

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Where are the affluent traveling this summer?

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Countries outside the traditional luxury destinations in Europe are gaining in popularity. Image credit: Virtuoso

By DANNY PARISI

While Europe is still overwhelmingly the preferred travel destination of the world's wealthy travelers, non-European countries have been seeing significant gains in popularity.

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Luxury travel agency Virtuoso looked at the bookings of its many affluent travelers to determine which destinations will be the most popular for wealthy travelers in the coming summer. While the United Kingdom was the number one country, other places outside Europe such as South Africa and Canada made it to the top five.

Top destinations

Tropical islands and warm beaches may be the picture of luxury travel for the colder months, but this summer, affluent travelers have made it clear that they are looking for cooler, more temperate destinations.

According to Virtuoso, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, France and South Africa make up the top five countries that wealthy travelers are interested in this summer.

Traditional luxury destinations such as France and Italy share the top spots with South Africa and Canada, two nations outside the mainstream European luxury sphere.



Sustainability is an important part of travel. Image credit: Booking.com.

Virtuoso notes that Canada climbed to the top five thanks to the vibrancy of its cities and gorgeous natural vistas.

But Virtuoso also categorized the 10 countries that have seen the largest growth in luxury travel since last year, including surprise contenders such as Zambia, New Zealand and Poland.

What is clear from Virtuoso's survey is that luxury travelers are bold and willing to explore less traveled destinations beyond the standard French Riviera or Amalfi Coast.

Instead, countries such as Vietnam and Zambia can serve just as prominent a role in luxury travel as their more popular counterparts in Europe, particularly as European travelers' desire to experience other countries grows.

Sustainable travel

For these countries that are newly attracting affluent travelers, some consideration must be given to the way people travel today. Post-boomer clientele represent more than 80 percent of the travelers who look for vacations that help the planet and people, pointing towards future growth for responsible upscale tourism.

Virtuoso's 2018 Luxe Report found that millennials were the generation most apt to seek out sustainable travel options. As these younger travelers gain disposable income and means to spend on upscale experiences, brands should look into incorporating eco-friendly elements and service into their offerings ([see story](#)).



Eco-friendly resorts. Image credit: El Nido Resorts

As sustainability in the travel industry becomes vital moving forward, some consumers still need to be convinced that luxury offerings can keep up their standards in an environmentally friendly fashion.

According to a study by Booking.com, about 19 percent of survey takers believe that eco-friendly travel lacks the luxury and comfort level they are looking for. The Sustainable Travel Report shows that 78 percent of U.S. travelers are interested in eco-conscious travel, but 43 percent have revealed they never manage to take sustainable trips ([see story](#)).

These considerations will be especially important for smaller and less wealthy countries, such as St. Lucia or Zambia, as they seek to attract more of their burgeoning audience of wealthy travelers.

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