

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Travel and hospitality sector's Top 10 headlines of 2018

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Affluents are looking for more authentic travel experiences. Image credit: TCS World Travel

By STAFF REPORTS

Luxury hospitality brands are responding to consumers' desires for more exclusive, personalized experiences and sustainable practices by rethinking their approaches to service, amenities and technology.

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Increasingly influenced by social media and their peers, affluents are seeking out more authentic travel experiences and embracing more tech-forward services. The top headlines from 2018 illustrate how the luxury travel and hospitality industry continues to change.

Here are Luxury Daily's top 2018 headlines from the travel and hospitality sector:



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

Millennials have changed the family vacation

Affluent millennials are pushing the envelope with constantly evolving travel trends, where visitors look to cities rather than tropical beach destinations.

Everlasting connectedness and growing technologies such as Uber and Airbnb have pushed travelers to be more

comfortable in the new cities they travel to, feeling almost as if it were home. This notion, paired with a simultaneous desire to experience new things and an increase in safety, is pushing an interest in city exploration to the forefront of travel trends ([see story](#)).



Voice assistants such as Google Home are gaining traction. Image credit: Google

AI assistants' potential for travel hindered by experience fallbacks

Artificial intelligence has the potential to transform the travel industry as the technology becomes more sophisticated and consumer interest in voice assistants continues to increase.

As detailed in a report from EyeForTravel, travel's place in voice assistance is currently small, but the potential is substantial. From January to October 2017, Amazon's Alexa saw an increase of more than 18,000 skills added, which shows that voice tech is growing and the ability to easily assist consumers' travel needs, hands free, makes it a potential game changer for the industry ([see story](#)).



Airbnb has added a new luxury tier of homes and hotels to book. Image credit: Airbnb

Airbnb pushes further into high-end travel with luxury tier

Home-sharing service Airbnb has announced a number of new services to attract wealthy travelers to luxury homes and hotels.

After years of hotels unofficially offering their rooms through Airbnb, the service is now allowing for more specialized searches for customers looking specifically for hotels rather than a room in someone's home. Additionally, a service called Airbnb Plus will connect affluent travelers with luxury accommodations, blurring the line between Airbnb and other high-end, luxury hotel services ([see story](#)).



The ultra-affluent are global. Image credit: Printemps

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

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

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 ([see story](#)).



Private air is becoming increasingly popular. Image credit: Michael Kors

Aviation alternatives luring UHNW away from jet ownership

NEW YORK While the cost of private planes used to be prohibitive to all but the wealthiest, newer, more affordable air travel options are enabling a wider population of the ultra-affluent to take advantage of private aviation.

New research from Wealth-X and VistaJet presented on March 27 revealed that private fliers are not tied to a single mode of air travel, with even jet owners frequently opting for charters or first class commercial tickets depending on their immediate needs. Flying private is growing at a rate faster than the population of UHNW individuals and the number of privately owned planes, pointing to an increased use of alternatives to ownership ([see story](#)).



Ritz-Carlton opens booking for its yachting service. Image credit: Ritz-Carlton

Ritz-Carlton's yacht debut begins with local immersion

Hospitality brand The Ritz-Carlton is finalizing its foray into yachting as affluent consumers seek more cultural and

unique means of travel.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection is officially open for booking, hoping to attract luxury travelers with a new way of exploring while also heightening the competition for luxury boating. Bespoke and rare itineraries will take high-net-worth individuals to destinations such as the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada and New England in deep cultural dives ([see story](#)).



Consumers admit to posting inflated photos of their vacations. Image credit: Travel+Leisure

Friends, family are top travel social media influencers

Social media has become a key source of inspiration for consumers as they make travel plans, but a new report finds that friends' posts are more influential than what a brand or publication shares.

According to a survey from Allianz Global Assistance, about half of millennials say social media influences their travel decisions. Peer-to-peer word of mouth holds the most sway, as 86 percent of consumers trust their own social networks to post accurate content about travel experiences, while 55 percent deem brands to be truthful on social media ([see story](#)).



The global ban on straws is in effect immediately. Image credit: Peninsula Hotels

Hotel groups roll out sustainability efforts without cutting back on luxury

As travelers become more environmentally conscious, luxury hotel brands are introducing more sustainability initiatives that prove hospitality does not need to sacrifice upscale experiences to achieve ecological and social responsibility.

Hospitality groups such as the Peninsula Hotel and Marriott International have been increasingly transparent with their guests about their newest sustainability efforts, which aim to benefit people and the planet. Environmental efforts do ultimately impact brands' bottom lines, whether through additional expenses or appealing to more travelers ([see story](#)).



Chinese travelers are growing in numbers, and increasing their spend. Image credit: Ssense

Chinese travelers' spend will continue to balloon

As luxury marketers look to reach the valuable and growing population of Chinese outbound travelers, it is imperative for them to capture this segment's attention before they leave home since they are planners.

According to a new white paper from iClick, outbound Chinese tourists' interest in foreign independent tours and customized itineraries is growing, reaching 42 percent compared to the 44 percent of traditional packaged tours. In addition, 52 percent of these travelers plan their trips and itineraries two to six months ahead of departure ([see story](#)).



St. Regis San Francisco lobby. Image credit: St. Regis

500M Marriott guests' information hit by data breach

Hospitality group Marriott International is responding to a data breach affecting about 500 million guests' information.

Hackers accessed information from Starwood's guest booking platform, including details such as names, addresses, phone numbers, passport numbers and credit card numbers. Following its discovery of the breach, Marriott says it is working to upgrade and phase out its Starwood systems, which have been hit before ([see story](#)).