



The **V**oice

“The way we travel now”

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The
Audience
by **dt.**

WELCOME

On behalf of The Audience, we're pleased to introduce you to The Voice, our regular insights newsletter which sheds light on shifting audience behaviours and attitudes and explores the potential impact on consumers of new and emerging trends and social and geo-political factors.

We're here to help you keep ahead of the curve with all things related to leisure tourism.



In our first issue, we've partnered with **Angelina Villa-Clarke**, a freelance travel journalist with some 30 years of experience. She has worked on staff for In Britain, for the British Tourist Authority, and on British Airways' High Life magazine.

Angelina has now been freelancing for over 11 years and writes for mainstream publications, such as Forbes, The Mail on Sunday, The Evening Standard, The Independent, Wanderlust, Woman &

Home and many more titles. She has lived in Venice and Barbados and has travelled to over 60 countries. Angelina regularly visits new openings and writes about the latest travel trends.

In this piece, Angelina delves into the evolution of leisure travel. The way we travel now is not only led by changing consumer behaviours, with a rise in sustainable and experiential travel, for instance; but it is also influenced by the progress of new technologies, with Artificial Intelligence beginning to reshape our travel experiences.

Leading travel brands which are industry innovators, such as Black Tomato, Intrepid Travel and Original Travel, are continuously pushing the boundaries when it comes to the way we experience the world. Meanwhile, catering to the demands of HNW and UHNW consumers, luxury hotel brands, such as Aman, Auberger, Six Senses and Belmond, are also offering more than just a room for the night, with their immersive takes on hospitality.

Whether you want to venture off the beaten path, discover hyper-local communities or soak up authentic cuisine, the essence of travel remains the same: at its heart is the desire to make meaningful memories, to soak up new experiences and to learn more about the world around us.

Read on to discover five key trends for the year ahead.



1.

ACTION-PACKED: THE RISE IN ACTIVE TRAVEL

Since the pandemic, there has been a sharp increase in consumer interest around preventative health, with McKinsey's Future of Wellness Survey for 2024 citing that a "demand for products and services that support healthy ageing and longevity is on the rise". Going hand in hand with this is a rise in travellers looking for active tourism. Whether it is cycling, running or hiking trips, it puts an end to the myth that many of us just want to 'fly and flop' when it comes to our holiday time. In the recent Barclays Business Barometer Report, which surveyed 1,500 senior decision-makers in the UK, 65 per cent of business leaders said that active leisure tourism has surged in popularity in recent years, with more than 71% of hospitality businesses seeing an increase in 'foot'-traffic due to active leisure.

Meanwhile, active travel experts, Explore Worldwide reveals in its recent Travel Trends Report that its active holidays were up 29% in 2023, with walking holidays up 52% since pre-pandemic. "Walking holidays, with particular emphasis on self-

reflection and personal growth are selling particularly well," says the company. "The legendary Camino de Santiago is up 20% on 2022, and Inca Trail treks are up 40%." Furthermore, recent research by Precision Reports on the Adventure Tourism Market, included information and data from key players in the sector, such as Intrepid Travel, G Adventures and Abercrombie and Kent, and concludes that "adventure tourism is anticipated to rise at a considerable rate between 2024 and 2031."

So, what is on offer for those in pursuit of some adrenalin-fuelled action? New for this year from Exodus Adventure Travels is its Active Europe Collection, which includes cycling trips across northern France and kayaking experiences on Turkey's Turquoise Coast. Catering to the popularity of e-bikes, BSpoke offers new e-biking tours exploring Portugal's Duoro Valley; while Eurohike has launched new holidays for this year, including an eight-day trek from the Alps to the Adriatic Sea.



2.

CULINARY CULTURE: WE ARE WHAT WE EAT

There's no better way to get under the skin of a place than to search out authentic local cuisine. Where once it was solely word-of-mouth, tapping into local foodie scenes, under-the-radar bars and hip restaurants is now much easier with the power of social media platforms, such as Tik Tok, driving travellers to seek out 'Instagrammable' hot spots.

In fact, the sector is booming with recent research showing that the global culinary tourism market reached US\$ 946.4 billion in 2023, and it is projected to reach US\$ 3,515.1 billion by 2032.

Booking.com's Travel Predictions 2024 reveals that "when it comes to culinary ventures, 78% of travellers hunger for fresh flavours. Half are planning their trips around specific restaurants or dishes, with 61% prioritising learning about the origins of a destination's iconic dish."

The search for the ultimate foodie experience is also increasingly more refined as our palettes become more

sophisticated. Travellers don't just want to eat local, but they want to eat with locals, with initiatives such as The Bahamas' People to People project allowing travellers to Nassau to connect with Bahamians and dine with them in their homes. Experiential dining is also on the rise, with many top-end hotels offering meals taken on isolated islands, in the desert and under dark skies. The ultra-luxury resort, Soneva Fushi in the Maldives, takes the concept one step further with its Flying Sauces restaurant, which sees guests zipline into the tiny treetop eatery to dine on local specialities.

Hyper-local dining is another micro-trend, with companies, such as Food Chick Tours and With Locals, giving you the inside track on the food scene in a given location. Wild Feasting, which celebrates foraged ingredients and communal dining in the great outdoors, is also rising in popularity, and takes us back to our ancient roots, with Norway's culinary traditions leading the charge.



3.

MIDWEEK MINDFULNESS: WORKING HARD ON HOLIDAY

Since the pandemic, the way that many of us work has evolved. This hybrid style of employment for many of us has also had an impact on the way that we can travel. Increased flexibility has seen the introduction of the ‘workcation’ concept – on-the-clock getaways that combine work with play.

Whether it is renting a villa in a hot climate, or setting up ‘shop’ in a mountain cabin, the workcation concept means that you can still fulfil your work duties, without taking time off, while broadening your horizons and exploring a new place in your downtime.

A recent BBC report describes the notion as an example of work-life integration,

a concept that is “more realistic than striving for ‘work-life balance’, where work and play are positioned in competition. Opting to work from a cabin for a week means you’re deciding how, where and when you want to incorporate your leisure time into your work, rather than trying to keep the two realms separate.”

This new attitude and elasticity around work and travel, has also seen a rise in mid-week breaks as travellers shun the usual weekend, or week-long time frame, and means that holidaymakers can often save money in the process. What’s more, taking off for a cheeky couple of nights in the traditional working week is the perfect antidote to ‘hump day’ blues, and can boost mental wellbeing.



4.

CONSCIOUS CONSUMERISM: TREADING LIGHTLY

The way we think about travel and our footprint on the planet is changing. With that comes a new era of conscious travel, with more and more companies, such as Responsible Travel, offering ways in which we can minimise our impact, or allow us to give back to local communities.

Justin Francis, founder and CEO of Responsible Travel says: “In 2024, we hope that it will be easier for travellers to make ethical choices. Especially as destinations themselves are prioritising responsible, low-impact tourism. Look out for tourism taxes, curbs on mega-cruise ships and Airbnbs, plus caps on visitor numbers and other much-needed controls.”

With rampant greenwashing and conflicting information, however, it can be confusing for the average traveller to work out where to start when it comes to ethical travel. A recent report from the Visa Economic Empowerment Institute in partnership with Oxford Economics,

reveals some of the challenges, and says that “sustainability in travel and tourism has moved from a niche consideration to an industry-wide priority that calls for meaningful change, transparency, and accountability.”

Based on a recent study, Expedia reveals that “90% of consumers look for sustainable options when travelling. From opting for lower environmental impacts to supporting local economies, travellers are seeking to make an impact with their trips – and on average, people are willing to pay 38% more to make their travel more sustainable.”

Companies, such as Hilton, are starting to make their mark, with initiatives such as the hotel company introducing carbon labelling at-scale, helping guests to make more informed choices across almost 30 hotels in cities including London, Liverpool, Leeds and Newcastle.



5.

AFFORDABLE LUXURY: UPGRADING YOUR EXPERIENCE

A desire to upscale our travel has seen a boom in consumers looking for affordable luxury experiences. Whether it is a stylish hotel room at an accessible rate or upgrading to a premium economy cabin to elevate a plane journey, many travellers are seeking out new ways in which to access a touch of luxury when on the road.

Mintel's Luxury Travel Market Report says that in part the trend is fuelled by those "seeking to make up for once-in-a-lifetime holidays that they missed out on during the pandemic" and it also puts significance on gastro tourism, "with 63% of luxury travellers say high-quality food and drink would encourage them to choose one holiday destination over another."

Moxy Hotels, an offshoot of the Marriott brand, is a leader in this sphere with their properties offering affordable room rates, innovative design and addresses found in sought-after destinations.

Travelling off-season; using loyalty programmes and saving air miles can all help travellers access an elevated way to travel. While it might feel counterintuitive, it can also be more economical to stay longer in a given destination, with deals to be found on longer-stay accommodation, such as Cheval Collection, five-star apartments found across London and recently opened in Dubai.



In an ever-changing world, leisure tourism continues to evolve, driven by shifting consumer behaviours and advancing technologies. From the surge in active tourism to the rise of culinary culture and the emphasis on midweek mindfulness, the landscape of travel is being reshaped by customers cultures and habits.

Keeping on top of these consumer behaviours has never been so important when it comes to effectively reaching and communicating with your target audience. Understanding your audiences' social and emotional awareness, means you can engage with them on a much deeper level, allowing them to build a genuine affinity with your brand.

Interested to find out how you can tap into these trends?
Simply email us at **hello@wearetheaudience.com**

The Voice



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