

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Wellness, colder climates will dominate travel in 2026: Virtuoso

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Destinations with moderate weather are expected to dominate expeditions in 2026. Image credit: Marriott International

By KIRAN GILL

High-end hospitality network **Virtuoso** is looking to the future with a new report on top travel trends.

Published Oct. 6, the company's 2026 Luxe Report reveals the far-flung locations and preferences that will drive trends in the travel industry. The company reports that luxury travelers are favoring crowd-free destinations, a slower pace and "main character synergy," or a desire to visit the filming locations of popular television shows and films.

For the report, the global organization gathered data from more than 2,400 travel advisors across 58 countries at Virtuoso-affiliated agencies in North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa and the Middle East via its Luxe Report survey.

Leading trends

Affluent travelers are spending more, but with greater intention, looking for experiences that enhance their vacation. Almost 50 percent of Virtuoso advisors anticipate an increase in travel needs for next year, with more than half expecting spending per trip to increase slightly.

Climate considerations and an aversion to crowds find luxury travelers flocking to destinations with cooler climates and sublime natural beauty, such as Greenland, Iceland and Antarctica. Virtuoso advisors report that clients are looking to travel during the off-season, with 75 percent favoring clement weather.

While younger travelers may look to social media and television for travel inspiration, Boomers and Gen X feel compelled to visit sites that face worrying changes in light of climate change. Once these travelers find themselves viewing Kenya's Great Migration or traipsing across the Galpagos, seasoned travelers are putting on the brakes to embrace the quiet moments, from leisurely river cruises to extended camping stays.

Virtuoso advisors report a 45 percent increase in requests for "unlimited luxe" experiences. Travelers with an appreciation for the finer things in life want personalized experiences and for all of the details, from exclusive reservations to private transfers, to be taken care of ahead of time.

Top Global Destinations

1. Italy
2. Japan
3. Greece
4. France
5. Croatia

Destinations on the Rise

1. Iceland
2. Antarctica
3. Norway
4. Morocco
5. Egypt

Top Aspects of Sustainable Tourism

1. Avoiding over-touristed destinations
2. Wildlife conservation/interaction
3. Farm-to-table dining
4. Giving back to/supporting local communities
5. Booking with companies that employ locals

Top Cities

1. Paris
2. Tokyo
3. Barcelona
4. Kyoto
5. Rome

Top Adventure Destinations

1. Antarctica
2. Iceland
3. South Africa
4. Costa Rica
5. Kenya

Top Honeymoon Destinations

1. Italy
2. Greece
3. Bali
4. Maldives
5. French Polynesia

Virtuoso's rankings mark Italy, Japan, Greece, France and Croatia as covetable destinations. Image courtesy of Virtuoso

Beyond all-inclusive experiences, these travelers are favoring private retreats and looking to celebrate milestones with friends and family members aboard private yachts or at a secluded estate.

A demand for wellness-focused travels finds advisors arranging trips to India, Costa Rica and the Canadian Rockies, with travelers valuing healing experiences divorced from the disordant sounds of modern life. While wellness trips are the second-most requested experience for solo travelers, multi-generational families are also embracing these journeys in nature.

In-demand locations

The five destinations on the rise include Iceland, Antarctica, Norway, Morocco ([see story](#)) and Egypt, which jumped three spots from last year.



Top-end consumer vacation preferences are shifting toward personalization and wellness. Image credit: Marriott International

With 72 percent of HNWIs in the global east increasing their trip spending ([see story](#)), Vietnam finds itself moving up the list three spots from last year to sit at the number six spot on Virtuoso's rising destinations list.

Japan maintains its sway over travelers as a popular destination for families, solo travelers and honeymooners.

For the first time since the list's inception, Kyoto makes an appearance on the top five cities category, finding itself at spot number four with sister-city Tokyo securing the second spot after Paris, and seeing a bevy of store openings in its city from the likes of U.S. jeweler Harry Winston ([see story](#)), U.S. fashion label Calvin Klein ([see story](#)) and U.S. jewelry Tiffany & Co ([see story](#)) in the third quarter of this year.

While European countries such as Italy and France maintain their hold on the list, smaller European destinations including Latvia, Albania, Montenegro and Malta are claiming their spot in the spotlight.