

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

84pc of young people prefer luxe vacations over luxury goods: American Express

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The new report shows just how influential young travelers are, as they invent new travel trends. Image credit: American Express

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

As COVID-19 measures are quelled, wanderlust is building particularly among Gen Z and millennial consumers.

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According to the [2023 Global Travel Trends Report](#) from American Express, 84 percent of Gen Z and millennials surveyed state that they would prefer to purchase a luxury vacation rather than buy a new luxury item, with 79 percent reporting that they view travel as an important item to include in budgeting. The results show a stark shift away from tangible goods on the part of young consumers, as they instead move towards finding meaningful ways to spend money and make memories.

The findings are based on American Express survey data collected from Feb. 3rd through 11th via a Morning Consult company online poll for travelers making at least an equivalent of \$70,000 annually across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Japan, Mexico and India. The sample size was 2,000 in the United States and 1,000 spread out across the other countries, all of which travel at least one time every year.

Young bucks

52 percent of all respondents indicated that they plan to go on more vacations this year compared to the year previous, signaling a growing prioritization of travel experiences among people of all ages.

That said, young people are clearly leading the way, reporting to value travel the most. With the demographic at the helm of the industry, fresh travel trends are blooming in this new era of luxury vacations.

"Travelers are getting inspiration from a number of places," said Audrey Hendley, president of American Express Travel, in a statement.

"Whether it's engaging with local communities, recreating favorite onscreen moments, or planning an entire trip around a specific restaurant, one thing that's clear is that people continue to value and feel passionately about travel."

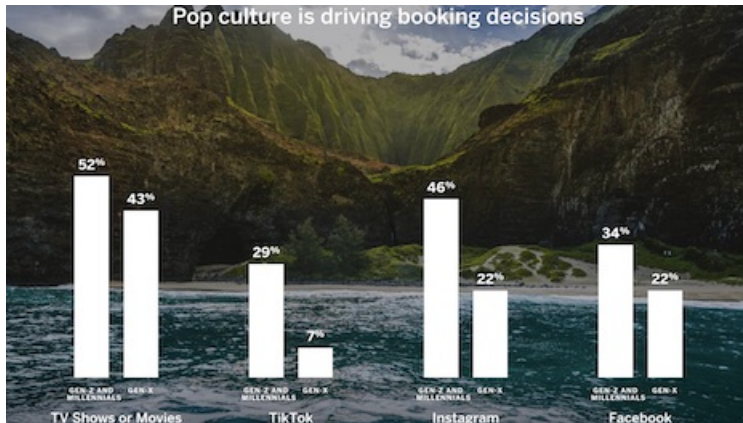
[#AmexTravel](#)'s 2023 Global Travel Trends Report shows that off-the-beaten-path, inspired by

pop culture, food-driven, and wellness-focused trips are on the rise: <https://t.co/3gjaDw9rop>
pic.twitter.com/Uza54XKRId

American Express (@AmericanExpress) March 23, 2023

Pop-culture is proving to be especially influential in planning luxury vacations, as young people increasingly turn to their favorite films and TV shows for travel inspiration a phenomenon dubbed "Set-jetting."

According to the report, 70 percent of Gen Z and millennials noted that they have felt driven to visit a global destination after watching a TV episode, news piece or movie that featured it, showing just how big of a part media plays in travel today.



"Set-jetting" is all the rage thanks to young travelers' love of media. Image credit: American Express

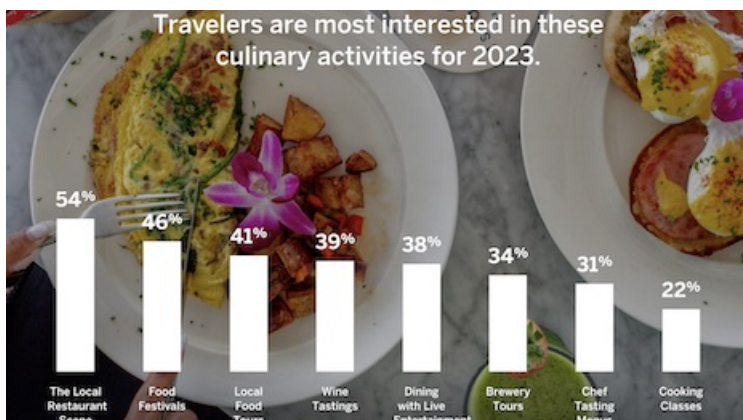
Social media also turned out to be shaping young people's vacations, as 46 percent of Gen Z and millennials said that Instagram has inspired them to visit a destination in the past.

Not only are young people getting inspiration from Instagram and social media, but they are choosing their destinations based on how their own posts featuring the destinations will look on the sites. In fact, 61 percent of the demographic surveyed admitted to picking locations based on how they will look in photos, compared to only 49 percent of respondents overall, showing a heightened prioritization of the visual value of destinations.

While on vacation, Gen Z and millennial travelers continue to turn to social media for travel inspiration, with 66 percent of those surveyed stating that they turn to those channels for culinary inspiration, looking to what and where others are eating.

With 81 percent of all respondents indicating that it is the food that they most look forward to when traveling, it is clear that culinary vacations are on the rise in luxury, aided by social media's influence. However, once again young travelers are leading the way.

"Vacations are precious, and travelers are prioritizing personalized itineraries built around their passions, from planning an entire vacation for a single dinner reservation to getting the perfect video for TikTok," Ms. Hendley said.



Culinary travel is having a moment, as young people put it higher up on their list of priorities while traveling. Image credit: American Express

Compared to 37 percent of overall respondents, 47 percent of Gen Z and millennial travelers said that they have

planned entire vacations around being able to visit a specific eatery. Of the young group, 45 percent also said that they have planned an entire trip around a food festival in the past, compared to only 35 percent of all respondents.

With this rise in culinary travel, many luxury brands are working to include more food-centric travel experiences, such as the Six Senses hotel brand's food festival celebrating the Michelin Guide's Vietnam entrance ([see story](#)).

Cruise lines like Regent Seven Seas are also making efforts to ground their international voyages in a stronger sense of place through food, responding to young people's hunger for culinary narratives ([see story](#)).

Looking local

Young travelers are not only wanting to take luxury vacations that benefit their appetites for food and social media "likes," but ones that also benefit local communities ([see story](#)).

79 percent of those in the age groups said they would like to spend at least one day on vacation living like a local, showing a peaked interest among Gen Z and millennial travelers in getting to know the local customs and the rise of mindful travel.



"Bleisure" travelers, or young travelers that combine business trips with vacations, are especially hoping to support locals while traveling. Image credit: American Express

The young travelers also showed a stronger desire to support local economies, with 86 percent of them saying they choose to shop at small businesses when traveling, compared to only 83 percent of all surveyed respondents.

While the demographic has faced criticisms for overcrowding viral destinations, perhaps the group's heightened value of ethical travel can make amends for the new crowds inflicted on the areas they visit.