

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Travel and hospitality sector's Top 10 headlines of 2017

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*Emirates takes inspiration from Mercedes for its in flight suites. Image credit: Emirates*

By STAFF REPORTS

In the past year, travel and hospitality has seen disruption for bookings with artificial intelligence being used to sort through data to target consumers on a deep and personal level.

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Affluent travelers are looking for unique destinations as they strive for unique experiences on a more cultural level, which will only increase in the coming year. Brands are learning to incorporate local culture and one-of-a-kind experiences to stay ahead.



*European river cruise, image courtesy of Travel Leaders Group*

### What luxury brands need to consider for EU's proposed visa requirement

Already in a tumultuous period, the luxury goods sector has been impacted even further now that the European Union has been considering requiring a visa for travelers coming from the United States.

With so many luxury goods coming out of Europe, and buyers living in the U.S., the new visa requirement could affect more than just travel and hospitality brands. If the proposed visa requirement is voted into practice, retailers

should consider strengthening their online capabilities ([see story](#)).



*Chanel held a show in Cuba*

### Cuba travel limitations will impact hospitality brands that jumped in early

Luxury travel and hospitality brands who flocked to Cuba soon after travel restrictions from the United States were lifted will likely have to readjust their strategy as President Trump seeks to change the tourism policy.

While growth looked promising for brands such as Marriott's Starwood, Wheels Up and Kempinski Hotels, President Trump's promise to repeal the former administration's policy in relation to Cuba will create problems for the brands. Tourism travel will be the greatest impacted, dramatically backpedaling the growth seen in the country over the last year ([see story](#)).



*Airbnb listing in Bennett Valley, California*

### Airbnb's latest project to largely impact high-end travel industry

Digital home rental platform Airbnb is causing greater disruption in the luxury travel and hospitality space with an addition of a high-end tier.

Tentatively named Airbnb Lux, the new tier is a hub for users looking for luxury home rentals such as mansions and penthouses. The high-end classification will be one of many new tiers from Airbnb that will help users search more easily for what type of accommodation they would like to book ([see story](#)).



*Private jet customers no longer have to go it alone. Image credit: JetSmarter*

## JetSmarter makes private air travel more accessible via plane pooling

Private aviation marketplace JetSmarter made air travel resemble ridesharing with a new feature on its mobile application.

Similarly to how services such as Uber allow riders to go in together on a journey to lower costs, JetSmarter opened up its chartered flights for sharing. SharedCharter builds off the community atmosphere of the JetSmarter platform, enabling travelers to be reimbursed by others who are going the same way ([see story](#)).



*Preferred Hotel and Resorts new app mobilizes its loyalty program*

## 60pc of digital travel bookings will come from mobile this year: report

For global travelers, mobile is increasingly the digital tool of choice for planning and browsing purposes.

Fifty-two percent of travel related browsing is on mobile, and that number is only slated to increase. This data comes from an infographic released by AppLift, which lays out the details on how mobile has swept over the travel industry in the past few years ([see story](#)).



*Image courtesy of Knight Frank in the Caribbean*

## Hurricane Irma leaves the Caribbean travel industry in its wake

Hurricane Irma, the most-powerful storm to form in the Atlantic Ocean to-date, has left a wake of devastating destruction in the Caribbean known for its high-end beach resorts and vacation homes which have and will drastically impact the region's tourism industry.

Popular luxury travel destinations such as St. Bart's, St. Thomas and the U.S. and British Virgin Islands are just a few of those devastated by the passing hurricane. Unfortunately for homes and business, this will leave the areas forever changed and will impact the tourism that these countries thrive on ([see story](#)).





*Niche tourism and luxury travel are fueling the growth. Image credit: Four Seasons*

### Africa is next destination headed for a luxury travel surge

Africa has gained importance in the luxury travel industry as a top destination, with many high-end hospitality brands expanding into the area.

With hotel conglomerates as well as luxury travel brands entering into Africa with bullish strategies, the area has become a significant travel spot. The growth of these brands in this area is a reflection of a jump in tourism ([see story](#)).



*Pepper stands at 4-feet tall, can tell stories and help guests with a slew of inquiries. Image credit: Mandarin Oriental*

### Mandarin Oriental introduces guests to Pepper, the "MObot"

The Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas appointed a humanoid robot as the newest member of its staff.

Developed by Softbank Robotics Europe, a French "Société par Actions Simplifiée" company, Pepper works as a technical ambassador at Mandarin Oriental's Las Vegas hotel property. Nearly all industry sectors have begun to toy with artificial intelligence-powered tools and services to better engage with and respond to consumers and their needs ([see story](#)).

### Luxury airlines look to bring high-end suites to the skies

Suites, a staple in the luxury hotel industry, are now becoming a selling point in the air as well as the ground with luxury airlines adopting their own versions.

Emirates and Singapore Airlines are a few of the travel brands who are bringing the luxury suite to the air, as this trend starts to rise. With affluent consumers continually looking to customer service, privacy, convenience and comfort, luxury suites in the air are likely to catch on ([see story](#)).



*The Trump hotel in Panama is working to abandon the Trump name and disassociate from the Trump Organization. Image credit: Trump Organization*

### Trump-branded hotels are dropping name in light of US President's constant controversies

Hotels both in the United States and internationally managed by the Trump Organization have ended their relationship with the president's family's business, signifying that the brand has become toxic for the hotels' desired customers.

After the iconic hotel in SoHo in New York's Manhattan borough dropped the Trump Organization last week, another hotel in Panama has begun the process of stripping the Trump name from the hotel's association, after paying around \$32 million for the association. While President Trump continues to accrue near-daily controversies, the many brands that bear his name are beginning to feel the danger of continuing to associate with the man ([see story](#)).

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