



Travel Trends Guide 2026

Redefining the Hospitality Landscape

*The essential guide to
understanding traveller behaviour
and shaping exceptional stays*



Chapters

- 01 What's Next for Hospitality in 2026?
- 02 Power of Play
- 03 Fandom
- 04 Hotel As The Destination
- 05 The Creativity Boom
- 06 Journey as the Experience
- 07 Someday As Everyday
- 08 Live Like A Local
- 09 Enduring Trends Worth Monitoring in 2026
- 10 In Conclusion
- 11 Sources





What's next for hospitality In 2026?



The way people travel is shifting in meaningful ways

After the pandemic, the need for social interaction, community building, psychological well-being, and a deeper sense of fulfilment has become one of the strongest motivations behind travel decisions. Ticking off checklists or visiting iconic places as a sign of status is no longer the primary motivation.

Today's travellers want journeys that enrich their lives and make them **feel more connected to themselves, to others, and to the places they visit.**

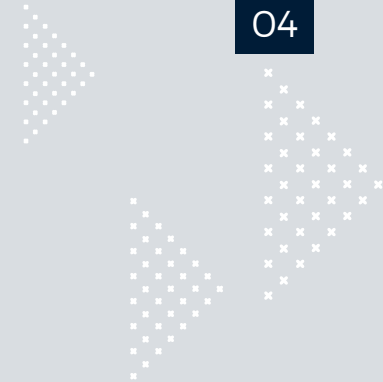
Industry data reflects this evolution. Global tourism revenue reached an estimated \$988.52 billion and is projected to grow 7.07% annually, reaching \$1.39 trillion by 2030¹. This momentum extends directly into hospitality.

The hotel market is expected to **grow at 7%** (CAGR 2025–2030), reaching **\$638.39 billion by 2030**, with the number of hotel users worldwide forecast to hit **1.86 billion** by 2026¹.

For hoteliers, the message is clear: **Demand is strong, but guest motivations and expectations are changing rapidly.**

This shift is being accelerated by **AI-powered discovery, smarter travel tech, and the influence of social media** on how travellers search and plan their trips. Combined with evolving lifestyles and new generational behaviours, the pace of change becomes impossible to ignore. If you look at the past years, the difference is clear.

In 2025, trends like me-mooning, JOMO-inspired travel and wellness-first trips reflected a desire for deeply personal, restorative experiences. As we move into 2026, traveller motivations are expanding. Guests are now seeking more **community-led adventures**, gravitating toward group and family travel, and showing growing interest in **experiences filled with action, fantasy, and immersive storytelling**. To stay competitive, hoteliers must remain alert, adaptable, and aligned with this evolving landscape.





What will you find inside this report?

This guide breaks down the **trends shaping 2026**, the reasons behind them, and the practical ways hotels can turn them into growth opportunities.

You'll notice several **emerging patterns**, from travellers planning entire journeys around sports to guests choosing destinations specifically for themed hotels that deliver an all-in-one experience. At the same time, demand for local, authentic, and multi-generational stays continues to strengthen, creating opportunities for properties that understand and respond to these shifts.

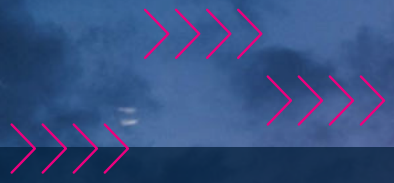
You'll also find an **overview of long-standing trends**, how they are evolving and the actions hotels can take to benefit from them.

Most importantly, this report highlights **how hotels can move beyond being traditional stopovers** and become thriving hubs of connection, creativity, and community. Keep reading to uncover the trends and opportunities that will define 2026!



The power
of play





People have always travelled to watch their favourite players in stadiums

But today, **sports** itself has evolved from being a mere attraction to **becoming the destination**. The Sports Tourism industry is projected to grow from \$991.57 billion in 2025 to \$5,279.27 billion by 2035, reflecting an exceptional 18.2% compound annual growth rate².

This shift is influenced not only by global events like the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, but also by the **growing integration of entertainment, sports, and cultural experiences** (ESC) that are becoming primary motivators for modern travellers.

Recent research highlights this behavioural change. The **Qiddiya City Report** notes that 68% travellers are willing to spend more on trips planned around play. At the same time, video games are reshaping what 'play' means in travel. Players want to take the same emotion, curiosity, and immersion they feel in virtual worlds and bring it into real-life trips.

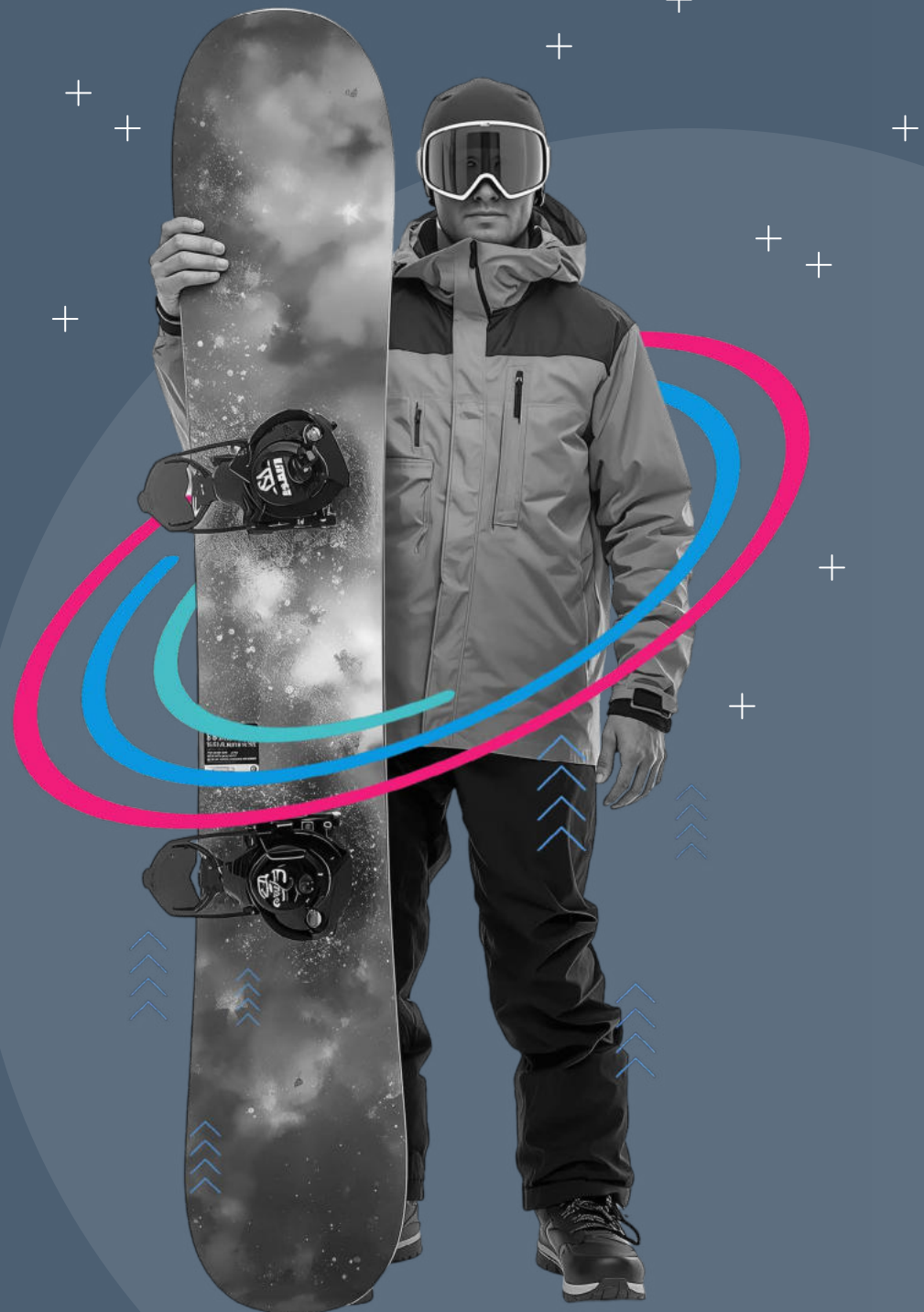


Many even **visit places that appear in their favourite games**. Some titles, like *Far Cry: New Dawn* with its striking Montana landscapes, are created to highlight real destinations and inspire tourism.

Narrative transportation theory explains why players feel so connected to virtual worlds, and how strong immersive design can spark real interest in exploring actual destinations.

When these experiences blend with social media storytelling and destination marketing, they can turn fans into travellers. People aren't just moving for the sport or the game. They are also driven by the **chance to meet friends, explore new cities, and be part of larger celebrations**. These factors reduce loneliness and increase happiness, so every trip then becomes an experience rather than just an event⁴.

The **economic significance** of this shift is striking. According to the World Economic Forum, by 2032, sports tourism will account for 11% of the global economy, a clear indicator that the 'power of play' is only accelerating⁵.





Opportunities for hotels

44%
of sports fans
travel
internationally
for events⁵

Average trip
spending exceeds
\$1,500
per person⁵

Typical stays
range from
2-6 days
with 17%
extending trips for
a week or longer⁵

Travellers aged
16-34
dominate this
segment
accounting for 56%
of international
sports travel³

This demographic
spends
20%
more per day
than regular tourists,
making them high-
value guests⁶

Properties in host
cities report
95-100%
occupancy
on match days⁷



What hotels can do

Build a play ecosystem

Modern travellers, particularly youth and young adults, are seeking city-wide experiences that go beyond attending a single match or event.

Hotels can create **immersive engagement** through fan zones, themed attractions, live performances, and interactive cultural activities, keeping guests connected to the destination throughout their stay.

For **smaller events** such as marathons, cycling races, or fitness competitions, hotels can tailor facilities accordingly. Mountain resorts, for example, can offer sauna, yoga, and recovery sessions for athletes after a long day of activity.

Design personalised packages

Develop packages that appeal to both sports fans and gaming travellers, translating virtual engagement into physical travel. **Partnerships with athletes, sports shops, and local event organisers** to create city tours in team jerseys, meet-and-greets, and merchandise collaborations.

Custom packages that combine lodging with events as per tournament timetable encourage longer stays, deeper participation.

Create memorable experiences, such as celebratory dinners or open bus tours after victories.



Bridge digital and physical worlds

Video games and virtual reality (VR) are emerging as powerful tourism drivers. Hotels can **host livestreaming sessions, watch parties, eSports competitions, and gaming lounges** to create shared social experiences where guests interact and externalise emotions.

Guided tours to game-inspired locations, collaborations with gaming influencers, and highlighting destinations featured in popular titles can enhance the likelihood of upselling.

Offer diverse accommodation options

Traditional hotel rooms are no longer sufficient. Sports and gaming travellers often arrive in groups, families, or long-stay parties, seeking flexible, social, and group-friendly accommodations.

Communal areas, configurable rooms, and mixed accommodation options increase guest satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat visits.



Key recommendations

Anticipate late bookings, short stays, and logistics-focused preferences. Offer flexible check-in/out and fan-centric services dedicated to the schedule of the sporting events. Maintain a regional sporting calendar and use geo-targeted campaigns months in advance for maximum reach and occupancy.



Fandom tourism



Fandom tourism sits parallel to sports and gaming tourism, but its attraction is even wider

It spans **films, TV shows, music, anime, book worlds, K-pop idols**, and even rare collectibles. Fans travel across countries, sometimes continents, just to feel closer to the stories, characters, and creators they love.

According to Triplt, travellers are **twice as likely to plan trips around pop-culture locations today**⁸. At its core is a deep sense of identity and belonging. Fandoms act as global subcultures where people feel understood, represented, and connected to others who share the same passion.

Research shows that this emotional attachment translates directly into travel behaviour with fans seeking immersive experiences shaped by their favourite fictional worlds and cultural icons.



Opportunities for hotels



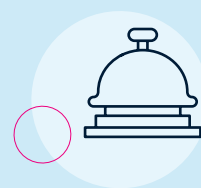
Appeal wide age-group

Pop-culture travel is now a generational megatrend. While younger travellers lead the trend, all age groups are emotionally drawn to their heroes.



High travel frequency

55% of pop-culture-inspired travellers take trips often, offering multiple booking opportunities⁹.



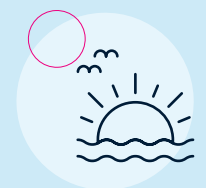
Higher spend potential

Willing to spend almost 2x more on premium stays, exclusive experiences and high-end travel⁹.



Year-round demand

Pop-culture destinations generate steady footfall throughout the year with long-term appeal.



Scope for curated packages

60% of travellers want to explore filming locations, iconic scenes, and story-based experiences, making tailored hotel packages attractive⁹.

What is trending?

Pop culture tourism

Pop-culture tourism has become **one of the strongest emotional triggers in travel demand**, driven by fans who want to step directly into the worlds that shaped their identities.

Singapore saw a 110% jump in travel searches after **Crazy Rich Asians**, while Croatia generated \$200 million from Game of Thrones tourism⁹. Recent hits such as **Emily in Paris** and **The White Lotus** show how 'set-jetting' transforms destinations almost overnight. Travel Daily Media reports a massive rise in 'romantasy retreats', with 40% of travellers open to fantasy-driven stays based on their favourite books, films, or games.

Story-driven travel is now mainstream. Properties can engage guests with rooms that reflect narratives, dining inspired by characters, or activities that bring stories to life. This audience is young, experience-driven, and willing to pay for themed stays and curated packages.

Music tourism

Music tourism is evolving into a global movement, led by Gen Z and Millennials, who **treat concerts as multi-day travel trips**. Shows are reasons to explore new cities, meet fans, and participate in social trends. The sector is projected to reach \$267 billion by 2030. **Taylor Swift's Eras Tour** alone generated \$1.043 billion, with eight shows in London drawing over 750,000 fans¹⁰.

During such music fests, accommodation demand is immediate. Airbnb reported a 337% spike in searches across major UK cities on Swift concert dates¹¹. Hotels can tap into this by offering convenient, themed, and community-focused stays that appeal to music travellers, even during off-season periods.



Event tourism

Event tourism is booming, with the global market projected to reach \$2.13 trillion by 2033¹¹. Travellers are crossing borders for experiences, not just destinations.

From **festivals and cultural celebrations to wellness retreats and celestial events**, hotels can capitalise on year-round demand by curating pre- and post-event experiences, offering flexible bookings, and managing seamless logistics. Large-scale gatherings such as Rio de Janeiro's Carnival, which attracts 2 million visitors per day, show just how big this opportunity can be.

Custom collaborations

Custom, collectible, and themed collaborations are increasingly driving travel. Iconic examples include the 'Pikachu with Grey Felt Hat' card, attracting a huge number of visitors to the Van Gogh Museum and EasyJet's Eurovision Celebration Flight connecting transportation with fandom experiences¹².

For hotels, there is a clear opportunity to **collaborate on co-branded experiences, themed stays, limited-edition packages**, or partnerships with cultural institutions. These initiatives can turn stays into immersive journeys, enhance guest engagement, and create shareable experiences.





Key recommendations



Use AR/VR, city-wide gaming apps to highlight filming locations and cultural landmarks

Encourage user-generated content by engaging fans to share authentic guest stories

Build online communities through forums or social media groups

Sell on limited/exclusive bookings to create urgency

Use dynamic pricing strategies to capture demand spikes

If your hotel is not near event locations: **collaborate with tourism boards and local businesses**, host viewing parties, themed brunches, or pop-up fan events, and capture local travellers attending concerts, festivals, or sports events





Hotels as the destination





Extending the slow and experiential travel trend, travellers now look at hotels as their destination

It is the appeal of hotel services and the unique packages that draws guests, making the property itself the primary reason for the trip.

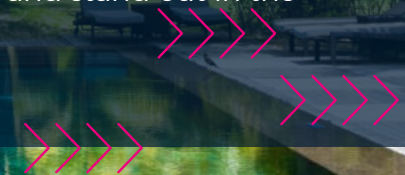
As reported by NDTV Travel, 82% of travellers **have picked a destination based purely on accommodation**¹³. Guests choose locations specifically to enjoy the architecture, amenities, spa, dining, natural surroundings, or signature experiences of a hotel.

Saudi Arabia's investment in destination hotels demonstrates how properties themselves can become major attractions¹⁴. And the market for destination-driven hotels is projected to reach \$40.26

billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 7.2% from 2025 to 2030¹.

Themed and experiential hotels appeal to family and multi-generational travellers, wellness tourists, and event-goers. **Nature-focused resorts** can provide eco-friendly and adventure activities, while **luxury themed hotels** deliver bespoke services and exclusive amenities. **Heritage buildings turned into hotels** can boast their architecture to appeal to the cultural tourists.

Overall, hotels can strengthen their brand and stand out in the competitive market.



Trending hotel concepts

Lifestyle hotels

Combining living elements and activities into the functional design, with focus on personalisation and specialised guest attention

Sleep & wellness

Focus on physical, mental wellness and relaxation

Nature & eco resorts

Properties that emphasise environmental integration, regeneration, and sustainability

Heritage & history hotels

Examples like The Plaza with over 100 years of legacy appealing to cultural and historical travellers

Luxury & architectural hotels

Iconic properties with cutting-edge architecture, unique design, and bespoke services, something like traditional houses converted to high-end hotels

Gastronomy-focused hotels

Culinary experiences, farm-to-dine experiences are major offerings

Mega-resorts

Large-scale destinations offering multiple attractions (casino, theme park, golf, spa)

Unusual & themed hotels

A segment with opportunity: Global Theme Hotel Market is projected to grow from \$13.60 billion in 2024 to \$23.54 billion by 2032¹⁵. Prominent examples include world's first robot-operated hotel or gaming-inspired hotels offering VR suites and marathon gaming setups

Bleisure & business-orientated hotels

Properties catering to business travellers seeking lifestyle, wellness, and leisure

Opportunities for hotels



Find your USP

Highlight what makes your property unique. This could be the location, architecture, or exclusive services such as modern wellness equipment unavailable elsewhere.



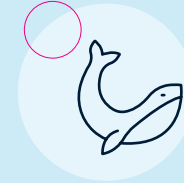
Personalisation

Ensure your USP resonates with your target audience and their expectations by customising your offerings.



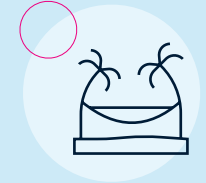
Embrace storytelling

Position your hotel as a differentiated brand using clear brand messaging to convey premium value.



Create unique experiences

Offer curated, purpose-driven activities aligned with guest motivations, e.g., gardening ancient temperate rainforest at Cabilla Resorts, hiking tours, or dark tourism.



Smart marketing

Use your messaging to attract your target audience and remain desirable year-round.



The creativity boom





With the growing buzz around hotels as destinations, travellers are increasingly drawn to properties where art, culture, and creativity are woven into the stay


This trend takes two main forms: hotels situated in art-rich neighbourhoods or cultural hubs, and hotels that offer workshops, creative classes, and immersive experiences on-site. This 'artification' in hospitality turns hotels into living canvases where guests don't just stay, but explore and connect with local culture in meaningful ways¹⁵.

The global art tourism market is on a momentum, projected to grow by \$8.3 billion at a CAGR of 3.4% between 2024 and 2029¹⁵. Some hotels are already known as **'art hotels'**.

The 21C Museum Hotel functions as a full-scale museum with rotating exhibitions, artist talks, film nights, and community events open to guests and locals alike. Resorts like Amanyangyun in China invite travellers into calligraphy, tea ceremonies, and traditional arts.

Travellers now value workshops, design aesthetics, and proximity to artistic neighbourhoods like Hong Kong's PMQ. Creative activities such as **pottery, photography, painting, craft, and cooking**, allow guests to deepen cultural connection, produce memorable takeaways, and share experiences on social media. In this context, hotels are living studios where visitors can breathe, learn, and create art.

And the benefits go beyond enjoyment: research shows that **engaging with art reduces stress, supports mental wellbeing**, and can even aid recovery for patients facing health challenges¹⁵.



Opportunities for hotels



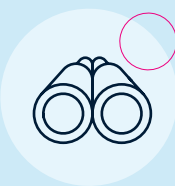
Build brand identity

Use art, design, and storytelling to build a recognisable aesthetic brand that differentiates your hotel and strengthens emotional connection with guests. Curate memorable environments (architecture, interiors, installations, themed floors, interactive art) that enhance satisfaction and encourage repeat stays.



Collaborate and support local artists

Partner with art schools, studios, and museums to host exhibitions, rent artwork, run artist residencies, and support emerging local talent.



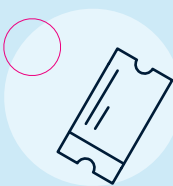
Offer hands-on creative experiences

Introduce pottery, painting, photography, calligraphy, natural-dye, or craft workshops that give guests unforgettable experiences they can take home.



Build community

Build open studios, rotating galleries, or creative lounges that bring together locals and travellers, fostering a sense of community and cultural exchange.



Monetise through art-led experiences

Capitalise on paid workshops, ticketed exhibitions, art tours, F&B tie-ins, limited-edition merchandise, or creative retreats.



The journey as the experience

As travellers immerse themselves in transformative travel, their motivations are moving far beyond simple sightseeing.

Mastercard research indicates this shift is being driven by a **hunger for new experiences** in unexplored destinations, micro-trips, and a maturing tourism landscape. It is a clear signal that guests no longer seek just a hotel stay; they want a carefully crafted, seamless journey.

This evolution presents one of the most exciting yet underexplored opportunities for hoteliers: owning the entire journey, not just the room.

Guests who trust your property with their stay are increasingly willing to **let you plan their train routes, flights, cruises, and multi-city**

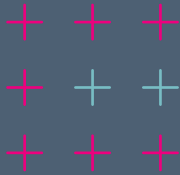
itineraries. Even in a world full of AI trip planners, online booking platforms, and travel agents, human curation remains highly valued.

Affluent travellers, in particular, are prime users of loyalty and membership programmes (34% versus a global average of 24%), according to Mastercard. They seek exclusive, personalised journeys, and this is where hotels can step in.

Some properties are already capitalising on this trend, such as the legendary Venice Simplon-Orient-Express paired with the unmatched luxury of a Belmond hotel.

With access to guest profiles, preferences, and behavioural data, all you have to offer is convenience and a meaningful journey!





Why 'Hotels as journey planners' is taking off

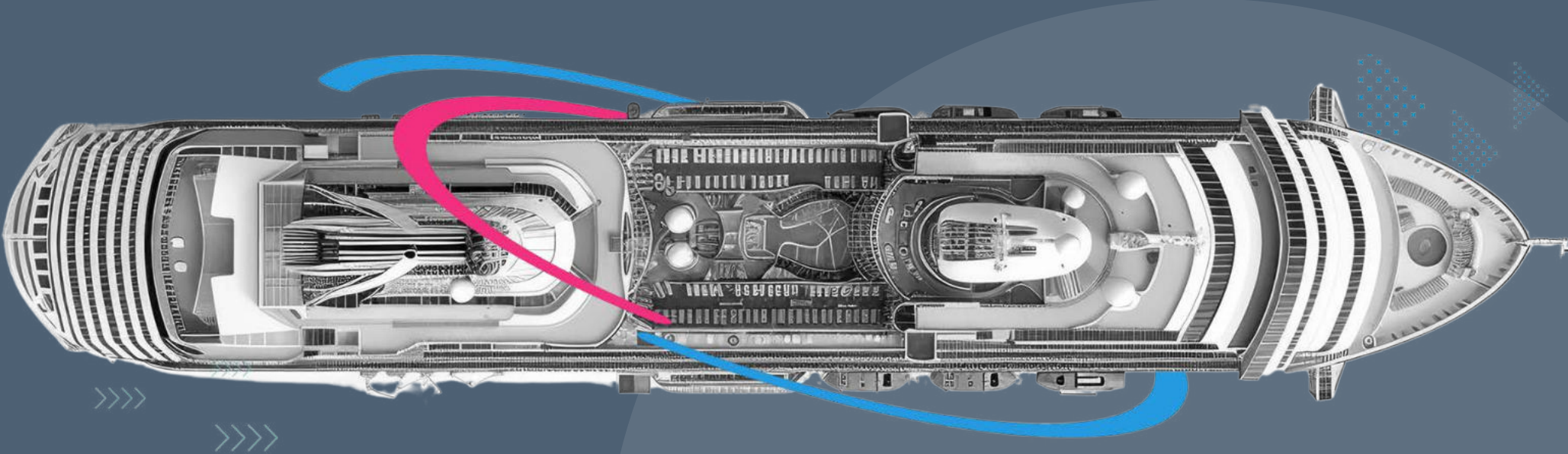
Travellers today are looking for slow, meaningful, and sustainable travel. Scenic landscapes, local stops, and fewer airport hassles are more appealing than speed.

For many, it is about prestige, and they are willing to pay for it. Luxury trains, yachts, and curated overland adventures clubbed with premium accommodations makes an overall prestigious trip.

For example, Accor + Orient Express collaborations include overnight train journeys across Italy. These journeys give access to new destinations while supporting the local economies.

Rail travel is also benefiting from environmental awareness: no-fly options are rising in demand, making trains an eco-friendly choice. The Global Heritage Railway Train Market is forecast to grow at 8.2% CAGR between 2024-2034²². Marketing initiatives like Great Rail Journeys' 'Go Slow' campaign highlight scenic routes such as the Settle-Carlisle Railway, emphasizing immersive, relaxed travel.

Cruising is another fast-growing segment. The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, launched in 2022, saw a 23% increase in bookings last year, and the cruise industry is expected to grow ~4% annually.



What hotels can do



Offer guided experiences

Hotels can become curators of the journey with expert staff leading immersive tours. At JW Marriott Desert Springs, in-house specialists guide guests through 450 acres where they feed more than 25 exotic bird species. Other possibilities include yacht trips, helicopter tours, guided fishing excursions, or even ghost tours. Package these experiences as upsells to boost revenue and foster deeper connections with guests.

Provide convenience and continuity

Even if hotels don't handle the entire trip, they can simplify travel logistics with pre/post-travel bundles (overnight stays, luggage handling, early/late check-in), transfers to rail, yacht, or cruise terminals. Curated meals, 'journey briefings' and dedicated staff to coordinate personalised transport are ways to add a personal touch. Include additional services (shower rooms, day-use facilities) to enhance guest satisfaction.

Use events for maximum appeal

Leverage events, sports, or local attractions by offering integrated travel packages. Example: In Switzerland, the Unireso card distribution rose 10% by combining public transport with UEFA Women's EURO 2025 event access and promoting green travel, as reported by Hospitality Net.

Partner with journey operators

Opt for co-branded packages with luxury rail lines, scenic operators, yacht charters, or small-ships. Offer preferred room allotments, discounted transfers.

Sustainability positioning

Promote trains, slow travel, and eco-conscious itineraries to attract guests who care about their carbon footprint.

Marketing and messaging

Position your hotel as a 'journey partner'. Highlight curated routes, seamless logistics, and unique experiences in messaging and campaigns.

Revenue & distribution

Create commissionable products for travel advisors and cross-sell via OTAs and direct channels to increase revenue. Use dynamic pricing during high-demand travel seasons.



Someday as
the everyday





For years, hoteliers believed that destinations, events, or seasonal motivations were the triggers for travel bookings. But the 2026 traveller is rewriting that rulebook.

If your property isn't located in a famous city or a high-demand attraction hub, this is exactly the moment to lean in. Because the fastest-growing segment of travellers today does not need an occasion, a reason, or even a destination logic.

They travel because they want to live fully, right now!

This is the heart of the 'Someday as Everyday' trend: **travellers turning everyday emotions, small wins, micro-moments, and spontaneous impulses into immediate travel decisions.**



This new shift is also known as the ‘Modern Milestone Missions’ trend that captures this shift perfectly:

Holidays are no longer reserved for weddings, anniversaries, or promotions. They’re now about celebrating the little things.

And travellers agree, 67% say **spontaneity is reason enough to take a holiday**

while 75% believe they deserve a reward for working hard all year¹⁶. This is not a niche behavioural change, it’s a generationally universal mindset developing at scale.

The research validates the cultural shift. Leisure travel demand is not slowing down; it is compounding. According to BCG, leisure travel is projected to grow ~4% annually from 2024–2029, followed by 3% annually through 2040¹⁷.

More importantly, leisure travel spending will rise 8% per year through 2029. The 50+ demographic is becoming one of the most powerful leisure travel groups. AARPA reports travel intent among 50+ aged adults rises to 70% in 2025. **95% agree that travel benefits mental health, and 85% say it improves physical health¹⁸**. This group is financially confident, motivated by wellbeing, and increasingly prioritising experiences over savings.

Triggers to travel today, not someday:

- Spontaneity
- Micro-celebrations
- Emotional and Mental Wellbeing
- Multigenerational family connection
- Socialising
- Nostalgia
- Passion-driven interests
- Desire to live every moment fully

Changing lifestyles, flexible work structures, and ageing populations are reshaping how, when and why they travel.

Preferences

Road trips

Modern road trips will continue to rise as travellers increasingly seek freedom, spontaneity, and ease. 67% of parents plan **annual RV trips**, with this category becoming a staple for family getaways, while 84% of travellers say they are open to carpooling, reflecting a growing preference for shared journeys that feel social and effortless¹⁹. The appeal lies in the low-pressure nature of road travel.

Hotels can offer **dedicated RV-friendly facilities**, such as overnight parking with access to pools, gyms, or kids clubs can transform hotels into natural stopover hubs. Flexible check-in options, EV charging, laundry access, and curated 'roadtrip survival kits' simplify the journey further. Properties can go a step further with staff-led local drives or curated scenic route maps, while positioning the hotel as a trusted stopover.

Beauty tourism & glowcations

Beauty-driven travel will accelerate as travellers increasingly fold self-care, skincare, and personal upgrades into their everyday lifestyle.

As per PR Newswire, nearly **80% are open to glow-cations**, signalling that travellers don't want to wait for big milestones to invest in themselves²⁰.

For hotels, this presents an opportunity to evolve into **next-generation beauty-wellness hubs** that simplify and elevate the guest's self-care journey. Climate-responsive skincare programs, AI-powered skin analysis, personalised hydration rituals, and sleep-enhancing room concepts can turn a stay into a transformative wellbeing reset. **Collaborations with local beauty traditions** like ayurvedic treatments bring authenticity





Silent nature trips

As travellers seek respite from constant noise and digital stimulation, quiet, **nature-based activities are becoming a key motivator for trips.**

As Hospitality Net stated, interest in calmer hobbies is growing, with 25% choosing quieter activities, 57% open to insect spotting, 73% to birdwatching or fishing, and 69% foraging¹⁶. Once considered 'slow' or niche, these experiences are now valued for mindfulness, restoration, and immersive engagement.

Hoteliers can build experiences such as staff-led foraging walks, birdwatching breakfasts, nature journaling corners, quiet/no-device zones, eco-trails enhanced with AI guidance, butterfly and insect observation gardens, and slow-skill workshops.

Finding social connections

Travel is increasingly used as a tool for social connection, whether for dating, friendship, or shared experiences. People are now open to travel overseas, specifically to meet new people.

Hoteliers should focus on spaces and programs that facilitate **co-working lounges and interest-based meetups.** Curate shared activities that help guests meet like-minded travellers.



Live like
the locals



According to the World Economic Forum:

69% of travellers want their spending to **directly benefit local communities**

75% actively seek **experiences that are authentically rooted in local culture**⁵

As travellers chase more meaningful experiences, they're also seeking something that feels real, human, and rooted. And what can be more unique than eating food cooked by a local using ingredients grown on their own farm, or learning a craft that has survived hundreds of years only through communities that still practice it every single day.

Being international still inspires travellers, but even in a foreign land, they're now actively seeking the 'local speciality' of the place. They're no longer impressed by the same food and hotel chains repeating the same flavour across continents. They want to experience the difference, not escape it.

Researchers define this form of travel with precision: Cultural/local tourism is a type of tourism activity where the essential motivation of the visitor is to **learn, discover, experience, and consume tangible and intangible cultural attractions**.

These can include art, architecture, heritage sites, culinary traditions, music, literature, creative industries, spiritual beliefs, rituals, value systems, and the lived lifestyles of communities. This is the deeper layer of travel that people now crave.

A 2024 UN Tourism report stated that 50% of global travellers now seek grassroots cultural encounters, a number that has jumped 10% since 2022²¹. This is not a niche trend but a global behavioural shift.

What does exploring like a local include



Cultural
tourism

- Heritage
- Arts
- History
- Festivals



Ecological
tourism

- Nature
- Wildlife
- Conservation



Gastronomic
tourism

- Local food
- Markets
- Cooking traditions



Event
tourism

- Native celebrations
- Fairs
- Cultural events



Wellness
tourism

- Local healing traditions
- Therapies



What elements are travellers looking for

Sustainability

The definition of sustainability and regenerative tourism has evolved to **support local cultures and communities**. Travellers now see 'eco-friendly' not just as solar power and reusable water bottles but as choosing hotels, food, and experiences that directly uplift the people who live there.

This includes staying in locally-owned accommodations, choosing tours that benefit communities, and preferring destinations that protect heritage, wildlife, and cultural identity. Guests are excited about tree-planting sessions, beach clean-ups or even forest restoration activities.

Local food and craft

Food has become one of the quickest and most enjoyable ways to understand a place. According to Hospitality Net, 43% of travellers have **explored local supermarkets abroad**, reflecting a growing 'Shelf Discovery' trend where culinary tourism goes far beyond fine dining.

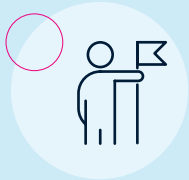
Guests are seeking supermarket safaris, street snacks, vending-machine finds, heritage recipes, and locally grown produce that offer a true sense of local life.

Supporting the local community

This is one of the definite global behaviours. Community-led tours (such as Maasai-guided safaris or Quechua village homestays) are rising worldwide. **Guesthouses, family-run hotels, artisan workshops, farm stays, and heritage homes** are becoming preferred options.



Opportunities for hotels



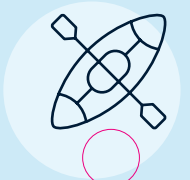
Support local talent

Hire and spotlight local artisans in your decor, amenities, and retail corners



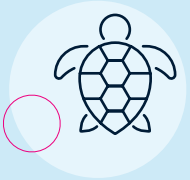
Elevate local food experiences

Curate hyper-local menus using seasonal produce. Offer farm-to-table cooking demos or tasting sessions.



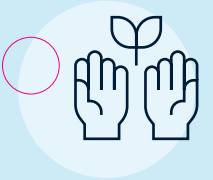
Build community-led guest activities

Partner with local experts for cultural workshops, nature walks, or storytelling sessions. Facilitate authentic guests-local interactions. Support NGOs or artisan groups and showcase real impact through QR-based stories.



Strengthen eco-friendly practices

Source essentials from local cooperatives to reduce carbon miles and uplift communities. Design low-impact itineraries that encourage responsible exploration.



Enhance cultural discovery

Provide simple cultural handbooks or etiquette guides. Create self-guided routes (food trails, heritage walks, hidden-spot maps) for independent explorers.



Enduring trends worth monitoring in 2026

While 2026 introduces fresh shifts in travel, several established dynamics will continue to influence how guests choose, book, and experience hotels. These aren't just trends, **they're now fundamentals that every property must actively integrate.**

Here's what will continue shaping traveller decisions and how your hotel can respond effectively



Sustainable travel

Sustainability now becomes a **key differentiator and decision driver** in the travel and hospitality industry. Ecotourism is still rising at a rate of 14% CAGR, reaching \$760 billion by 2032 by World Economic Forum⁵.

This is highly relevant as guests are actively seeking out properties that align with their values, choosing stays that demonstrate authentic sustainability rather than surface-level claims.

Advice for hotels

- Start with easy wins: towel reuse programmes, LED lighting, filtered water stations, zero-plastic amenities
- Source local produce from nearby communities and build credibility certifications
- Offer eco-led experiences like guided cycling tours, reforestation activities, eco-friendly transport, or discounts for low-carbon choices



Wellness tourism

Wellness is now an integral part of living and **a core reason people travel today**. The Global Wellness Institute forecasts wellness trips will reach 8.3% of all tourism trips by 2027, with wellness in hospitality growing 16.6% annually as per Hospitality Net¹⁶.

For hotels, this means adding health-oriented offerings that directly influence booking decisions and brand value.

Tips for hotels

- Create holistic experiences: spa rituals, sound healing, forest walks, sunrise yoga, breathwork sessions
- Leverage your location be it mountains (hikes + runs), beaches (yoga + water therapies) or cities (urban wellness, saunas, sleep pods)
- Offer healthier menus with local, seasonal, or functional ingredients
- Integrate tech enabled equipment in gyms, spas and guest rooms



Solo travel

Solo travel has evolved from a trend into a **major shift in traveller behaviour** that is driven by Gen Z and Boomers seeking independence, safety, and self-discovery. Hospitality Net reports an 83% YoY increase in hotel bookings using the 'solo' filter globally.

Advice for hotels

- Create social yet safe spaces such as co-working corners, communal tables, cosy reading pods.
- Make exploration easy with clear local maps, 'solo-friendly' neighbourhood tips, curated micro-itineraries.
- Address safety concerns and spread the message through your marketing.
- Offer packages tailored to different age groups because solo-travel has no age-limit!



Family and Multigenerational Travel

Families travelling together across three or more generations continue to surge. Nearly 48% of travellers now travel with elders and children together, signalling a **desire for shared memories and connection**, as per Hilton's research.

With your adaptable spaces and multi-age activities, you can appeal to families and gain long-term loyalty!

Advice for hotels

- Provide flexible room configurations: interconnected rooms, family suites, adaptable bedding.
- Offer multi-age activities like nature walks, farm visits, local zoo trips, craft workshops.
- Support parents with kids' clubs, babysitting, child-friendly dining options.
- Provide spa sessions, wellness classes, or quiet zones as relaxation for adults.



Personalisation and AI

AI has moved from 'buzzword' to 'baseline'. According to Hotel Tech Report, **58% of guests believe AI improves their booking and stay experience**. More than half of hotels already use AI-led marketing (Oracle x Skift).

This means AI with tech upgrades is necessary, and properties that use it well can deliver tailored stays that are efficient and profitable.

Advice for hotels

- Use AI to simplify guest journeys: web check-in, virtual assistants, smart recommendations.
- Optimise operations: automated housekeeping workflows, predictive maintenance, dynamic pricing.
- Build richer guest profiles, personalise guest communications and packages: marketing offers, in-room settings, on-site suggestions based on guest interests.
- Upgrade slowly and smartly. Don't invest in a complete PMS migration. Modern cloud-based, web-native tools integrate seamlessly as add-ons to your existing systems.





In conclusion

The next decade presents one of the most promising chapters for the hospitality industry.

With accommodation spending projected to rise by 63% - adding more than \$1 trillion to global expenditure - the opportunity for growth has never been greater¹. However, this growth will favour the hotels that evolve alongside travellers' changing expectations.

Today's guests are driven by experience, not just stays. Their definition of 'premium' is shifting from opulence to meaningful, personal, and culturally rooted moments.

Guests want hotels that understand why they travel and respond with services that feel both unique and relatable. Those who adapt will shape the next era of hospitality.



Closing takeaways for hoteliers



- Integrate technology thoughtfully

Use AI, smart recommendations, and micro-moment personalisation to stand out, even small touches can transform guest satisfaction and loyalty.

- Go deep with segmentation

Design hotels around passions and identities like art hotels, music hotels, wellness retreats, gamer-friendly stays. Use segmentation to target these passionate travellers with focused marketing, personalised experiences, and offers that genuinely match their interests.

- Leverage authentic content

Behind-the-scenes content, artist/athlete features, local partnerships, and guest-generated posts turn your property into a social moment.

- Strategic distribution matters

Position your property on the right channels that connect you with hard-to-reach, high-value traveller segments.



HBX Group is the B2B travel marketplace that brings everything together in one connected ecosystem

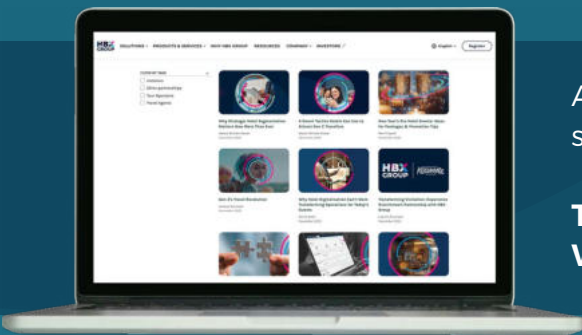
While hoteliers implement these techniques, partnering with **HBX Group** makes staying ahead effortless. With deep industry insights, expertise in distribution, and tailored solutions, we help properties turn travel trends into action.

You gain data-led insights, access to c. **60,000 travel distributors** across more than **135 markets**, and the support of **+1,400 local experts** who understand your region and guest behaviour.

Our **B2B platform** strengthens your **distribution strategy**, boosts global visibility, and integrates seamlessly with your existing channel manager and front-desk systems, ensuring minimal disruption.

We help you attract **high-value guests**, optimise performance, and create memorable stays that travellers will share.

REGISTER YOUR PROPERTY WITH US



Also, check out our **Resources page** for the latest travel trends, hospitality insights, and practical solutions designed to keep your hotel ahead.

Thank you for trusting HBX Group to guide you through the transformative travel trends of 2026. We hope they help your property become an experience and journey-driven destination!

Sources



- ¹ <https://www.statista.com/outlook/mmo/travel-tourism/worldwide>
- ² <https://www.marketresearchfuture.com/reports/sports-tourism-market-16078>
- ³ <https://partner.expediagroup.com/en-us/resources/blog/new-study-win-big-sports-tourism>
- ⁴ <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.989706/full>
- ⁵ https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Travel_and_Tourism_at_a_Turning_Point_2025.pdf
- ⁶ <https://www.sportstravelmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Sports-ETA-SOTI.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://www.hospitalitynet.org/opinion/4129069.html>
- ⁸ <https://in.mashable.com/travel/69123/how-tiktok-became-gen-zs-travel-advisor>
- ⁹ <https://view-su2.highspot.com/viewer/64789fcd94e64ca01c2ef89d>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/taylor-swifts-eras-tour-is-the-first-ever-tour-to-gross-over-1-billion-says-pollstar>
- ¹¹ <https://news.airbnb.com/en-uk/airbnb-and-oxford-economics-reveal-the-economic-impact-of-major-uk-events/>
- ¹² <https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/switzerland-and-united-kingdom-take-tourism-to-new-heights-as-easyjet-flies-eurovision-fans-from-london-to-basel-in-immersive-flight-experience/>
- ¹³ <https://www.ndtv.com/travel/top-7-travel-trends-that-are-going-to-rule-2026-as-per-report-9437133>
- ¹⁴ <https://invest-gate.me/features/74837/>
- ¹⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377436573_The_Artification_of_Hospitality_Art_Hotels_as_the_New_Frontier_of_Sustainable_Cultural_Tourism
- ¹⁶ <https://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4129344.html>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.bcg.com/ja-jp/publications/2025/the-15-trillion-opportunity-in-leisure-travel>
- ¹⁸ <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/topics/social-leisure/travel/2025-travel-trends.doi.10.26419-2fres.00882.001.pdf>
- ¹⁹ <https://www.sdxcentral.com/press-releases/rvshares-2025-travel-trend-report-finds-that-quality-experiences-passion-driven-travel-and-splurgecations-take-center-stage/>
- ²⁰ <https://www.prnewswire.com/in/news-releases/skyscanner-reveals-the-seven-trends-shaping-travel-in-2026-302599750.html>
- ²¹ <https://www.mindfulecotourism.com/sustainable-travel-trends/>
- ²² <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/heritage-railway-trains-industry-outlook>

