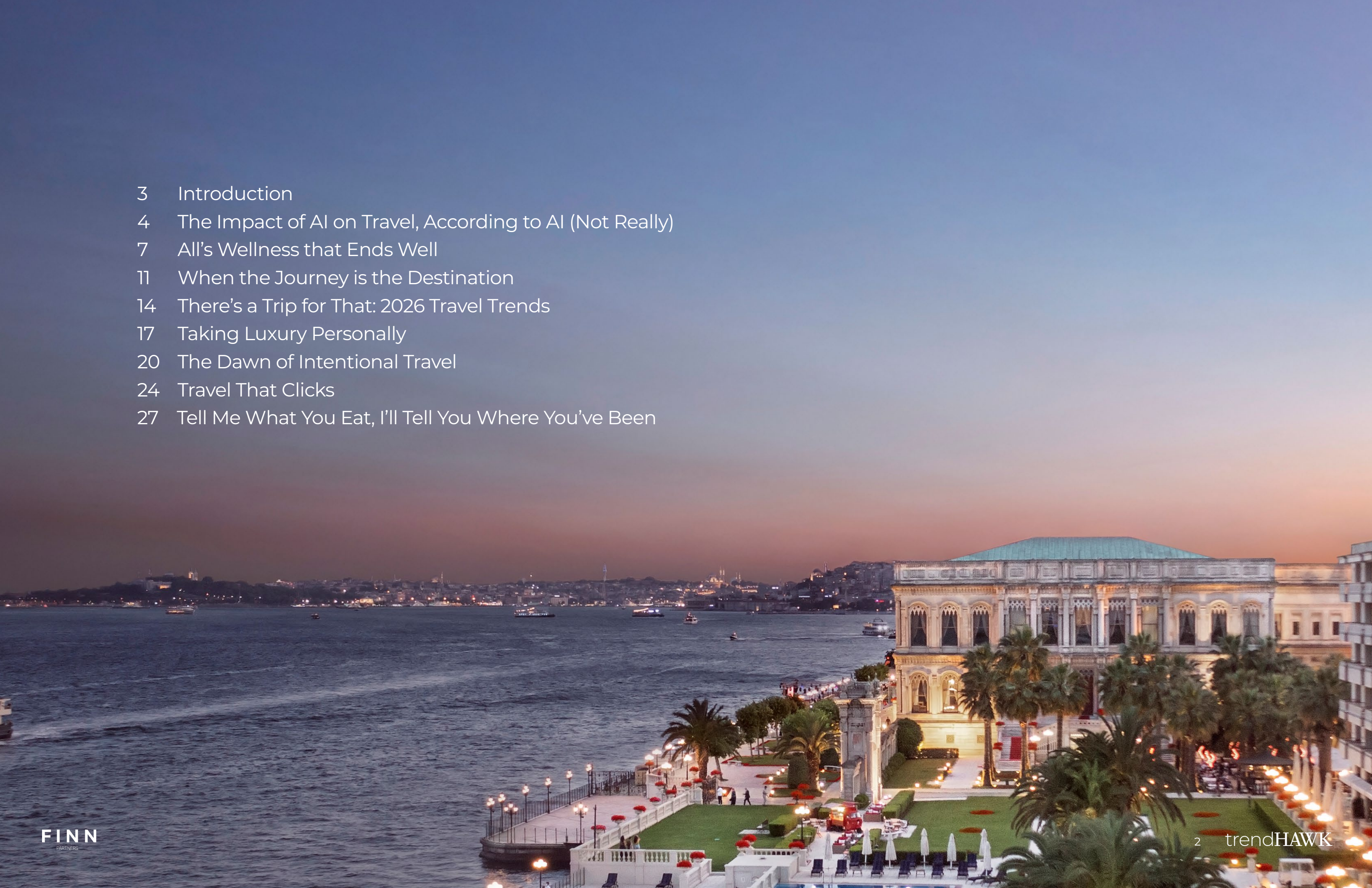




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- 3 Introduction
- 4 The Impact of AI on Travel, According to AI (Not Really)
- 7 All's Wellness that Ends Well
- 11 When the Journey is the Destination
- 14 There's a Trip for That: 2026 Travel Trends
- 17 Taking Luxury Personally
- 20 The Dawn of Intentional Travel
- 24 Travel That Clicks
- 27 Tell Me What You Eat, I'll Tell You Where You've Been





Introduction

If two is a coincidence, is three a trend? It all depends.

Ian Fleming, creator of the most-famous, if fictional, member of the British Secret Intelligence Service, spun the point differently, with James Bond informed by the title character of *Goldfinger*: **“They have a saying in Chicago, ‘Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. The third time it’s enemy action.’”**

Dark? Definitely, especially considering *Goldfinger* uttered it before directing his henchman, Oddjob, to escort 007 to “The Pressure Room.” But there is a pleasing rhythm to Fleming’s phrasing, just as there is to other, similar maxims it may have inspired, including the pared-down version above, which a FINN Partners editor learned early during his days at magazines.

With the calendar recently turned to 2026, trend sightings have been popping up and grabbing attention everywhere. That includes travel, where they’re

spotted like the wings of invasive lanternflies by tastemakers, influencers, journalists, industry insiders, market researchers, and the eagle-eyed public relations and marketing pros of FINN Partners’ Global Travel Practice.

But are travel trends actually trends? Some might say no, arguing that, as with anything, travel is cyclical and the trends we learn about and observe today are more evolutions of things people have adopted and shaped their own way for years.

That’s an interesting angle, but it’s not how FINN Partners approaches travel trends. Instead, we work to bring creative approaches to travel to light, and we’re fans of how trends enlighten, inspire, and guide us and the luxury clients we work to promote.

Page through the latest edition of our long-running TrendHawk report, pieced together by our diverse and passionate global team, and discover how everything from destinations to dining, wellness to travel packages, AI to sustainability, and more are shaping travel – and being shaped by travelers themselves.

No pressure, of course.

Debbie Flynn, Global Travel Practice Leader

Jennifer Hawkins, Managing Partner, U.S. Travel

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The Impact of AI on Travel, According to AI (Not Really)

There's so much to say about the impact – already felt and still to come – that artificial intelligence is having on travel, it's hard to blame a TrendHawk writer for asking for input from the technology itself.

“AI is revolutionizing travel by enabling hyper-personalized planning, automating bookings, offering real-time assistance via chatbots, optimizing logistics for providers, and enhancing on-the-ground experiences with instant translation and navigation, making trips more seamless, efficient, and tailored to individual preferences from booking to return,” spat back the AI Overview generated by a Google search.

Search for AI trends in travel and expect a similar abundance. In a [look](#) at travel for the Europe, Middle East and Africa in 2026, for instance, [Marriott Bonvoy](#), the loyalty program of the world's largest hotel company, noted **“AI is going mainstream in travel planning”** with 50 percent of travelers having used it to plan or research a holiday, up from 41 percent the previous year, and 50 percent expressing comfort at the prospect of using AI to book accommodations in the future. While those aged 18 to 24 are most likely to have used AI, Marriott Bonvoy reported that 29 percent of travelers aged 55 to 64 have used it, too, up from 18 percent last year – or the same amount who profess booking travel through AI platforms makes them “uncomfortable.”

The year ahead will see hotels using AI to gain a better understanding of those they keep, “moving from reacting to guest requests to predicting their wants” via predictive intelligence, according to [CNBC's](#) reading of an [Oracle Hospitality](#) report. Meanwhile, the travel technology outfit [Amadeus](#) sees guests able to personalize every detail of their room, from squeezing in a Pilates Reformer to blocking out morning sunshine with blackout blinds, stating: “As AI accelerates, personalization will no longer be a nice-to-have but the default operating system of choice.”

Forecasting in [Forbes](#) at the start of 2026, renowned futurist Bernard Marr noted that “artificial intelligence, automation and immersive digital experiences are fundamentally reshaping how we plan trips, move through airports, stay in hotels and engage with destinations.” Among Marr's examples are AI agents capable of providing “end-to-end, always-on assistance”; automation of hospitality experiences, such as the robots – a.k.a., Digital Curators – that deliver room service – a.k.a., in-room dining – at [LUMA Hotel](#) in San Francisco; and the marketing of travel via generative AI tools.

Since hotel booking platform [HotelPlanner](#) launched the world's first AI-powered call agents at the end of 2024, the number of calls being fielded by the AI agents has increased fivefold from 10,000 a day to 55,000, demonstrating a growing appeal for this technology among consumers. Their combined AI and human agent call center is taking tens of thousands of calls a day and is currently responsible for 61 percent of their total bookings worldwide, indicating that conversational bookings are a vital part of the booking process, globally.

Meanwhile, on the ground across Europe, [a&o Hostels](#) has been quick to seize the moment, employing artificial intelligence for everything from AI-powered robots to vacuum, clean, and disinfect public areas of its more than 40 hostels in nearly 30 cities; to offering quick responses on live chats on a&o's website; and improving on-property hospitality by managing arrivals and departures, arranging transportation, addressing guest concerns, and more.

"AI is fundamentally changing how travelers interact with hospitality brands long before they ever reach a booking engine," says Elise Carlin, Associate Vice President at FINN Partners.

"a&o Hostels understands that visibility within AI tools, whether through chat platforms or LLMs (large language models), is now part of the modern marketing funnel. They've already seen a competitive edge because they're getting ahead of searches for things like budget travel, affordable experiences in European cities, and inserting their brand into these platforms. Between prioritizing PR to help them rank better in these systems and refining their social channels with the help of AI, hospitality brands should take note of the success and think about how they can thoughtfully implement AI into their marketing and communications strategy."

In a recent [piece](#) for [Hospitality Technology](#), Thomas Hertkorn, Head of Online Marketing at a&o, encouraged hoteliers to sharpen their focus and attitudes on the future of AI for the industry. Hertkorn has much success to trumpet, not least that Europe's largest hostel chain has been using AI to "drive real bookings" by proactively ensuring its hostels are visible throughout the discovery, comparison, and booking stages of various AI tools, while also driving direct bookings through LLMs such as ChatGPT, Mistral, and Gemini.

Result? Though a&o only began leveraging AI solutions in 2019 and LLMs in 2023, the company is generating up to 3 percent of its total revenue through LLM referrals. **"While that may seem modest,"** wrote Hertkorn, **"it's a meaningful share at such an early stage, particularly given that most of the hospitality industry hasn't yet started tracking AI-driven traffic."**

a&o's take is on the money, with [Skift's Megatrends 2026 highlighting](#) AI models including ChatGPT and Mistral as "the new travel gatekeepers" that are driving travel brands to rewrite their playbooks "for an era where visibility hinges on being mentioned, not ranked."

While there's no stopping AI in travel, hospitality – or anything else – there is taking it into consideration. Interviewed by consumer advocate Christopher Elliott of the non-profit [Elliott Advocacy](#) for a recent [travel trend roundup](#) in The Seattle Times, Jessica Parker, founder of the Philadelphia-based travel agency [Trip Whisperer](#) noted limits. "AI tools are designed to fill rooms and chase the cheapest or fastest option, not curate your best experience. AI can get you a room, while relationships get you the experience."

Indeed, writing about luxury hospitality design trends for [The Hotel Yearbook 2026](#), Scott LaMont, CEO and Principal of the tech-savvy planning, landscape architecture, and urban design firm [EDSA](#), cautioned hotel developers to remember the many positives of the personal touch. "AI and smart systems now streamline operations and allow staff to anticipate needs with unprecedented accuracy. Yet, even with these advancements, authentic human interaction remains the element that elevates a guest experience from good to exceptional."

The challenge for hoteliers and designers, he continued, "is striking this delicate balance: integrating technology in ways that enhance convenience and efficiency without diluting the warmth, empathy, and intuitive care that make a stay truly memorable." LaMont's pro tip? "Design spaces with flexible infrastructure so smart technology can improve the guest experience without diminishing the personal service and subtle gestures that define exceptional hospitality."

As AI rapidly evolves in the travel space, travel public relations needs to keep pace. Last summer, FINN Partners introduced [Canary For Crisis](#), an [AI-powered crisis training program](#) designed to prepare communications teams for navigating the increasingly chaotic media landscape in which brand or corporate narratives can be amplified and even weaponized in the blink of an eye. Developed by David Krejci, who joined FINN as a Partner in 2024 following three decades in public relations that included launching his own consultancy firm, Media Forensics, (now part of FINN), Canary evolves crisis training for an era in which facts can get sidelined by virality and context can be lost to chaos.

“Canary For Crisis is a scrimmage for crisis teams,” explains David. **“You get hit. You sweat. You make good plays and learn better ones. But more than anything, you come out better prepared for the real game. We’re training teams to act with speed, clarity, and emotional intelligence before the narrative gets away from them.”**

That’s when having a partner like FINN matters. In moments where instinct and judgment are as critical as data, FINN helps clients cut through noise to determine threats before they begin by pairing human insight, pattern recognition, and hard-earned intuition with FINN’s own proprietary technology to identify risks early, model scenarios in real time, and support faster, smarter decision-making in crisis when it counts.

FINN looks at more than the dark side of AI, of course. Haldun Dincetin, Senior Partner on FINN’s North American Travel Team, describes AI as “my passion” and is enthralled by learning to use it both personally and professionally to keep pace with future generations. “There’s a common misconception that AI in travel begins and ends with curated itineraries. In reality, we’re moving toward a state of ‘ambient intelligence,’ where the technology quietly manages the logistical friction of a journey before the traveler even perceives it. It is becoming the invisible curator of our movements – less like a search engine and more like a silent concierge that handles the cognitive load, allowing the traveler to focus entirely on the experience itself.”

So, how does AI pan out for travel in the moment? Last summer, on a whim and a need, Rachel Frank, Vice President at Maverick Creative, tapped AI for assistance in finding a destination for herself and a companion in France. **“I told AI that I didn’t want something too hot or too crowded, and a few other parameters,”** she recalls. **“It spit out 10 options in no time, including Brittany, which wouldn’t have worked because we didn’t have a car.”**

The best AI option for Rachel turned out to be the fishing port of Saint-Jean-de-Luz along the Atlantic in southwestern France near the border with Spain. The train ride from Paris was a bit of a haul, but the weather was milder than the Côte d’Azur, where Rachel might have traveled had she – like so many vacationers – chosen something more familiar. “AI was combating overtourism, helping us avoid crowds in destinations that I had on my radar because they were the only places I knew.”

The takeaway? “AI ties back to the adventure travel mindset, revealing new places for people to experience and discover. I was a happy customer.”



All's Wellness that Ends Well

Like the hottest of the Five Elements of Chinese Medicine, the latest forecast from the [Global Wellness Institute](#) reveals **“a wellness market on fire.”** GWI's [2025 Global Wellness Economy Monitor](#) reported the market doubling since 2013 and rising 7.9 percent since 2023 to a new peak of \$6.8 trillion in 2024, with every wellness sector from Mental Wellness to Personal Care & Beauty, surpassing pre-pandemic numbers. Wellness Tourism, defined as travel intended to enhance one's well-being, was the fourth loftiest sector, contributing nearly \$900 billion. Spas, standalone or hotel and resort-based, added another \$157 billion.

Along with its head for numbers, GWI has an eye for wellness trends. Among 10 forecast in the [Future of Wellness 2026 Trends report](#) are a **“rise of neurowellness,”** which sees traditional modalities such as massage, yoga, and breathwork being recast as medicine for the nervous system;

“fragrance layering,” with technologies aiding hospitality and leisure spaces shift aromas in different environments; and “skin longevity redefines beauty,” with anti-aging messaging out and optimization of skin health and function over the long term in. There's also “the ‘festivalization’ of wellness,” with events such as wellness raves, sober morning dance events, and more to make wellness playful, group-oriented, and inclusive.

Meanwhile, hospitality-derived wellness has graduated from optional to expected. As observed by [Today's Hotelier](#) of the [Asian American Hotel Owners Association](#), “The shift toward health and wellness isn't merely a trend; it's a fundamental change in consumer behavior.”

This shift in wellness travel is evidenced across the globe. As noted in [The Intentional Traveler](#) report prepared by FINN's Hong Kong office for The

Luxury Group by Marriott International, well-being is everything for high-net-worth travelers in APAC, with 90 percent citing wellness offerings as key factors to their booking decisions in 2025, up from 80 percent – still pretty solid – in 2024.

In the UK, the growing number of public saunas was on path to reach 200 by year-end 2025, up from just 45 near the start of 2023, according to the non-profit [British Sauna Society](#), and in keeping with another GWI trend, “the over-optimization backlash”. And Food & Beverage departments across the hotel industry are fashioning health-conscious menus for everything from gut health to athletic performance, planting chefs' gardens with seasonal produce, and choreographing experiential culinary offerings to teach guests to transform local ingredients into culturally astute meals.

In Florida, [Carillon Miami Wellness Resort](#) remains a shining star of tech-driven wellness, leading in AI for personal health management, as it did pioneering **“touchless wellness technologies”** for therapeutic healing during the darkest days of the pandemic. From Vibroacoustic Electromagnetic Infrared technology (V.E.M.I.) that uses healing sound resonance with full-body vibrations, natural earth frequencies, and infrared to eliminate effects caused by electro-smog radiation; to leveraging AI to provide detailed insights into imbalances in organs, tissues, bones, and mental well-being (OYA Health), the resort has long been a destination for optimizing health and wellness, embracing advances to offer unparalleled experiences and, often, services unavailable elsewhere in the U.S. or around the world.

If properties like Carillon Miami represent the future of wellness through high-tech AI, [Langham Hospitality Group](#) proves that the ultimate “personalization data” may actually be thousands of years old. The Hong Kong-based hospitality brand has spent the last two decades perfecting a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern science. The brand’s [Chuan Spa](#) – the name means ‘flowing water’ – does not just offer treatments; it offers a diagnostic system rooted in the Five Elements of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Through a signature Five Element questionnaire, Chuan Spa identifies current internal imbalances, enabling therapists to curate a sensory journey specifically for that moment in time. From the elemental oils used in the treatment to the specific ‘element tea’ served in the relaxation lounge, the experience is a bespoke roadmap to equilibrium. In an era of seeking ‘fountains of youth’ and stress relief that goes deeper than the skin, Chuan Spa stands out by translating centuries of TCM philosophy into a high-touch, data-driven wellness experience, offering a tailored prescription for emotional and physical equilibrium.

[McKinsey & Co.’s](#) most-recent [Future of Wellness Survey](#) trumpeted in-person experiences and wellness travel as poised for growth, with boutique fitness classes and retreats as standout offerings, especially in the U.S. The survey also anticipated the uptick in longevity-focused wellness, with consumers – especially Gen Z, who feel **“almost always stressed”** – pinpointing longevity as an area in which their needs are unmet. A recent move by [The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe](#) in Southern California addresses precisely that glitch, with its [Mila Moursi Spa](#) partnering with Dr. Sarah Corey, a leader in integrated concierge medicine, to craft a new Staywell Longevity Menu featuring hormone therapy, peptide therapy, IV therapies, and more.

Meanwhile, [Upper House Hong Kong](#) from [Swire Hotels](#), overlooking the shimmering city from the Admiralty business district, offers a half-dozen **“wellness residences”** including [10x Longevity](#).





Originally introduced during the pandemic in keeping with surging local demand for cellular rejuvenation, 10x is designed for busy urban professionals to **“level up”** their healthspan and provide relief for sufferers of jet lag, incorporating high-pressure oxygen therapy, infrared saunas, and cold plunges to boost energy, promote relaxation, improve circulation, and reduce inflammation.

Even with such strides forward, FINN Partners can’t help noticing a return to tradition in wellness. **“There are a lot of bright, shiny, fast-moving offerings these days, but the flipside is wellness programming rooted in ancient traditions, rituals, and philosophies that are true to the destination,”** observes Elise Carlin, Associate Vice President on FINN’s North American travel team. Carlin points to the [Songtsam Group](#), which has begun offering Sowa Rigpa, an ancient Tibetan medical system that blends natural energy with cultural wisdom to spark physical and spiritual transformation, at seven of its 18 boutique hotels and resorts in Tibet and the Yunnan Province of China.

At the [Qiyuan Healing Space of The Spa at Mandarin Oriental Qianmen, Beijing](#), “Qi Yua,” a term used by Taoists, conveys the meaning of gathering and restoring inner energy, as well as a calm atmosphere in the meditation and healing space. Guests can immerse themselves in transformative experiences featuring the transcendent gong bath, long considered an excellent tool for sound healing and uplifting the mind and body in ancient Chinese culture.

Far from everything except the dramatic landscapes that define them, luxury safari operator [Wilderness](#) is underscoring how wellness has evolved into a central pillar of the modern luxury traveler’s mindset with the debut of [The Sanctuary at Wilderness Bisate Lodge](#) in Rwanda’s [Volcanoes National Park](#) and at [Wilderness Mombo Camp](#) in Botswana’s Okavango Delta. Purposefully embedded into each destination, The Sanctuary reflects a broader shift in luxury travel toward presence, ritual, and place-driven well-being, offering guests space to re-center through curated soundscapes and signature scents; a heated saltwater indoor lap pool designed for quiet reflection; steam rooms and ice baths for therapeutic renewal; and cocoon-like meditation pods created for stillness and solitude. Both Sanctuaries also feature fully equipped gyms, treatment rooms for massage and beauty therapies, and fireplaces that encourage guests to slow down and linger.

“Today’s luxury traveler is no longer compartmentalizing wellness and cultural immersion as separate experiences,” says Caroline Keane, Vice President at FINN Partners in New York. “We are seeing a clear evolution toward well-being that is intrinsically tied to destination, landscape, and local tradition. What Wilderness is doing with The Sanctuary feels emblematic of where the market is headed – wellness that is quietly sophisticated, deeply contextual, and designed to enhance the journey rather than interrupt it. In the same way Carillon’s touchless, tech-forward approach reflects Miami’s innovation-led energy, The Sanctuary is a natural extension of the environments Wilderness explores, reinforcing that the future of luxury wellness is rooted in authenticity, intention, and a sense of place.”

Similarly, the city of Seoul has emerged as the world’s “fountain of youth,” as the [Wall Street Journal](#) put it, for travelers seeking savings on skincare procedures that can’t be accessed elsewhere. As reported in [The Korea Herald](#), local luxury properties have been targeting Millennials and Gen Z with creative skincare specials such as last-summer’s “Pool-cation” package at [Vista Walkerhill Seoul](#), a seasonal partnership with vegan beauty brand Frebits from [Moxy Seoul Insadong](#), and [Banyan Tree Club & Spa Seoul’s](#) “Blooming in Pink” program with the French skincare line [NUXE](#).

These examples also signal a broader shift toward wellness as an integrated, sensory experience, shaped as much by atmosphere and design as by treatments or programs. At [Pan Pacific London](#), well-being is embedded into the guest journey from the moment of arrival. The hotel’s lobby sets the tone with a deliberately calm, minimalist aesthetic, where muted materials, curated artworks, and softened acoustics create a sense of decompression from the city outside.

“As wellness matures, it’s becoming less about individual treatments and more about the overall experience of a place,” says Gregory Cole, Senior Partner in London. **“The most effective hospitality environments are those that support well-being continuously, through design, atmosphere, and rhythm.”**

At the heart of the experience sits the dedicated [SENSORY Spa & Wellbeing](#) floor, conceived as a holistic environment supporting physical, mental, and emotional balance through space, ritual, and technology. The floor integrates a high-performance fitness center – among the most advanced hotel gyms in London – and a temperature-controlled 18.5-metre infinity pool overlooking the Square Mile.



Treatments blend Western clinical research with Southeast Asian traditions of clean beauty and restorative practice, delivered through tailor-made seasonal rituals. From mindful, biometric-led training and immersive spa journeys to family-friendly wellness initiatives – including the UK’s first [Bonpoint](#) children’s spa treatments – the experience is designed not as an escape from the city, but as a calm, sensory counterpoint to its intensity.

The Middle East has gone bold on wellness to boost the health and well-being of local populations and attract travelers.

As noted by the Global Wellness Summit, whose examination of wellness in the region was penned by Thomas Morris, Senior Partner, Middle East, of FINN Partners, the dramatic landscapes of the region offer a backdrop for authentic wellness experiences such as stargazing and hiking experiences inspired by the Bedouin culture of Jordan, even as world-class training for young athletes unfolds at [Aspire Academy](#) in sports-crazy Qatar, and investments in AI, digital healthcare infrastructure, and more are setting up the Middle East as a leader in wellness.

“The Middle East is not borrowing wellness from anywhere else; it is building something entirely unique of its own,” says Thomas Morris. “This is a region where ancient hammams, desert rituals, and spiritual traditions sit comfortably alongside AI-driven healthcare, longevity science, and next-generation hospitality. Wellness here is not a retreat from modern life; it is being hardwired into national visions, cities, and destinations. For decades, the region imported the concept of wellness from Asia or the U.S. That era has ended.”

Wellness staycations are fast emerging as one of the most visible shifts in India’s travel landscape, driven by changing consumer expectations from “holiday” to “recovery.” With burnout levels rising and time for long vacations shrinking, urban Indians are increasingly choosing short-format getaways that deliver tangible outcomes – better sleep, stress relief, digital detox, clean eating, and structured wellness routines rooted in yoga, Ayurveda, and mindfulness. **“Wellness staycations are no longer an indulgence – they’re becoming a form of preventive self-care,” says Shivani Gupta, Managing Partner of FINN Partners India.** “People today are actively looking for spaces that help them switch off from screens, slow down, and reset their mind and body. That’s why purpose-led stays focused on rest, restoration, and digital detox are seeing strong demand across India.”

Like those savoring staycations, the demand for wellness isn’t going anywhere anytime soon. Here’s looking forward to more innovation, trends, and growth to come.



When the Journey is the Destination

Coming? Going? The journey you take can be key to the travel you make, and sometimes a lot more.

“Everyone dreams of getting away these days, but many dread it because of the stress around transportation to the destination. Thinking of the journey as the destination has become a way to alleviate that,” says Rachel Frank, Vice President at Maverick Creative, who points to atypical transportation as the re-framed solution.

Train travel, for instance, is on a roll, with people enamored by how railways foster immersion at a gentle pace. As Bjorn Bender, CEO of Rail Europe, noted to TravelAge West: **“Today’s travelers – especially younger generations – are choosing rail not just for convenience. It’s more connected, more sustainable, and more human.”**

CV Villas, the UK-based specialty purveyor of luxury villa getaways throughout Europe and beyond, has teamed with the travel B Corp Byway to offer flight-free travel to various properties, with pre-built itineraries to get travelers where they’re going positively by train while minimizing CO2 along the way.

Belmond, the London-based hospitality operator with luxury offerings in 25 countries and territories, is bolstering its rail presence in Europe with Villeggiatura by Train, a high-end journey from Paris to the Amalfi Coast of Italy on the legendary Venice Simplon-Orient Express. Scheduled to debut in May 2026, the Villeggiatura – that’s Italian for a leisurely stay in the country – will feature overnights in Belmond hotels plus a day to explore Pompeii with access to rarely open Casa del Larario Regio V for Grand Suite guests. Additional Italian itineraries, including Paris to Venice and Florence, will be introduced by Belmond later in the year.

At the budget-friendly end of the rail, travelers headed for or residing in Europe have been scooping up Eurail and Interrail Passes, respectively, at record rates. There were 1.2 million sold worldwide in 2023, up 25% from the previous year, and Travel Weekly has ID’d the U.S. as the biggest market for Eurail passes, followed by Australia and New Zealand, whose combined populations purchased more than 64,000 passes in 2024. Both passes offer a bundle of options, with parent brand Eurail, providing service on railways in 33 countries, including the Eurostar Group, whose high-speed trains zip through Western Europe and the Chunnel.



Plenty of luxury rail options have received critical raves. [Condé Nast Traveler](#) recently hailed [TranzAlpine](#) through the Southern Alps of New Zealand; [Palace on Wheels](#) through the Land of Kings in India; [The Ghan](#) from Adelaide to Darwin through Australia, with operator [Journey Beyond](#) set to debut [new luxury suites](#) arrayed with Australian-inspired, art deco-style design elements from decorative timber accents to stone and marble masonry; and the curiously named [JR Kyushu 36+3](#) offering a week's worth of day trips on travel around the coast of Kyushu, Japan.

Responding to rising demand for slow, meaningful travel, small-group adventure travel expert [Intrepid Travel](#) has been expanding its rail range. Designed without internal flights, the itineraries allow travelers to spend more time engaging with locals and fellow passengers, seeing more of the countryside and accessing lesser-visited destinations. Since launching the rail range in 2024, Intrepid has recorded 24% year-on-year growth in train bookings and added six new rail itineraries in mid-2025, bringing the collection to 50 trips worldwide. New routes span Canada's Rockies, Africa, Asia (including Vietnam to Cambodia), and Europe.

While the company continues to offer a wide mix of trip styles – from walking and trekking to women's expeditions – Intrepid has unveiled 28 new active trips for 2026, responding to rising demand for active, nature-based travel. Spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, the new itineraries feature cycling, hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, and rafting experiences, balancing outdoor adventure with immersive cultural encounters. Customization remains central to the strategy, with Intrepid continuing to build momentum in its [Tailor-Made](#) program, allowing travelers to personalize everything from accommodation to pace and physical demands.

Far, though not that far, from land, river cruises are having a moment. [Travel Market Report](#), a North America-focused B2B platform for travel advisors, recently described the segment as **“one of the powerhouses of luxury travel,”** highlighting the tendency of big-spending customers to repeat their business. Meanwhile, UK-based [Travel Weekly](#) reported that river cruise bookings for 2026 were outpacing 2025, thanks to the success lines have had in marketing cruises, adding new itineraries, and adjusting to economic uncertainty.

[AmaWaterways](#) is offering fresh spins on river cruising, including taking travelers far from traditional European routes such as the Rhine and the Rhone to explore the Nile in Egypt with Egyptologists, and the Mekong through Cambodia and Vietnam with aid from land-based conveyance such as traditional ox carts, trishaws, and tuk-tuks.

Even farther afield, AmaWaterways is the first river cruise line to roll along the main waterway in Colombia with new explorations of the Magdalena River. Heading north from Cartagena to Barranquilla with stops including Palenque, Mompox, and Sitio Nuevo, each of the line's new vessels — [AmaMagdalena](#) and [AmaMelodia](#) – is custom-built to navigate and celebrate the river and those native to it. AmaWaterways is helping to build a sustainable foundation for tourism that benefits local communities and bolsters the country's future as **“a world-class river cruise destination,”** while carefully planned itineraries and excursions and locally designed ships act as a gateway for avid cruisers to embark on an exciting new journey to a culturally rich destination that they may not have traveled to otherwise.

As noted by Hilton, “Skip-Generation” holidays are growing in Asia, with kids journeying with grandparents instead of their parents to discover their shared culture. **“Multi-gen travel is nothing new in APAC, but the ‘Skip-Gen’ angle has become appealing for how it strengthens ties among the most-distant generations,”** says Magel Ordoñez of FINN Partners Singapore, who points to family-friendly properties such as [Canopy by Hilton Xi’an Qujiang](#) near museums and parks in Xi’an, China; [Conrad Koh Samui](#), where unhurried island living, hands-on activities and gentle cultural and nature experiences create easy, shared moments for grandparents and grandchildren to connect through time spent together; and [Anantara Chiang Mai Resort](#) from [Minor Hotels](#) offering family-friendly cultural activities such as cooking classes, temple visits, and craft workshops allowing for families to bond over shared traditions.

Among trends in premium aviation is a shift from extravagance toward quiet luxury that prioritizes refinement, comfort, and emotional experience to create a better sense of ease and privacy in flight. With a new Crystal Business Class Suite coming soon, [Turkish Airlines](#) is surrounding business-class clientele with warm lighting, refined textures, and a cohesive design language that feels elegant without being excessive, perfect for high-flying and spending travelers who appreciate discretion, quality, and thoughtful details. With business class increasingly treated as a flagship product by commercial carriers, the new product enables Turkish Airlines to appeal to a globally minded audience that prefers sophistication to ostentation.

[Tradewind Aviation](#), provider of private air travel and pioneer of the shared charter concept throughout North America and the Caribbean, has built a hearty market for travelers to embrace its airborne journeys as destinations by prioritizing convenience, efficiency, and personalized experiences – attributes unmatched by traditional long-haul carriers. Having seen a 20 percent increase in bookings for regional travel across the northeast, southeast, and Caribbean during the first half of 2025, Tradewind recently responded to client demand by expanding scheduled routes to Nantucket from seasonal to year-round and tripling capacity on routes from South Florida to The Bahamas.

“Time is money,” observes Lexi Robayo, Senior Account Executive at FINN Travel in New York. **“People aren’t as inclined to spend vacation time in big cities. They want to have meaningful connections to the places they visit, and enjoying their time getting there is key to the trip.”**

[Delta Air Lines](#) is constantly evolving its product offering to give its customers a more premium, connected, and personalized onboard experience en route to their chosen destination. Testament to this is its fast and free WiFi revolution for Delta SkyMiles® Members, which has reached its 1000th aircraft, providing a major industry milestone. This, paired with expanded luxury partnerships, such as its collaboration with Italian fashion brand Missoni on a luxurious Delta One collection, an exclusive Missoni bedding set along with a refreshed Delta One amenity kit, provides a comfortable and luxurious experience during a long-haul flight.



Step right up, 2026 traveler: There's a destination for every **"-ism"** and **"-cation"** you can imagine.

Searching for comfort in a warming world? Travelers are seeking out cooler climes for adventure and to get to know the natural destination offerings. The island of Hokkaidō, Japan, is right for Coolcations, with pleasant temps and humidity, active volcanoes, and Daisetsuzan National Park, home to the Ezo brown bear, at its mountainous core.

Prefer to chill? Sedona, Arizona, remains a serene sanctuary for Calmcations, with [L'Auberge de Sedona](#) deepening connections to the mystical landscape with the Duck Pool on a red rock bluff. [L'Apothecary Spa](#) goes beyond the traditional luxury spa getaway, with floating sound healing, an outdoor relaxation garden, and massages outdoors in Sedona's breathtaking natural beauty.

More a creature of the dark? Destinations for Noctourism are as wide as the sky, from glimpsing Aurora Borealis from a Forest Suite at [Holmen Husky Lodge](#) along the northern border of Norway; to stargazing from Starlight Foundation-certified Tenerife in the Canary Islands, where [Bahía del Duque](#) has an observatory; and star bathing – **"the new forest bathing,"** according to *Condé Nast Traveler* – in settings such as [Six Senses Kanuhura](#) in the Maldives or with [Cairngorm Excursions](#) in the Scottish Highlands.

The U.S. will be a hot destination for travel on and off the beaten path in 2026, with a line-up of inspiration from its 250th anniversary, the 100th anniversary of Route 66, and the 2026 FIFA World Cup drawing travelers to every corner of the country. The San Francisco Bay area will host six World Cup matches, including a knockout round, at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, an hour south of the home field of the San Francisco City Football Club, the oldest community-owned soccer team in the U.S.

The World Cup hype has [San Francisco Travel](#) trumpeting the region's cultural, culinary, and tech highlights, including Waymo robotaxis, which numbered 800+ on city streets last August and have become a major tourist attraction. Meanwhile, the city remains delightfully walkable with the 34-mile-long [Big Art Loop](#) featuring 100 temporary large-scale sculptures, the 38-mile-long Roundabout urban hiking trail starting and ending at the landmark Ferry Building, and a self-guided Martini Trail with 23 locations en route. Betcha can't drink 'em all!

There's a Trip for That: 2026 Travel Trends



National Parks from rocky [Acadia](#) in Maine to the volcanic island and coral atoll-filled [National Park of American Samoa](#) will be major draws for domestic and international travelers through 2026. But take note: The [National Park Service](#) is charging non-U.S. residents over age 16 an extra \$100 to enter the top parks, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon. With 63 National Parks and hundreds of National Battlefields, Historic Parks, Lakeshores, Memorials, Monuments, Preserves, and more – 433 destinations in total – there’s no shortage of places to explore.

Prime among them is the second-westernmost National Park, [Hawai‘i Volcanoes](#), which hosted more than 1.4 million visitors in 2024. Nathan Kam, Senior Partner at Anthology FINN Partners in Honolulu, notes that geopolitical tensions have “crushed international visitation” from Canada to the Aloha State of late. **“Other countries are telling us, ‘It’s not you, Hawai‘i. It’s just that we have our own values, so we’re going to pause for now, but our travelers will come back, so don’t worry.’”**

Among hotels waiting to dazzle such travelers are those of the [Marriott Waikiki Collection](#), with four recently renovated properties, including [The Royal Hawaiian](#), set to celebrate 100 years of oceanfront luxury in 2027, and [Moana Surfrider, A Westin Hotel & Spa](#), which marks its 125th anniversary as the first hotel in Waikiki in March. As Kam observes: “There are a lot of nice places to travel, but it’s culture and traditions that make Hawai‘i special.”

Across the Pacific, Asia seems to be on every traveler’s list for 2026. In Hong Kong, Managing Partner Cathy Feliciano-Chon of FINN Partners Asia Pacific highlights standout destinations.

First on her list is the Philippines, with Manila transforming from a stopover location into one of the hottest culinary scenes on the continent. In 2025, the capital’s first [Michelin Guide](#) revealed one two-Star, eight one-Star, and one Green Star dining experiences, plus another 99 Bib Gourmand and Michelin Selected restaurants.

The top rating went to [Helm](#), whose modern tasting menu expresses the British/Filipino heritage and Spanish influences of Bedford, England-born Chef Josh Boutwood. Further south, the Province of Negros Occidental has been named the country’s first Slow Food destination for its plethora of lush organic farms and innovative aquaculture operations. **(Insider FINN tip: If you’re headed to Bacolod City, the chicken inasal at [Aida’s Chicken](#) is a “can’t-miss.”)**

Vietnam is another bright light for travel in Asia in 2026, with a hotel development pipeline spanning major cities as well as coastal destinations such as Da Nang, Nha Trang, and Hoi An, the last of whose walkable Ancient Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, charms with a melting pot culture, colorful architecture, and pedestrian-friendly streets. Come mid-2026, Hoi An Marriott Resort & Spa will offer a serene escape on Vietnam’s central coast, commanding a prime position along Cua Dai Beach and blending modern sophistication with cultural charm, just minutes from the above-mentioned Ancient Town.

As for China, visa-free policies, new hotel developments, and creative culinary offerings are attracting significant traveler traffic to Tier II cities such as Chengdu, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, where [Mandarin Oriental](#) will soon welcome guests for stays within a new mixed-use complex near West Lake, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The presence of the luxury hotelier will have a profound effect on Hangzhou, as it did when Mandarin Oriental opened in 2022 in [Shenzhen](#), a special economic zone located a quick train excursion from Hong Kong. With Andaz also in [Shenzhen](#) and a new luxury [Upper House](#) from [Swire Hotels](#) anticipated for 2027, the transformation of the former industrial enclave into a destination is well underway.

On the Continent, “personal passions” are a prime motivator for Europeans scoping out travel destinations these days. “What unites a lot of people here is their drive for authentic experiences as opposed to ticking boxes,” explains Amy Skelding, Managing Partner at FINN Travel UK in London. **“It has almost become a badge of honor for Europeans to go to Iceland, say, and skip the Golden Circle in favour of the delights of the Westfjords in the north of the country, or to Paris and not visit the [Café Des Deux Moulins](#) where Audrey Tatou waitressed in Amélie.”**

That means missing out on delights such as Iceland’s newest geothermal wellness resort, [Laugarás Lagoon](#), with 1,000 square meters of thermal waters, a 6.6-meter waterfall, a secluded grotto, and two swim-up bars, as well as French culinary classics from duck confit to crème brûlée. It does, however, widen opportunities for adventurous “good getaways” to destinations such as the island of

Menorca, Spain, to secure trendy [Palmaira](#) sandals where they were born, or to [Unexpected Ibiza Hotel](#) on another Spanish island, which Skelding notes “has been zigging while other hotels are zagging, with ‘pop-up’ experiences all the time.”

Among clever attributes drawing travelers to the Unexpected are The Sin Box suite that tempts guests to share secrets, Flametronic flamenco performances incorporating giant hand puppets and remote-control horses, and an endless string of top DJs who know how to keep a party going.

Whatever destination ends up in their sights, travelers want more than fun in the sun or shade. “I believe travel is becoming more purposeful, with people looking to brands that can actually provide rewarding experiences that go beyond completing bucket lists,” says Chad Belisario of FINN Travel Los Angeles. “It’s really about connecting to what they value and taking away something meaningful and mindful when they depart.”





Taking Luxury Personally

Luxury today isn't shown; it's felt. The leading global travel agency network [Virtuoso](#) recently asked its advisors for their thoughts on ultra-luxury travel. The response, as detailed in the [2026 Virtuoso Luxe Report](#), found 45 percent of advisors have seen a rise in luxury requests. Meantime, "ultra-luxe" travel is now defined as "having every detail seamlessly included," with celebration, privacy, adventure, and hyper-personalized experiences within offerings that affluent travelers crave.

"Luxury travel continues to show remarkable resilience as we move into 2026," says Shannon O'Malley, Florida-based Vice President of FINN's North American travel team, who notes that travelers' growing thirst for frictionless experiences is reshaping the industry's language around value. **"'Value' was often narrowly defined as a discount. Now it means something to cherish. Time has become such a commodity, especially for families, that the true value of travel can't be overlooked."**



In Asia, the FINN travel team sees a long leadership in luxury hospitality, including locally owned international brands that are shaping the future of ultra-luxury travel while keeping their properties front-of-mind worldwide. **“I may be biased, but the supreme, gold standard of luxury travel is happening right now in Asia,” says Cathy Feliciano-Chon, Managing Partner, FINN Partners Asia Pacific, who points to upcoming openings from renowned Asian-owned luxury hotel brands across the region. “Those making news are layering hospitality with Asian values. The way luxury travel has been expressed here from a hardware and software perspective over the past couple of decades is generations beyond where other regions are today.”**

[Mandarin Oriental](#), for instance, is growing its already strong presence in Asia with a second property in Malaysia, rebranding a luxury address on the Desaru Coast surrounded by 128 acres of unspoiled rainforest and endless beaches. [Rosewood Hotels & Resorts](#) is anticipating the opening of [Rosewood Red Sea](#) on Shura Island on the west coast of Saudi Arabia, with a marina, a yacht club, and an 18-hole championship golf course as part of the new Red Sea cultural and lifestyle destination. And slated for a December 2026 opening, [The Langham, Custom House, Bangkok](#) from [Langham Hospitality Group](#) will re-imagine the city’s historic Custom House, an 1888 neo-Palladian-style structure designed by Joachim Grassi and characterized by arched windows, grand columns, and intricate stonework. The revitalized landmark, blending traditional Thai elements and Western architecture, will be flanked by a heritage post office and a new modern structure with a fluid form inspired by the adjacent Chao Phraya River.

Relative newcomer [Swire Hotels](#), based in Hong Kong, continues to evolve its distinctive [Upper House](#) brand, promising luxury destinations for

seasoned globetrotters “who seek a different, intimate and personalized guest experience” with the rebranding of Michelin-Keyed properties in Hong Kong, Chengdu, and Shanghai, as well as [upcoming openings](#) in Tokyo, Shenzhen, and Xi’an, and designed branded residences in Bangkok. And fresh from being honored as the “Best Hotel Brand” in *Travel + Leisure’s* World’s Best Awards for the third year in a row, Singapore-based [Capella Hotels and Resorts](#) is welcoming guests with new properties in Macau and Taipei, while also readying [Capella Kyoto](#) and Capella Florence, the brand’s first in Japan and Europe, for 2026 and 2027.

FINN’s Hong Kong team is also primed about partnerships between high-end hotel brands and fashion designers, transforming the former into luxury retail outlets for the latter. [The Ritz-Carlton](#) recently partnered with Madrid-based fashion brand [Late Checkout](#) for their [second exclusive capsule collection](#). Designed for long nights, leisurely travel, and, one assumes, leisurely stays, the collection features rugby polos, cozy sweaters, and a souvenir “sukajan” jacket emblazoned with the hotelier’s lion or flag insignia. The collection was launched with a stylized and quirky [campaign film](#) starring the charming Josh Hutcherson as he travels to meet [Shoko Plambeck](#) at [The Ritz-Carlton, Nikko](#); worth a watch to gaze upon this stunning property.

Though hardly new, such partnerships help build loyalty that leads to repeat business. **“It’s becoming more important to give guests something to take with them,” explains Annouchka Behrmann, Managing Partner at FINN Hong Kong.** “Whether it’s a co-branded fashion item or a reminder of the experience, such things can take on a second or third life for guests by capturing their holiday and inspiring memories.”

A growing number of luxury hotel groups are evolving into broader luxury brands, reflecting how today's affluent travelers engage with hospitality. Gregory Cole, Senior Partner, Luxury EMEA at FINN Partners, has seen this take shape as hotels increasingly occupy the same cultural space as fashion, design, and lifestyle brands. **"They're becoming cultural brands with a point of view, a following and a lifestyle attached to them,"** he says.

That evolution is visible across leadership and brand platforms, from [Jumeirah's](#) 2024 appointments of former Gucci executives Michael Grieve and Julien Soyez, to The Langham's Luminaries concept inviting dialogue with key opinion leaders across creative and lifestyle professions, from violinist Joshua Bell, to culinary tastemaker Brooklyn Peltz Beckham, to photographer Douglas Friedman.

Of course, luxury is not only on the folio, but also in the eye of the hotel guest. While "personalization" may be tired terminology in hospitality circles, it's all over travel trend reports for the year ahead, as luxury travelers strongly desire tailored bang for their buck.

"Gone are the days of booking the same trip as everyone else," proclaimed a recent roundup of travel trends from the BBC, which shared the thoughts of brand strategist and cultural futurist Jasmine Bina, CEO of [Concept Bureau](#) in Los Angeles, that "specialist tours" from luxury [menopause retreats](#) to upscale [adventures for insect enthusiasts](#) present "a huge opportunity for the travel industry to provide meaning and experience on a totally different level." (BTW: If relief and renewal from the unique challenges of menopause stirs interest, consider the new [Inner Glow: Menopause and Perimenopause Retreat](#) from the [biostation](#) at [Carillon Miami Wellness Resort](#).)

Vice President Chad Belisario of FINN's West Coast Travel Team observes that while personalization may be baseline in luxury travel, a lot of thought still goes into it. At the 2025 IGLTA Global Convention in Palm Springs last fall, Chad's eyes were opened to the shift in travel from demographic and psychographic considerations to more value-driven offerings.

"Rather than shape hotel experiences by, say, one's age or heritage, personalization is now based on things guests really value, such as time at the beach, good food, or adventure. Destinations and hotels are discovering that experience-led personalization enhances guest engagement and translates into measurable brand loyalty."

Of course, covering the range of such values can require a lot of diversification. Hence, the world of luxury properties, such as [Puente Romano Beach Resort](#) on the Golden Mile of Marbella on the coast of southern Spain. Originally opened in 1974 by Prince Alfonso von Hohenlohe, who played an outsized role in shaping Marbella into a global luxury destination, the resort has since been transformed by owner David Shamoon of [Luxury Hotel Partners](#) into a multi-sensory playground – anchored by a world-class tennis facility that draws icons of the game and an unparalleled culinary ecosystem of no fewer than 27 restaurants and lounges, including world-renowned dining destinations such as Cipriani, COYA, GAIA, UNI, and a Nobu overseen by the brand's first female executive chef. Puente Romano will also open a [La Petite Maison](#) this spring after the icon of Mediterranean gastronomy "popped up" for two months at another newly renovated Luxury Hotel Partners property, [Hermitage Bay](#) in Antigua.

"Puente Romano is a clear reflection of how the expectations of today's most discerning travelers have evolved," says Caroline Keane. **"Resort-style travel is very much back, yet guests are no longer choosing between relaxation and stimulation; they expect both. Travelers want beautiful settings paired with exceptional dining, cultural energy, and a sense of momentum, all within one destination. With more than 20 restaurants and a deeply rooted sense of place, Puente Romano has positioned itself as one of the Mediterranean's most in-demand resorts because it delivers a fully integrated experience. In an era of endless choice, the resorts that stand out are those offering a true 360 ecosystem, where no two days feel the same."**

Cheers to that!



An aerial photograph of a coastal city at dawn. In the foreground, a wide river flows through a lush green mangrove forest. The water reflects the soft light of the rising sun. In the middle ground, a city skyline is visible, featuring several tall skyscrapers and a mix of urban buildings. The sky is a pale, hazy blue, suggesting the early morning light. The overall scene is a blend of nature and urban development.

The Dawn of Intentional Travel

Whatever one's hopes and dreams for preserving the environment, culture, and economy of the places we visit around the world, there are plenty of options for traveling sustainably once they head out the door.

As travel continues to grow, tourism-related sustainability is more important than ever. Consider, for example, there were 25 million international travelers in 1950; about 1.4 billion in 2019, before sights and scenes caught a break from the pandemic; and nearly the same in 2024. That's a lot of traffic, and a lot of reasons to make sustainable tourism a priority.

Take the Middle East, where sustainable hospitality **"is more than a choice – it is an imperative for the enduring success of the tourism sector,"** according to Daniel Gribbin, Sustainability Leader at Deloitte Middle East. In a 2025 Insight Report created with Business Traveller, Gribbin highlighted a number of tourism-related sustainability efforts in the region, including proactive restoration of coral reefs in the sparkling waters of the Red Sea; holistic integration **"where every tourism activity supports interconnected systems of nature, community, and economy";** and regenerative tourism **at the community level "with traditions and livelihoods interwoven into the very fabric of the hospitality framework."**



From his perspective in the heart of that action, Thomas Morris, Senior Partner at FINN UAE, notes that sustainable hospitality is becoming foundational in the Middle East “because it is being built into new developments from the ground up rather than implemented into legacy infrastructure.” Morris points to AMAALA, a new tourism destination rising along the Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia under real estate developer [Red Sea Global](#) in keeping with the country’s Vision 2030 plan to modernize its economy. AMAALA will feature more than two-dozen wellness-focused and renewably energized resorts from renowned luxury brands, including Rosewood, Six Senses, The Ritz-Carlton, and Four Seasons.

Ecotourism is also on the rise in the UAE, notably in Ras Al Khaimah, whose [tourism development authority](#) bills it as “[The Nature Emirate](#)”. Among outdoorsy adventure offerings are the [Jais Sky Tour](#), offering “brave-hearted explorers” six ziplines stretching up to more than a kilometer for bird’s-eye views of the craggy Hajar Mountains, and the [Suwaidi Pearl Farm](#), celebrating more than 7,000 years of local pearl fishing history in the village of Al Rams along the Persian Gulf.

Nearby, the vast country of Oman has made sustainable tourism the cornerstone of its Oman Vision 2040 with the Sultanate positioning itself as a sanctuary for “quiet tourism” prioritizing environmental protection over mass development. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is diverting traffic away from Muscat by investing in 14 regional tourism clusters; in the rugged Al Hajar Mountains, adventure and ecology meet at sites like Jebel Akhdar and Jebel Shams, where visitors can traverse ancient terraced gardens or take on the via ferrata routes perched 2,000 meters above sea level. There is also the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, a world-leading site for the protection of the endangered green turtle, where travelers can witness nesting rituals under strict conservation protocols. Further north, the Musandam Peninsula, otherwise known as the “Norway of Arabia,” offers low-impact dhow cruises through turquoise fjords.

Much like the Middle East’s ground-up approach to sustainable tourism development, India’s opportunity lies not in retrofitting sustainability as an afterthought, but in embedding it into the next phase of destination and hospitality growth – guided as much by traveler values as by policy.

Indeed, as related in [The Future of Travel 2025](#), an analysis of India’s new “global travel generation” created by Shivani Gupta, Managing Partner of FINN Partners India, with the global research and insights agency [GSIQ](#): Gen Z, in particular, has a keen eye for authenticity, sustainability, and immersive experiences. With India turning into a global powerhouse of outbound tourism, their strong preferences for eco-conscious stays, culturally rich interactions, and digital convenience are pushing the industry to innovate on experiences as well as luxury.

Shivani adds: **“These travelers are ready to reward brands that demonstrate genuine intent rather than performative claims. As the significance of India’s outbound tourism grows, the expectations of Gen Z, who perceive roaming the globe as a form of self-expression, will increasingly shape how destinations and hospitality brands design experiences and define luxury.”**

Among domestic addresses that check such boxes is [The Grand Dragon, Ladakh](#) at 11,562 feet in the Himalayas, recently heralded by *Travel + Leisure Asia* as one of the Best Sustainable properties in India, with Ladakhi architecture actively promoting locally sourced materials and experiences for guests from “feast for the senses”-style picnics along the Indus and Zaskar rivers to day trips to the ancient monasteries. [Six Senses Fort Barwara](#) in Rajasthan has also woven sustainability into the guest experience rather than positioning it as a separate initiative. From adaptive reuse of a 14th-century fort to water stewardship, local sourcing, and community engagement, the property reflects how luxury in India is increasingly being defined by restoration of place, culture, and self.

Similar experiences are being sought across Asia, as well, with the global travel media platform [Travel and Tour World](#) recently noting that travelers are choosing lesser-known destinations to secure authenticity and eco-friendliness, a shift driven in part by **“a renewed focus on sustainability.”**

Among representative settings is Kanazawa, one of dozens of towns across Japan tagged as ‘Little Kyoto,’ which is home to traditional arts and crafts, modern art and architecture, well-preserved Edo-era districts, and historic treasures such as Kenrokuen Garden. There is also Azerbaijan, straddling Europe and Asia, recently hailed as **“culture-packed”** by *Condé Nast Traveller*. Highlights include Icherisheher, the UNESCO World Heritage Site-honored Old City of the capital city of Baku, with a “maze of narrow alleys revealing medieval mosques, caravanserais once used by Silk Road traders, and the iconic Maiden Tower, whose origins remain shrouded in mystery.” The futuristic Flame Towers are can’t-miss in the nighttime skyline of Baku, while wellness traditions “that stretch back centuries” and rotating art shows at the Heydar Aliyev Center along the city’s Caspian waterfront are not to be missed.

With the downsides of overtourism rising like snakes from the scalp of Medusa, destination dupes continue to trend. In Europe, travelers are increasingly considering spots like Montenegro instead of Croatia, Wexford

instead of Dublin, Cormons instead of Venice, and Kéa as a stand-in for busier Greek islands of the Aegean.

“Such travel feeds into a lot of the destination clients we work for to help with their sustainability messaging and geographical and seasonal spreads. The perfect example of this is in Iceland. There is now a winter flight from the UK to the capital of the north, Akureyi, which launched back in 2023 and has been very popular ever since with travelers hunting those infamous Northern Lights, wanting to indulge in some geothermal bathing, and even pop on their skis,” says Amy Skelding, Managing Partner on FINN’s travel team in the UK.

Another example is that this year Malta’s sister island of Gozo was named on [Wanderlust’s Good to Go List](#) which represents the most meaningful places on the globe for the **‘curious and responsible Wanderlust traveler.’** Just a short ferry from the popular resorts and renowned heritage sites of Malta, Gozo offers a more sedate and tranquil Maltese holiday experience with its picturesque villages, ancient wonders, and farm-to-table gastronomy. The island has a community-focused approach to tourism, and this accolade is recognition of how a thoughtful approach to tourism on the island appeals to responsible travelers.

Of course, travelers can leave a positive footprint wherever they’re headed, especially by patronizing champions of local communities.

Across the Tibetan Plateau in southwestern China, the boutique hotel group [Songtsam Resorts](#) exemplifies regenerative travel through a deep commitment to sustainability, cultural preservation, and community impact. The boutique hospitality group incorporates thoughtful, low-impact design – often building lodges in traditional styles using locally sourced materials, including reclaimed wood from abandoned village structures or naturally fallen trees – while crafting immersive itineraries that educate travelers and meaningfully support surrounding communities. Guests are invited to connect firsthand with local cultures and traditions through experiences that also generate economic opportunity for artisans and villages. **Today, more than 90 percent of staff across Songtsam’s 18 hotels, lodges, and glamping sites are locally hired, and the brand reinvests a portion of its profits back into nearby communities, helping ensure long-term prosperity alongside environmental stewardship.**





In The Bahamas, tourism is all about sustainability, and vice versa. The island nation with 700-plus islands and cays and 100,000 square miles of calm blue ocean between them has paved two paths to sustainability, protecting its natural surroundings while building the durability of its tourism economy. Among several successful regenerative efforts created via partnerships between the government, the private sector, and impassioned locals is Mission4Mangroves, an environmental tour of Grand Bahama Island that taps visitor muscle to restore and replenish natural ecosystems to sustain marine life and protect coastal communities.

Meanwhile, in Freeport on Grand Bahama, the commercial coral farm [Coral Vita](#) is busy cultivating two-dozen types of indigenous coral through innovative techniques that speed up growth by 50 percent while making it more resistant to rising temperatures and acidity.

As cool as those and other environmental efforts are, tourism to The Bahamas continues to climb, with 11.22 million international visitors in 2024, up 16.2 percent over 2023.

When travelers and communities work together, sustainability can be truly transformative.

In Northwest Florida, Destin-Fort Walton Beach – the only town mentioned by name in Taylor Swift’s dark and dreamy “Florida!!!” – has engaged the local community to welcome visitors and encourage them to divert to lesser-known locations in the destination. To address anti-tourism sentiment, the destination’s tourism organization engaged local businesses and residents to actively participate in solutions. In fact, they created and trained a contract workforce dedicated to tourism. Employment possibilities became available to serve as scouts – both online and in person – and adventure experts, to engage visitors with recommendations pre-arrival and in-market; acting as

adventure guides to draw travelers away from crowded beaches to lesser-known locales; and teaching proper technique for snorkeling, paddling, fishing, and more during high season.

Payoff? Destin-Fort Walton Beach was named one of the [Destinations of the Year 2026 by Expedia](#), which noted the area has much to offer **“away from the sand and sea.”**

Oh, and by the way, Taylor: There are a lot more places for travelers to stay than timeshares. Drop by for a visit sometime, and you’ll see.

Travel That Clicks

Good things come in travel packages, and variations on the same are growing by offering a world of opportunities as travel personalization becomes the gold standard.

Packaged travel has been around since 1841 when Thomas Cook, founder of the late, eponymous British tour operator, organized a rail excursion for 500 sober Midlanders who paid a shilling a pop for a 12-mile ride from Leicester to a temperance gathering in Loughborough. Four years later, as per [TimeTravel-Britain.com](#), Cook picked up steam with a trip to Liverpool and by the 1860s was packaging tours to as far away as Switzerland, America, and the Nile. Thomas Cook outlasted Cook, grew global, and even branded an airline before going out of business in a hurry in 2019. (Though [Thomas Cook India](#), headquartered in Mumbai, remains in operation.)

Today, travel packages have not only endured, they are blossoming. As observed last spring by Rich Robinson, Head of Hospitality & Leisure for Barclays Corporate Bank: “While the DIY holiday once reigned supreme, we’re now seeing a resurgence in the popularity of package holidays and travel agents, particularly among younger travelers.” The shift, Robinson added, “reflects a growing desire for value, convenience, and stress-free planning.”

Desire, indeed: Two years ago, Euromonitor International estimated the market for package holidays in Europe would grow to \$125.9 billion in 2025, with popularity strongest among the budget-conscious Brits and Germans seeking to secure savings on accommodations, transportation, and the like.

In our hectic time, the appeal of packaged travel goes beyond price. Jenny Lo, Managing Partner at FINN Partners Shanghai, notes how “information overload” is not only driving travelers in China towards one-click travel, but it is also shaping the marketing of travel brands. “Traditionally, hotels put a lot of positive reviews and information on social media to influence consumers.

But with life so complicated and demanding, younger generations are now making last-minute travel decisions based on random factors, despite having months to plan. Even they can’t explain why they choose one travel opportunity over another.”

As such, travel brands are filling social media platforms with inspiring virality instead of experiential details, the better to excite and engage consumers. Adds Lo: “Traditional marketing no longer works for spontaneous decision making, as booking lead times have dropped from weeks to days or even overnight.”

Such spur-of-the-moment decisions aren’t reserved for quick getaways. On the adventure front, [Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions](#), one of the few private tour operators with the means and expertise to provide environmentally ethical deep-field explorations of the interior of Antarctica, regularly receives last-minute bookings for travel into one of the most remote destinations on Earth. **“It was shocking to learn how many clients wait until a month out to book 5+ day trips that need to be buffered with multiple days on either side in case the climate doesn’t cooperate,”** relates Catherine Colford, Senior Partner of Maverick Creative, which recently reeled ALE into its growing client portfolio.

Upon arrival, ALE guests find a lot to experience, with programming sculpted for casual travelers and adrenaline junkies alike. For the former, [Emperors & Explorers](#) offers camping near an emperor penguin colony (they’re the big ones), the only experience of its kind in Antarctica, as well as a venture to both the geographic and ceremonial South Pole and a stay at ALE’s lively base camp at Union Glacier, a hub of exploration. For adventurers, there is sky diving, mountaineering on the highest peak on the continent (Mount Vinson), skiing to the Pole(s), snowmobiling, and more. Comfort is key for all, with ALE providing a range of accommodations, including top-of-the-line, double-walled tents with elevated flooring and heated bedding at its [Three Glaciers Retreat](#), where days end with warm showers and menus from a private chef.



[JOURNY](#) a newly reimagined travel media channel that relaunched last fall following acquisition by the tech-forward travel company [NextTrip](#), is taking a clever approach to capturing the attention of preoccupied consumers with immersive travel programming that not only tells compelling stories but drives engagement and action via seamlessly integrated booking and discovery tools. The ecosystem surrounding JOURNY, which includes the online travel agency [Five Star Alliance](#), combines concierge-supported travel, smart booking technology, and branded media to inspire travelers through culturally rich and insightful programming and connect them to bookable journeys as they're watching the show.

"What makes JOURNY so timely is that it reflects how people actually travel today," says Barney Bishop, Associate VP on FINN's New York travel team. "We're inspired by what we watch, we want things to feel easy, and when something resonates, we're ready to act. By bringing together great storytelling, smart technology, and real concierge support, JOURNY makes it possible to go from dreaming about a trip to booking it in the same moment."

The convenience of package-esque travel offerings is a main driver for younger travel consumers and Gen Z in particular. **"We are witnessing a strategic shift in which Gen Z is trading traditional planning for 'curated spontaneity,' valuing their time as much as the experience itself,"** says Haldun Dincetin, Senior Partner of FINN Partners North America. **"These travelers seek what I call 'frictionless adventure,' gravitating towards unique cultural experiences they can't find in their own zip codes. Properties like [Çırağan Palace Kempinski Istanbul](#) are leading this trend by moving beyond the traditional stay; by offering curated cultural immersions – such as bespoke tours of Old City-filming locations for Skyfall featuring Daniel Craig-as-007 – the hotel is positioning itself as a vital architect of the traveler's overall narrative."**

Similarly, [Lunara Bay](#), a first-of-its-kind collection of oceanfront vacation homes in Key West, Florida, is coaxing groups of friends and multi-gen families for luxury stays with the services of Guest Experience Managers who bring deep local expertise and concierge-level access to the best experiences across the Keys. "They're well-connected across the island, from sought-after boat captains to private chefs

and specialty purveyors," says Cesaley Hill, Associate Vice President of Maverick Creative, who notes the goal is to deliver the ease and consistency of a luxury hotel experience without sacrificing the privacy and comfort of a spacious home.

In Europe, [weloveholidays](#), one of the fastest-growing online travel providers, has made packaged holidays its specialty. Their most recent data shows that German travelers increasingly opted for all-inclusive, worry-free packages and were willing to spend more for comfort. "Almost six out of ten bookings in 2025 were made by couples without children – a surprisingly strong trend showing that package holidays are no longer just for families. Couples also appreciate the planning security and comfort of all-inclusive offers in higher-end hotels," says Anett Wittmann, Senior Partner of FINN Partners, Germany.

This shift towards a younger customer base is also clearly reflected in their booking behaviour data. In 2025, smartphones remain the dominant booking device, with 55% of bookings being completed via smartphones. Continues Wittmann: **"Taken together, these developments point to packaged holidays emerging as the defining travel trend of the next generation, driven by a demand for convenience, efficiency, and mobile-first booking experiences that are reshaping the industry."**

The UK is also home to [Advantage Travel Partnership](#), a global community of 400-plus travel agents and travel management outfits that together generate more than £17 billion in global sales annually from millions of travelers. While packaged holidays are among ATP's specialties, many of its member agents are now broadening in more experiential and luxury realms of travel. "That's where the money is in travel now, and so the options are getting bigger, broader, and more varied," notes Grace Parker, Senior Partner on FINN Partners Global Travel Team in London. ATP's evolution reflects a wider trend: Travel is no longer just about seeing the world – it's about shaping it, with personalization and luxury redefining value.

As such options increase, so, too, do the ranks of travel advisors at the top end of the market. According to a recent piece from Bloomberg, the number of professionals describing themselves as travel agents or advisors grew by more 50 percent over the past three years, while the American Society of Travel Advisors has estimated travel booked through advisors will climb to \$141.3 billion in the U.S. in 2026.

Today's most influential travel counsel is defined by access, authorship, and cultural authority. In New York, Jack Ezon, Founder and Partner of [Embark Beyond](#) and a recent addition to *Travel + Leisure's* 23rd annual A-List of the World's Top Travel Advisors, represents the apex of this evolution. His work centers on experiences that are structurally impossible for most travelers to achieve independently, including a pre-wedding celebration in Paris that involved closing the top of the Arc de Triomphe for a private toast, and securing exclusive access to the summit of the Eiffel Tower for the bachelorette group.

In Italy, journalist Laura Itzkowitz offers [The New Roman Times](#), her [Substack](#) rooted in editorial credibility and local fluency written for high-end travelers and devoted Italy lovers. Itzkowitz translates deep, on-the-ground knowledge into highly targeted guidance on the country's most compelling hotels and destinations. Her work reflects a growing appetite for travel advice that is curated, informed, and authored by trusted voices with genuine proximity to place.

"With their insider knowledge and ability to cut through an increasingly crowded digital landscape, travel advisors are filling a critical gap for consumers who value lived experience over algorithm-driven recommendations," says Caroline Keane, Vice President on the FINN Partners Travel Team in New York, pointing to the rise of [Fora Travel](#), a marketplace for travel advisors that recently expanded with the launch of Fora Groups to modernize how corporate clients and advisors approach group travel. "AI and social media offer incredible tools, but they also create noise and misinformation. Travel advisors provide discernment, context, and a human point of view that technology alone cannot replicate."



Tell Me What You Eat, I'll Tell You Where You've Been

As if travel to Asia didn't have enough going for it, the region sits at the head of the table for discovering and savoring contemporary dining and drinking trends.

"Food and beverage has always been a major part of travel here, with locals and visitors dining at hotels whether or not they are guests," observes Magel Ordoñez of FINN Singapore, adding that hospitality brands have learned a lot about crafting memorable experiences at the table, such as the ongoing, multi-city [Luxury Dining Series](#) launched in 2024 by the [Luxury Group](#) by [Marriott International](#). Ordoñez also points to lounges in her neck of APAC, including [Nutmeg & Clove](#), [Jigger & Pony](#), and [Manhattan](#) at [Conrad Singapore Orchard](#) home of the Seasons of Manhattan cocktail menu. Each has been hailed among the 50 Best Bars in Asia or the World over the past few years. "They've turned themselves into destinations, inspiring travelers to discover what's on the menu and in the neighborhood."

Just a couple of kilometers east, [Hilton Singapore Orchard](#) recently re-raised its image as a culinary destination with a new partnership with American celebrity chef, baker, and author Nancy Silverton, whose Southern California portfolio includes [Pizzeria Mozza](#), [La Brea Bakery](#) and [chi SPACCA](#). In August 2025, Silverton spent a week at the Hilton dishing Californian-Italian cuisine at [Osteria Mozza Singapore](#) the Asian edition of her Michelin-starred [Osteria Mozza](#) in LA, with a six-hands dinner featuring Dave Pynt of [Burnt Ends](#) in Dempsey Hill, Singapore, and Jordan Keao of [Butcher's Block](#), the wood-fired fine-dining experience of [Raffles Singapore](#).

With a wealth of emerging urban centers and seven of the world's 10 largest cities, things are also looking up for rooftop bars across Asia. **"Hotels are realizing that providing bird's-eye vantage points of the skylines around them can be a big draw,"** says Cathy Feliciano-Chon, Manager Partner, FINN Partners Asia Pacific, who points to Bangkok, in particular, as fertile ground for cocktails on high.

[Sky Bar](#), one of a collection of highly rated offerings within the Dome atop [Lebua at State Tower](#) in the Bang Rak district of Bangkok, is widely renowned for its incredible views and creative cocktails, including the signature Hangoverini, fashioned with Johnnie Walker Blue Label King George V for the cast and crew of *The Hangover II*. Other local rooftop bars include [Akara Sky Hanuman Bangkok](#) with 360-degree views from the 61st floor of [One City Centre](#), and upscale [Le Du Kaan Sky Bar](#) on the 56th floor of The Empire Tower, noted by The Rooftop Guide as **“the perfect spot to enjoy a breathtaking sunset while feeling the warm evening breeze.”**

There are plenty more standouts for sky-high sipping in the region. [The Roof](#) of [The Tokyo EDITION, Ginza](#), is a green retreat and quiet sanctuary

for seasonal Japanese spirits and natural wine. [MO Bar](#), with industrial-chic design and modern mixology reflective of Chinese heritage on the 79th floor of [Mandarin Oriental, Shenzhen](#), was ranked #21 of Asia's 50 Best Bars 2025. And the Secret Roof of [Alila Shanghai](#), doubling as a sun-drenched coffee spot by day and a high-energy cocktail terrace by night, delights with views over the grey-stoned rooftops of Zhangyuan, a historic complex of 1920s shikumen (stone-gate) townhouses.

Interestingly, the focus on travel-worthy dining and drinking experiences comes as consumption is in decline in parts of APAC. **“Sobering Trend: Nearly Half of Young Japanese Never Drink Alcohol”** reported the *South China Morning Post* in September 2025, noting findings from the marketing firm

Mery Co that 44 percent of Japanese aged twenty-something don't imbibe and another 16 percent do so less than once a month. Similarly, NielsenIQ found shifts away from habitual alcohol consumption locally, with 34 percent of Australians, 38 percent of New Zealanders, and 42 percent of Filipinos drinking less.

“People are consuming less alcohol, but they're still going to bars to eat and drink,” says Annouchka Behrmann, Managing Partner of FINN Partners Hong Kong, who credits lower costs at bars compared with restaurants, and growing creativity on the bar scene. Indeed, as FINN's Hong Kong office noted in [Future of Food 2026](#), prepared for Marriott International, bars across Asia **“are moving beyond drinks to deliver immersive curated experiences.”**



For example, [The St. Regis Jakarta's](#) signature [St. Regis Bar](#) – ranked #22 among Asia's 50 Best Bars 2025 – channeled New York roots and the multicultural culinary heritage of Indonesia into a twist on everyone's favorite brunchtime hangover cure with The Batavia Mary mixed with locally made arak, cuka, and sambal oelek. "Listening bars" with roots in 1950s-era jazz kissatens of Japan are also re-emerging, with addresses such as [Deaf Shop](#) in Chiang Mai, and [Kanpai](#) in Ho Chi Minh City offering melodious alternatives to louder clubs.

Tea pairings are also finding fashion in the fine-dining sphere, as evidenced by the staffing of tea sommeliers at [Wing Lei](#) at [Wynn Macau](#) and [Chef Tam's Seasons](#) at [Wynn Palace Cotai](#), as well as at [Crony](#) in Tokyo, whose co-owner/sommelier Kazutaka Ozawa sees a bright future for the beverage in a health-conscious world: **"The fact that tea has no added fructose, is organic, and places less strain on the body are key factors in its growing popularity."** (Each restaurant above has two Michelin stars, by the way.)

Sips & Nibbles

Decline in alcohol consumption isn't limited to APAC. The sobering phenomenon is one of the [Skift Megatrends for 2026](#): **"Teetotalling Travelers Are Just Saying No to Booze."**

Ask Google AI for **"wine drinking techniques"** and prepare to be ho-hummed. Enquire the same for mocktails, and things brighten: "Effective mocktail 'drinking techniques' are less about the act of drinking itself and more about the preparation and presentation that elevate the sensory experience, focusing on flavor complexity, texture, and visual appeal." No wonder bar hounds are thirstier than ever for no- and low-alcohol concoctions, and the hospitality industry is happy to serve.

Indeed, sober-friendliness has become a rage, with lounges and bars whetting dry palates creatively. Billed as one of London's **"most celebrated cocktail and spirit destinations,"** [The Library Bar](#) at [The Lanesborough](#) in Knightsbridge lists eight non-alcoholic concoctions on its menu, from The Blooming Wallflower with cherry and raspberries shaken with fresh lemon and cranberry juice, to the X-Rated with passionfruit and mango juice with vanilla flavors. [The Dandy Bar](#) at [The Mayfair Townhouse](#) features non-alcoholic cocktails fashioned by Olly Smith, the drinks expert on Saturday Kitchen on BBC1. Try the Blackberry Buzz, detailed by Smith as **"a fruity tribute to the darkest, ripest blackberries that used to hang in the hedgerows around my Granny's house in southern Scotland."**

Sounds delish. Yet Thomas Morris of FINN United Arab Emirates suggests sampling the non-alcoholic creativity of the region around him. **"I would hazard a guess that the best mocktails anywhere are in this part of the world. The UAE is such a diverse, multicultural country, with 250 nationalities that really shape the culinary scene."**

Stars on that scene include Emirate cuisine, which Morris says is **"finally having its moment"** while recommending machboos of spiced rice and meat or fish. Dining destinations such as Michelin-starred [Erth Restaurant](#) in the Qasr Al Hosn cultural site in Abu Dhabi serve modern dishes shaped by Emirati traditions and local ingredients, and Bib Gourmand recipient [Al Khayma Heritage Restaurant](#) in the Al Fahidi Historical District of Dubai offers full-flavored takes on rustic cuisine. There's also steampunk-inspired [Amelia Restaurant and Lounge](#) at Forbes Travel Guide-recommended [Address Sky View](#) in Downtown Dubai, which spikes its full bar menu and extensive wine list with non-alcoholic creativity like the Geisha 69 with honey, ginger, mango and buckwheat.





Of course, creativity is the name of the culinary game all over. Nathan Kam, Senior Partner at Anthology FINN Partners in Honolulu, points to the “real growth” of locally produced spirits, a growing craft beer scene, and chefs opening restaurants that honor their ethnic roots through their cuisine, using local products grown or raised in Hawai‘i. On the coast of California, [Montage Laguna Beach](#) recently reimagined its signature dining experience with [Studio Mediterranean](#) as an homage to Mediterranean ingredients and light, sustainable California fare.

Further north in Sonoma County wine country, grapes from [Montage Healdsburg](#) were used to create Montage Estate, [Montage International's](#) private label, available at all [Montage](#) and [Pendry](#) locations. Available since December in Cabernet Sauvignon, with Sauvignon Blanc and Rosé set for uncorking in April 2026, the wines were created in partnership with celebrated winemaker Jesse Katz of [Aperture Cellars](#).

As noted by Torg, a Berlin-based B2B marketplace for the food & beverage industry in Europe, the private label wine market is experiencing “tremendous growth,” not least due to “consumer tastes trending toward distinctive, exclusive, and customized products.” Private-label wine sales now account for up to 10 percent of domestic wine sales in the U.S., and up to 50 percent in some European countries.

With so much good food & drink out there, what are travelers minding their calorie intake to do? Keep their eyes and palates out for **“Ozempic menus” serving portions sized for diners on GLP-1s, as appetite-suppressing drugs employed for weight loss are known. As reported in the *New York Times*, such offerings are popping up all over NYC: From “teeny-weenie mini meals” featuring bite-sized burgers & fries and choice of a mini beer, martini, or wine at [Clinton Hall](#) locations, to the Italian Restaurant [Lulla](#) in Chelsea, where an aperitivo hour box for four guests comes with nine snack-size items.**

Across the Pond, celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal recently began offering a Mindful Experience tasting menu at his three-Michelin Star restaurant [The Fat Duck](#) in Bray, Berkshire, England, telling [The Caterer](#) that the days when people who ordered a tasting menu had to grab a burger on the way home are over. **“Now, as our needs and expectations and appetites change, maybe this carefully structured menu is the perfect answer to what many people are looking for.”**

Maybe, and to many, but not to all. As Blumenthal's reliably snarling contemporary Gordon Ramsay related when asked by *The Sunday Times* if he'd ever consider smaller-portion menus for patrons on weight-loss medications: **“That is absolute bulls***.”**



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