

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Experts' predictions on the future of travel

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Exclusive Resorts Los Cabos, Mexico. Image credit: Exclusive Resorts

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

What are travel experts predicting for the future of travel post-COVID-19 pandemic?

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Shorter stays, closer to home, preference for boutiques, and more time with family and friends: that seems to be the consensus.

Here is what some travel experts have to say:

Exclusive Resorts

James Henderson, CEO

There will be an uptick in private travel via members-only vacation and aviation clubs because they provide added security, offer flexibility and treat you like family.

COVID-19 has brought family, friends and loved ones closer together and even once things go "back to normal," people will have an emotional need to travel with people they know and trust.

As a close-knit members-only vacation club, **Exclusive Resorts** is already planning group bonding activities and adventures. People will be hungry for human connection and fun.

Study Hotels

Paul McGowan, founder

We should remain hopeful for the bounceback while also preparing for a more conservative flow of travelers far before a major influx.

There will be businesses and industries that will come back sooner than others.

For instance: we are fortunate to operate in university markets which typically stick to a cyclical schedule we can count on and so as we emerge from this crisis, we expect an accelerated ramp-up of occupancy as students and staff address unfinished business on campus, and another as we get closer to their return in the fall.

Above all, we must remember that travel is an antidote to all this: providing positive, aspirational feelings in the wake

of our current confinement.

Charlestowne Hotels

Michael Cady, vice president of marketing

Being homebound for so many weeks has sparked a renewed desire for adventure, but it will come with some caution.

We anticipate that travelers will gravitate towards the smaller, boutique hotel experience, staying closer to home where they have the option of driving.

Enhanced cleaning procedures are here to stay, and travelers will benefit from a hotels' commitment to earn their loyalty after this hiatus.

Finger Lakes region of New York

Lisa Burns, executive director of the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council, New York

We're all eagerly awaiting the warmer months and hopeful that the industry will find its footing in time for summer travel.

However, it is important that we understand behaviors will be changed and we're already beginning to see new trends take shape.

For example, travelers will be wary of public transportation and plane travel, choosing to drive via their own cars to explore nearby destinations.

For the Finger Lakes region of New York, that would include local and region and statewide residents, New York City, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and even Canada.

We also predict there will be a larger emphasis on outdoor, open-air attractions and destinations as social distancing phases out slowly.

For us, we'll see an uptick in travelers visiting our hiking trails at places such as Letchworth State Park, the 100-plus waterfalls of Ithaca and water activities on our 11 pristine lakes and Lake Ontario.

Lastly, private, standalone accommodations and entire home rentals, such as the 10-person Williamson Estates on Lake Ontario will be preferred over hotels.

Pitchup.com

Dan Yates, managing director

'Shorter, closer, later' is how we've characterized booking trends for years now, but this summer may embody it more than ever.

Even if government gives the green light before summer, many will be reticent to travel and will choose remote, domestic locations like campgrounds over densely populated areas, certainly avoiding transport hubs like international airports.

Staycations are likely to be top of mind and we predict these will be booked at the last minute.

Limited time to plan and a desire to test the water' may mean a succession of short trips instead of an immediate long vacation.

We also anticipate an increased interest in low-cost travel given the economic impact coronavirus has inflicted on so many.

Visit Fort Worth

Mitch Whitten, executive vice president of marketing and strategy

We anticipate that drive markets and Fort Worth's free activities will be big parts of the destination's story when people are ready to travel.

Fort Worth is at one of the busiest crossroads in the country, and with many free attractions such as the world-class [Kimbell Art Museum](#) and the world's only [twice-daily cattle drive](#), we're a great value for people who need an easy escape.

Cayuga Collection

Hans Pfister, president and co-owner of the Cayuga Collection, a group of 5-star sustainable luxury hotels in Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua

Following this period of social distancing, hoteliers need to take into account that travelers behaviors will be forever changed and I expect consumers to seek out more off the beaten path experiences, private accommodations and adventure activities where they are able to be outdoors and surrounded by open air.

We'll be keeping that in mind when planning out summer programming to ensure we can give our guests the most well-deserved vacation of their lives once we're on the other side of this.

VisitLEX

Mary Quinn Ramer, president, VisitLEX

While our world and the way people travel will forever be changed, we believe the industry will bounce back.

Following this long period of social distancing, we'll find many people revisiting the places and experiences that fill them with joy.

We anticipate many travelers will still play it relatively safe by traveling in smaller groups and choosing closer-to-home, more familiar domestic travel after restrictions are lifted.

However, after being cooped up, people will start to put plans in place for destinations that have always been on their bucket list, and they may even be more apt to try adventure-filled experiences with their renewed sense of freedom.

We're preparing for the many ways travelers may choose to travel moving forward and are putting our efforts and initiatives together that beckon them back here to Kentucky.

Tourism Exchange Japan

Tomohiro Murakami and Mika White, founders, Tourism Exchange Japan

While we anticipate Japan remaining a top destination to visit, especially with the Tokyo Olympics postponed to 2021, we can expect more travelers heading to less dense cities.

Japan-bound travelers will likely venture out of over-populated cities like Tokyo and Osaka and seek smaller, lesser-known areas and prefectures, a trend that has slowly increased in the last few years.

Instead of spending the majority of a travel trip in dense cities, we foresee the reverse and travelers will spend the majority of trip in off-the-beaten path communities and locales.

We also anticipate in greater shoulder-season travel where travelers can still enjoy all that a country can offer without the crowds.

Alaia Belize

Edward Donaldson, director of sales and marketing

We predict that there will be a very enormous pent-up demand that people will want to travel.

However, there will be a consideration about one's health safety, which will extend past what the industry has seen in other pandemics.

This will also extend to airlines and hotels, but destinations will play a large part in the recovery: what did they do, how they are involved in making it safer for their staff/locals and even the rates of infections being a part of the overall calculation of consumers selecting destinations.

If we can assuage people's fears, it won't matter if it is individual or group related, people will travel again.

AKA

Larry Korman, president

We predict travel will come in waves and coincide with the resurgence of certain industries. Traditional business travel may make a comeback sooner than leisure travel, therefore creating more opportunities for the extended stay sector.

Our feeling is that travelers will now be more selective and think more carefully about details in service,

cleanliness, space, size and security, whereas in the past, price may have driven a traveler to prioritize differently on some of these facets of the experience.

For AKA, which specializes in longer stays with residential-style amenities, we feel there will be more of a demand for a better work environment within the residence.

From the furniture to the need for small printers and other work supplies, we will ensure it's incorporated. Most of our AKA locations are under 100 residences with amenities that are private to residents [guests], which we hope will continue to provide an extra level of comfort.

Sensei

Kevin Kelly, CEO of Sensei, a new wellbeing company launched by Oracle founder Larry Ellison and leading physician Dr. David Agus

In a time of crisis, people's instincts are to come together, yet the immediate solution for COVID-19 is social distancing.

As our nation adjusts to a new normal, reconnecting safely and in a meaningful way with family, friends and self will be paramount.

Sensei and our Sensei Retreat on the island of Lanai [in Hawaii] provides an environment and programs to optimize health and greater wellbeing.

Given the superfluous information adding confusion to uncertainty, people will search out brands that have authority they can trust.

Sensei's founders are two of the world's leading experts in technology and health. Sensei is applying this knowledge in its dynamic, principled approach to healthier living within the luxury wellness travel space.

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