opting for active getaways like hiking, cycling, and endurance races, fitness trips have become a new milestone of adulthood (YouGov).



This shift isn't just about exercise-it's BIG business. Sports tourism is now a major driver of the \$1.41 trillion wellness tourism industry, as travellers increasingly plan trips around events rather than just booking a beach and figuring it out later (Business Research Company).

Fitness influencers like James Warnock, Jake Dearden, and Mary McCarthy are fueling the trend, turning HYROX, marathons, and endurance events into aspirational travel content, complete with race-day montages, post-run gelato, and deep reflections on their... knee pain.

"Hotels have long had tennis courts or gyms. What's now ever more common is enthusiasts travelling to participate in marathons or other sporting events - with this being the key criterion when it comes to choosing a holiday destination—or to train.

Surf camps, cycling retreats, and wild swimming weeks are all firmly in vogue. The hotel giant Accor reported a 50% rise in searches for 'workout holidays' during 2024." Says travel journalist, Richard Mellor.













So, it seems the "fly and flop" holiday is being replaced by the "fly and..flex?" getaway, and brands need to keep up. Hotels with gyms, cold plunge pools, foam rollers, and protein-packed breakfast buffets will have a clear advantage, while destinations that position themselves as prime training or competition spots can tap into this high-energy, high-spending audience. Because, let's be honest, if your 30s are going to be defined by DOMS, Strava screenshots, and expensive race entries, you might as well make a holiday out of it.



# 2025

Here are some smaller trends we've spotted whilst researching, and while the data isn't extensive just yet, we've seen how the major travel trends of 2025 started as niche movements back in 2023 - so these are definitely ones to watch.

# COWBOY TRAVEL.

The Yellowstone effect is real. Ranch stays in the US saw a 42% surge in interest in 2024, and Skyscanner even introduced a filter for hotels with horse riding, as bookings rose 18% (Tripaneer / Skyscanner). With Beyoncé's Grammy Award Winning Cowboy Carter adding fuel to the Western aesthetic, expect more travellers swapping city breaks for saddle time and cowboy hats.





# BOOKTOK-INSPIRED TRAVEL

Literature is sending people on real-world adventures, with 72% of Brits say a novel has inspired them to travel somewhere new (Explore Worldwide). Whether it's wandering the streets of Paris like a Hemingway protagonist or booking a trip to Japan after reading Before the Coffee Gets Cold, fiction-fueled wanderlust is driving bookings.



# NO MORE MINI MOONS

After years of "mini-moons", couples are now going all-in on postwedding travel. With weddings costing an average of £20,700, many are choosing to delay and save, turning their honeymoon into a multi-week adventure rather than a quick getaway. Think off-the-beaten-track destinations, immersive experiences like wine tasting and painting retreats, and "bucket list" trips.



# **SET-JETTING** 2.0

We called this last year, it even inspired a few of our travel campaigns, and it's still going strong. TV and film continue to shape travel trends, with travellers booking trips to Paris (Emily in Paris), Morocco (Gladiator II), and even Scotland, thanks to The Traitors. If a show is binge-worthy, chances are, its filming locations are seeing increased footfall.



D.	
TAKE	SOUND
AN	
EXT.	INT.

# **KEY TAKES FOR SEARCH MARKETERS IN 2025.**

Google's AI-powered search is changing how travellers discover destinations, making structured data and intent-driven content non negotiable for visibility. Top level keyword optimisation won't cut it- brands need to create content that answers natural, conversational queries to stay relevant.

At the same time, direct bookings need a big rethink. Travellers are open to booking direct, but only if the experience is easy. Price parity alone won't win them over. We're talking exclusive perks, frictionless checkout, and clear incentives!

Social-driven travel inspiration remains strong, but brands can't rely solely on TikTok. With potential bans and algorithm shifts looming, diversifying content across Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Pinterest is wise. Meanwhile, SEO and PPC should work together, not in silos. With 57% of travellers using search engines to plan trips, brands need to maximise both organic visibility and paid search, to capture demand early.

A rising trend in "detour travel" offers a major opportunity. Optimising for searches like "hidden gems near Rome" or "destinations like.." will help brands tap into this growing demand.

Finally, booking fatigue is real. With 70% of travellers finding the process stressful, reducing friction at checkout is critical. Travel brands should simplify booking flows, be transparent about costs, and highlight key benefits upfront to minimise drop-off. And while AI-generated content is on the rise, Google is favouring actual expert insights - meaning first-hand experiences and high-quality storytelling will set brands apart.



# GET IN TOUCH.

hello@mintydigital.com



\*This document includes research and data gathered from third-party sources. All research has been referenced accordingly to ensure transparency and accuracy. While we strive to provide reliable and up-to-date information, we encourage readers to verify details independently where necessary. For any questions regarding the content of this document, please contact Sophie Crosby at sophie.crosby@mintydigital.com.