

LUXURY TRAVEL TRENDS



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THE
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PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS

Fairmont
MAYAKOBA

PALLADIUM
HOTEL GROUP



Luxury travel

By Paloma Villaverde de Rico

When it comes to the travel industry, it's clear that luxury travel is the guiding light—forecasting, to a certain extent, what's to come for the industry as a whole. As Pilar Arizmendi-Stewart, vice president of sales and marketing, The Americas for **Palladium Hotel Group**, says to **Recommend**, “With their tendencies to demand technological advances, sustainable travel, wellness features, and more, luxury travelers are helping move the industry forward and evolve our offerings.” Adds Marco L. Evangelista, vice president of business development for **Journeys by Central Holidays**, “Anticipating and fulfilling the needs and wishes of luxury travelers also raises the bar of expected service and gives the opportunity to service providers to expand the product offering.”

The experts we reached out to for this **Luxury Travel Trends Report**—a complement to the **Luxury Travel Trends Survey** conducted on **recommend.com**, as well as the **Ins & Outs of Selling Luxury Travel** webinar—agree with Arizmendi-Stewart and Evangelista, noting that luxury travelers tend to set the trends.



“Luxury travelers are very important in the industry as they are unique in their interests and what they are looking to explore.”

— Jon Grutzner, President,
Luxury Gold

Defining Luxury Travel

So if they are setting the trends, how does today's luxury traveler differ from the one just a few years ago and what are their unique needs? "Today's luxury traveler is highly discerning," notes travel advisor Susan McDougal of **Suzqz Travels**. "These travelers want more from their travel experience, maybe an off-the-beaten path excursion, or insider information, to add a touch of the extraordinary to their trip." They are "cultured and independent nomads," adds Robert-Jan Woltering, area general manager, **Accor-Luxe Mexico** and general manager, **Fairmont Mayakoba**. He points to luxury travelers creating "an aspirational benchmark for others," with Evangelista noting that they are "sophisticated explorers, more inspired and aware of the destinations, and looking for more personalized travel as well as one-of-a-kind experiences."

Personalization is key, in fact, say many of the experts, to defining today's luxury traveler—today it's a "more meaningful, immersive and personalized experience, one that is a moment of fulfillment for the luxury traveler," says travel advisor Dusty Davidson, **Dream Vacations** franchise owner and vacation specialist. "The luxury traveler still expects value for their money, all the details to be taken care of and excellent customer service," Davidson continues, "but the personal significance behind luxury vacations is changing."

Jon Grutzner, president of **Luxury Gold**, agrees that personalization is a key motivator for what today's luxury client is looking for. "Luxury travelers want more personalization by visiting places that are off-the-beaten path and less crowded.... And with personalized itineraries, it allows them to travel at their own pace, doing what they want to do."

Today's luxury vacation is no longer "about the golden taps and marble bathroom," continues Grutzner. Luxury clients are, as he notes, looking for less-touristy places, authentic experiences, and a seamless vacation. It's about the "WOW factor," says travel advisor Lynn Ciccarelli, owner of **Bella Vacations** and a member of the **Virtuoso** network. And that wow factor comes into play when you add such things as "after hours, early entrance, or access to people or places that can only be done with careful and advance planning, as well as experiential days—cooking classes, wine tastings, concerts in iconic venues," points out travel advisor Valerie Edgemon, owner of **Edgewood Travel** and a member of the **Ensemble Travel Group**. It has to be an extraordinary experience, for certain, says Jay Paul, a **Cruise Planners** travel advisor. "The guest is a VIP...and they receive personalized service that goes above and beyond for a truly exceptional experience."

“For luxury guests it's about quality, quality and more quality, and knowing that if they have a need, it'll be met fast and efficiently. Luxury travelers today also appear to be more open-minded and really like bringing a group to enjoy more adventure and 'local' experiences. They also want to ensure the vacation they are on is contributing to something charitable or good.”

— Amy Menci, Vice President, Leisure Sales, Atlantis, Paradise Island

TRENDS

“Finding the right balance between travel, work and wellness; where all three are no longer competing, they now complement each other.”

— **Robert-Jan Woltering**, Area General Manager of **Accor-Luxe Mexico** & General Manager of **Fairmont Mayakoba**

From Sustainability to Multi-gen. . . and Authenticity

Luxury travelers are no longer satisfied with crossing off the destinations on their bucket list. They want to be fully immersed in a destination, in an authentic experience, in their surroundings...they want to feel that when they are traveling they are doing right by the world, instead of just leaving their carbon footprint. They want to go in for a deep dive and come out on the other end a changed person—upping their Emotional IQ in some way.

Take volun-tourism, which, says Amy Menci, vice president, leisure sales, **Atlantis, Paradise Island**, is one of the top trends among luxury clients. “More and more guests want to be part of a ‘give-back’ experience when they travel.” She adds that it’s becoming more apparent that luxury travelers “are becoming more and more environmentally conscious and want to see that the place they are going to does their part in ensuring that natural resources and

marine animals are preserved and safe.” Jonathan Raggett, managing director for **Red Carnation Hotels**, also sees sustainability as a defining trend, “with guests wanting to know what we are doing to reduce our carbon footprint and actively supporting a number of the initiatives we have introduced.”

Another important trend that’s really come to define travel in the 21st century is multigenerational groups, and in the luxury segment it’s no exception. Dan Austin, founder and director of **Austin Adventures**, says that he “definitely continues to see significant growth in multigenerational adventures. While grandma and grandpa might be picking up the cost, they want to ensure a quality experience for all from start to finish.” Arizmendi-Stewart also sees “luxury for the whole family/multi-gen travel” as one of the most noticeable trends among today’s luxury traveler.

“Luxury isn’t just for adults anymore; it extends to the youngest members of the family too and is embodied in different ways.”

All of the travel advisors we reached out to for this report pointed to multigenerational and family travel as in-demand, with Davidson noting that “luxury travelers are seeking more meaningful moments experienced as a family.” He adds that this affects travel advisors tremendously because it changes how “vacations are planned due to the larger group sizes and needing to appeal to and satisfy multiple interests spanning multiple generations.”

And there’s no denying that seeking out authentic experiences are going to continue to be at the top of the list for luxury travelers, with Paul pointing to “expedition experiences.” And expedition experiences make sense if you consider what Davidson says: “We are seeing more and more interest in remote locations... they want to explore lesser-known paths and spend more time among locals, providing the authentic, immersive experience they are searching for.”

TOP TRAVEL MOTIVATORS

1. Authentic Experiences
2. Crossing Off Bucket List Destinations
3. Exploring New Destinations

* Source: Luxury Travel Trends Survey (conducted on recommend.com)





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How Will Luxury Travel Evolve?

"Preserving cultures, saving wildlife and treading lightly is very crucial to the future of our planet," says Grutzner, adding that off-the-beaten path destinations will continue to be sought out by luxury travelers. In fact, notes Menci, "luxury travel will become more and more focused on the art of 'local' experiences," with Woltering concurring, pointing out that luxury travel is about "offering an organic and locally sourced experience. It has to be something that differentiates your day-to-day living and transports you to a new and enriched environment." In fact, says Raggett, "experiential travel will continue to grow. Guests want to be able to connect with a locality, understand different cultures, etc." No doubt about it, says Evangelista, "On the horizon, we see luxury travel expanding even further as travelers seek more and more transformational opportunities, as lesser-known destinations emerge, and as travelers continue to want to make new connections and have interpersonal exchanges that reinforce values such as humanity, family and personal achievements."

"We'll continue to see one-off dream trips. 'Dream it and we can build it' sort of adventures. Eight national parks in 10 days, sure; hot air ballooning in wine country, sure; mountaintop chalet with a celebrity chef, you bet. We are just going to continue to hear requests for unique, one-of-a-kind experiences.**"**

-- Dan Austin, Founder and Director, Austin Adventures

TOP TRENDS IN COMING YEARS



- 1.** Traveling to Destinations Not Impacted by Overtourism
- 2.** Out-of-the-Box Immersive Experiences
- 3.** Cultural Connections

* Source: Luxury Travel Trends Survey (conducted on recommend.com)

RELATIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Today's travel advisor, says McDougal, "should know as much about the client's lifestyle and preference as a doctor knows about his or her health." That relationship, she points out, leads to her being able to "recommend particular sites, restaurants, accommodations and activities that are meaningful to the client."

"Rapport is everything," adds Paul. "You become not only their trusted advisor, but also a respected friend or colleague in their inner circle." It's important to know a client well, because "you can anticipate every need and request before the client even realizes they need or want it," says Davidson. Ciccarelli adds that, "many clients think they know what they want, but don't know how to experience it in the best way possible," and that's where the travel advisor comes in.

Edgemon adds that what's priceless for luxury travelers is having "someone attending to all those details and watching them in real time from the time the plane takes off to the time it lands again."



Who's Your Target Client

- Highly educated, retired professionals who have resources and time
- Younger clients who have the resources
- Empty nesters
- Travelers who want that extra touch, advice and guidance
- The traveler who wants to delve a little deeper into their destination

THE CALL OF CULTURE



Half of respondents said that **Cultural Capitals** are the type of destinations their luxury clients are most seeking, so it's no surprise that Europe's destinations are the most popular among these luxury clients.

* Source: Luxury Travel Trends Survey
(conducted on recommend.com)

⇒ Point Your Clients to Luxury Experiences

So what do some of the hotels and destinations that are focused on luxury have on offer for your clients? Unique guest experiences, including distinct styles of lodging, high-service standards, sustainability opportunities, personalization, and focused journeys, as well as exclusive amenities and authentic encounters.

The Cove at Atlantis, Paradise Island, for example, lends itself to today's luxury vacationer, says Menci, because not only does it provide exclusive amenities as well as an oasis-style feel away from the more central Atlantis, it also affords an opportunity for guests to connect with "people and environments that cater to the soul. The Cove lends itself beautifully to this spirit with its location, as well as its staff of Bahamian associates." She adds that the resort "made the decision to lead with their culture and the artist entrepreneurs of the country to bring to surface the magic of Paradise Island."

Also fully embracing its surroundings, **Fairmont Mayakoba** delivers on the philosophy that "nature is the new luxury," as Woltering notes. "Our beautiful property has been a pioneer in sustainability and eco-friendly offers

for our guests. One example is our *Coral Reef Restoration Program*, where guests participate in helping grow the Mesoamerican Reef, which fortunately runs right in front of Mayakoba. We take pride that in Fairmont Mayakoba is where discovery comes naturally."

For Raggett, one of the most important aspects of a luxury vacation is delivering on guests' expectations.

"Red Carnation Hotels works hard to meet those expectations by delivering consistently high service standards, providing tiny noticeable touches (TNTs) to make guests feel special and recognized."

Delivering on guests' expectations also plays into the theme that our experts keep touching on—personalization. Arizmendi-Stewart says it's key to allowing Palladium to deliver on the promise of a luxury vacation. "Our **TRS Hotels** are guest-centric. They give guests the freedom to vacation how they want. This idea lives in touches like customizable minibars and in-room and mobile technologies, but the centerpiece of personalization at TRS Hotels is a personal butler assigned to each suite who can assist with any request—from setting up a sunrise personal training

session to arranging a romantic in-suite dinner. We also remember our guests' preferences, so we can tailor their stay accordingly when they come back and join us again."

And it's delivering on that unique, personalized experience that feels authentic that truly resounds with luxury vacationers.



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As Evangelista notes, for **Journeys by Central Holidays** that means "developing a unique guest experience that starts from the planning of the itinerary to local assistance through the travel journey—every step is very detailed and meticulously planned." Grutzner adds that, "What matters most are the details," and he points to **Luxury Gold's** VIP experiences—"those money-can't-buy moments of accessing an iconic site after-hours or meeting someone incredible—combined with our exceptional dining and *Traveling Concierge* service, which will be there for you if you need help with making arrangements for dining and experiences outside the itinerary."

It's about catering to an array of luxury clients, because, as Davidson notes, "a luxury vacation means different things to different clients. For today's luxury traveler, it doesn't necessarily indicate how much money they spend. It is about getting a seamless, personalized experience and amenities resulting in a relaxing, rejuvenating, and authentic experience while getting the best value for their money." ■

SAILING AWAY

Cruising is the vacation style most moving the needle among luxury clients, with more than 50% of respondents pointing to this type of travel, both ocean and river cruising. And when they're on the cruise, luxe travelers are looking for: **Cultural Immersion; Ease of Travel; Unique Shore Excursions; and a Global Itinerary.**

* Source: Luxury Travel Trends Survey (conducted on recommend.com)

THE
COVE
ATLANTIS
PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

Elegantly situated between Cove and Paradise Beaches, The Cove at Atlantis is an all-suite resort on Paradise Island. Set within the 171 acres that comprise Atlantis, Paradise Island, this ultra-luxury property raises the bar among distinctive resort destinations. Welcomed by an open-air lobby, guests will enjoy sensual suites, celebrity chef dining, bespoke amenities and purposeful service delivered with Bahamian warmth. The exclusive, adults-only pool includes 20 private cabanas with breathtaking views of the ocean.

The Cove has found that luxury travelers today are in search of a transformational vacation experience, looking not only for authentic and culturally rich experiences, but also for opportunities to connect with people and environments that speak to the soul. The resort lends itself beautifully to this spirit with a warm, friendly staff and spectacular location. Curated partnerships with Bahamian artists, musicians, designers, chefs and farmers allow every guest to discover the country's traditions through tastes, colors and sounds. From a sculptural installation on the Peninsula of Cove and Paradise beaches carved by Bahamian artist Antonius Roberts and flavorful Caribberranean cuisine by chef Julie Lightbourn at Sip Sip to the patterns painted by Lulu deKwiatkowski around The Cove Pool, guests are surrounded by truly transformational experiences. The Cove staff don a nametag including the Bahamian island they are from, meant to help guests learn more about the 700 islands of The Bahamas. By connecting these souls together, The Cove takes their guests on a luxury journey, highlighted by authentic experiences.

The Cove at Atlantis has found that luxury travelers today are in search of a transformational vacation experience, looking not only for authentic and culturally rich experiences, but also for opportunities to connect with people and environments that speak to the soul.

 **TheCoveAtlantis**

 **thecoveatlantis**

 **youtube.com/user/TheCoveAtlantis**

atlantisbahamas.com

Fairmont

MAYAKOBA

Fairmont Mayakoba, a luxurious private retreat and part of the luxurious Mayakoba gated resort community - is a unique and precious jewel among beach resorts. With an exceptional location, the AAA-Five Diamond Fairmont Mayakoba offers all manner travelers a spectacular and unique setting. It embraces the ancient Mayan culture, which still reverberates and is complemented by the welcoming Mexican culture; the luxurious environs and the desire to always be the perfect host. Each of the 401 guest rooms welcomes and pamper guests with excellent amenities, versatile facilities, and well-credentialed professionals.

Meet our Willow Stream Spa located in the heart of a tropical jungle. A mystical spa journey inspired in the Mayan Culture is ready to delight your senses. It offers unique treatments with local herbs, essential oils, and natural extracts used to pamper and energize the body, mind, and soul. This three-floor spa includes 20 treatment rooms, fitness center, spa boutique, couple suites, rooftop, mineral pool and steam, and sauna rooms.

Other signature activities that our resort offers are the birdwatching boat tour through the water canals, the Guided Catamaran tour, and more! Discover the unparalleled beauty of Fairmont Mayakoba.

Fairmont Mayakoba is a unique and precious jewel among beach resorts. With an exceptional location in the private Mayakoba enclave, this AAA-5 Diamond resort offers a spectacular setting embracing the ancient Mayan culture. Complemented by warm and welcoming curated Mexican experiences. Each of the 401 guest rooms pampers guests with excellent amenities, unparalleled facilities and well-credentialed professionals.

 **Fairmont Mayakoba**

  **@FairmontMYK**

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PALLADIUM

H O T E L G R O U P

How Palladium Hotel Group is Elevating Luxury Travel

Palladium Hotel Group, which operates the adults-only TRS Hotels and family-friendly Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts brands, is on the forefront of emerging luxury trends. The company is elevating luxury at its resorts through personalization and indulgent amenities for the whole family.

TRS Hotels offer sophisticated décor, modern technologies and exemplary service. Personalization is paramount to the hotels, which give their guests the freedom to vacation how they want with Infinite Indulgence, an evolution of the all-inclusive hotel concept. This is embodied through everything from in-suite minibars with premium liquor tailored to guests' preferences, to a personal butler who can arrange whatever guests desire – whether it's a poolside yoga session with a personal trainer, or a romantic paella dinner for two on the balcony – and it's included in their stay.

Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts offer luxury for the whole family at the Grand Palladium Vallarta Resort & Spa and the new Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres Resort & Spa through Family Selection, a designated, privileged area especially for VIP families. Family Selection offers guests unique luxury rooms, personalized services, special amenities and exclusive facilities. Family Bosses are treated to a variety of in-suite surprises and have access to enriching activities just for them. Family Selection adults receive in-suite service 24/7, unpacking and packing services, priority restaurant reservations, and complimentary admission to the hydrotherapy area of Zentropia Palladium Spa & Wellness center. They also have direct access to a Family Host, who can assist with reservations and special requests.

Palladium Hotel Group operates TRS Hotels, which bring a luxurious, sophisticated and modern offering for guests seeking an adults-only, all-inclusive experience; and Grand Palladium Hotels & Resorts, all-inclusive resorts that are perfect for families, couples and groups. Both brands are located in the Caribbean and Mexico's most spectacular beach destinations.



PalladiumHotelGroup



PalladiumHG

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