



# Lemongrass Annual Travel Trend Report 2026





## Introduction

Travel has a way of bringing people together. A chat with a stranger, a shared meal, or even a laugh over a misunderstanding can turn the unfamiliar into something familiar. It reminds us to stay curious, to embrace the unexpected, and to see ourselves as part of something bigger. In a world that often feels overwhelming, what stands out in travel is the energy, optimism, and fresh ideas we encounter across the industry.

Looking at this year's travel trends, a gentler, more understated and joyful side of travel is emerging. Instead of embracing the go-big-or-go-home mindset, people are turning inward emotionally, even as they travel afar geographically.

Bucket-list trips and far-flung destinations remain appealing, but many more travellers are seeking

comfort, connection, and simplicity. Rather than chasing the perfect Instagram shot, people are savouring meaningful moments — a long conversation with a friend in a floating sauna, for instance. The focus is shifting away from constant stimulation towards peace, quiet, and even a little darkness.

Minimalist luxury will always have its place, but over-the-top excess no longer impresses when the world is facing a polycrisis. Travellers' changing expectations are mirrored within the industry itself: destinations and companies are rethinking what success in tourism really means, with regenerative travel and long-term value increasingly taking centre stage.

These are subtle but significant shifts, offering a sense of hope and promise as we look ahead to the next chapter in tourism.





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# Trend 1

The Decision Detox:  
the rise of decision-free getaways





Once upon a time, travel promised an opportunity to unwind and relax. Now, the pressure to create and curate the perfect holiday has become a chore in and of itself. From setting price alerts for good flight deals and mapping out daily itineraries, to sorting through possible accommodations and finding restaurants suitable for everyone, it's no wonder people need a holiday from their holiday!

Overstimulated and overwhelmed, many are opting for “decision detox” travel and leaving all the decision-making in someone else's hands, essentially checking in at an all-inclusive resort but with no options.



See BodyHoliday in Saint Lucia, for example a resort built on the promise: ‘Give us your body for a week, and we’ll give you back your mind’. Or Cabilla Cornwall, where restorative experiences such as the ‘Dirty Weekends’ package, blending rainforest restoration with yoga and soundbaths are de rigueur.

These curated escapes are a response to decision fatigue and the cognitive overload of making never-ending micro-decisions, both at home and abroad. For some people, this might sound like handcuffs on a holiday, but for women burdened with making seemingly every decision in their families’ lives all the time, it’s heaven in the form of a pre-booked massage and meals that magically appear when desired.





“We’re seeing a clear shift away from travellers wanting to control every detail of their holiday plans. The rise of decision fatigue, coupled with the constant presence of tech in our lives, means people no longer want to spend their precious time off buried in logistics, researching restaurants or juggling Google Maps and itinerary apps. Instead, they’re seeking the relief of handing over the reins to an expert who can curate something impactful, seamless, and truly restorative. This goes far beyond the traditional travel agent role. It’s about entrusting someone with the entire arc of the experience, from the emotional tone to the hidden details. Our guests don’t want a ‘fly and flop’ break; they want meaning, connection, and transformation, without the mental load. For many women especially, the idea of showing up and knowing every element has been carefully thought through, from nourishing food and thoughtful accommodation to local experiences and moments of stillness, feels not only like a luxury, but a necessity. I believe this shift will only accelerate as we move into 2026.”



**Jools Sampson**  
Founder & Owner,  
Reclaim Yourself Retreats



# Trend 2

Untrending is the New Trendy





Well-known destinations no longer dominate travellers' to-visit lists. Last year, we noted travellers were skipping popular hotspots altogether, opting instead for “destination dupes” that scratched the bucket list itch with places featuring similar cultural vibes, architectural features, and environmental landscapes; opting for Girona instead of Barcelona, for example. This year, people are clawing back those favourites, but they’re also adding alternative destinations or going completely off-script to complete their holiday plans.



Iconic destinations are iconic for a reason, and people are still visiting them. Yet, travellers are more aware of and increasingly concerned about the impacts of overtourism, and they're interested in less expensive and unhip places as well. So, after a night or two, people are moving on to less popular but nearby destinations, like Brandenburg or Spreewald in addition to Berlin, or Toledo as well as Madrid. Taking this one step further, some people are seeking spots off the algorithmic radar altogether, like internet-silent towns and unphotogenic places that don't cater to the Instagram aesthetic.



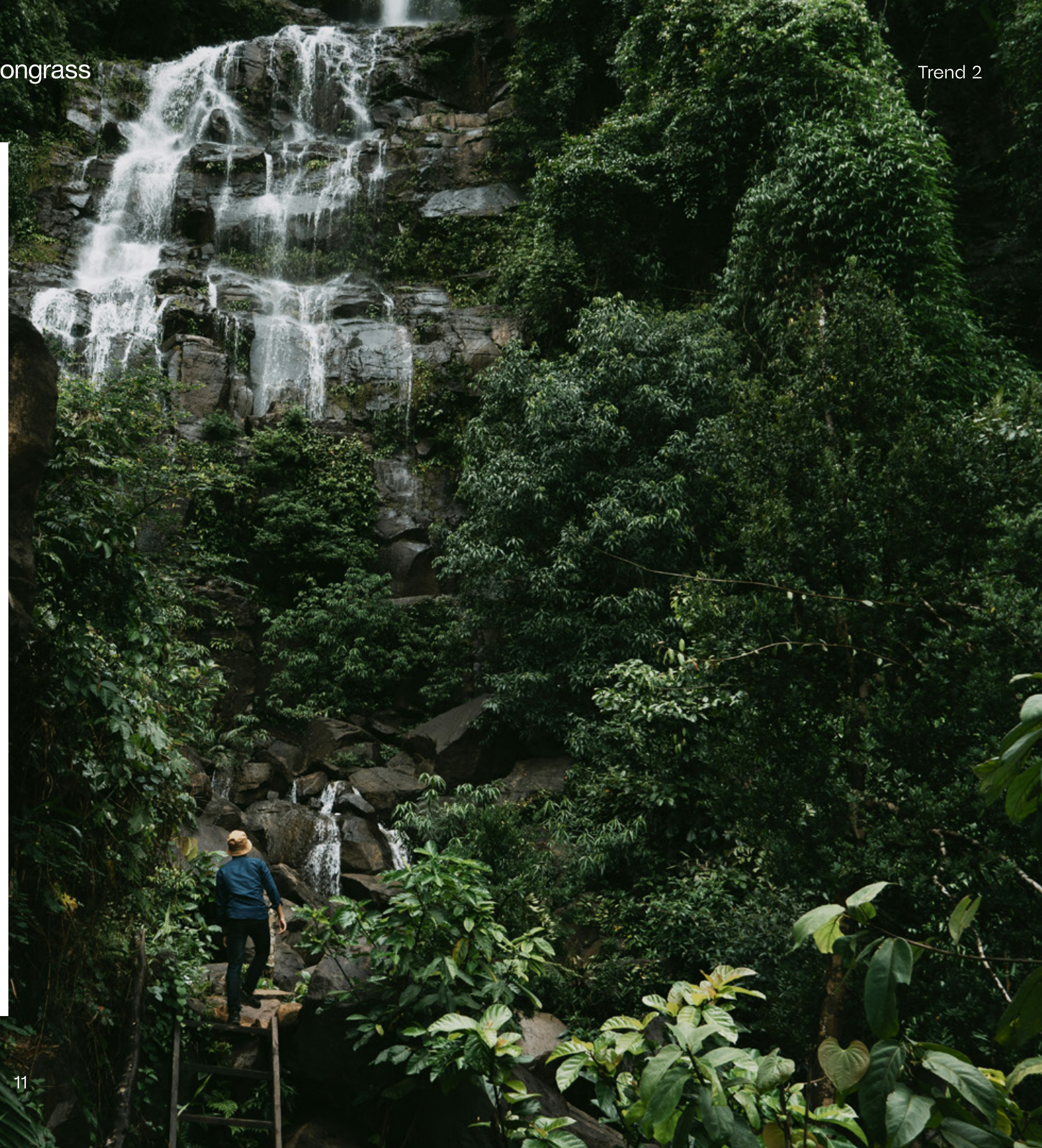


“There’s definitely an ongoing shift. More and more of our travellers, especially the anti-Instagram brigade, are turning away from overcrowded hotspots that rarely live up to their over-filtered, uncluttered online image. Thankfully, there’s growing awareness that these places, while iconic, often offer less of an experience than expected. This shift is essential for reducing pressure on overcrowded destinations, while

giving travellers the deeper, more rewarding connections they crave. It’s something Selective Asia has championed for years, carefully developing experiences in lesser-visited regions with long-term sustainability in mind. Done right, it’s a win-win: reduced strain on local infrastructure and a far more meaningful experience for the traveller.”



**Nick Pulley**  
Founder,  
Selective Asia





“The adventure travel sector has always been ahead of the curve in offering ‘off the beaten-track’, purpose-led travel with many companies keen to play their part in easing the burden of over-tourism and managing its impacts. This includes launching exciting new destinations like Iraq, for example, or driving visitation to under-visited regions within an already thriving destination.

We have noted for example that inbound adventure tour operators are seeing a shift in the destinations travellers are choosing to visit in the UK. There’s been a notable rise in demand for travel to lesser explored regions such as Northumberland, Wales and Somerset where traditionally these regions have often been overlooked in favour of more traditional hotspots like the Cotswolds and Cornwall. Travellers are increasingly drawn to its unspoiled landscapes and tranquility, away from the more tourist-heavy villages in parts of England.

ATN members specialising in outbound travel have reported that off-peak travel is also proving more popular, with travellers increasingly keen to travel without the crowds even if that means travelling during the wet season or when the weather is colder or hotter. The appetite for ‘adventure with purpose’ has never been stronger, with a rise in self-guided travel reported as a significant growing trend. Travellers are looking for flexibility, authenticity and the desire to immerse themselves in a destination, all of which plays to the strengths of self-guided travel.”



**Pru Goudie**  
Director,  
Adventure Travel Networking



# Trend 3

## All Eyes on U.S. Travel Trends





Once a global tourism juggernaut, the United States now holds a tenuous place in the travelsphere, but the situation is nuanced and in flux. While global travel generally has shown modest growth since early 2025, the U.S. has dragged that upward trend down month-over-month. A growing laundry list of issues has kept many potential inbound travellers away from the once-popular destination, including a progressively fraught political climate, lingering visa delays, unexpected fees, rising airfare costs, and complicated (and changing) border policies.



This two-sided trend has also kept many Americans from venturing abroad. Economic anxiety and concerns about re-entering the country have influenced Americans' current interest in trading far-flung, international holidays for destinations closer to home, but it's not all bad news. Those concerned about discretionary spending and those less adventurous aren't necessarily heading abroad right now, but that hasn't stopped everyone. High earners and more adventurous travellers, especially, are still eager to pack their bags for long-haul, overseas travel. In other words, as noted by recent research by The Harris Poll, "Americans still want to travel; they're just travelling smarter."







“There’s been considerable discussion and growing unease around travel to the United States, and with good reason. Increasing risk aversion and ethical concerns are prompting some travellers, and even editors, to avoid U.S.-related content altogether. For example, I work with one Canadian magazine that, at the time of writing, has opted out of commissioning any U.S. tourism stories. This shift is already having a tangible impact on the industry: according to the World Travel & Tourism Council, international visitor spending in the U.S. is projected to dip below \$169 billion this year, a notable drop from \$181 billion in 2024.

To combat travellers’ anxiety around border policies, I see U.S. preclearance facilities (such as those offered in Dublin and Abu Dhabi) as a game-changer, growing in popularity and importance. Allowing travellers to pass through U.S. immigration before they board their States-bound plane, I can even see some travellers (and agents) purposely routing themselves through these airports to alleviate stress. It’s an opportunity for airlines and tourism boards, too, to push, highlight, and make people aware of this innovative service.”



**Nicole Trilivas**  
Travel Writer



This year has seen the U.S adventure travel industry grappling with a complex combination of government policy changes, shifting international sentiment, and evolving traveller priorities. While the appetite for immersive, nature-based, and culturally rich experiences continues to grow globally, a mounting series of domestic government policies has begun to cast a long shadow over the industry’s trajectory.

New restrictions on international travel, reductions in tourism funding, and international diplomatic strain are not only reshaping global perceptions

of the U.S. as a travel destination but are actively threatening the health of adventure travel businesses both domestically and abroad.

While concerns are real, particularly around international travel and marketing, there is also a strong current of resolve, creativity, and collaborative spirit driving the industry forward. ATTA conducted some anonymous research with adventure travel professionals which found that despite the many challenges for the US adventure travel industry, there is hope. Policy-driven challenges are real, but so

is the determination of the people behind the experiences that make this sector thrive.

As global trends continue to evolve, adventure travel professionals will need to balance adaptability with advocacy. The road ahead may not be easy, but if there’s one thing this industry knows how to do, it’s move forward, step by step, with purpose. Adventure travel is no longer a niche. It is the future of tourism, a driver of economic development, a platform for sustainability, and a competitive advantage for destinations ready to embrace it.”



**Heather Kelly**  
Director of Research & Knowledge,  
Adventure Travel Trade Association



# Trend 4

Overtourism Beyond the Band-Aid:  
Addressing Tourism's Ills at  
the Systemic Level





Anyone working in tourism, and a good portion of people beyond it, have heard about the myriad of problems mass tourism causes. Gentrification, rising housing prices, and displaced residents have sparked ongoing backlash. Environmental damage, fragile infrastructure, and cultural erosion force communities to ask whether tourism's benefits are worth its negative impacts. Not so long ago, concerns like these warranted commentary and then a shrug of the shoulders while business carried on as usual.



Today, there's no hesitation in acknowledging that overtourism, and its many nefarious ripple effects, isn't just a logistical problem centred on crowded places. It's about broken systems that demand hard conversations, strategic decisions, and real action.

However, instead of shaming and blaming, destinations are adopting a lead-with-a-carrot not-a-stick approach to change tourism from the ground up, starting with a commitment to protect a place's integrity.

In Vienna, for example, the Optimum Tourism initiative prioritises local sustainable development while improving quality of life, place, and experience — a win-win

situation for residents that also creates better conditions for visitors.

Copenhagen's CopenPay incentive offers simple ways for travellers to contribute positively to the destination, such as by picking up litter and using public transportation. And in the Faroe Islands, a fleet of self-navigating cars packs an element of surprise as visitors follow a preprogrammed mystery itinerary to some of the islands' less visited areas.

These examples are just a few of the promising and innovative collaborations and partnerships within the private sector, community stakeholders, and the public that address this challenging problem.





“Over the past decade, we have seen destinations increasingly embrace stewardship. They care about protecting their communities, creating programmes to encourage visitors to adopt a similar mindset, and being able to see if their efforts are making tourism a force for good. This trend towards sustainability and regeneration is so strong that we have centred our company around it, working exclusively with destinations across the globe that are leading this change.

Here are three of many examples:

1. Wonderful Copenhagen (Denmark) launched CopenPay in 2024 that rewarded residents and visitors for taking easy, climate-friendly actions. CopenPay well exceeded expectations, even earning a 100% satisfaction rating among participants. The initiative continues in 2025.

2. Banff & Lake Louise Tourism (Canada) has a 10-year vision with five Trails To Tomorrow: Visitor Experience, Nature Positive & Climate Action, Community Wellbeing, Indigenous Connections, and Smart Tourism. Each Trail has non-revenue measurements to report how tourism activities support them (e.g. resident and visitor sentiments, human-wildlife conflicts, participation in cultural awareness training, and uptake of digital vs. paper park passes).

3. Destination Hauraki Coromandel (New Zealand) has sustainability programmes for visitors to help regenerate the regional ecosystem. The number of kiwis, ground-dwelling birds found only in New Zealand, is a key performance indicator for tourism’s ability to protect the environment.

There is a ready audience for this fresh approach to tourism. A 2024 study of global travellers found that 83% of them said that sustainable travel is important to them and 75% wanted to travel more sustainably in the next 12 months. Programmes designed to attract responsible travellers that are easy to find and experience are the real opportunities for 2026 and beyond, because people are actively seeking destinations that align with their values and want this to be a convenient option.”



**Rodney Payne**  
CEO,  
Destination Think



# Trend 5

## Regenerative Travel Grows Up





Taken at textbook level, regenerative travel has been defined as minimising negative impact and leaving a place better than how it was found. Yet, even if regeneration seems like an industry buzzword, the regenerative travel movement isn't, and its potential for truly elevating tourism's positive impact is just starting to be understood.

Regeneration is a holistic, whole-systems perspective that recognises tourism is only one piece of a complex and deeply interwoven ecosystem. A regenerative travel approach seeks to restore, replenish, and renew a relationship with nature and the community in the context of tourism instead of causing or accelerating harm. It is an ongoing and aspirational notion that recognises tourism doesn't exist in a silo and that its presence has a lasting impact on the people and places it touches.



From supporting rewilding projects that cross geopolitical borders to tracking soil health on property grounds, destinations and travel brands are integrating regenerative practices into their operations at a growing rate. Among the many outstanding examples are the groundbreaking Fogo Island Inn, which uses regenerative design principles, sustainable sourcing, and transparent economic communication. Tour operator MonMon Travel also adopts a regenerative approach, using only small, locally-owned suppliers while committing to environmental practices that minimise negative impact.

For their part, travellers are also beginning to understand their role in contributing to a regenerative model of tourism by seeking impact-oriented activities and choosing aligned brands.







“As established destinations grapple with overtourism, investors, operators, policymakers, and travellers are turning to less explored places, making it particularly urgent for emerging destinations to embed regenerative practices now, so they don’t repeat the mistakes overcrowded locations made. Regenerative travel is no longer just a philosophy, it’s a practice anchored in accountability, reciprocity, and place-based intelligence. True regeneration starts at placemaking and destination management, adopting a systems approach to policy, investment, development, and operations. This practice is poised to grow even more in 2026, with demand forecasts pointing to increased adoption of regenerative principles across new destinations. In the year ahead, we’ll see more tourism investors, developers, and operators making decisions deeply informed by place, while forward-thinking policymakers position regenerative strategies at the heart of destination management.”



**Chalana Perera**  
Founder,  
RETRACE Hospitality



# Trend 6

Travel for Every Stage of Life





Gone are the days when tourism fit neatly into pre-defined categories like family travel and adventure excursions. Like many aspects of the hyper-personalised world we live in, travel is becoming more attuned to who we are and the life stages we're in, not just where we're going. From mental health holidays to menopause, divorce, and grief retreats like those offered by Me Time Away, The Good Grief Project and Spark of Life, the spectrum of trips now available blends personal growth and awareness of each unique era people traverse throughout their lives.



These retreats and holidays meet people's physical, emotional, and relational needs while offering something meaningful to learn or do. Forget that bike-hike-swim experience; opt instead for a slow-paced cycling trip for peri-menopausal women. Step aside arts-centred itinerary; people are booking grandmother-grandchild ceramics retreats. And that generic cultural experience? Now it's possible for neurodiverse adults to take a creative sabbatical. These are the trips that touch who we are as rich, complex humans by design.





“We are seeing a significant rise in the importance of individualised and holistic travel. Experiences such as menopause retreats, mental coaching sessions, or wellness treatments for mother and daughter are becoming increasingly popular. Our own guest enquiries confirm this trend, travellers are seeking experiences tailored to their personal needs, interests, and life stages. At Dolce Vita Hotels in South Tyrol, we already cater to a wide range of travel interests, from family hotels and romantic hotels with medical spas, to sports hotels and multi-generational hotels, allowing us to serve diverse target groups and life stages with expertise.

We believe that personalised offerings will have a strong impact on the market, particularly among guests looking for meaningful and holistic experiences. Hotels and travel providers who respond to these needs can clearly differentiate themselves and attract new audiences.

This trend reflects a shift in how travel is perceived today: it is no longer simply a leisure activity, but a all-encompassing experience. Guests increasingly value emotional enrichment, personal growth, and shared moments with family or like-minded travellers. Providers who create authentic, life-stage-specific experiences are not only meeting current demand but also fostering long-term guest loyalty.”



**Mara Bertoldi**

Marketing Manager,  
Dolce Vita Hotels



“Gone are the days of one-size-fits-all holidays. From menopause retreats to neurodiverse-friendly adventures, travel is becoming precision-focused on who we are, not just where we’re going. Transformational travel is exploding and a majority of travellers now seek experiences that actively improve their mental health. This isn’t just tourism, it’s therapeutic intervention disguised as adventure.

Traditional therapy has hit a wall. Long waiting lists, clinical settings, and talk-only approaches leave many people stuck. When we combine evidence-based interventions with transformative environments, like surf therapy in nature, we’re essentially democratising healing and making it irresistible rather than intimidating.

Novel environments enhance neuroplasticity; add physical challenge, social connection, and natural settings, and you’ve created optimal conditions for lasting change. Our own research shows a 49% reduction in depression symptoms through this approach, results that traditional therapy often takes months to achieve.

We’ve always believed healing happens best outside the consulting room. The ocean doesn’t judge, physical fatigue breaks down psychological barriers, and shared challenges create authentic connection. This trend validates what we’ve known that transformation requires.

Looking ahead I expect travel operators to partner with healthcare providers, insurance coverage for therapeutic experiences, and measurable outcomes becoming standard. The future belongs to those who understand they’re facilitating transformation, not just providing holidays.”



**Josh Dickson**  
Founder and Clinical Director,  
Resurface



# Trend 7

Radical Rest:  
Finding the Light in the Dark





Embracing the dark side tends to have a negative connotation, but it turns out darkness can come in lavish packages too. We've always known darkness is key to a good night's sleep, but hotels are now turning the lights out for far more than a healthy dose of shut-eye. As overstimulation, blue light fatigue, and burnout become near-universal, a new wave of properties is experimenting with the absence of sensory input as a luxury offering.

Once niche and spiritual, darkness retreats are inspiring mainstream hospitality to reimagine rest. Whereas sleep tourism focuses on recommendations and treatments meant to help travellers sleep, this new trend is a radical rejection of 24/7 culture.



High performers, wellness travellers, digital minimalists — they're all seeking a deep reset beyond the bounds of simple relaxation. Think blackout architecture, no-tech zones, and design promoting circadian repair over constant activation to heighten the sensory experience over the course of several days. At Skycave Retreats, for example, guests are advised to stay three to four days in the darkness while staff tends to food delivery and offers a daily check in. In Southern Germany, travellers check in at Evolute Institute Darkness Retreat, where they join a group experience spending four days out of seven in the dark.

In an always-on world built to keep people alert and informed, the new status symbol is tuning out and turning off, completely.





“We predicted that 2025 would be *the* pivotal year that people got intentional and aggressive about unplugging from an online world costing us our minds, focus, joy, humanity and social lives. That more people would embrace the ‘joy of logging off’ (JOLO) and act on their hunger to ‘go dark,’ rejecting the empty overstimulation and sensory overload (all the 24/7 digital, light and noise pollution) that increasingly engulfs us.

Within that trend, we’ve been tracking all year how travellers will now go very far to experience dark, quiet, silent and digital disconnected places and experiences, and how destinations are helping them ‘turn off’ and ‘go dark’ in unprecedented new ways.

A crucial aspect of ‘dark hospitality’ is the surge in noctotourism and ‘night wellness’ experiences. This is being driven by a confluence of forces: climate change is creating unbearably hot days, more people (especially younger generations) are wanting to trade nights of bars and booze for healthier social experiences, and in a world where light pollution is increasing 10% each year, more people yearn to reconnect with the stillness and ancient awe of the night sky. It’s incredible how fast after-dark wellness experiences are rising at resorts: from sophisticated, astronomer-led stargazing programmes to in-nature, nighttime meditation, hot springs soaking, rainforest walks and even night snorkelling.”



**Susie Ellis**  
Chair and CEO,  
Global Wellness Institute



# Trend 8

Sweat It Out on a Sauna-vation





From Berlin to British Columbia, saunas are redefining what health and wellbeing look like on holiday. While sauna usage has long been a staple in Scandinavian cultures, in particular, the many scientifically-backed health benefits they offer have only recently gone mainstream. Improving cardiovascular health? Check! Promoting performance and recovery? Check! Enhancing immune functions, lengthening life spans, and supporting psychological well-being? Check, check, and check!



Couched within the tourism context, it's floating saunas that are all the rage. These mobile sanctuaries offer elemental immersion interwoven with sweat-inducing heat and momentary cold plunges while being surrounded by nature. Floating saunas generally hold up to a dozen people that can be rented out a few hours at a time (see Berlin's FINNFLOAT for an urban example), turning them into a unique combination of sauna as social hub and sensorial reset, a place where design, adventure, relaxation, and ritual meet for the ultimate wellness experience.







“Sauna is the number one reason why tourists visit Finland, and ‘sauna vacations’ are becoming a trend in other Scandinavian countries such as Norway, Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. A sauna holiday is a great way to immerse yourself in nature and meet the locals while doing something healthy and affordable. Sauna festivals have long been a popular pastime in these countries.

I think sauna holidays will become a trend, rather like wild swimming holidays have, and some UK operators are already offering their regulars trips to Nordic bathing countries. Saunas come in many shapes and sizes, from smoke saunas to floating versions and rustic DIY cabins in the woods, so there’s no shortage of options to explore.

As well as being an enjoyable sociable, healthy holiday, it can be an educational one as sauna culture is rich in history and tradition; a sauna is an original lens through which to explore places that can be quite hard to penetrate as a foreigner. Sweat bathing is also a year-round activity, though some might say best enjoyed in the depths of winter when it is -20 outside.”



**Emma O’Kelly**  
Author & Freelance  
Journalist



“Luxury travel continues to evolve: simplicity, wellness, and immersive experiences now define what it means to travel well. At the heart of this evolution is the sauna: no longer just a spa feature, but a ritual space for restoration and reconnection.

With searches for our properties with saunas up 30% year-on-year, wellness has become a cornerstone of luxury travel. Today’s guests seek more than relaxation, and nature-aligned healing rituals such as saunas, with benefits ranging from improved sleep to stress relief, are increasingly essential. In response, 57% of homes added to our portfolio in the last 18 months now include one, with every new addition this year featuring a sauna.

More than a luxury detail, the sauna experience is rooted in global tradition, from Nordic heat rituals to Japanese onsens, offering a rich, cultural immersion. Whether following a sea swim or cold plunge, the act is both grounding and transformative.



Our curated collection of luxury homes with saunas reflects this growing demand for wellness immersion. These sanctuaries combine sustainable design with energy-efficient technology, inviting guests to slow down and reconnect, with self and nature.

From cliffside retreats to woodland hideaways, saunas now symbolise a new kind of luxury: one defined by health, harmony, and meaningful experience.”



**Hilary Dominey**  
Head of Marketing,  
Perfect Stays



# Trend 9

Travel gets political





Today's travellers are thinking more intentionally about the unspoken consequences of their decisions. Driven less by cost and convenience, people increasingly weigh questions of ethics, justice, politics, and human rights before booking a trip. This shift reflects a wider cultural trend in which consumption is reframed as political participation. In other words, to travel is to cast a vote, show (or deny) support, and make a statement about perceived rights and wrongs.



However, this movement toward political consumption in the tourism context raises troubling questions. Ethical tourism is not equally accessible; making travel decisions with consideration to the wider global landscape often requires disposable income, mobility rights, and cultural knowledge. Sidestepping cost and convenience to choose “responsible” operators, engage in solidarity travel, or avoid certain destinations is an act of privilege. Instead of democratising travel, this tourism landscape shift may amplify travellers with the capacity to act while further sidelining those excluded by economic or systemic constraints.



Photo by NEOM





High-profile initiatives such as NEOM and the Red Sea Project are marketed as futuristic, sustainable tourism hubs promising innovation and conservation stewardship, yet they face criticism for forced displacement of local tribes, environmental harm, and the reinforcement of elite privilege. Such developments highlight a key paradox: even tourism framed as “ethical” or “transformative” can obscure deep inequalities, disempower local communities, and raise serious questions about who truly benefits. As tourism becomes an arena of ethical struggle, the challenge is to

determine whether political consumption can genuinely drive structural change, or whether it risks functioning primarily as a symbolic gesture that validates conscience while the underlying systems remain unchallenged.

As tourism increasingly positions itself as a moral choice, the pressing questions for the industry are clear: will these initiatives drive meaningful structural change, or merely provide superficial reassurance to travellers and brands? How can companies move beyond marketing tactics toward embedding

genuine responsibility in their operations, profit-sharing, and community engagement? And what standards of transparency and public oversight are needed to ensure claims of “ethical” tourism are more than words on a website?

While political activism shapes consumer behaviour, the responsibility ultimately lies with the industry itself. The key challenge is to move beyond surface-level gestures and marketing, and to tackle the structural changes required to ensure tourism delivers on its claims of equity, sustainability, and justice.



# Trend 10

Ready, Set, Roam:  
Midlife Women Redefine Travel





Women aged 50 and older are the travel industry's quiet powerhouse, taking the travel industry by storm with significant spending power, ample time to spare, and a now-or-never mindset that refuses to settle for a mediocre midlife. Many 50+ women travel solo or with friends, not content to let life passively go by but rather taking full advantage of this prime time in their lives to explore the world. While women in this age group tend to be a marketing blind spot, a handful of companies catering to this crowd (such as Grit & Grace Adventures and Somewhere Sunny) realise menopause is no longer a private matter; it's a catalyst for reinvention.



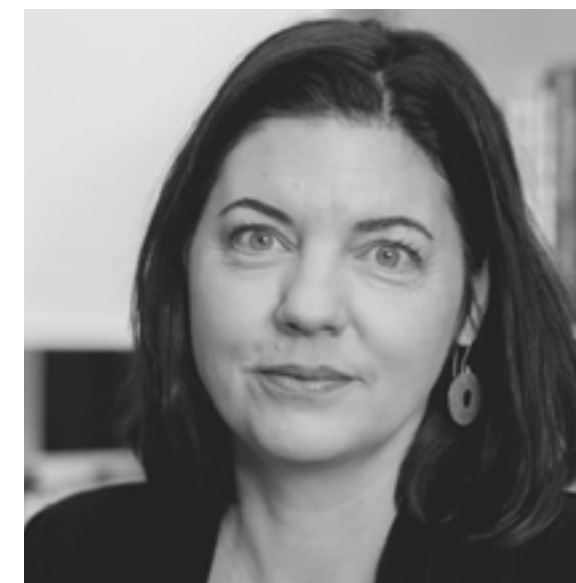
While Millennials tend to grab headlines and are catered to by the tourism industry, travel brands are slowly starting to capitalise on this largely untapped market. According to “Invisible No More: The Ageless Adventuress” published by JourneyWoman, Women aged 55 and over in North America alone represent US\$245 billion travel market. And that number is expected to grow: travel spending by women aged 50 and older is set to more than double to US\$519 billion by 2035. And these aren’t necessarily your stereotypical spa-centric getaways. Instead, these trips challenge every stereotype in the book, running the gamut from adventurous forays to hands-on cultural experiences. There’s no question about it: Today, this demographic is driving demand for purpose-led, wellness-aware, boldly curious travel experiences that redefine what it means to live the good life at midlife.





“What struck me most during a year-long family sabbatical through South America in 2024 — from Colombia to Patagonia, aged 50 — was how invisible middle-aged women are in travel marketing. While researching kayaking and rock-climbing trips, glacier trekking, rafting, volunteering, and tree planting, I noticed that we are almost never represented: not on websites, not on brochures, nor on social media.

When middle-aged women do appear, it’s often in yoga retreats or as restrained, rather miserable figures. Yet we hold enormous buying power: women over 50 make or influence the majority of household travel decisions. So, no, middle-aged women aren’t quietly fading into the background. We’re bold, curious, and unapologetically alive. Travel brands are missing a huge trick if they don’t wake up to this audience. We want adventure, fun, and new challenges — and we have the money and freedom to buy them.”



**Mirjam Peternek-McCartney**  
Founder & CEO  
Lemongrass Marketing



# Trend 11

## The Travel Rebellion Starts on Rails





Last year we were ready to pack our bags and head out for an epic cross-country rail journey. While the idea of crossing Canada or traversing Australia from ocean to ocean still gets us giddy, this year we're excited by the simple gifts rail travel offers: time, connection, and an opportunity to appreciate the vibrancy of life beyond the train windows.





As climate anxiety increases, trains are shedding their sensible-but-boring reputation, but more must be done to make European rail travel an affordable reality. A lack of integrated booking systems makes it nearly impossible to plan and book extended rail travel, and a lack of high-speed rail corridors, especially in

Southern and Northern Europe, creates a connectivity challenge. And while national railway systems in Europe work relatively well, things get complicated with border crossings, including ticketing and passenger rights. It's true that booking an extended train journey often isn't as simple or inexpensive as it should be, but a new

generation of travellers are embracing rail anyway, not just for its low emissions but also for the stress-free joy and even a sense of nostalgia that it offers. From sleeper carriages to scenic routes, this isn't a step back; it's an invitation to be present and feel alive in this beautiful world we inhabit.



“At Byway, we’ve seen a remarkable shift in how people perceive rail travel over the past five years. Where once trains were the transport of the commuter, they’re now embraced as part of the adventure, a chance to journey *through* instead of flying over, connecting with places along the way. Since 2020, we’ve welcomed over 18,000 customers and saved more than 2,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. Of the almost 6,000 travellers who journeyed with us between 2024 and 2025, 90% said they would book again or recommend us to a friend.

Travellers are telling us that what draws them in isn’t just the significantly lower carbon footprint compared to flying, but the whole experience: the shifting scenery, the freedom to explore en route, and the way the journey becomes a memorable part of the trip. Rail is winning hearts for its stress-free nature and the romance of an overland, multi-stop adventure. This isn’t just a greener option; it’s a cultural shift that puts discovery back into travel.”



**Holly Clarke**  
CMO,  
Byway





# Trend 12

## The Billionaire Backlash and Reframing Luxury Travel



NS-31 Astronaut Katy Perry celebrates a successful mission to space. (April 14, 2025). © 2025 Blue Origin



Jeff Bezos shut down Venice with a posh wedding attended by a host of A-list celebrities, and Katy Perry took an 11-minute sojourn into space with an all-female crew while insisting it was “for humanity and for women”.

Once upon a time, these happenings would have been lifestyle news. Now, they garner rally cries of blatant tone deafness.



In a polycrisis era, people are increasingly calling out ultra-luxury experiences and a lack of sensitivity about place-based disasters. Regardless of how they spin it, out-of-touch celebrities are facing cultural pushback, but this isn't isolated to the world's billionaires. While many travel companies still lean on that luxury label to legitimise overconsumption, that tendency is increasingly being questioned both within the tourism industry and in society as a whole. Travel companies marketing heli-ski or superyacht trips to Antarctica are no longer getting a free pass as luxury travellers increasingly seek authenticity over excessive extravagance.

The truth is, luxury travel can be positively impactful and even sustainable. Generally speaking, a more values-led culture is emerging, and that's true with luxury travel brands as well. As this trend continues to evolve, it's very possible that, within the coming years, luxury will be more aligned with local immersion and thoughtful, personalised experiences rather than a playground for the tactless rich and famous.





“We’re entering an era of what Globetrender calls ‘defiant decadence’. When billionaires flaunt their excess in the middle of wildfires, wars and economic instability, it doesn’t just spark an ‘eat-the-rich’ backlash — it also sends a message that nothing really matters. That sense of shamelessness trickles down, shaping how the rest of society behaves in the face of overwhelming polycrises. If the world is burning, why not put yourself first? We risk sliding into an ‘age of ego,’ where selfishness becomes normalised and values-led behaviour feels optional.”



**Jenny Southan**  
Founder & Editor,  
Globetrender





“As the cost-of-living crisis bit in the early 2020s, one percenters embraced ‘stealth wealth’, an aesthetic of understated elegance which favoured quality and minimal branding. Such quiet luxury has now entered travel.

Luxury travel has become a parade of clichés. Beautifully skewered by White Lotus, it’s a checklist of private islands, vintage Champagne and three Michelin stars. UHNWIs have been there, done that, and, frankly, they’re bored. What you crave when money is no object is originality and authenticity.

Ultra-luxury for 2026 means buying the unbuyable. It is providing unique experiences or exclusive access to guides or artisans to provide moments of adventure and creativity that can be realised in no other way. Sure, execution must remain faultless, but what those who have bought it all really want is to feel that first thrill of travel all over again.”



**James Stewart**

Journalist,  
Freelance Writer of the Year 2024 & 2020,  
Travel Writer of the Year 2021



# Trend 13

A New Set of Metrics:  
Destinations That Measure  
What Matters





Inbound arrivals, bed nights, GDP: all those tired old “success” metrics are losing relevance. Instead, we’re seeing a new cohort of future-focused destinations rethinking why tourism matters and redefining what, and who, tourism is for. Destinations still prioritising economic output are being left behind by those considering the holistic wellbeing of people, places, and the planet.



Today, an increasing number of destinations are tracking a wide range of metrics historically unaffiliated with traditional measures of tourism success. Take Finland, for example, which is focused on supporting sustainable development and improving accessibility, among other community-centric priorities. Or New Zealand, which is intentionally seeking to grow off-season visitation. Destination stewardship and visitor economies created through dialogue are the new normal, and community satisfaction, environmental repair, housing availability, and cultural preservation are all considered relevant measurement metrics. This is an era of tourism as a public good, not just an economic engine.





“Tourism success metrics focused on numbers, including number of arrivals or visitor days and revenue earned, are still important. We need to know how many people are visiting, where they are going, and what they are spending money on, in order to effectively manage their impacts (both negative and positive!). So they are not losing relevance completely, but they are not accepted anymore as the only success metrics, and this is the shift.

More places are attempting to add measures of community satisfaction, contributions to environmental restoration and to societal needs and to more diversified and equitable supply chains. This is not easy to measure,

but it is possible. And we are seeing more and more tourism destination management organisations committing to this through master plans or destination stewardship strategies because the leaders and the facilitators of these processes are listening to the people.

It’s a positive trend, but they need help with management tactics and good data sources, and also support to navigate these new areas of responsibility. So we as an industry need to work together, public and private sector, on these shared aims, and invest in the actions and the measures needed to make this not a trend but the new reality.”



**Kelly Galaski**  
Senior Director of Operations  
& Head of Impact,  
Planeterra



# Trend 14

Can AI Itineraries Really Support Sustainability Efforts?





The marriage of artificial intelligence with travel doesn't have to result in flashy gimmicks or soulless automation. In fact, its most promising use right now is far more subtle: savvy companies are using the tech tool to quietly improve complex, analogue systems, from rail planning (such as at Byway) to hotel operations (like those at Vivosa Apulia Resort), in ways that prioritise sustainability, accessibility, and the human experience.



This isn't tech for tech's sake. Take navigating travel logistics, for example: what is often a fragmented, multi-step process spread across countless outdated systems can now be seamlessly navigated to create great traveller experiences that save tonnes of carbon emissions. Or, in hospitality spaces, a digital concierge can offer customised suggestions and useful, context-aware responses instead of burdening hotel staff with simple queries when their time is better spent providing meaningful person-to-person service. Often this technology hides behind the scenes, such as at Iberostar properties, where AI has helped cut food waste by 28%. As companies continue to experiment with and integrate AI tools into their offerings and processes, more opportunities for supporting sustainability efforts are sure to arise in the coming months.



AI has helped cut food waste by 28%

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“The decision to introduce two AI-based concierges stems from our constant drive for innovation, keeping pace with technological progress while staying true to Vivosa’s core values: sustainability, guest wellbeing, and service excellence. This initiative is part of a broader change management strategy, specifically within the scope of digital transformation, interpreted through a human-centred lens. In this approach, the integration of new technologies is not aimed at replacing the human element, but rather

enhancing it. The digital concierges allow us to offer a personalised 24/7 guest experience, freeing our team from repetitive tasks so they can focus on more meaningful, value-driven interactions. Unlike static resources, where the guest must search for the information they need, our AI-based tool is proactive and immediate and it delivers tailored, real-time answers. This not only simplifies the guest experience but also ensures a smoother and more intuitive interaction.”



**Damiano Reale**  
CEO,  
Vivosa Apulia Resort





# Trend 15

Green Eating, Elevated:  
Vegan Goes High-End





Over the past couple of years, there's been a growing interest in plant-based travel with more vegan meal options, vegan-based tours, and even all-vegan cruises. Once again, vegan travel is getting another glow up and reaching new gastronomic heights. Say good-bye to side salads and sad substitutes as hotels and resorts usher in vegan cuisine not as a compromise, but as culinary artistry.



Today's plant-based travellers will almost always find something on the menu to suit their needs, but it's likely to be just as appealing and appetising as any other offering. Take London-based, plant-friendly Plates, for example, which "was born from a lifelong fascination with food, a deep appreciation of nature, flavour and a passion for sustainable craft." From Michelin-starred tasting menus and plant-forward fine dining to foraging excursions and veggie-focused agritourism experiences, the makings of a vegan meal, at long last, are being celebrated as luxury ingredients and not just as an afterthought.





“At Due Camini, the shift to plant-based cuisine is not just a trend; it’s a natural evolution that reflects our deep-rooted commitment to the environment, biodiversity, and local agriculture. For years, we have embraced vegetarian gastronomy, long before it became a widespread trend. Puglian tradition has always celebrated vegetables as the heart of our cuisine, and we have continually honored that legacy through our vegetarian degustation menu. It’s an offering that has always been rooted in the agricultural wealth of the region, where fresh, local produce plays a central role.

We’ve also seen how this shift resonates with our guests. Those who have chosen our plant-based menu often leave with a stronger emotional

connection to the experience. Over time, this feedback made it clear that there was untapped potential in plant-based cuisine, an energy that resonated not only with our guests but with our team as well. This project was born from that energy, from a desire to continually grow and create something that truly connects with the land and its traditions.

We believe this trend will continue to grow in importance, with plant-based dining becoming a central element of high-end travel. Guests are no longer looking for plant-based options just as an afterthought or a compromise. They are looking for exceptional culinary experiences that reflect a more sustainable, conscious approach to dining.”



**Chef Domingo Schingaro**  
Executive Chef,  
Borgo Egnazia





“From Gauthier Soho in London to L’Arpège in Paris, plant-based menus are now front and centre at some of the world’s most celebrated restaurants. It’s a powerful sign that vegan food belongs at the heart of award-winning culinary creativity and innovation.

Veganism is a growing global movement so the implications of this growth for the travel market are clear, from affluent travellers who want fine dining to those whose budgets might not stretch to a Michelin-starred establishment but who still want to

eat tasty, nutritious food, grounded in values of compassion and justice.

Vegans seek to reduce harm and challenge exploitation. This is a fundamental, ethical belief that transcends whether someone turns left or right when boarding their flight. More and more travellers want experiences that align with their ethics, including food that reflects care for animals, people and the planet, regardless of their budget.

Excellence in vegan food isn’t new and many high-end dishes take inspiration

from traditional plant-based cuisines that have flourished for generations. Around the world, in domestic settings and in street markets, people have long created extraordinary vegan food rooted in compassion, culture and community. Now, those values are being refined and ‘high-end’ vegan dining is helping to reshape contemporary hospitality. This shift in demand really matters and it proves that doing the right thing doesn’t mean giving anything up — quite the contrary: it can be the most delicious part of the journey.”



**Libby Peppiatt**  
CEO,  
The Vegan Society



“The most common-sense way to cut global carbon emissions quickly is simple: eat more vegetables and waste less food. Going vegetarian or vegan, or even just cutting back on meat, can reduce food-related emissions by up to 60%. And here’s the best part: it’s no longer a sacrifice. Done well, it is cheaper, healthier and incredibly tasty; progress over perfection is the key here. Our data shows that less than 8% of meals served on holidays are vegetarian, so there is still plenty of room for improvement.

We’ve seen tour operators serve 100% vegetarian meals for an entire week and receive fantastic feedback. One important detail to note though is that they rarely label dishes as ‘vegan’ or ‘meat-free’. Instead, they simply serve delicious, nutritious food that happens to contain no meat, and the five-star reviews speak for themselves. If the food tastes good, people enjoy it. Now we just need to make that the new normal.”



**Charlie Cotton**  
Founder,  
E-Collective





# Trend 16

## Nature: The Luxed-Up Look





It wasn't so long ago when nature was synonymous with rustic: bunchy sleeping bags, burnt marshmallows, and a layer of smoke that could be scraped off the skin. There will always be an opportunity to rough it, but a new era of ultra-luxury outdoor hospitality has emerged on the scene.



Immersion in wild landscapes blends flawlessly with high design, spa-level comfort, and personalised service. See Sweden's Arctic Bath, for example, where the one-of-a-kind hotel, spa, and restaurant float on the Lule River, surrounded by the serene Scandinavian landscape. And nestled in Tuscany's Apennine Mountains, Oasyhotel beckons not with an invitation to "rough it" but rather relax and rejuvenate at a contemporary wilderness resort. Hidden from the hustle and bustle of city life and artfully melding indoor and outdoor spaces, these properties have thought of every detail to help travellers enjoy nature while making it feel upscale and comfortable. From safari-style lodges and minimalist tree houses to A-frames set on farmland and waterfront cabins, hotels are creatively rethinking this fireside classic. But to be clear: this is not glamping. It is nature reimagined for the luxury traveller.





# Conclusion





## We'll be the first to admit that we might just have the very best jobs in the world.

We spend our days learning about impact-inspired companies, itineraries, and destinations. We have conversations with inspiring, forward-thinking changemakers who are helping to shape the next evolution of tourism. And we get a front row seat to the transformations and trends that will define travel in the coming months and years.

This year, these interactions have been hopeful — always aware and conscious of the world we live in but sprinkled with creativity, curiosity, and the belief that travel really can help shape the world into a better place to live, work, and play. This year's trends mirror those interactions: quiet but inquisitive, sophisticated yet simple, and

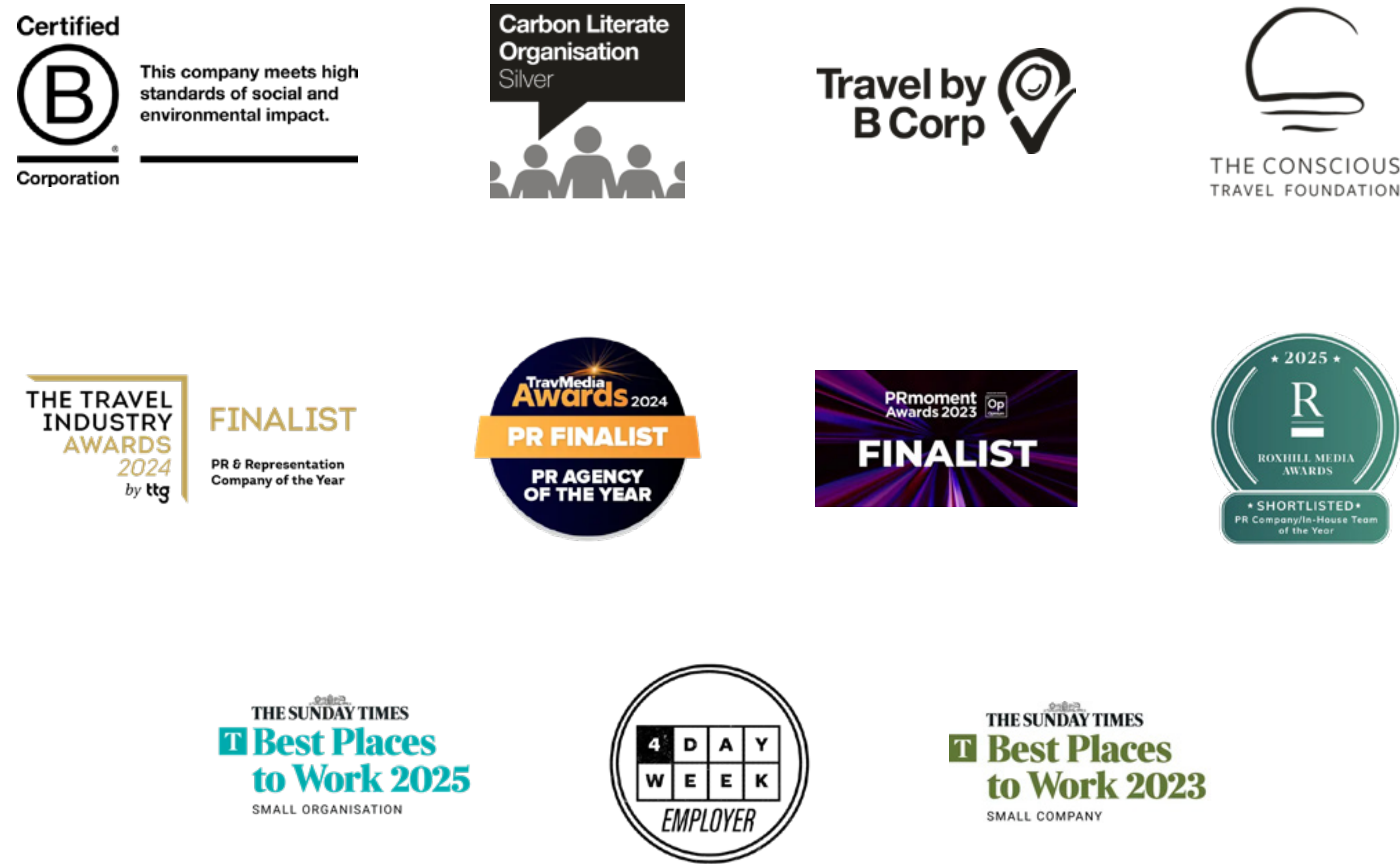
always deeply human. They are an invitation to laugh, listen, and learn, an opportunity to make small moments into big memories while ensuring our presence as travellers and within the tourism ecosystem leave a minimal but meaningful footprint in the places we step.

As always, curating this report leaves us wanting more. There are questions that remain unanswered, ideas we want to discuss, and threads we can't wait to continue unravelling. We never know what the coming year's journey will look like, what twists and turns these trends will take, but if the hot topics of this year are any indication, we're ready for the trip.

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Awards and accreditations





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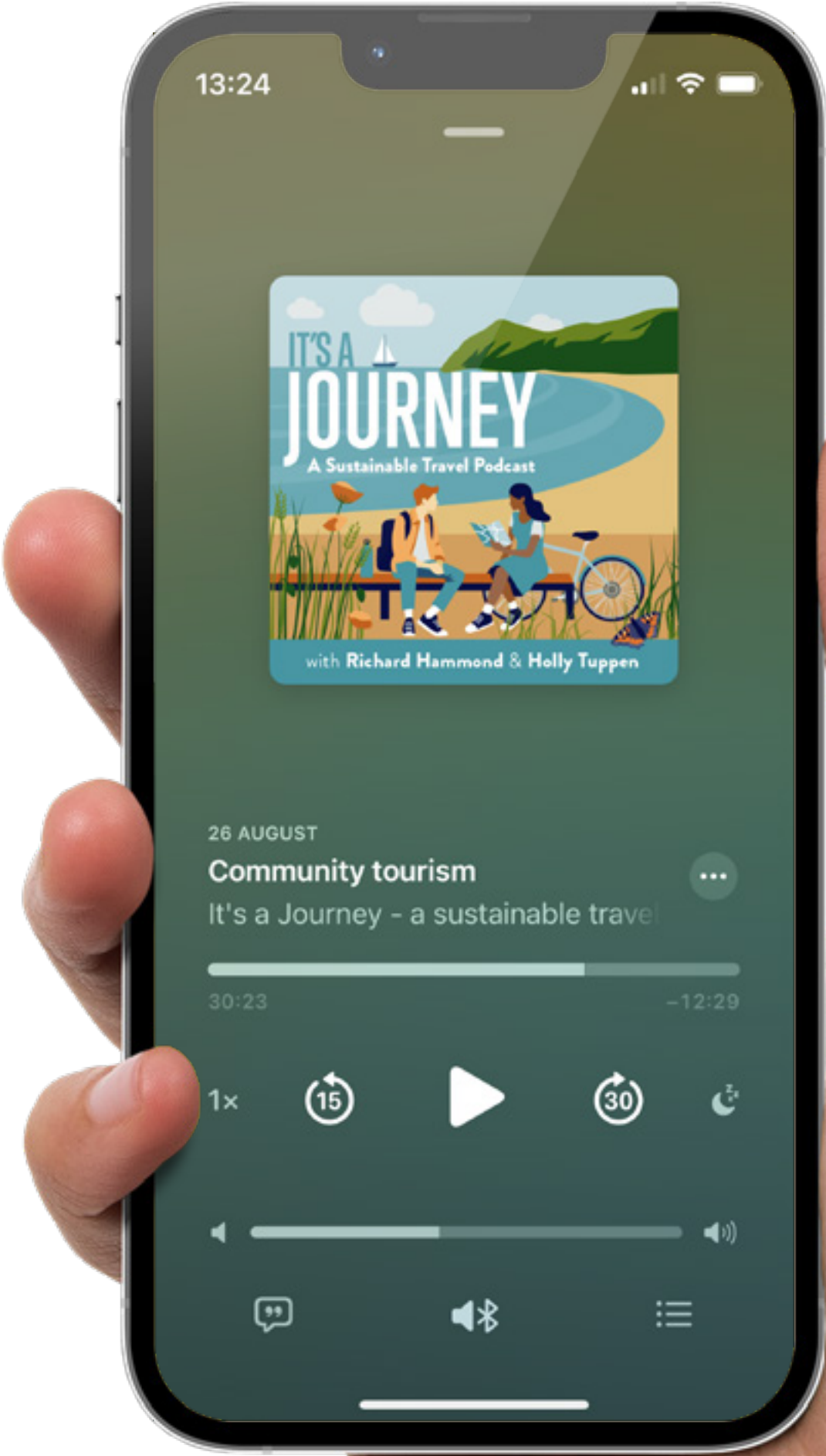
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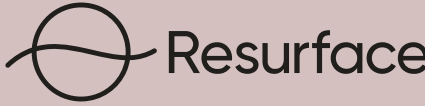







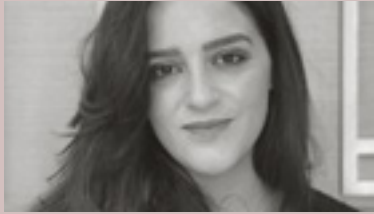









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Lemongrass is an award winning PR & Content agency for travel brands with impact and purpose, in the world’s most beautiful destinations. We are a certified B Corp and have been recognised as a Sunday Times Best Places to Work Company.

Lemongrass was formed almost 20 years ago as a bolder, brighter and better solution to travel PR. We are sector specialists in travel and wellness and develop travel PR strategies based on data insights.

Clients include tourist boards, tour operators, hotels and wellness retreats.

We care about making travel meaningful and we thrive on working with clients who share this belief with expertise, understanding and innovation. Together, we create strategies that support them now and — most importantly — into their future.

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