

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Popular Cond Nast Traveler podcast is leading luxury's new era with empathy

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After a seasonal hiatus, Cond Nast Traveler's "Women Who Travel" podcast is back with its first airing. Image credit: Abbey Lossing/Cond Nast Traveler

By AMIRAH KEATON

Cond Nast Traveler's marquee broadcast is back, as *Luxury Daily* exclusively presents the first interview since the show's new season debut.

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At the height of the pandemic, luxury travel media grappled with disruptions abound as uncertainty and restriction shrouded the industry's future. "Women Who Travel," CNT's adventure-focused podcast aimed at female-identifying audiences, managed to emerge unscathed, having used this period as an opportunity for honest, hopeful introspection. After a seasonal hiatus, its host is continuing to usher in a new era of enthused exploration, while integrating listeners and rewriting the rules of modern-day travel.

"By featuring guests from a diverse range of backgrounds and age groups as well as including listener stories from around the world," said Lale Arikoglu, Articles Director at *Cond Nast Traveler* and host of the "Women Who Travel" podcast. "It is our hope that the podcast will shine a light on experiences and points of view that people may not have been as exposed to within the travel space before, and make travel feel more accessible, too."

In this Q&A, Ms. Arikoglu discusses how the podcast is fostering important conversations in the face of a changing travel landscape. Here is the dialogue:



Lale Arikoglu is Cond Nast Traveler's Articles Director and host of the "Women Who Travel" podcast. Image credit: Cond Nast Traveler

Host, guest and audience contributions to "Women Who Travel" are incredibly personal, part of which may be inherent to the nature of the medium itself would you agree, and is the consistency of this level of intimacy across episodes intentional?

Absolutely agree. I think that one of the greatest takeaways from this podcast is that talking about travel can be an entry point to discuss and examine all sorts of different personal experiences prior to the relaunch we explored themes spanning everything from relationships, parenthood, and loss, to personal finances, music, and wellness, and we will continue to do so.

That said, talking about travel should also be playful, after all, traveling is not only challenging and exciting but fun, so expect a whole range of personal accounts to emerge across future episodes.



"Women Who Travel" podcast cover art. Image credit: Abbey Lossing/Cond Nast Traveler

Prior to the hiatus, the show's last full episode included the following description: "This will be our last episode before we come back this summer with some new tricks up our sleeve!" Can you speak to this, as far as upcoming

content is concerned? Also, what was the decision process like in terms of launch and run timing for this new season why now?

The heart of the podcast remains the same, however the relaunched version will feel more experiential audio allows us to capture the sense of a place through not just storytelling, but sound, too. Providing listeners with a platform to share their own experiences is also a brand new segment, and perhaps one of the most exciting additions to the new format.

The relaunch comes at a time when there is so much excitement around travel as we emerge from the pandemic, and I think our listeners' stories capture that in a wonderful way.

We are obviously presented with a much different travel premise today versus when the show began in 2017. What has been the biggest challenge in terms of facilitating conversations about travel in a post-lockdown landscape? Conversely, how has conversation regarding travel evolved on the podcast since its beginning? Has the pandemic shifted the show's "why" in any way?

Recording the podcast during lockdown and post-lockdown came with a whole host of challenges, most importantly that we made sure we were encouraging listeners to move around responsibly once they were able to do so recording over Zoom in a closet also wasn't always easy!

But I think that, while we weren't able to travel so long, that didn't prevent any of us from wanting to talk about travel, and all the joy that it can bring. I think the podcast was able to provide listeners with a little bit of escapism during that time, and also a light at the end of the tunnel during a period of great uncertainty.

The world was also a different place when the podcast launched almost five years ago, and as a result the questions we were asking then aren't necessarily the same as what we should be asking now. One thing that has been striking to me as we emerge from the pandemic is a greater sense of personal responsibility.

Travelers are considering their own impact on a place they may visit in increasingly thoughtful ways, which is great. Is luxury's travel boom of any relevance to "Women Who Travel" and its audience? To what degree do travel trends impact show topics, if at all?

The travel industry has seen a massive boom across all sectors since the world opened back up, and we can see that hunger to get back out in the world demonstrated across not just Women Who Travel listeners, but all of Cond Nast Traveler's readership, whether it be in the comments across WWT's social media and listener submissions, or within the results of our recent Readers' Choice Awards survey.

And while show topics aren't driven by trends per se, we do want to help guide listeners in areas that are important to them, like how to be a more responsible and respectful traveler, or what it takes to become more confident in the outdoors, for example.

How important are inclusivity and discovery to the "Women Who Travel" ethos? The show's description reveals a bit about the gendered disparity that grounds the podcast's origins, as well as a shared mindset between audience and host "this is a podcast for anyone who is curious about the world."

Inclusivity and discovery are essential to the podcast's mission. As the description states, the intention is to show that while travel and adventure have historically been publicly claimed by men, women-identifying travelers have always been part of those narratives.

By featuring guests from a diverse range of backgrounds and age groups as well as including listener stories from around the world it's our hope that the podcast will shine a light on experiences and points of view that people may not have been as exposed to within the travel space before, and make travel feel more accessible, too.