amadeus | GLOBETRENDER®

Amadeus Insights

Travel Trends 2026

Global overview and trends

Introduction

"From new pet travel technology to AI-powered trip planning, long-range narrow-body jets, pop culture-inspired pilgrimages, and hyper-personalized hotel stays, a wave of innovation is reshaping travel.

"Our pets are traveling with greater dignity, travelers are blending machine intelligence with human instinct, aircraft are shrinking global distances, entertainment franchises are inspiring new forms of belonging, and hotels are offering guests the power to design every detail of their stay. Together, these shifts signal a transformative new era for travel."

Dan Batchelor
Senior Vice President, Global Corporate Marketing and Communications
Amadeus

"The future of travel is on 'spin mode' – with technology, culture and innovation propelling it into hyper-drive. At Globetrender we continuously hunt for shifts in consumer behaviour in relation to our framework of ten globally relevant mega trends, which range from Climate Contours to Youthquake. The broader pace of change that is now happening in the mid 2020s is feeding into an accelerated loop cycle within the travel industry, as differing influences nudge and ignite what both companies and individuals do in response.

"Although people's fundamental human needs don't change from year to year, what does change is how they react to marketing, news cycles and pop culture. As we enter the latter half of the decade, 2026 will feel more 'science fiction' than any year that has come before."

Jenny Southan
CEO
Globetrender

TREND 1

The Pawprint Economy

Pets gain ‘freedom of movement’ rights and rewards.

The era of pawsecco and novelty gimmicks is over. In 2026, pets will no longer be treated as accessories to amuse their owners, but as beings whose dignity and wellbeing demand genuine consideration.

A wave of new technology, legislation and travel innovation will see that animals' needs are given greater attention – whether they're breaking new ground with their owner or keeping lookout at home.

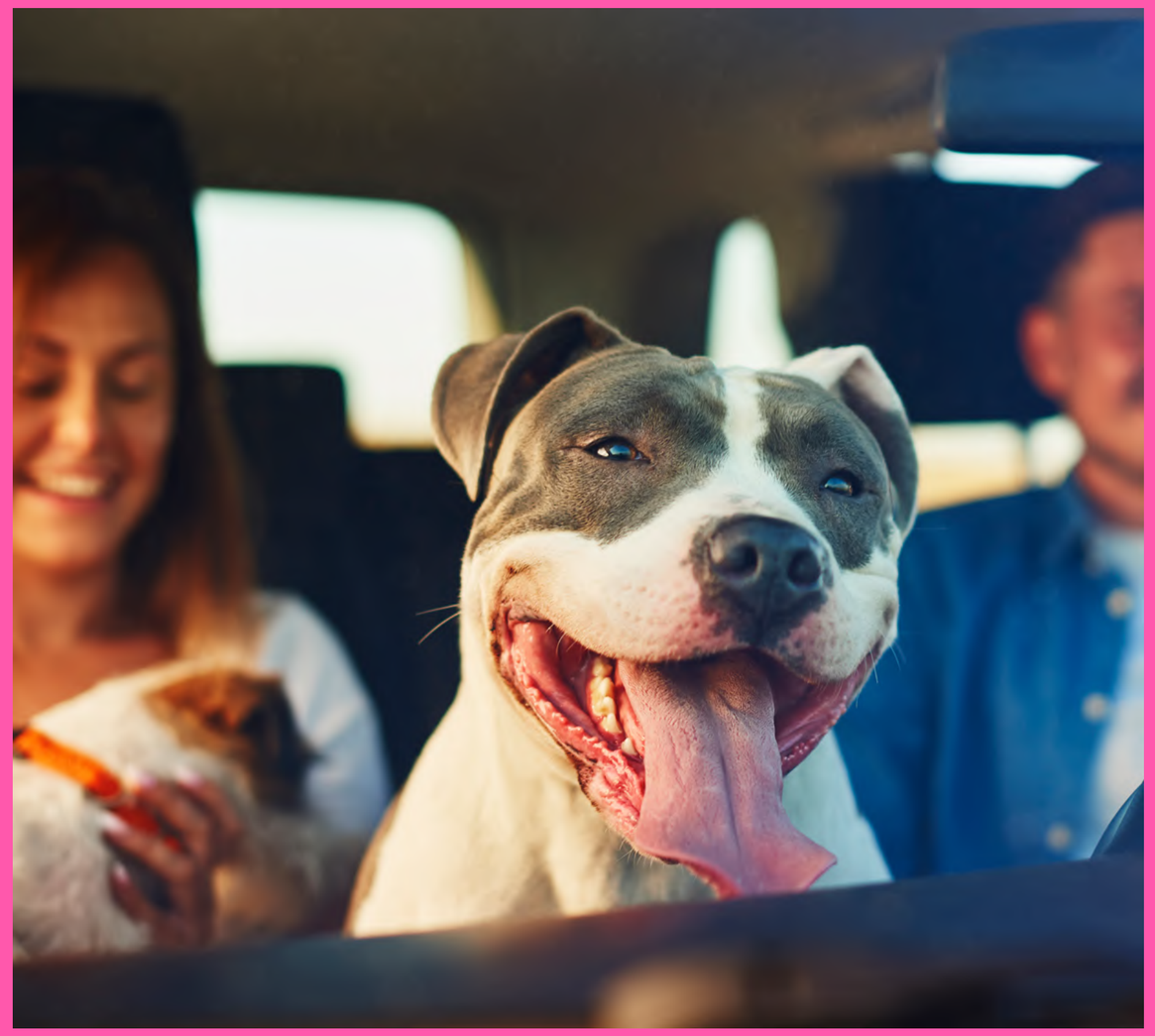
The shift is being catalyzed by an ongoing rise in pet ownership. A global study of 20,000 people, published by **Mars** ↗ in October 2024, found that 56% now own a pet, with almost half (47%) identifying as first-time owners. This points to a new generation whose outlook may differ from those who came before. Explanations for the surge vary from the dwindling number of long-term relationships to prospective parents using pets as training grounds for human progeny – but the financial impact is clear.

56%
of people now own a pet

By 2030, **Bloomberg** ↗ forecasts the global pet industry will grow

by **45%**

Reaching a **US$500** billion valuation



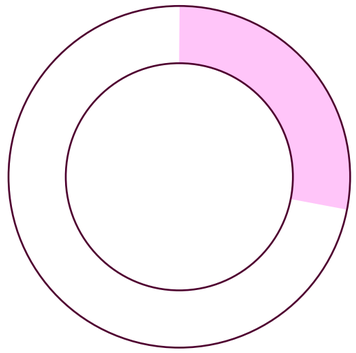
Barriers to pet travel

20%
'restrictions on where pets can go at vacation destinations'

21%
'not believing any accommodation / destination is truly pet friendly'

42%
'traveling would've been too stressful for their pet'

Research from Shape Insight supports the trend. Among a survey of 2,896 travelers in the UK and USA, 27% of pet parents who took their pet with them on their main vacation in 2025 were doing so for the first time.[1]



27%
of pet parents who took their pet with them on their main vacation in 2025 were doing so for the first time.

For those in The Pawprint Economy looking to encourage more pet travel, the focus should be on overcoming the barriers preventing some pet parents from taking their pets away with them in 2025. Fear 'traveling would've been too stressful for their pet' (42%) was cited as the most common reason, followed by 'not believing any accommodation / destination is truly pet friendly' (21%) and 'restrictions on where pets can go at vacation destinations' (20%).

1. Data collected via online survey between 26 Oct – 05 Nov 2025.

For those companies that get it right, 2026 will be the year travel with pets, whether felines, pooches and their pals, leaves an irrevocable pawprint on the global travel industry as new rules and regulations across continents see them transcend “cattle class”.

China

In 2025, China Railway Express piloted pet-friendly journeys on its busy Beijing-Shanghai route, laying the foundations for a wider rollout.

Italy

Medium and large-sized dogs were upgraded to the passenger cabin following new rules from Italy’s civil aviation authority, ENAC.

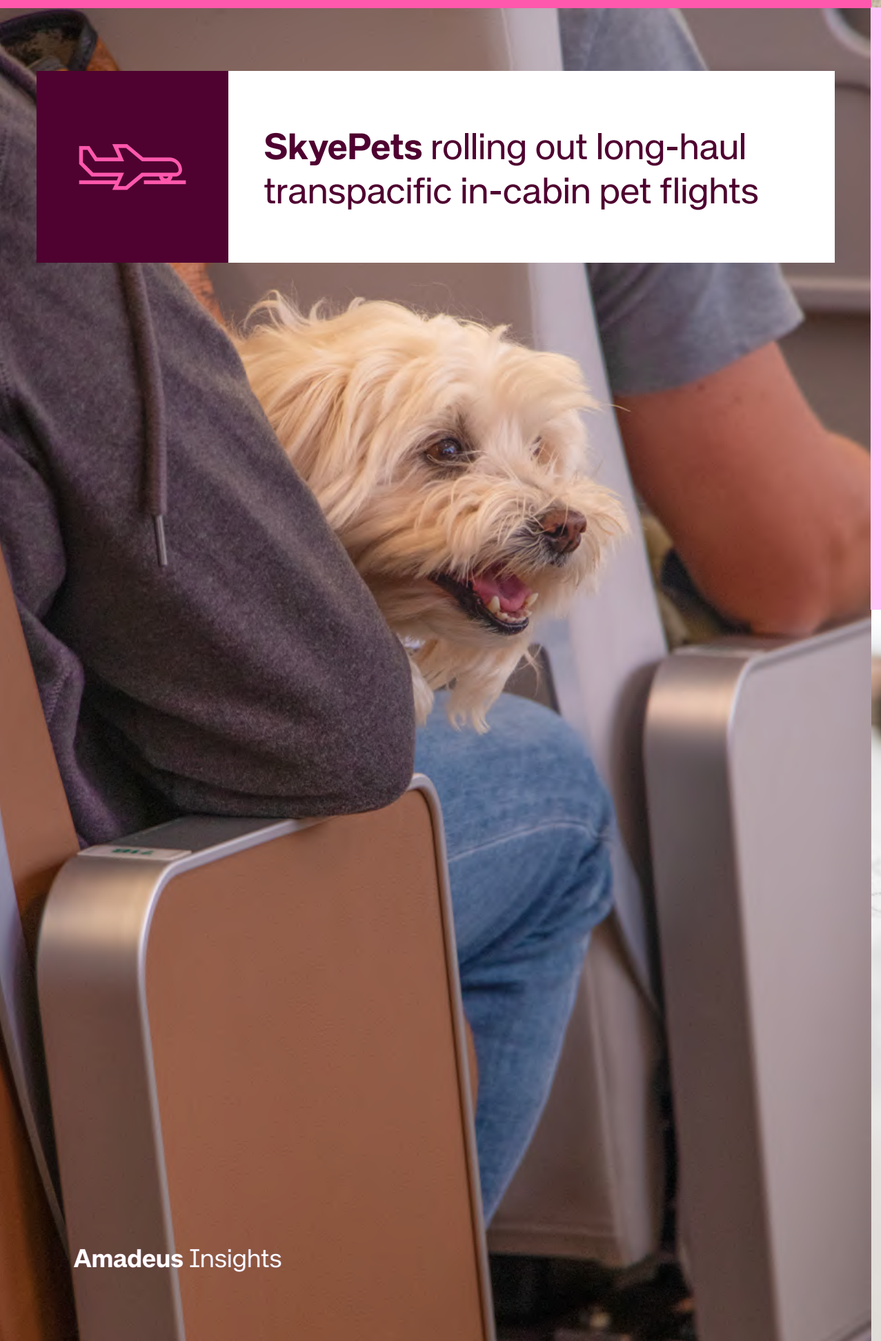
UK

The reimplementation of the pet passport means a return to pre-Brexit travel freedoms for British pets and their owners – a revocation of the expensive single-use animal health certificate.

China Railway Express piloted pet-friendly journeys on its busy Beijing-Shanghai route

As red tape is cut, pressure is mounting on travel operators to deliver human-grade experiences suitable for four-legged beings.

Private air charters are leading the pack. BarkAir, K9 and RetrievAir are three such companies that made headlines in 2025 with regional or domestic pet–forward charters: In 2026, **SkyePets** ↗ will take the concept further, quite literally, by rolling out long-haul transpacific in-cabin pet flights between Australia and the US.



SkyePets rolling out long-haul transpacific in-cabin pet flights

Keen to leash this new demographic, **AKA Hotels** has built pets into its loyalty program with the April 2025 launch of a Canine Club.

Returning pets are greeted with in-room welcome notes and upgraded amenities – a toy, stylish bowl and special bed – plus an inside guide to the best local walks, parks and grooming spots.

Dog Relais hotel redesigned pet stay to alleviate the stress of separation.

The Pawprint Economy won't only be about elevating animals' travel experiences; some of the most interesting innovations also address the emotional strain felt by both pets and owners when they're apart.

At Rome's Fiumicino airport, for instance, the **Dog Relais hotel** ↗ is reimagining the typical vacation kennel with underfloor heating and aromatherapy treatments – soothing balms designed to alleviate the stress of separation for both pets and owners.

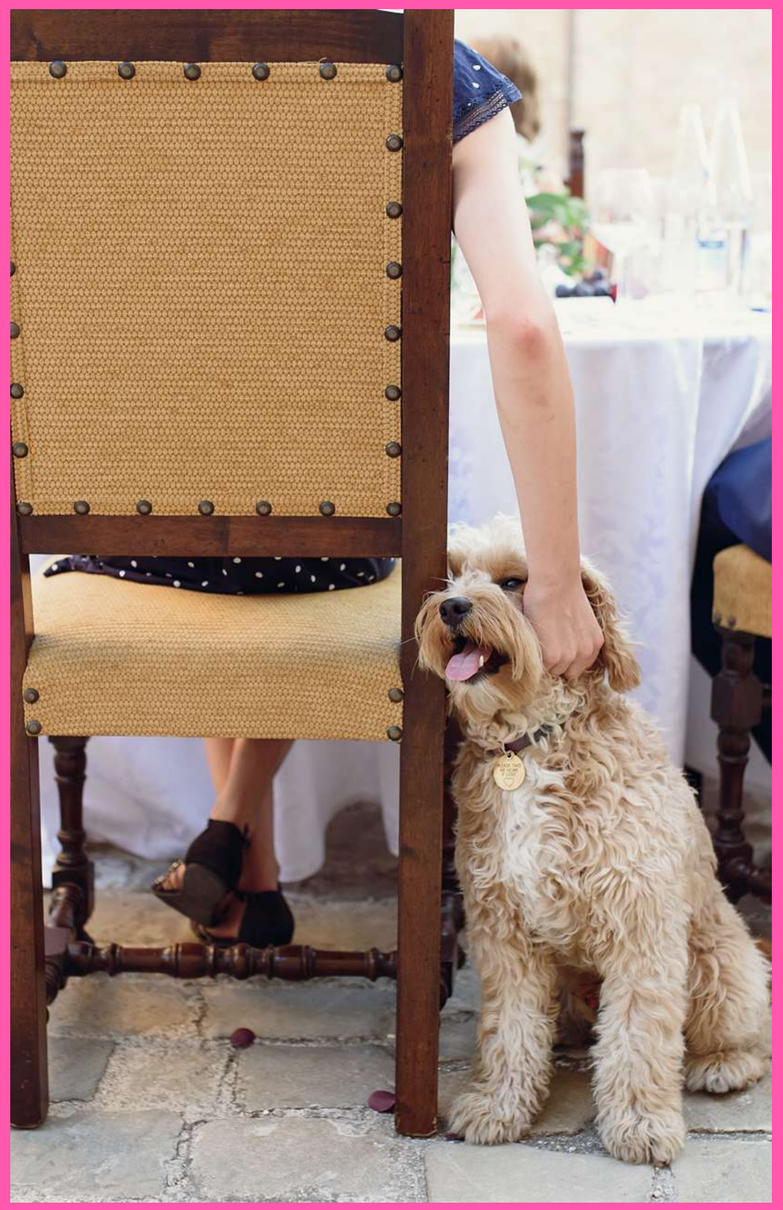
Meanwhile, a wave of tech innovation is helping pets left at home cope more comfortably with their owners' absence.

AI pet feeder

Petkit, an early pioneer of IoT pet tech, continues to create products that make being apart easier. One example for 2026 is the **Yumshare Daily Feast**, a pet feeder that uses AI to recognize individual pets, reports on abnormal eating habits, handles leftovers automatically to prevent spoilage and self-sterilizes using UV.

AI collars

This greater autonomy is being further enabled by AI collars such as those by **PetPace** that not only measure biometrics but facilitate 24/7 global access to veterinary telehealth, meaning owners can both observe and act upon any health issues remotely as they arise.

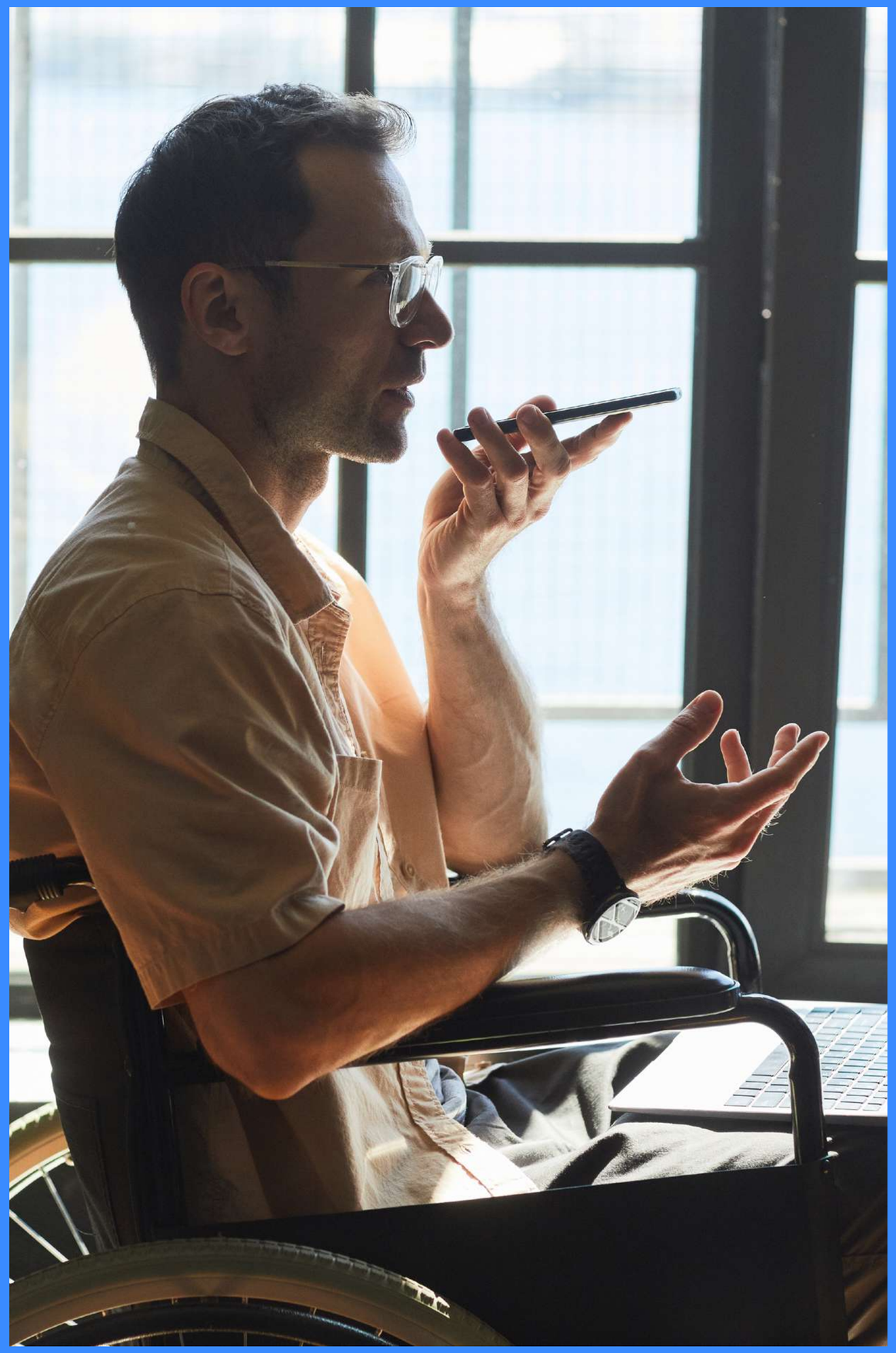


As gimmicks give way to genuine care, the Pawprint Economy is redefining what it means to travel with animals. For travelers, this means greater ease in taking pets along or leaving them in comfort; for the industry, it signals a new customer segment to design for, with loyalty, booking and cabin experiences increasingly putting our most trusted companions up front in the pilot's seat.

TREND 2

Travel Mixology

Savvy travelers turn to multi-modal advice.



Ever since OpenAI launched its ChatGPT API in November 2022, proclamations about its transformative impact have come thick and fast. People flocked to it in their millions (ChatGPT recorded 100 million monthly users within two months of launch), but the path to travel integration has been bumpy.

In 2026, travelers will find their groove. Rather than lean exclusively on generative AI travel planning tools, an emergent wave of Travel Mixology will see people flit between platforms and technologies.

They might leverage the hive brain of Large Language Models (LLMs) to gauge consensus and big-picture thinking, then turn to Reddit or YouTube for nuance and lived experience.

From there, they could lean on brands' conversational AI assistants to get suggestions based on past search behavior or skip that step entirely, combining their own custom recipe of tools to conjure up the perfect journey.

Whatever their approach, the intended result is the same: a more layered, resilient method of trip planning that blends machine speed with human authenticity.

There's no questioning generative AI's stratospheric ascent. Google has pivoted fast, rolling out AI Mode with multimodal search capabilities in summer 2025, in an effort to maintain its competitive edge with LLM rivals or so-called "answer engines" such as Perplexity.

At the discovery stage of the customer journey:

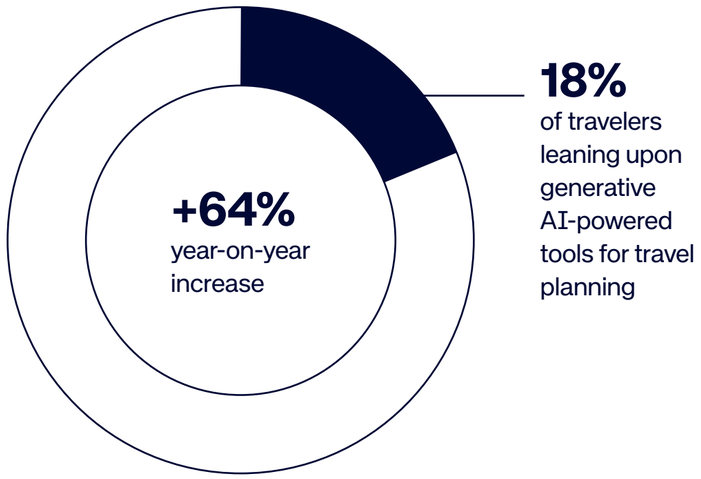
Amadeus Connected Journeys report

42%
of consumers find AI helps them to save time planning.

37%
use it to receive highly personalized recommendations.

36%
find new destinations.

A 2025 **Amadeus survey of global travelers ↗** found the percentage of those leaning upon generative AI-powered tools for travel planning soared from 11% to 18%, marking a dramatic 64% year-on-year increase.



In 2026, expect uptake to jump further, spurred by new in-platform integrations that deliver unprecedented convenience and value.

Flight Deals

Is a search tool within Google Flights, which is built on Amadeus' inventory and surfaces destinations with the most affordable flight options from an open-ended user prompt. There is no need to even have a destination in mind; simply describe the intended vibe and atmosphere, and the tool pulls up near-perfect pairings.

Expedia's Trip Matching

Since June 2025, it has allowed Instagram users to decode reels instantly, translating visual content into full itineraries.

These innovations mark the beginning of a magical multimodal era in which image and video are no longer just inspiration, but direct conversion opportunities.

Expedia's Trip Matching allows Instagram users to decode reels instantly.

Even as these intuitive solutions hit the mainstream, trust in the technology remains a sticking point.

Media coverage of travelers led astray by wayward LLMs, whether missing buses and trains or flunking visa requirements, has amplified doubts.

Amadeus data from 2025 ↗ shows that 25% of travelers have received outdated or inaccurate information while planning their trip, while a KPMG survey finds only 46% of people are willing to trust AI systems. At the crux of the Travel Mixology method is a push-pull dynamic. The convenience offered by LLMs is driving adoption, but generative-AI hallucinations, deepfakes and low-quality content flooding the internet are also pushing people towards sources of information that feel verifiably human.

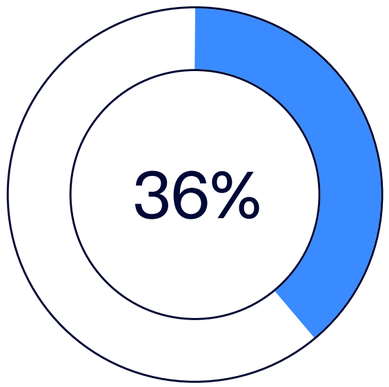
25%

of travelers have received outdated or inaccurate information while planning their trip

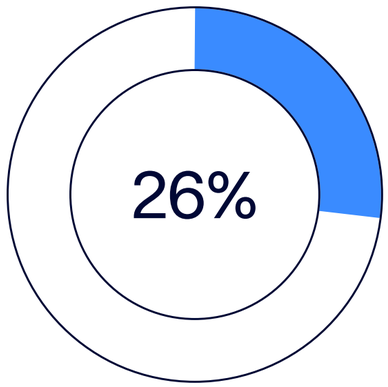
46%

of people are willing to trust AI systems

Amadeus findings show the most influential sources of travel research are:



Word of mouth



User-generated video

Reddit, with its reputation for unvarnished peer-to-peer insight, is already seeing the benefit. In 2025 it reported a **31% ↗** year-on-year jump in active users, with 1.9 million members of the **r/travel ↗** community regularly dipping in and out to share and receive tips, ostensibly unbiased by commercial intent. YouTube and social platforms are also key, with Amadeus finding that user-generated video was the second-most influential source of travel research (**26% ↗**) in 2025, trailing only word of mouth (36%).

Active users of the r/travel community:

1.9 million members

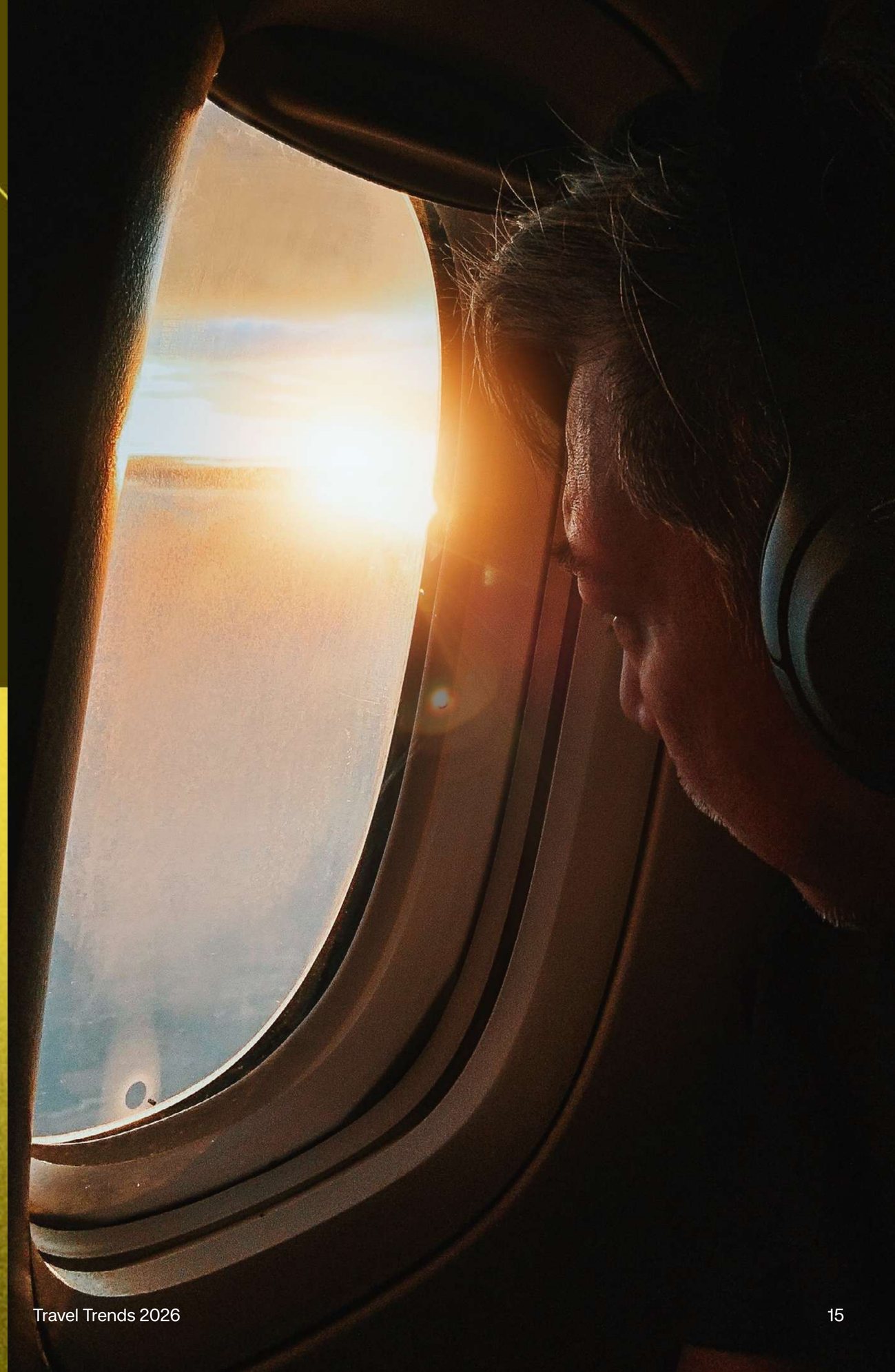
In 2026, Travel Mixology will set the pace by delivering a multi-source method that is finely attuned to the whims and vulnerabilities of both human and AI-powered sources.

Brands looking to keep up must operate on both fronts of this new paradigm – adopting generative search optimization to ensure AI visibility, while cultivating organic real-world content that gives synthetic output human sticking power.

TREND 3

Point-to-Point Precision

The world shrinks as nonstop flight paths open up.



Aircraft innovation continues to shrink the world by crunching time spent in transit and collapsing cultural distances.

In 2026, expect the world to feel that much smaller as new fleets of long-haul narrow body jets take to the skies. These single-aisle aircraft are literally turbo-charged, boasting turbofans that dramatically extend nautical air mile capacity. That means more efficient journeys with fewer stopovers, enabling travelers to more easily stretch the map to second cities and lesser-travelled destinations that could benefit from tourist dollars.

It's a trend being propelled by Airbus, primarily the brand's A321XLR (that's 'Extra Long Range', a souped-up version of their A321LR ('Long Range') – this time fitted with an extra rear center fuel tank which increases the jet's range by 700 nautical miles (compared to the LR version). When the revolutionary design was announced in 2019, global carriers launched in, with 500+ orders placed – the first of which were delivered in the latter half of 2025. But a number of extended-range models are set to take to the skies in 2026.

500+ orders placed

Iberia was the launch customer for the Airbus A321XLR 'Extra Long Range'

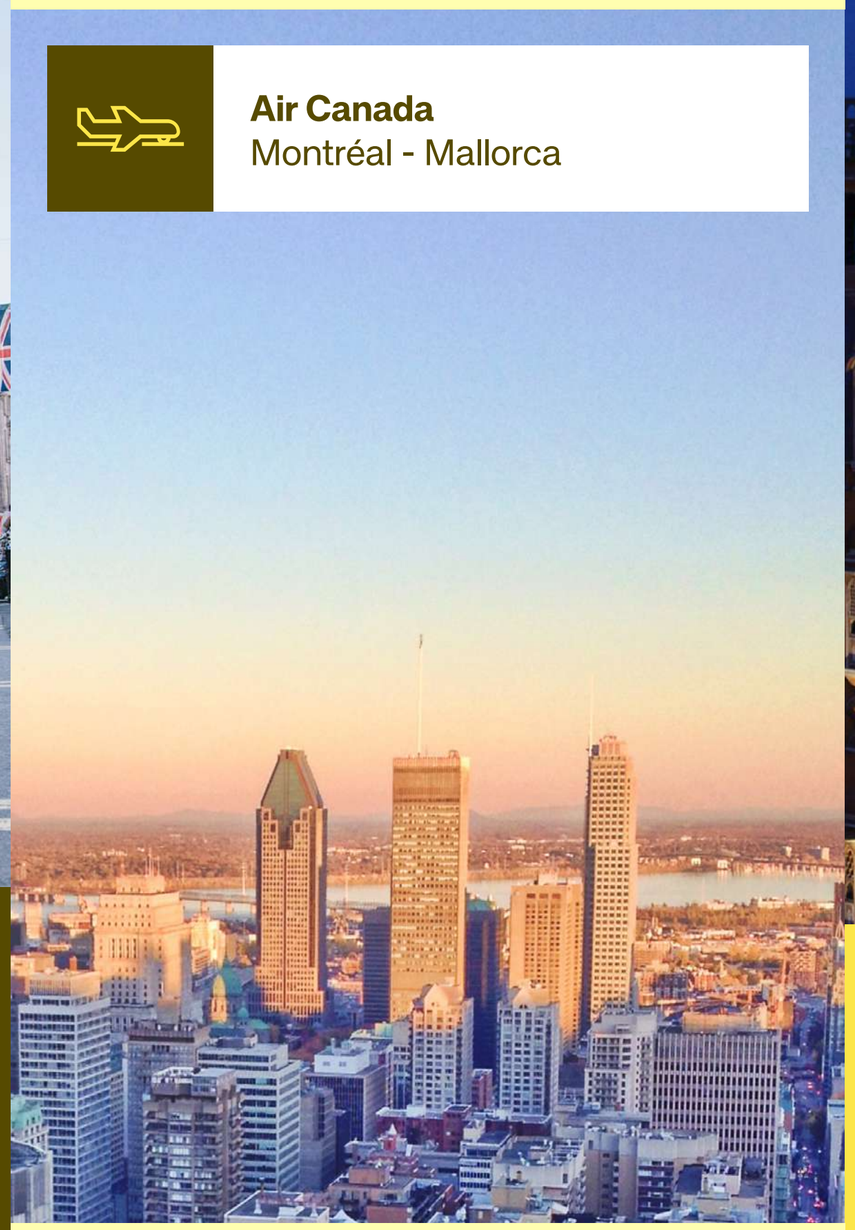
Wizz Air
London - Jeddah

These superconnectors promise to transform air travel across the spectrum.

At the budget end, carriers like **Wizz Air**, which trialed the model on a London to Jeddah flight in 2025 aim to make long-haul travel more affordable than ever.

Low-cost carrier **IndiGo**, plans to launch the first nonstop service between India and Athens in January 2026.

Air Canada
Montréal - Mallorca



Air Canada prepares to connect Montréal and Mallorca for the very first time.

IndiGo
India - Athens

At the premium end, **Qantas**' ambitious Project Sunrise will be a true gamechanger. Its A350-1000ULR aircraft ('Ultra Long Range') will feature the fewest seats of any comparable jet, linking Sydney to London and New York with nonstop journeys up to four hours shorter than traditional routes.

These new aircraft are also pushing the boundaries of fuel efficiency, with improvements between 25 and 30% per seat, compared with their predecessors. These increased efficiencies are a consequence of various innovations like new-generation engines and advanced aerodynamic design.

Iberia

According to Amadeus Travel Intelligence[2], Iberia has embraced the trend with gusto. In just a few months, the Spanish carrier will operate the A321neo on seven long-haul routes between Madrid and airports in the Americas (Boston, San Juan, Santo Domingo, Washington, New York, Recife and Fortaleza). By early 2026, these narrowbody aircraft will account for nearly 10% of Iberia's flights between Madrid and the Americas, according to Amadeus data.

Aer Lingus

Ireland's national carrier shows triple-digit growth on routes to the USA using the A321XLR (+171% to Indianapolis and +102% to Nashville)[2]. By embracing these more fuel-efficient aircraft, airlines are able to service thinner markets.

2. Amadeus Travel Intelligence Air Supply Forecast Jan-Jun 2026 versus previous year. (All data is correct as of 1 November unless otherwise stated.)

+25~30%
fuel efficiency gains per seat in new aircraft

The trend won't just be felt by those with Point-to-Point tickets; these new aircraft are set to redefine in-flight comfort for everyone, setting new expectations that planes of the future will follow. With passengers flying longer, continuous journeys, onboard mobility becomes a higher priority.

Fitted onto each **Qantas' Project Sunrise** flight is an onboard movement area with healthy snacks and on-screen exercise programs that promise to loosen up stiff muscles.

Qantas' Project Sunrise

Qantas hopes to combat another pressing challenge, too: jetlag.

With no grounding pit-stops to help travelers calibrate mid-journey, circadian rhythms are at risk of greater disruption than experienced on a typical long-haul (<12 hours).

A system of science-backed LED lighting sequences

one designed to emulate cloud rolling overhead, another the slow build of an Australian sunrise – will periodically change to ensure guests alight the plane with their best foot forward.

In the Point-to-Point future, friction will be reduced not only from the in-air experience but also from the moments before takeoff and after touchdown, as new airport technologies streamline the journey – eliminating the need for check-in desks and passport-control gates.

A 2025 survey by Amadeus found that two thirds (69%) of global travelers would use biometric gateways if it meant not needing to stop or show a passport. And the tech's already in play.

Amadeus Seamless Corridor leverages AI-enabled processing to identify large groups of passengers while in motion, verifying individuals' ID using mobile apps or biometric wallets.

After a 2025 pilot at select airports, a wider rollout is being planned for the years ahead.

69%

of global travelers would use biometric gateways if it meant not needing to stop or show a passport

A global traveler survey by Amadeus (June 2025).

Singapore's Changi Airport

At the same time, humanity is being put at the heart of airports themselves, which are evolving into places where people linger, rather than simply being terminals for passing through. Asia's leading the charge.

Cambodia's Techo International Airport, opened in October 2025, rises like a cathedral of biophilic design, filled with light and living greenery.

Cambodia's Techo International Airport

Vietnam's lotus-shaped Long Thanh Airport, set to open in 2026, continues the trend, rivaling Singapore's iconic Changi, where a cascading indoor waterfall spritzes tiers of tropical gardens.

Vietnam's Long Thanh Airport

2026 will mark a new dawn for air travel. Journeys once considered marathons will feel more like sprints, opening up second cities and far-flung destinations to new visitors.

Affordable carriers will democratize access, while premium cabins ease the strains of ultra-long haul. For the industry, this shift means new flows of demand, redistributed tourist dollars, and opportunities to connect people with places once out of reach.

And for travelers?

Crossing oceans is no longer an odyssey, but a breeze – whether stretching out in a Project Sunrise wellness zone or napping your way to Mallorca.

TREND 4

Pop Culting

Cultural IP is becoming a travel-worthy commodity and driving pop culture tourism.

Pop culture is at a crossroads. From Labubus to Bridgerton, cultural IP heavyweights have proven themselves adept at driving fans into a frenzy.

An estimated

US$1 billion

Labubus were sold in 2025, while Visit Bath expects Netflix drama **Bridgerton** to contribute approximately

GBP5 million

per year to Bath's local economy.

Expect to see more fan favorite live events for fans in 2026

This obsessive fandom is being amplified by social platforms such as Reddit where "subreddit" forums invite users to scrutinize the subjects of their fandoms at length. But what these IPs deliver in fascination, they lack in real-world connection – a growing dislocation that is increasingly pushing travelers to embark on Pop Culting expeditions where they can live their fantasies out to the max.

Seoul Tourism Organization

The digitalization of recent decades has put endless entertainment within reach but eroded cultural unity. Unlike the nineties or noughties, today's audiences are splintered, steered by algorithms into niche content rather than shared tastes. As casual LLM use evolves into agentic AI, this dislocation will deepen. Instead of being nudged within Netflix or TikTok, tomorrow's consumers may ask their AI agent to pull suggestions from the open web, curated by their own prompt history.

In this landscape, finding that connection becomes even harder – driving people to seek it elsewhere, literally. Travel has always been a bridge to connection. **In 2026 and beyond, smart brands will lean upon IP to build sustained relevance.**

Pop culture travel pioneers include the

Seoul Tourism Organization

which innovated an end-to-end traveler journey revolving around the film *KPop Demon Hunters* – a runaway hit that, as of September 2025, had amassed over **300 million views ↗**, making it Netflix's most-watched film of all time. Across the city, fans can forge connections while making traditional knot bracelets worn by characters in the film, eating meals featured in the show, or joining a "Learn K-Pop dance" program near the scenic Cheonggyecheon Stream.

In 2026, a proposed singalong bus tour will invite fans to join a global chorus belting out *KPop Demon Hunter's* big hits while zooming around the city together.

+33%

future bookings to Seoul from Japan (above the previous year)

+30%

future bookings to Seoul from USA (above the previous year)

3. Amadeus Travel Intelligence Air Visitor data.

Amadeus Travel Intelligence data

Future flight bookings to Seoul between January and June 2026 currently sit **+19% above the previous year** with origin markets such as Japan (+33%) and the USA (+30%) standing out in terms of growth.[3]

Amadeus hotel data from Demand360®

2026 on-the-books occupancy for Seoul hotel chains is pacing ahead of 2025 by 1.8 percentage points and ahead of 2024 by 2.2. And looking back, we can see an increase in Average Daily Rates (ADRs) since the film aired. In September, October and November of this year, ADRs in Seoul hotel chains **grew by 7.4%, 6.9%, and 5.9%** respectively: these three months represent the highest ADR growths for the full year.[4]

Another example comes from North America

According to Entertainment magazine, Variety, HBO's *The Last of Us* made history by becoming the most-watched show in the history of HBO Max in Europe.[5] Demand for international tourist bookings to Alberta, Canada (one of the main filming locations) for the first half of 2026 are currently up +20%, with demand from EU27 countries increasing significantly by +47%, according to Amadeus data.[6] Hotel data reflects the **increased popularity of Alberta as a destination** too. Alberta's occupancy and ADRs have grown year over year since the show was released in 2023. Occupancy was at 58.5% in 2023; 61.4% in 2024 and 61.9% in 2025 (actual, and on-the-books for the remainder of each year). And the ADRs have grown from $137.50 in 2023; to $142.43 in 2024 and $148.63 in 2025.[4]

3. Amadeus Travel Intelligence Air Visitor data
4. Amadeus Demand360® data, as of 18 November
5. Variety.com ↗
6. Amadeus Travel Intelligence Future Bookings – Air Visitors H1 2026 versus 2025

Alberta, Canada

+47%

EU27 bookings to Alberta

+20%

International bookings to Alberta

On the high seas, Virgin Voyages is tapping into the podcast boom of recent years. In October 2025, the company's first-ever True Crime Voyage set forth. Tapping into the online subculture that's developed around true crime content, the cruise line invited podcasters with cult followings to host live recordings and meet-and-greets, alongside workshops where fans could go behind the mic as they learned how to create podcasts of their own.

Virgin Voyages
True Crime Voyage

On terra firma, Airbnb is also looking to tap into appetite for Pop Culting with the summer 2025 rollout of Airbnb Originals, whereby fans can book exclusive experiences with celebrated experts; learning katana swordplay from the Kill Bill choreographer Tetsuro Shimaguchi in a historic Tokyo shrine, or sitting in on a recording of Conan O'Brien's hit podcast in New York.

Airbnb Originals – Craft Noodles and Broth with a Ramen Legend

Early signals suggest the relevance of Pop Culting will extend far beyond 2026, with some destinations building temples to IP in the form of radical new theme parks.

Universal Studios Great Britain

starts construction in 2026 – becoming a major European epicenter for the group's various IPs, supported by a network of hospitality and hotel offerings.

Fairytale bricks

Such is the power of Pop Culting that Abu Dhabi, a long-time fossil fuel exporter, is putting it at the heart of its economic restructure. Fairytale bricks are being laid at Disneyland Abu Dhabi in 2026, with fans expected to arrive in 2032.

But Pop Culting isn't just rollercoaster thrills and leaving via the gift shop.

As the entertainment landscape becomes more fragmented, the characters and stories that live in consumers' smartphones and televisions have the potential to deliver much more value than simple, in-the-moment escapism. For savvy travel brands, IP-led experiences enable consumers to step beyond the glass screen; becoming portals for human connection that deliver a sense of belonging.

TREND 5

Pick ‘n’ Stays

Personalization in hotels – what you want, how you want it, when you want it.

In almost every aspect of modern life, whether booking a flight or ordering a morning coffee, personalization is now a given. Yet when it comes to hotel rooms, many guests are still stuck choosing from the same traditional categories – “standard,” “double” or “suite” – with little idea of what awaits them at check-in. That changes in 2026.

Powered by new technology, hotels are embracing Pick ‘n’ Stays, giving travelers the freedom to choose every detail of their room, whether they want a reformer Pilates machine and blackout blinds, wrap-around monitors for deep work or a room just steps from the breakfast buffet.

Personalization in the hospitality industry is driven by tech innovation.

Evolution of the CRS

What’s enabling this shift is an evolution of the typical Central Reservation System, the core hotel software that manages reservations, room availability and rates across all distribution channels.

Amadeus’ iHotelier

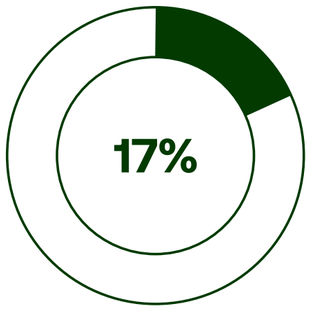
New iterations on an old formula, such as Amadeus’ iHotelier reservations and booking engine, are transforming how hotels keep tabs on availability and ways to personalize the guest experience.

Private, “at-home” cinema experience

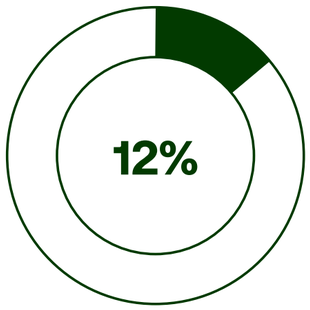
Sought after design elements – a spacious room that doubles as a VR gaming or at-home cinema space, or superior soundproofing that turns a suite into an ideal remote workspace – are now being reframed as high-value selling points. These features can either be bundled together into dynamic offers or presented to prospective guests as nifty add-on purchases.

The possibilities are becoming reality as software providers sync up to provide hoteliers with full-suite tools. In September 2025, Amadeus and hospitality tech company Shiji agreed to share their products across clients, setting the stage for hyper-personalization at scale.

But this isn't some esoteric back-end trend; travelers are hankering for it. A Pick 'n' Stay approach lets travelers spend smart – tacking on room specificities they truly value, crossing off those they don't – while closing the void between expectation and reality. **Amadeus' 2025 *Travel Dreams* survey ↗** of 6,000 travelers found that 63% are willing to pay extra for specific room attributes beyond the standard daily rate, with distinct patterns emerging across traveler types. For instance, 17% of business travelers from the US say they would be prepared to pay up to 20% more to have business services like printing as part of their room package. On the flipside, 12% of Gen Z (18–27-year-olds) say they would pay up to 25% more on top of their room rate to have an Xbox or premium TV channels.



of business travelers (US) would pay up to 20% more to have business services



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63%

of travelers are willing to pay extra for specific room attributes beyond the standard daily rate

Wellness-focused travelers might tack on in-room yoga kits or meditation pods, while families could bundle adjoining play spaces, childcare credits or late-night snack runs. In this way, Pick ‘n’ Stays evolve beyond four walls into lifestyle add-ons that respond to who the traveler is and how they want to live in the moment.

This evolution of personalization promises to permanently change the traveler’s customer journey. Countless studies have shown anticipation to play an outsized role in the joy of travel – imbuing the discovery and research phases with a magical aura.

In the Pick ‘n’ Stay future, uncertainty might be erased, but interactive interfaces such as Hotelverse promise to deliver an even heavier anticipatory rush of dopamine. When booking via Hotelverse, guests get to tour a 3D digital twin of the hotel, getting an unparalleled feel for the property’s layout while peeping into perfect replicas of rooms and snagging their favorite.

Hotelverse guests get to tour a 3D digital twin of the hotel

Unbundling what makes up “a stay” opens the door for real creativity, enabling hotels to capitalize on the spontaneous whims of travelers.

Partnerships might see minibars reimagined with wellness kits, charcuterie selections or luxury skincare, while scented rooms could feature bedsheets and toiletries infused with designer fragrances.

Maverick operators may go further still, monetizing time itself – renting rooms for afternoon naps, post-checkout showers or daytime luggage storage – turning idle hours into smart revenue streams.

Beyond any single platform, the rise of Pick ‘n’ Stays reflects a broader consumer shift. As AI accelerates, personalization will no longer be a nice-to-have but the default operating system of choice.

Speed and precision are key

Once generative AI reaches mass adoption, fueled by in-app integrations from Meta and Google, scrolling through vague categories like “standard” or “premium” will feel increasingly outdated. Travelers will gravitate to providers that can deliver results with the same speed and precision as their AI assistants.

In this new landscape, Pick ‘n’ Stays won’t be a perk – they’ll be a powerful differentiator, enabling hotels to maximize revenues while offering travelers stays that feel tailor-made, down to the last detail.

TREND 6

Innovation Tourism

The future normal is just a timezone away.

AI-generated image

Picture the scene.

You burst into airport arrivals to be greeted by a chrome robot who relieves you of your luggage and dutifully follows you to your connecting train. Ticket purchased with a flash of your palm, you hurtle through tunnels aglow with holographic projections, eventually arriving at your hotel. After refueling on 3D-printed room service, you head to a nearby park for some much-needed R&R, ordering a chilled natural wine that's delivered to your exact coordinates by drone. This is not science fiction but reality (providing you know which destination to visit).

Where governments once vied for dominance in space and energy, the new flag-stakes are in artificial intelligence and robotics.

China

The National Development and Reform Commission has pledged CN¥1 trillion (approximately USD 141 billion) for robotics.

US

The US has matched this with 1 trillion dollars in AI investments.

Japan

Japan continues to build upon its "New Robot Strategy".

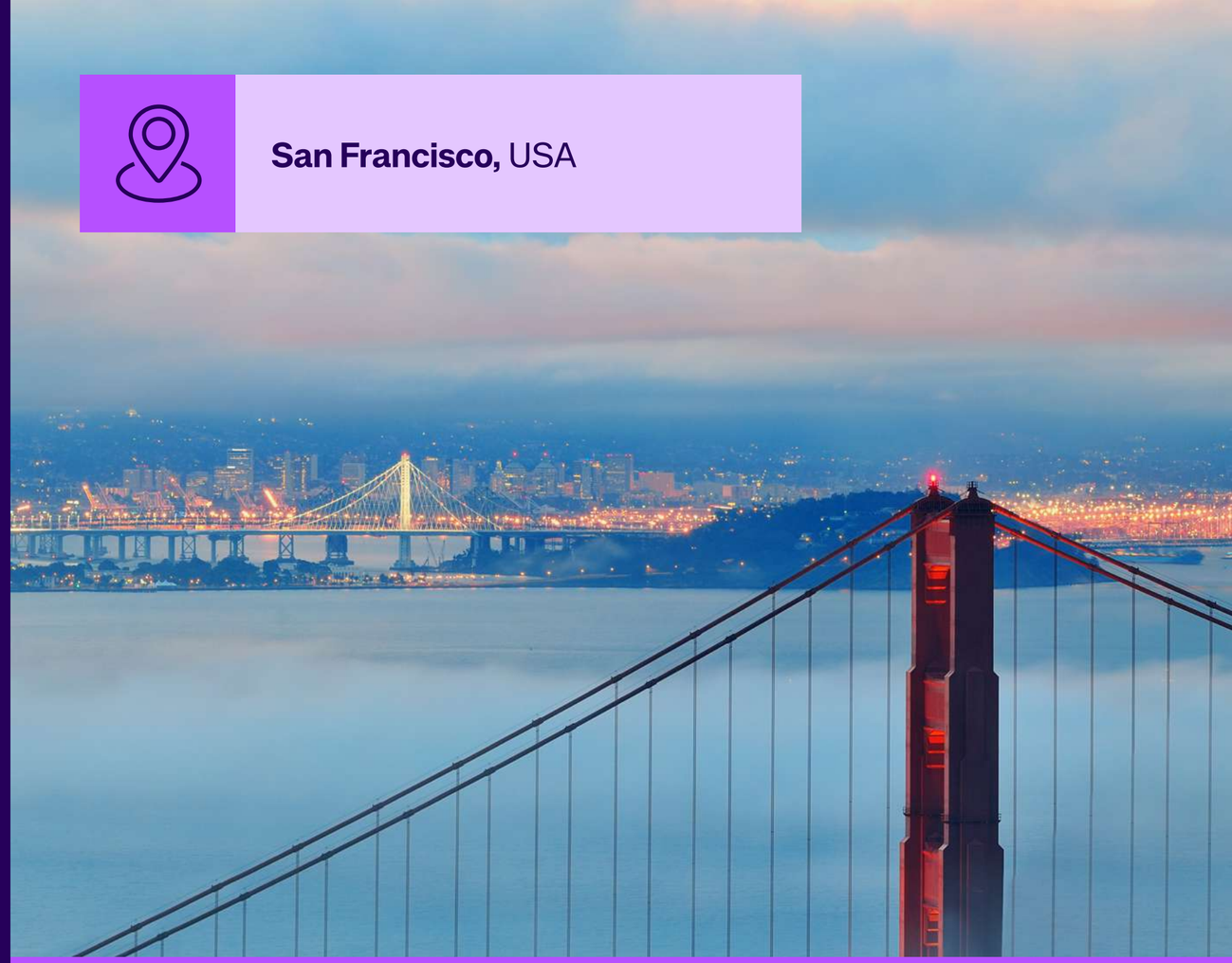
South Korea

South Korea has quietly emerged as a world leader in humanoid design and deployment.

Much of this investment revolves around specific innovation hubs within countries – San Francisco in the USA and South Korea's Pangyo Techno Valley for example. And while much of the output of government investment is to be found in industrial manufacturing as opposed to consumer culture, advancements are also finding their way into the daily lives of their citizens either in the form of new products and services, or vital urban infrastructure.

As these developments start being rolled out, it's fueling a wave of Innovation Tourism in which international travelers seek out the opportunity to experience life as it might look tomorrow, today.

Pangyo Techno Valley,
South Korea



San Francisco, USA

AI-generated image

Social media is driving this wave of Innovation Tourism, with future-forward technologies going viral via short-form videos.

In 2025, the 24/7 Tenz Tangquan Life Spa in China's famed tech hub Shenzhen blew up on TikTok, with global users dazzled by its expansive luminescent interiors.

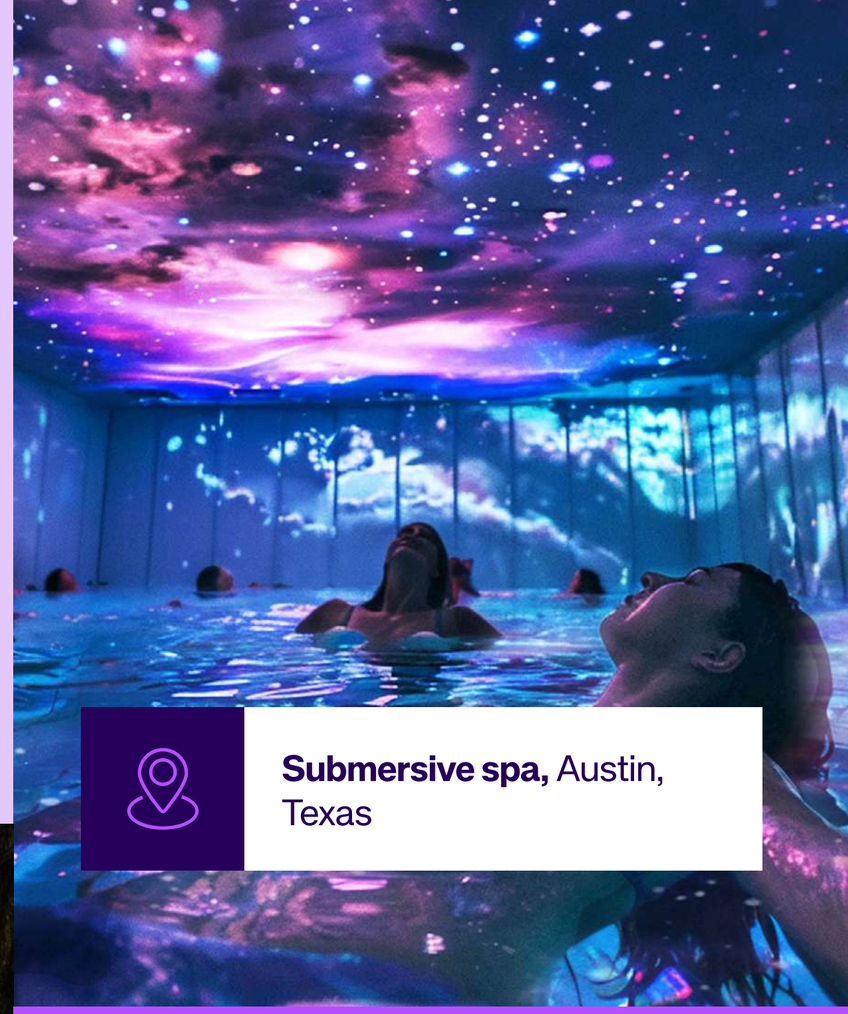
According to Amadeus Travel Intelligence, flight searches for the first half of 2026 to Shenzhen are up +48% year-on-year, highlighting the city's growing allure as a destination where technology, creativity, and investment converge. Searches from top markets including the United Arab Emirates (+137%), Singapore (+82%) and the United Kingdom (+55%) have soared-reflecting how Shenzhen's reputation as a hub of cutting-edge design and digital innovation is increasingly inspiring travel from key markets.[5]

5. Future Bookings – Air Visitors H1 2026 versus H1 2025.

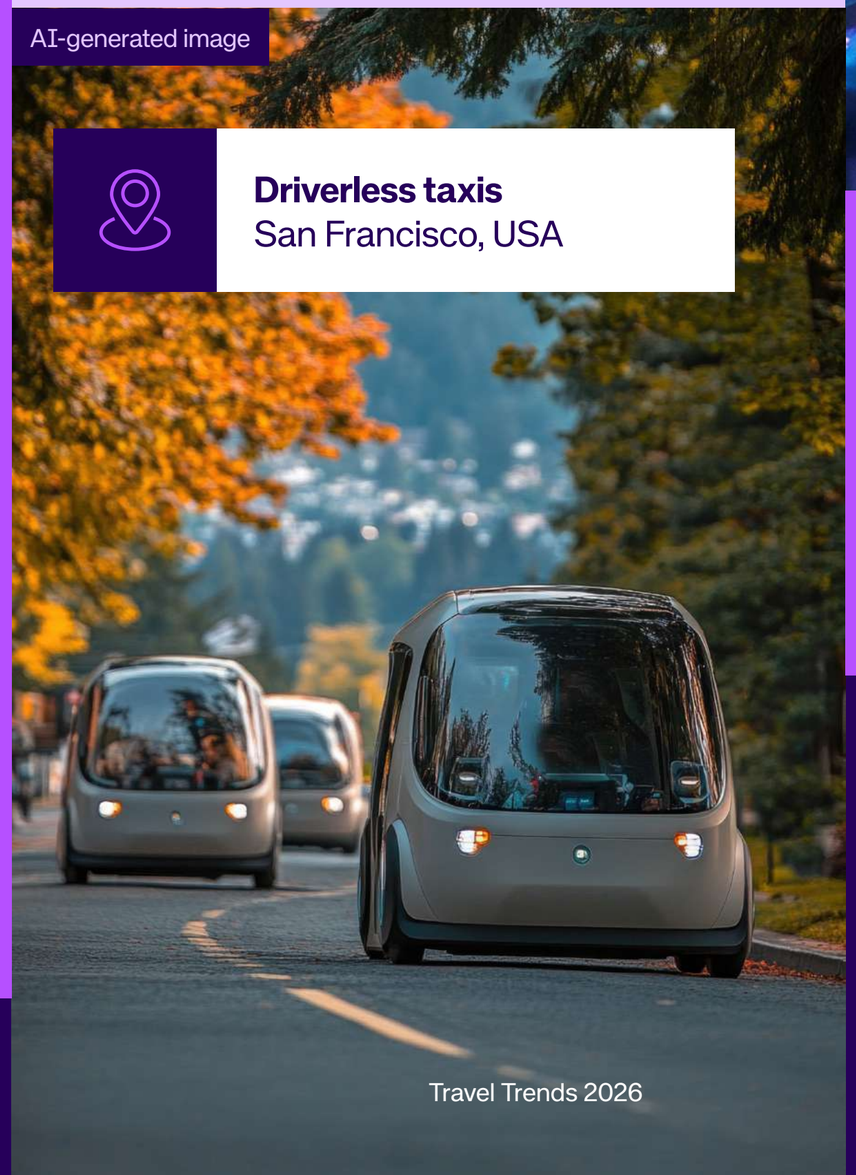
24/7 Tenz Tangquan Life Spa, in China

In 2026, expect this wellness wonderment to continue as Innovation Tourists descend on Submersive, from Meow Wolf cofounder Corvas Brinkerhoff, which launches amid the future-forward startups of Austin, Texas.

Visitors will languish across 12 sensory rooms with projections, lasers and immersive art that use biometric-reading tech to respond in real time to guests' nervous systems.



Submersive spa, Austin, Texas



Driverless taxis San Francisco, USA

Elsewhere, the surreal joyrides of next-gen automotive innovation are luring in early adopters. In **San Francisco ↗**, innovation in tourism sees tour guides now reportedly including journeys in Waymo's driverless taxis as part of their itineraries. By 2026, **2,000 ↗** more vehicles are expected to hit streets across the US, with London poised to follow.

Waymo is already lining up its London fleet, alongside native UK brand Wayve which have both been granted authorization to launch London's first driverless taxis in time for the UK's Automated Vehicles Act, expected to come into force in 2027.

Ultra-fast **Hyperloop** ground transport

But today's Innovation Tourism is tomorrow's everyday. Looking ahead, to 2036, the same thrills elicited by today's driverless cars will be redirected towards ultra-efficient modes of transport.

According to Amadeus research, well over half (60%) of global travelers today are interested in Hypersonic air travel (5x the speed of sound) that could launch jetsetters from London to New York in less than an hour, while 59% would be interested in trying ultra-fast Hyperloop ground transport between major cities.

60%

of global travelers today are interested in Hypersonic air travel

59%

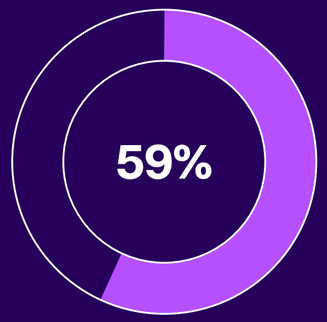
of global travelers would be interested in trying ultra-fast Hyperloop ground transport between major cities

Or consider wearables.

In 2026, iconic Apple designer Jony Ive will reveal **OpenAI**'s first hardware device. AI-powered instant-translation earbuds are already here, but what about inter-species translation – a development hinted at by scientists at the **UK's Coller Foundation ↗**.

This sudden platforming of animal perspectives has the power to entirely reimagine conservation and safari travel, turning a fundamentally conservative experience into a titillating leap into the future for budding Innovation Tourists.

As the AI revolution ushers in game-changing innovations, it's also creating opportunities for travel sellers to package the future – from "try before you buy" VR experiences, which 59% of travelers say they'd consider, to tours of robotics malls, humanoid hotel safaris, and EVTOL sightseeing flights.



of travelers would consider "try before you buy" immersive, virtual reality experiences.

Those who move early on Innovation Tourism will capture a traveler segment motivated by curiosity and eager to showcase their progressive tastes. For these future-curious travelers, the passport stamp is secondary; the true souvenir is the story of how they glimpsed tomorrow before everyone else.

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Travel Trends 2026

All insights are based on research from Globetrender and Amadeus (unless stated otherwise). **Amadeus Travel Intelligence** ↗ , leverages anonymized data from hundreds of millions of bookings and searches worldwide. Amadeus hotel data comes from **Amadeus Demand360®** ↗, which provides a comprehensive overview of market insights from more than 44,000 hotel properties globally, including forward-looking hotel occupancy and rate data.

Amadeus. It's how travel works better.