



Image courtesy of UN Tourism



Image courtesy of The Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea

Global tourism: fully recovered?

The global tourism sector recouped 98% of pre-pandemic levels in 2024. The new year marks full / near-full recovery for the tourism sector since the COVID-19 crisis.

The latest World Tourism Barometer by UN Tourism reflects the industry's remarkable recovery and shows outstanding results in terms of international tourism receipts, with most destinations with available data posting double-digit growth compared to 2019.

The Middle East enjoyed record growth in the first nine months of 2024 (+29% compared to 2019), while Europe (+1%) and Africa (+6%) also exceeded 2019 levels.

The Americas recovered 97% of pre-pandemic arrivals.

Asia and the Pacific reached 85% of 2019 levels. They have experienced a gradual rebound since the region reopened to international travel in 2023.

Despite the generally strong results, several economic, geopolitical and climate challenges remain– such as inflation and major conflicts around the world impacting consumer confidence.

-UN Tourism

Average vacation budgets up for 2025

According to MMGY's latest "Portrait of American Travelers" study, Americans are planning on spending more money on vacation in 2025. The average vacation budget has climbed significantly, with 4.1 trips per person estimated.

Brand loyalty is growing and social media influencers are gaining traction. Hotel loyalty program memberships have increased 6% since 2023.

Airline programs have seen an 8% expansion in the same period. Over 40% of participants in the study indicated their travel plans are influenced by content creators and celebrities.

-TravelAge West

Peace through Global Tourism

The global tourism industry is expected to transform 2025 travel through "Peace" initiatives. These initiatives seek to develop cultural understanding and sustainable travel growth globally.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is committed to amplifying tourism's role in peace and understanding between nations.

In 2024, UNWTO selected "Tourism and Peace" as the theme for World Tourism Day. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili stated, "Tourism...has a unique ability to promote peace between and among peoples everywhere."

Leveraging tourism as a force for good is expected to shift the global tourism industry in 2025. The sector has an opportunity to redefine its position in times of global challenges and to drive positive change.

-Travel and Tour World

International visitor forecast

The National Travel and Tourism Office's (NTTO) International Visitor Forecast estimates total international arrivals to the United States for years 2024-2028 from the top 12 U.S. source markets (India, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, South Korea, Japan and China).

Total international arrivals will continue to increase significantly and will surpass pre-pandemic 2019 visitation in 2025, according to the forecast. Total international arrivals will increase 9.7% to 85.2 million in 2025, increase 7.0% to 91.1 million in 2026, increase 3.8% to 94.6 million in 2027, and increase 2.3% to 96.8 million in 2028, according to the International Trade Administration's forecast.

[-International Trade Administration](#)

Trending "detour destinations"

In 2024, tourists are expected to veer away from traditional travel spots toward lesser-known locations, which Expedia has referred to as "detour destinations." These alternates provide travelers with unique experiences while helping them avoid hotspots with overtourism.

Expedia compiled a list of the

top 10 most popular detour destinations for 2025, according to the percentage increase in flight searches on the site (based on data pulled from September 2023 through August 2024).

Trending detour destinations are:

1. Reims, France (Paris)
2. Brescia, Italy (Milan)
3. Cozumel, Mexico (Cancun)
4. Santa Barbara, CA (LA)
5. Waikato, NZ (Auckland)
6. Girona, Spain (Barcelona)
7. Fukuoka, Japan (Tokyo)
8. Abu Dhabi, UAE (Dubai)
9. Krabi, Thailand (Phuket)
10. Canmore, Alberta (Calgary).

-Laurie Baratti, [Travel Pulse](#)

Travel behaviors in 2025 with staying power

Five travel trends are expected to steal the limelight in 2025, according to Emily Goldfisher of Hertelier. Those trends are **nostalgic travel, solo travel, secondary destinations, slow travel, and set-jetting.**

Described by Hilton as "time travel," and by Amadeus and Globetrender as "new heydays," nostalgic travel recognizes travelers are longing for simpler times, and want to pack up – often with extended family – for vacations that remind them of their youth.

Solo travel—described by Hilton as "me-moons" and by Virtuoso as "wander women," tackles the

growing number of travelers heading out on solo expeditions. Women continue to grow in the solo travel cohort, Goldfisher said, citing Marriott International research on the purchasing power of women. "Women are three times more likely than men to spend on luxury goods, which underscores the increasing economic clout of women, particularly in the luxury market," she said.

Secondary destinations, or "detour destinations," are now checking out the next place, whether that be to avoid crowds, for a lower price tag or even for bragging rights around unexpected and different experiences, Goldfisher said.

Slow travel is expected to include taking a break, staying in at a hotel, and unplugging from the world. This trend has spurred the popularity of the acronym JOMO (joy of missing out).

Set-jetting describes the practice of traveling to the locations popularized by famous TV shows or movies, like walking in the footsteps of "Emily in Paris," or heading out on an epic "Outlander" adventure.

-Stephanie Ricca, [Hotel News Now in CoStar](#)