

LUXURY GOLD  
PRESENTS

# The New Golden Age of Travel

*What if passports were stamped  
with experience instead of place?*

March 2023



# *For modern luxury consumers, a holiday has to be more than 'just a holiday'.*

To meet the needs of a modern luxury customer, businesses need to think past end-to-end and more beginning-to-after. From the booking process, to the trip to the airport, to the long-term impact of the trip, to how their stay will drive personal long-term growth, to how will visitors get to relive the trip when they get home: those that win will create a holistic holiday experience.



# *What if passports were stamped with experience instead of place?*

## TOURING ON TOP

*Tours are set to hit the top of wish lists as consumers seek human advice and collective experiences.*

## REGENERATION RISING

*Consumers are demanding more than sustainable, they want their trips to give back to the planet and communities they visit.*

## LEAVE-TO- LEARN

*Move over classic cooking class – travellers are looking for new ways to connect with destinations and drive personal growth.*

## SPECIALIST STAYS

*Luxury consumers are looking for experiences that cater to their life-stage and need states.*

## TANGIBLE NOSTALGIA

*In our fast-paced world, we're looking for physical mementoes of our stays that give us kudos and a sense-of-good feeling.*

## THE NEW ROARING TWENTIES

*We're entering an era of hedonism – and more luxury travel players will be catering towards maximising pleasure and happiness as we enter 'vacay mode'.*



TREND\

# Touring on Top

After a few years away from travel, as we dip our toes firmly back into the waters of travel, touring comes to the fore.



*We've noticed people are looking for... support, flexibility and truly unique experiences in a post-pandemic world*

*Toni Ambler,  
MD, Luxury Gold*



## HUMAN-LED SERVICE

In a world changed by the pandemic, people are looking for help to dip their toes back into the world. 49% of Australians would consider booking a tour in the next two years, which was higher again for the luxury segment.

This is where the real-life person comes in: people are looking for human service for humans and by humans, who understand unique needs more than a bot or an algorithm ever could.

## PERSONALISED ITINERARIES

American Express has found that 59% of consumers want to hire a travel agent in order to personalise their trips.

Services like Joel Found have been set up in order to create custom itineraries, designed around the personal lives of travellers. This allows them to create trips that speak to a traveller's personal interests as well as the destination, through the lens of brand founders and premium influencers the audience would be aware of.

## COMMUNAL EXPERIENCES

GWI found that 77% of luxury consumers prefer to purchase experiences or products for the experience of the community that come along with the purchase. We're seeing community-oriented trips – whether that be the local community or the community you build around your own travel experience – heat up as we realise that life is about connections, not just things.

To this end, the Whispers app was established for Rolls-Royce customers to connect with one another to share the latest finds, access a 24/7 concierge and learn from the best.

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# Regeneration Rising

Australian travellers will be focusing more on how travel can be regenerative, not just eco-friendly, as we decolonise travel and make travel restorative.



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# Travel relies on a sense of place, and healthy places. How do we ensure they are grandchildren proof.

Shannon Guihan, Chief Sustainability Officer,  
The TreadRight Foundation



## REGENERATION > SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is no longer enough, according to many travel experts. Regenerative travel is all about ensuring that anything you engage with while travelling actually gives back to the planet, rather than 'only' offsetting activity.

In Hawai'i, the Malāma Program incentivises volunteering in exchange for a free night at participating hotels. In Scotland, TTC and TreadRight funded Whitmuir Organic Farm, whose aim is to teach visitors about circular farming techniques.

## LED BY NATURE

More and more resorts are looking embed themselves in, and give back to, the landscape around them. The architecture of Kisawa Sanctuary in Mozambique was taken from the local sand dunes, intentionally made without heavy machinery and using local materials to protect the natural environment. Not only that, there's an on-site ocean conservation centre to further protect the area for future generations.

In Africa, Xigera Safari Lodge has the land baked into every aspect - from materials, to protecting local flora and fauna, to solar panels providing clean energy, to artisan-made furniture and much more, demonstrating end-to-end luxury responsibly.

## DECOLONISING TRAVEL

Travellers from Western countries are becoming increasingly aware of the impact their trips have on not just the environment around them, but the communities too. Consumers want to know that the activities they take part in are not just regenerative, but also sustainable from a community perspective. In fact, almost three-quarters of travellers would prioritise a trip that supports local communities and culture, even if it's more expensive.

The Travel Corporation & the TreadRight Foundation funds initiatives such as protecting local languages through tourism initiatives, enabling local underrepresented and indigenous communities to lead tours and local tourism initiatives, and enabling numerous local craft cooperatives around the world to protect heritage handicrafts.

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# Leave-to-Learn

The pandemic reset becomes post-pandemic reset, as we seek to find masterclass experiences on holiday too, like cooking classes, weaving workshops, even archaeological digs.



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# *Leisure doesn't improve quality of life unless one knows how to use it effectively.*

*James Wallman,  
author of "Time and  
How to Spend It"*



## **SPECIAL AND SPECIALIST**

More and more, we are seeing bespoke services pop up that cater to unique, personal-growth-oriented trips. The Luminaire offers curiosity-oriented experiences, like tours that involve masterclasses with top photographers, or participation in an archaeological dig.

Expedia found that "Alternative getaways such as sylvotherapy (forest bathing), chakra sessions, food boot camps, puppy yoga, laughter therapy, and fruit harvesting are increasingly more popular than classics such as cookery courses, sports trips, and meditation sessions."

## **MASTERCLASS-LED**

When luxury travellers engage in classes, they want to know they're getting top-notch expertise.

Hôtel Plaza Athénée in Paris hired celebrity chef Jean Imbert in order to offer one-of-a-kind sit-down experiences for guests, where they enjoy a bespoke menu designed for their tastes, presented to them by Imbert himself. TreadRight and Luxury Gold offer tourists the chance to learn at Laboratorio Giuditta Brozzetti, one of the last standing Italian hand-weaving institutions. The Chairman's Collection offers tourists a chance to connect personally with not only local experts, but also local nobility – from duchesses to princesses – to learn from those in the know.

## **LOCALLY UNIQUE**

As we seek to reconnect with our ancestors and what makes us human, understanding local truths and traditions are high on the itinerary. Here in Australia, bushcraft lessons are on the rise. In fact, in 2022 some institutions across AU, US and CAN reported a 60% increase in YOY enrolment as visitors learn to reconnect with land and heritage.

To this end, the government of Queensland is investing \$10m in Indigenous tourism after discovering over 324,000 international visitors took part in a First Nations activity; and Airbnb launched "The Italian Sabbatical", offering travellers the chance to swap their normal holiday for a three-month 'live and learn' experience in rural Italy.

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# Specialist Stays

As opposed to the 'kitchen sink' style of itinerary, we're seeing travellers look for specialist stays – focusing on a need state or a desire that allows them to immerse themselves in a fulfilling trip.

# There is burgeoning potential for the travel and hospitality sectors to cater for people's specific life stages.

Abi Buller,  
foresight analyst,  
The Future Laboratory



## LIFESTAGE TRIPS

Wellness tourists spend 35% more than the average international traveller – and specialised lifestage trips are becoming more and more the norm. Both TTC and Flight Centre have noted a huge uptick in womens-only trips post-pandemic, for those entering a new stage of single life.

Amilla retreat in the Maldives focuses on perimenopausal and menopausal care, whereas the Boram Postnatal Retreat offers both physical and mental care for mothers and babies. Kimpton Hotels are going beyond the specialist stay into norm-ing lifestage needs by offering breast-milk fridges in its rooms to help more mothers get back into travel post birth.

## NEED STATE CONCIERGE

We've all heard about wellness retreats – but luxury hotels are taking this further with need state concierges. The Cadogan is offering a personalised 'sleep concierge' to build on the existing trend for the sleep retreat.

Six Senses Ibiza is now offering access to its exclusive Guest Experience Maker – a personalised itinerary concierge that allows guests to pick experiences, classes and tours bespoke to them and their needs. Equinox Hotels now offers IV therapy in its Hudson Yards Club; there are 13 NutriDrips to choose from, giving guests options for every need state they might encounter, from immunity to muscle recovery.

## IMMERSIVE INTERESTS

Live action role-playing hits the mainstream – from murder-mystery jubensha escape-room “script homicide” experiences in China; to the Galactic Starcruiser immersive experience as part of Disney's Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge theme park which encourages consumers to book for an immersive trip by packing in-character clothes and taking on an in-universe identity to fully get the most from their trip.

UK luxury travel firm Black Tomato created a series of immersive “escapes” for pandemic-affected customers – from an Alice in Wonderland themed experience to 1001 Nights – they were popular for customers looking to escape the everyday with something a little extra special.

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# Tangible Nostalgia



Our desire for tangible in an intangible world continues apace, with physical mementoes of travel not only a status symbol but also an emotive driver.



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# *Luxury is not about selling leather bags. It's about identity and it's about tribalism, belonging and self-expression.*

*Ian Rogers, chief experience officer, Ledger*



## THE RISE OF THE PHYSICAL

"We used to boast about the places we've been to and different country stamps in our passports. Now it's all digital, people are looking for new, physical ways to connect with their holiday memories." As Luxury Gold MD Toni Ambler sums up – with our lives increasingly digital, it's no surprise that we're seeking more and more of the physical, so we can feel passport moments again.

Culture-driving Gen Zs are swinging away from "experience-driven" priorities towards the 'item' as status symbol. On-stay "merching" – from Glimpse's small-biz-to-big-hotel pipeline, to LIBi's 'as seen on your holiday' databank – allow travellers to take their holiday home with them.



## MULTISENSORY MEMENTOES

It's not just the tangible we are prioritising, but finding ways to evoke all the senses and be reminded of our 'passport moments'. US-based The Maker Hotel has released a range of perfumes designed to capture the experience of staying in a hotel, from a fleeting encounter with a stranger to the experience of hotel linen against bare skin.

TravelPulse reported on the role music plays in the travel experience, and thanks to Spotify's personal playlist push, we see more and more travellers create custom playlists highlighting the songs they were listening to on each trip – 73% of Pandora users find that music enhances the travel experience.



## RESPONSIBLE SOUVENIRING

The modern memento carries more cachet nowadays for luxury consumers, as Planet 9 Private Air espouses: "From the locavore culinary trend to a focus on locally made crafts and artwork, the luxury travel industry is discovering its preference for high-end goods and services sourced from the destinations they represent."

From the rise of the post-holiday physical photobook (predicted to grow almost 4% over the next 7 years), to the kudos of the Polaroid shot, to trends we've already explored like mementoes from masterclasses, or contributions to Regenerative travel – meaningful, slow souvenirs are taking on deeper relevance – as we see in TreadRight's investments into heritage crafts.

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# The New Roaring Twenties

As we hit our stride in the 'Age of Rebellion,' our pleasure-seeking and hedonistic desires go into overdrive, as we want to kick back and enjoy the good life while we still can.



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*[Getting out of the] pandemic is working like a massive feelgood boost: a global YOLO attitude is creating an outsized luxury demand wave.*

Luca Solca,  
analyst  
for Bernstein



## DOPAMINE DEPARTURES

Pharrell Williams' new venture, the Goodtime Hotel, takes inspiration from his upbeat hit *Happy*, bringing that feel-good factor to an entire experience: "[Goodtime] is that adrenaline-fuelled sensation of entering a whole new setting and a whole new mindset."

Following from 2022's "Altbashes" and "dopamine dressing", Pinterest is predicting a continued investment in hedonism-oriented experiences, this time with a focus on older travellers. "In 2023, Boomers and Gen X will plan epic bashes for major milestones... more years, more reasons to party."



## PLEASURE RISING

As we enter the new Age of Rebellion, according to Kantar's Millennium Monitor, we're seeing a huge rise in engagement with cocktails and cocktail bars, clubbing and raving, and general dopamine-seeking behaviour.

Luxury hotels are reinvesting in their onsite bars to make them experiences in themselves (Seed Library or The Connaught); giving access to every little luxury imaginable to ensure patrons never have to leave their grounds (Dayuse); or even by creating on-premise nightclubs (Hotel X) to cater to the true hedonistic desires of their clientele. Pinterest has seen rave-related searches skyrocket, like a 250% increase in "Berlin rave fashion".



## 21ST CENTURY DEBAUCHERY

After the emotional and physical shutdown of the pandemic, we're reinventing historical vices for the modern day – and turning them up to eleven, making taboos cool and hedonism hot.

Bedroom 6 is an invitation-only speakeasy in America which has reinstated old-style absinthe rituals. Caviar is also being used to revisit the temptations of old – where drugs are being replaced with caviar in a 'bump' style appropriate for today. This is taken to extremes at Temple Bar, where customers are told to lick caviar from their hands, rather than use implements.

ABOUT\

# Luxury Gold

As the world leader in Luxury Small Group Journeys, Luxury Gold is redefining the New Golden Age of Travel. With the finest end-to-end travel experiences, guests are spoilt with high-end experiences in magnificent environments.

Exceptional dining at sought-after Michelin Star restaurants to unique street food experiences. Curated experiences with after-hours access, VIP experiences and the exclusive Founder's Collection meet and greets with nobility, icons and royalty. Magnificent stays at world-leading properties such as the Belmond and Red Carnation Hotels or unique Chalets or Private Game Reserve lodgings.

Beyond these high-end experiences, a guest's every need is catered to by their 24/7 Travel Concierge who combines local knowledge with the ultimate black book of contacts to customise a guest's journey.

*Luxury Gold is part of the family-owned and run The Travel Corporation (TTC), driven by service for over one hundred years.*

*The New Golden Age of Travel report was created in collaboration with TBWA\ and Luxury Gold.*

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