

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Wellness trips thrive as travelers seek sensorial relief: WGSN

June 6, 2023



*The new report states that as pre-pandemic depression rates jumped from 8.5 percent to today's 27.8 percent, 48.2 percent of American consumers are prioritizing their health more than they did a few years ago. Image credit: WGSN*

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

According to research from trend forecaster WGSN, 78 percent of Americans cite stress relief as their biggest reason for traveling.

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The new **report** states that as depression rates from pre-pandemic to this new era in the U.S. jumped from 8.5 percent to 27.8 percent, 48.2 percent of American consumers are prioritizing their health more than they did before COVID-19 those in other countries such as Brazil and the United Kingdom are doing so at even higher rates. With the support of Maldivian resort company Soneva, WGSN predicts the rise of five traveler archetypes as a result, fueled by a drive for sensorial relief from worsened morale on the homefront.

Findings are based on Soneva and WGSN expert insights, cross-industry data analysis and a global canvassing of network professionals who contributed insights and future-facing studies concerning cultural shifts for compilation.

### Nature nurtures

The report states that now, luxury travelers are poised to spend money on six things in the pursuit of wellness-supporting experiences: adventure, nature, health, authenticity, responsibility and intent.

Five types of travelers are identified as key drivers of these themes, including the "New Romantics," described as driven by an intense need for internal connection. Like practitioners of the 200-year-old philosophy from which the name is derived, New Romantics embrace the intersection of community and nature.



*Luxury travelers, wanting to feel awestruck for the sake of their mental health, are viewing inspiring encounters as essential vacation elements. Image credit: WGSN*

This mindset is reflected in the way they travel, seeking out human connection and most of all, awe, in nature-dominated locations around the world.

Framing the traveler's habits as beneficial to mental health, the report cites research from Stanford University and the University of Minnesota that explored the long-term perks of awe-inspiring moments.

"Experiencing awe heightens people's focus on the present," said Melanie Rudd, co-author of the study, in a statement.

"When you are more conscious of the present moment, you feel that your experiences are fuller, that more can happen or be accomplished during a period of time."

With depression rates climbing substantially since 2020, nature-powered solutions are being explored by travelers and professionals alike, the report referencing psychedelic resorts and wilderness retreats, both of which are viewed as mental health-focused trip options in today's landscape.



*More resorts are exploring plant-based food in depth, as luxury travelers ask for greener meals and hyperlocal menus. Image credit: WGSN*

Aside from "Global Citizens" a group emerging due to the rise of remote work, made up of affluent nomads the "Epicurean Adventurers" is another archetype WGSN outlines, speaking to culinary-focused travel, a trend many luxury resorts are already leaning into ([see story](#)).

Like the former archetype, mindful interactions with nature and people are central to the group. Therefore, a priority is placed on the authentic representation of local cuisine, low-emissions ingredients and food experiences that will benefit their health on every level.

As 58 percent of travelers believe that their trips should benefit local communities ([see story](#)), the Epicurean Adventurers are not only putting mindful-yet-flavorful experiences first but their own peace of mind.

The lines between the archetype and the "Virtuous Voyagers" archetype are admittedly blurred, however, those in this category are focused on other categories besides food and agriculture.

How much do you think of the planet when planning a trip away? In this episode of Lives of Tomorrow, WGSN CEO Carla Buzasi sits down with sustainable travel pioneer Sonu Shivdasani OBE to talk the future of travel.

Listen to the full episode here: <https://t.co/yNyy0BCDJc> [pic.twitter.com/eoIGeoALcE](https://twitter.com/eoIGeoALcE)

WGSN (@wgsn) April 18, 2023

A stark difference is that Virtuous Voyagers view travel as a privilege, rather than a right, due to the environmental implications of mobility. To mitigate their impact, those luxury travelers in this group tend to focus on regenerative experiences, such as conservation efforts ([see story](#)) and nature-first interactions with indigenous and traditional cultures safeguarding the land resorts sit on.

Now, 68 percent of travelers want experiences that accurately showcase local traditions, asking that resorts become "cultural custodians" that integrate local knowledge into operations.

Healthy and wealthy

Like Virtuous Voyagers, those included in the "Wisdom Seekers" archetype are looking for that same connection with local cultures and natural spaces through knowledge attainment.

These travelers look for resorts and luxury travel offerings that center authentic narratives and allow guests to engage with the locale in a meaningful way that provides them with a sense of purpose.

With this drive has come what WGSN is calling "transformative travel," said to be a key trend for 2023 and 2024.



*Scream therapy and sound baths are just a few ways that luxury resorts are catering to the wellness-focused travelers. Image credit: WGSN*

The genre of travel not only expands minds but uplifts mental health for those who more closely intertwine health and travel now than ever before "mediluxe" facilities, or luxury resorts with substantial wellness and health offerings, are having a serious moment as a result.

The report credits transformative travel to the pandemic, which planted seeds that made "the ritualistic process of undertaking simple, honest pastimes became an important well-being practice."

According to WGSN, Wisdom Seekers are especially driving demand for trips that support emotional healing, leading to a cutting-edge travel trend called "emotional hospitality," or experiences that directly address the mental health crisis through cathartic spaces and treatments on-site.

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