

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## As hotel brands expand, affluent travelers would rather have exclusivity: report

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*The ultra-affluent are global. Image credit: Printemps*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

As luxury becomes more accessible to the mass market, affluent consumers are becoming more discriminative with their travel choices.

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According to a new luxury travel report by Sienna Charles, ultra-high-net-worth individuals want more opulent travel experiences and are comfortable with the high prices that go along with them. But as travel and hospitality brands seek more and more expansions, these travelers desire more exclusivity.

"The key takeaway from the report is that the UHNW are seeking more authentic, more luxurious experiences and are willing to pay for them," said Jaclyn Sienna India, founder of [Sienna Charles](#), New York.

"Bigger hotel suites, better first class airlines and private islands," she said. "The UHNW today are more discerning than ever."

Travel with affluents

Italy, Spain, South America and Morocco are the top destinations of interest in the coming year, in that order.

Following the top four are Thailand, Iceland, French Polynesia, Israel, Hawaii and the United States.



*The ocean view pool pavilion at the Rosewood Phuket in Thailand. Image credit: Rosewood.*

As these affluent travelers look for more extravagant amenities, private jets, wellness, family, celebrations, villas and yachts are the top trends in travel for 2018.

Asia is the top continent for hotel openings, as these brands have recognized the importance of this region. The continent is followed by Europe, Mexico or the Caribbean and Africa, respectively.

Private jets continue to be a mainstay in luxury travel, with New York Teterboro, New York West Chester, Dallas, Washington, Houston, Las Vegas, Palm Beach, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Denver the top airports for private jet takeoffs and landings, respectively.

Affluent travelers look to "experiential" travel, hoping to take away stories and memories rather than physical goods.

Adrenaline activities used to be the forefront of experience-based travel, but cultural immersion will likely be the popular trend in 2018. According to Sienna Charles, 45 percent of HNWI prefer cultural experiences rather than adrenaline-based activities.



*Millennials are interesting in showing off their unique experiences with travel. Image credit: Resonance.*

Food is also becoming an important aspect of the travel experience, with each guest looking for a tailored dining encounter. Some hotels' restaurants have even eliminated menus all together so that guests can choose whatever they are in the mood for.

#### Wellness in travel

Wellness has also surpassed relaxation in terms of what affluents are looking for while traveling.

While wellness continues to be a vital aspect of luxury travel brands' experiences, the face of the health movement has shifted.

With affluent travelers' interest in health and wellness becoming an important feature in selecting their next trip, high-end hospitality brands have been forced to embrace it. However, in the past brands and consumers were more focused on fitness, but now digital detoxes and mental health are becoming more popular in catering to today's overly connected affluent ([see more](#)).

Hospitality is no longer a separate luxury category, as every brand must find ways to incorporate experience and service into their offerings, according to an executive from Bond Brand Loyalty.

During a panel discussion hosted by the Luxury Marketing Council on Jan. 24, speakers concurred that the luxury business needs to adapt to new pressures and evolving consumer behavior and mindsets. Even with the rise in digitization, the panelists agreed that luxury still needs a human touch ([see more](#)).

"The most surprising finding is that hotels are being built at a rapid rate, new restaurants, spas, programs and that as the luxury travel industry grows, clients are not interested in large scale growth but more unique and one of a kind offerings," Sienna Charles' Ms. India said.

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