



After years of rapid reinvention, travel is evolving from a mere pursuit of escape to a deeper quest for connection — with **people, purpose, and place.** Why Travel? examines the emotional and cultural forces shaping today's journeys. From Gen Z redefining discovery through social platforms to travellers prioritising regenerative experiences over hurried getaways, this report uncovers the changing motivations behind why we leave home — and the implications for the travel industry.

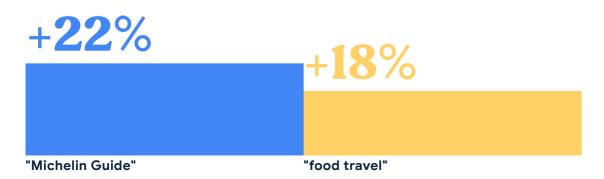
To identify the hottest and emerging trends for 2025 and 2026, Trip.com Group combined first-party travel data with Google research* to reveal insights that inform both travellers and industry stakeholders.

*Insights are based on a combination of Google survey results and Google Trends data, alongside Trip.com's proprietary booking data.

by Trip.com Group Google

Travel is no longer just about the places we visit; it has become a way to express who we are: our aesthetics, tastes, and lifestyle. From turning culinary finds into a statement, to drawing inspiration from short-form video platforms for the trendiest destinations, going abroad has become a way to enrich your main character story. Fashion tourism sees travellers curating outfits and destinations, while more travellers are now choosing "skillvenirs" over traditional mementoes, bringing home knowledge and experiences—like cooking classes, wine tastings, or artisan workshops—that last far beyond the trip.

Fork-First Travel



Google Trends worldwide searches for "food travel" have grown by 18% year-on-year (YoY) in the first half of 2025, with momentum escalating in summer (May/June).

People are interested in curated culinary experiences that serve as a central purpose for travel, not an afterthought, as shown by an increase in searches for expert guide-led resources such as "Michelin Guide".

Food-related bookings on Trip.com are up by 43% YoY. Top destinations that people book for food-related experiences are Mainland China, Thailand, Singapore, whereas "foodie travellers" predominantly hail from Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and Japan.

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Group Global Data 3)

Cooking class



+500%



+1500%

While cooking classes have been traditionally associated with foodie destinations like Florence and Osaka, Google has observed a rising search trend combining "Valentine's Day" with "cooking class" and specific cuisines like "Thai cooking class", implying a clear shift in demand from travel-based tourism to local, event-driven, and culture-based culinary experiences.

Search interest for "cooking class" is particularly prominent in cities rich in culture and food such as Florence and Osaka, while interest in Amalfi is also fast growing. In APAC, travellers from Australia, New Zealand and Singapore are most interested in attending a cooking class overseas based on Google Trends data.

This reflects a larger trend where travellers are trading trinkets for 'skillvenirs' - knowledge and techniques that they can bring home and reuse long after the trip.



Wine tasting

Travellers' interest in wine tasting is evolving beyond the vineyard. While searches for prestigious regions ("wine tour Melbourne") and famous festivals ("Cata del Vino Córdoba") are growing, a new trend is emerging: the "wine experience". The significant search increase for "wine tour Niagara-on-the-Lake" shows that consumers are seeking scenic and curated tasting experiences, even in places that don't produce wine.

"wine tour Melbourne &

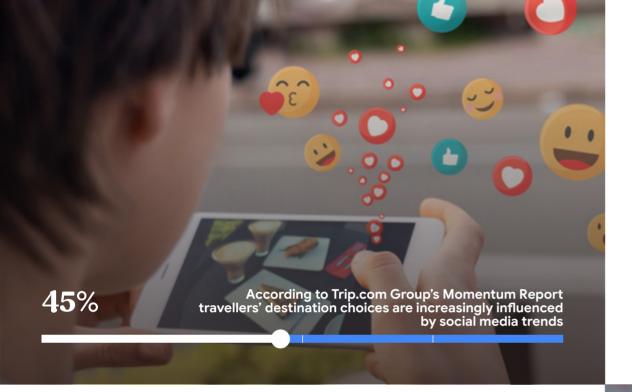
+50%



+350%



+140%

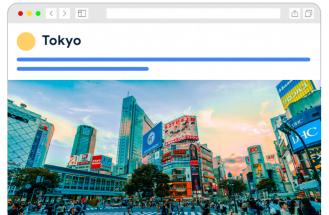


Livestreams as a Key Influence

In markets like Thailand, Indonesia, and India, over 75% of travellers say they watch travel-related livestreams. Even in lower-engagement markets like Australia (44%) and Japan (25%), the trend remains present. [2-1]

Among viewers, over 40% and up to 76% in some markets, say they're likely to book travel directly through links in livestreams. While Japan remains an outlier (~20%), interest in livestream-driven bookings is strong across much of the APAC region, highlighting its growing role in travel discovery and decision-making. [2-2]

Top destinations popularised by social media







Travelling Miles for Style

+190%

+25%

"how to get invited"

"fashion week dress"

Fashion travel

Driven by the pursuit of unique experiences, Fashion Week has evolved from a trade event into a city-wide festival.

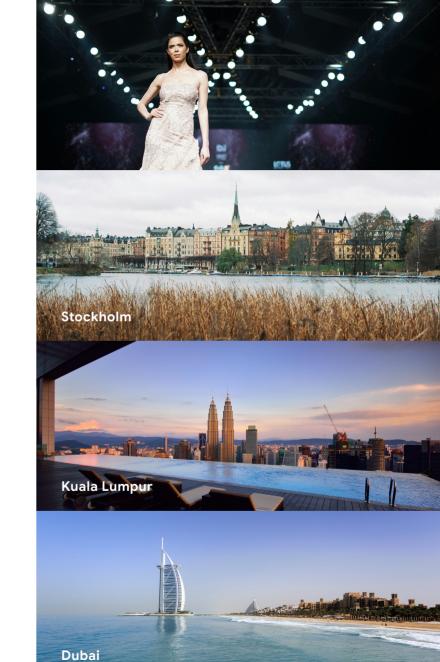
Social media and online video platforms have amplified the importance of "being there". The most compelling Fashion Week content from creators and celebrities focuses more on exclusivity and personal experience: their outfits ("fit checks"), the restaurants they visit, the parties they attend, and their overall travel diary.

Popular destinations:

Besides traditional fashion week cities like Paris, Milan, and New York, new destinations are rising:

- Stockholm
- · Kuala Lumpur
- Dubai

Other up-and-coming destinations, especially for European travellers: Seoul (319% YoY growth) and Shanghai (864% YoY growth).



Chapter 2 Fravel with purpose Say bye to travel checklists. Travellers are exchanging cookie-cutter itineraries for experiences that cultivate a deeper sense of purpose and exploration. From Japanese tea ceremonies to castle tours, travellers are no longer satisfied with

Say bye to travel checklists. Travellers are exchanging cookie-cutter itineraries for experiences that cultivate a deeper sense of purpose and exploration. From Japanese tea ceremonies to castle tours, travellers are no longer satisfied with simply ticking popular attractions off their list, but seeking unique experiences that inspire and dive deep into their desire for discovery. Rural retreats are also rising in popularity as more turn to unconventional stays that not only provide a place of rest, but also a place of wonder.

Discovery-cation



Japanese tea ceremonies

+53%

Travellers are choosing mind over body. "Japanese tea ceremonies" showed a 53% YoY increase in Google search interest in the first half of 2025.

A traditional ritual and cultural practice that invites mindfulness and the appreciation of life, Japanese tea ceremonies are resonating strongly not only with locals, but also tourists from its neighbouring East Asian regions including Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Mainland China.

(Source: Google Trends 1)



Story-driven and immersive experiences are also rising in demand. Travellers are rediscovering history and culture through castle-ventures. Search interest in castle tours has increased by 4% worldwide in the first half of 2025, based on Google Trends data.

Top-related search terms for "castle tour" on Google

- 1 Hikone Castle
- 2 Chapultepec Castle
- 3 Glencoe
- 4 St. Paul's Cathedral
- 5 Nymphenburg Palace

(Source: Google Trends 1)



If you've ever needed a vacation from a vacation, you're not alone. Travellers are abandoning hectic itineraries for a slower-paced one, looking for destinations that not only bring them closer to nature, but also invite a time of contemplativeness and reflection.

Hiking destinations such as Sapa and Banff have seen booking volumes increased by over 100% YoY in the first half of 2025.

Travellers are no longer shying away from off-grid destinations, but embracing the return to nature for intentional moments of reflective solitude and self-discovery. Trip.com Group data found that Bhutan, the world's first carbon-negative country, has seen a sevenfold surge in flight bookings in the first half of this year compared to the same period last year.

YoY booking volume

+100%

Hiking destinations such as Sapa and Banff

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(Source: Trip.com Group Global Data 3)



Eco-tripping

Sustainability is no longer a good-to-have but the main agenda. Travellers are making more sustainable choices from how they get there to where they choose to stay – driving demand for a new type of vacation revolving around conscious choices, eco-tripping.

In Europe, more are choosing to bikepack as they seek a lower-impact and more experiential transportation mode. "Bikepacking" has seen a 33% increase in YoY search interest, based on Google Trends data. This trend is most prominent in Europe and Oceania, where travellers get to enjoy the luscious landscapes around them while on the road.

Roadtrips are also rising in popularity as travellers become increasingly conscious of their impact when travelling. Bookings for electric and hybrid cars have shown an average month-on-month growth of 14% since July 2024, based on Trip.com Group data.

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Group Global Data 3 & 6)



Beyond transportation, more are finding themselves fascinated by unconventional stays that offer an opportunity to immerse in the local community with minimal disturbance and impact. Search terms such as "homestay", "rural resort" and "countryside stay" have seen an average YoY growth of 22% in search interest, based on Trip.com data. Bookings for homestays have also increased by 21% YoY, reflecting an upward trend for more varied and unique accommodation types.

To meet such demand for lower-impact and more immersive stays, Trip.com Group has established 34 country retreats since 2021, where guests can experience themed cultural activities centred on traditional customs, farming culture and local heritage.

Top 5 countries with search interest in "bikepacking" from Google Trends

- 1 Belgium
- 2 Switzerland
- 3 Netherlands
- 4 New Zealand
- 5 Austria



Chapter 3

Travel to heal

Wellness is going beyond long weekend indulgences to the very reason people travel. What once meant the occasional massage or yoga class has evolved into a full-scale philosophy of healing, movement and restoration. Travellers are booking silence, chasing mindfulness, and weaving well-being into their journeys.



Wellness-Centric Agenda

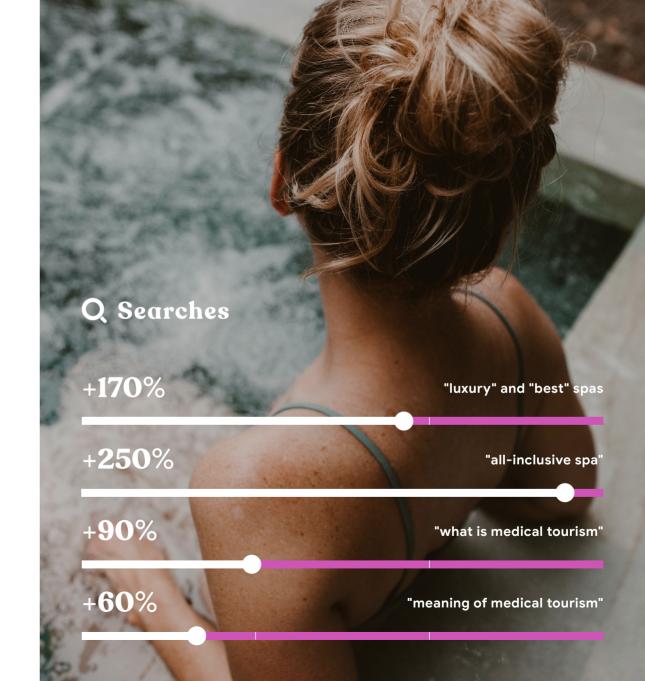
Health and vitality are no longer vacation side activities— they're part of the main event. According to Google Trends, searches for spa destination experiences are soaring, with +140% YoY in the first half of 2025.

Searches for "luxury" and "best" spas have gone up by 170%, reflecting the desire for aspirational, healing escapes. For burned-out travellers, removing financial and logistical friction is itself part of the cure.

The rise of the "all-inclusive spa" has also spiked by 250% YoY, reflects a new consumer demand for seamless, stress-free healing escapes.

But the wellness agenda is also expanding beyond spas into the realm of medical tourism. Searches for this category rose +8% in the first half of the year, while curiosity is booming. Searches for "what is medical tourism" surged +90%, and "meaning of medical tourism" climbed +60%.

Interest is strongest across the Americas, Europe and Asia, signalling a broadening definition of travel to heal, where people aren't just seeking mindfulness centred on spas but life-changing treatments, preventive care and vitality-focused getaways.



Sweat & Spa

+250%

+300% "golf and spa resorts"

"ski & spa"

Travellers don't just want to "switch off", they want to challenge and restore themselves in equal measure. Wellness travel is becoming active, immersive and narrative-rich. The "Sweat & Spa" trend pairs spa with sport.

Google search interests like "golf and spa resorts" +300% YoY, and "ski & spa" rose +250% YoY, showing that the balance between active exertion and deep relaxation is the new recipe for holistic healing.

Sapporo and Reykjavik are surging in popularity. Trip.com Group flight bookings are up 62% and 25%, with hotel bookings surging 111% and 35% respectively, embodying this dual-demand, mixing natural thermal escapes with active adventure.

When it comes to blending adrenaline with après-ski indulgence, travellers can take the guesswork out of planning.

Trip.com's Trip.Best ranking of the **Top 50 Global Ski Resorts** is a go-to inspiration source, spotlighting not only iconic European slopes but also rising stars in Asia-Pacific and North America.

Travellers can choose ski resorts that deliver more than runs and lifts but those that offer sweat and spa escapes that combine sport, scenery and restoration.



(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Group Global Data 3)

Soakcations

Geothermal traditions are becoming anchors for modern resets. Trip.Best data shows hot spring icons are resurging, Pamukkale, Blue Lagoon and Ginzan Onsen among the fastest-growing Soakcations globally.

Across Europe, Google Trends show, "Thermal Trails" are growing 28% YoY, proving popular among travellers from the Netherlands, Belgium, Lithuania, Germany and France.

But it's not just a European mindset! Across Asia, travellers are seeking deeper meaning in wellness, turning to spiritual traditions as part of their therapeutic journey.

Onsens grew +20% YoY, led by travellers from Singapore, Thailand, Australia, Hong Kong and New Zealand.

Japan's hot spring towns are surging. Trip.com Group data shows Noboribetsu, Jozankei Onsen, and Karatsu are seeing renewed demand, positioning onsens as the quintessential soakcation trip to cleanse mind and body.

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Group Global Data 3)



♦ Japan's hot spring towns





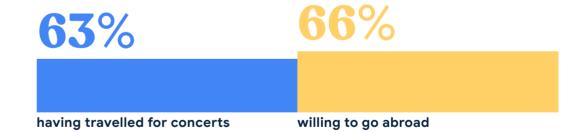


+1300%



+25%

Chapter 4



In 2025, travel is no longer a solo pursuit, it's about connection. Friends, families, and fan communities are shaping where people go and what they do together. Concerts are pulling crowds across borders, with 63% of Asia Pacific travellers already having travelled for concerts and 66% willing to go abroad. Sports are shifting too, with endurance travel growing 5x in a year as runners, cyclists, and Hyrox competitors build communities through shared effort. Cruises, too, are becoming community spaces, with Disney Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean packages fuelling demand among families. Whether through music, sport, or sea, big events are bringing people together, across borders and across generations.

Tour-trekkers & festi-families: Concert, festival tourism



Concerts are the new reunions - and APAC travellers are leading the charge, based on Trip.com Group data. Fans are travelling with friends, families, and fan communities to share live music experiences together. The next wave is all about immersive and niche shows: from Hans Zimmer's Candlelight concerts to the Chopin Concert 2025 in Poland. ABBA Voyage in London stands out as a Trip.com Innovation Fund winner, proving investment is flowing into next-gen concert experiences. Meanwhile, "Stagecations" are booming, with Macau, Las Vegas, Melbourne, and Singapore turning into hubs where concerts meet hotels and attractions, based on Google Trends data. And it's not just youth culture anymore — 85% of Thai travellers and 66% of Malaysians combine concerts or festivals with vacations in family groups. Organisers are adapting, from kid passes at Fuji Rock in Japan to family-friendly spaces at Tomorrowland, Coachella, Glastonbury, and Grøn Koncert.

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Group Momentum 2025 Report 7)



Popular Hyrox participation hubs

Endurance sports are no longer niche - they're becoming a way to connect, train, and travel together. Worldwide search interest on Google has surged, with 5x growth in endurance sports travel in the past year. Hyrox, the hybrid endurance event, is exploding across hubs like Hong Kong, Barcelona, Manchester, Dubai, and Milan. This shift reflects a deeper desire for shared experiences: 90% of Trip.com travellers want to pair sporting events with cultural exploration, turning competitions into community journeys. Among Malaysian travellers, football (62%), Formula 1 (42%), and basketball (31%) are the most popular sports to combine with travel. And the trend is not just about spectating - packages like the Shanghai Marathon 2025 give runners guaranteed race entry, hotels, meals, and shuttles, transforming a sporting event into a shared milestone for families and friends.

Enduro-explorers: From endurance to connection TOREVER. FASTER Five times growth in interest for endurance sports ठींठ ठींठ ठींठ ठींठ

Cruise communities: Group & multigeneration travel





Popular cruise ports

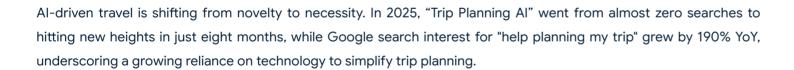
Cruises are turning into floating communities - places where every generation finds its space onboard. The top draws are simple but powerful: scenic sea views, fresh air, and all-inclusive ease. Popular routes through Tokyo, Kyoto, Jeju, and the Maldives offer something for everyone — grandparents enjoying dining and relaxation, parents seeking convenience, and kids chasing entertainment and adventure. Momentum is accelerating with the arrival of Disney Cruise Line, alongside Royal Caribbean, MSC, Resorts World, and Ritz Carlton Cruises, all fuelling demand for family-friendly packages. Cruises today aren't just journeys — they're multigenerational reunion halls at sea.



AI: From Planner to Partner

190%

Google search interest for "help planning my trip"



Travellers are finding Al-generated content helpful when planning their trips. For example, 61% of consumers of travellers in Australia who saw an Al Overview in their search results claim it provides relevant or valuable information. [2-3] And already, travellers who see an Al Overview in their search results are using that information to make decisions. In India, 44% of travellers who saw an Al Overview in their search results, claim to have made a decision based on the information it provided. [2-4]



Hi there!

Can you suggest some nice areas to stay in Goreme?

র্ম Flights

Can you show me flights from Boston to Rome for a family of four?

₹ Flights

Can you show me some flights departing from Hong Kong to Sydney?

☐ Hotels

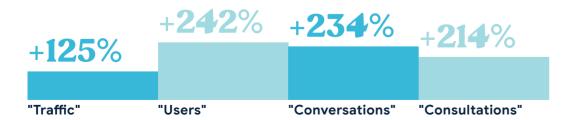
Which hotels in Kyoto have **the best scenery** surrounding?

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Google/Ipsos Online Survey 2-3 & 2-4)

Beyond pre-trip planning, travellers want AI assistance during their journeys. Key use cases include real-time translation via Google Translate and support with disruptions and local dining recommendations. On Trip.com, 5–6% of queries to its AI assistant, TripGenie, are itinerary-related. In September 2025 compared to the same period 2024, TripGenie's traffic rose 125% YoY, with 242% more users, 234% more conversations, and a 100% increase in average session time. Translation-related functions have been especially popular: since launch earlier this year, consultation volumes are up 214%, and time spent on translation features is triple the site average.

Meanwhile, Google Trends data shows that "restaurant near me open now" search interest has doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels, highlighting demand for immediate, real-time information like current operating hours. Searches related to "how to cancel" are also up more than 10% YoY, reflecting travellers' growing reliance on Google to manage disruptions.

TripGenie



AI-Driven Discovery and Bookings



Al not only guides exploration but also converts inspiration into bookings.

Trip.com booking data shows destinations recommended by Trip.Best saw strong growth in 2025: Paris, London, Tokyo, Osaka. In Southeast Asia, Singapore and Bangkok emerged as Al-fuelled hotspots.

New Frontiers in Travel

Travel ambitions are extending beyond borders and even beyond Earth.

Google Trends show that interest in "astro travel" is on the rise, with growing fascination for experiences like stargazing, aurora chasing, and volcano exploration. Popular destinations include:

Stargazing:

Lake Tekapo (NZ)

♀ Valle de la Luna (CL)

Pangong Lake (IN)

Northumberland (UK)

P Hawaii (US)

Volcano tours:

Nusa Penida (ID)

Kona (US)

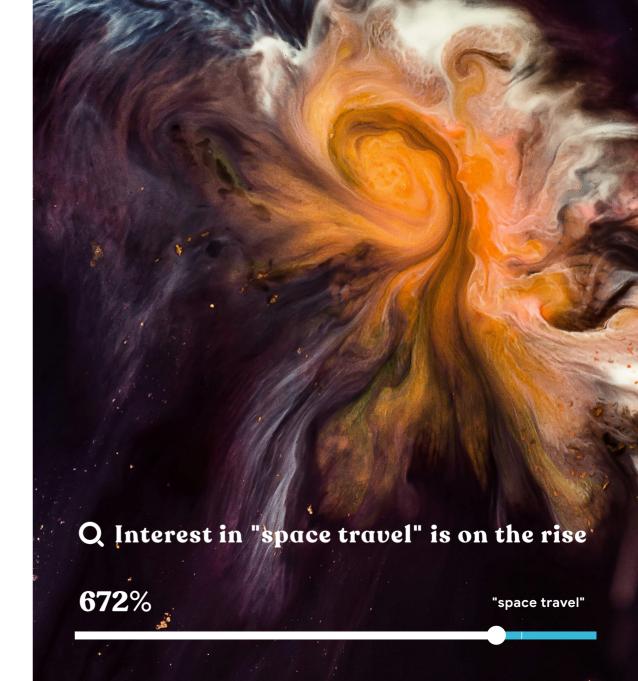
Q Gran Canaria (ES)

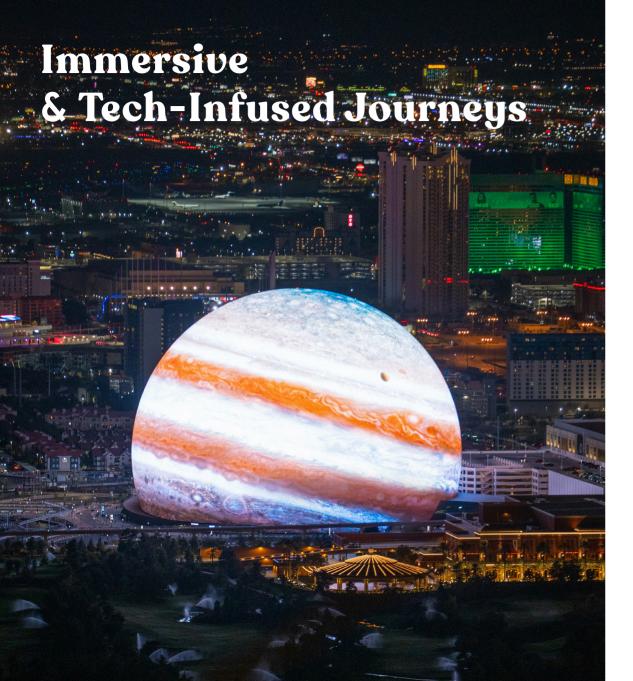
• Hawaii (US)

Reykjavik (IS)

Space tourism is also moving from sci-fi to serious interest. With companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin leading the charge, Trip.com reports that searches for "space travel" are up 672%, reflecting the growing fascination with out-of-Earth experiences.

(Source: Google Trends 1 & Trip.com Grpup Space Travel Data 5)





Virtual and immersive travel experiences are moving into the mainstream. From digital music festivals to virtual exhibits, travellers are actively seeking innovative, digitally enhanced experiences.

Searches for "tech travel" keywords on Trip.com have surged, with bookings following suit:

- •Las Vegas Sphere (home to the Afterlife immersive show) saw a 4014% YoY spike in bookings.
- •Tokyo Immersive Fort, known for its interactive installations and multi-sensory experiences, experienced a 1627% YoY increase.

These numbers highlight a broader shift: today's travellers are not just visiting places, but are stepping into stories, powered by cutting-edge tech.

+4014%

+1627%

Las Vegas Sphere

Tokyo Immersive Fort

(Source: Trip.com Group Data 3)

Travel is not just about the destination anymore. It's about the story you bring home.

From fork-first food pilgrimages and social inspiration, to eco-tripping and fitness journeys, travellers are moving beyond checklists to seek identity, purpose, and restoration. They connect through concert communities and a deeper pursuit of meaning, while embracing Al-first planning that makes travel more seamless and personalised. Technology now acts as an itinerary co-pilot, while culture, community, and wellness become core motivations behind every journey.

For travel brands and industry partners, this means designing experiences with purpose, where identity and storytelling take centre stage. Technology should enhance personalisation without replacing human insight. Connection drives loyalty, wellness is a core motivation, and travel begins long before departure and continues after return.

The Why Travel? Report reflects this shift, revealing how expression, purpose, healing, connection, and innovation are redefining the future of travel — which is no longer just a place, but a mindset.

About Us

Trip.com Group[™]

Trip.com Group is a leading global travel service provider comprising of Trip.com, Ctrip, Skyscanner, and Qunar. Across its platforms, Trip.com Group helps travellers around the world make informed and cost-effective bookings for travel products and services and enables partners to connect their offerings with users through the aggregation of comprehensive travel-related content and resources, and an advanced transaction platform consisting of apps, websites and 24/7 customer service centres. Founded in 1999 and listed on NASDAQ in 2003 and HKEX in 2021, Trip.com Group has become one of the best-known travel groups in the world, with the mission "to pursue the perfect trip for a better world".

For more information, visit: https://group.trip.com

Google

Google's mission is to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Through products and platforms like Search, Maps Gmail, Android, Google Play, Chrome and YouTube, Google plays a meaningful role in the daily lives of billions of people and has become one of the most widely-known companies in the world. Google is a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc.

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Data Sources

- [1] Google Trends Global Search Data, Jan-Jun 2025 vs Jan-Jun 20242.
- [2] Google/Ipsos, Vertical Consumer Journeys, July 2025, Online Survey
- [2-1] Base: n=1400 In-market or past-month purchasers of travel (flight, car rental, or accomodation) per market, 20+ TH, 21+ ID, 18+ IN/AU/JP
- [2-2] Base: In-market or past-month purchasers of travel (flight, car rental, or accomodation) who watched livestream videos related to travel in their journey, JP n=797, IN n=1329, AU n=965, KR n=1297, HK n=1305, TW n=1275, PH n=1331, TH n=1348, ID n=1351
- [2-3] Base: n=727 In-market or past-month purchasers of travel (flight, car rental, or accommodation) who encountered Al Overview in search results while engaging with content related to the category, 18+ AU
- [2-4] Base: n=1142 In-market or past-month purchasers of travel (flight, car rental, or accommodation) who encountered Al Overview in search results while engaging with content related to the category, 18+ IN
- [3] Trip.com Group Global Data, Jan-Jun 2025 vs Jan-Jun 2024
- [4] TripGenie Trip.com Group Global Data, Aug-Sep 2025 vs Aug-Sep 2024
- [5] Space Travel Trip.com Group Global Data, Jan-Sep 2025 vs Jan-Sep 2024
- [6] Electric and Hybrid Car Bookings Trip.com Group Global Data, Jul 2024-Jun 2025
- [7] Travel to Connect Trip.com Group Momentum 2025 Report, APAC Region