

Travel Trends 2024 Report (Part 1): Authenticity And The Rise In AI

Angelina Villa-Clarke Contributor

Chasing the dream: I write about travel and the world around me

Follow

In this series of articles, I talk to a wide range of travel experts, insiders and luxury brands to find out more about the future of travel for next year and beyond. Today, I look at two growing trends: the search for **authentic travel** and how **technology** can elevate travel experiences.

TREND 1: DEEP AND MEANINGFUL TRAVEL

Connecting with local communities, learning about local cultures and harnessing authentic experiences are all key for travelers.



An intrepid Travel trip to Karijini National Park, Western Australia.

(CREDIT: INTREPID TRAVEL)

In **Intrepid Travel**'s recent '**A Sustainable Future for Travel**' Report—which was published in collaboration with foresight agency, The Future Laboratory—'People-Positive' travel is pegged as the successor to sustainable travel. Going forward, regenerative travel will focus on travel being social-led instead of product-led, says the report, with people-positive travel focusing on forging deeper human connections, as well as considering the environmental and

social impact. Inclusivity will also be key, with travel companies like Intrepid focusing on social change through connection. One area has seen Intrepid investing in recruiting more female leaders in locations such as Morocco and India, doubling the number of female leaders in recent years, and introducing 100 new Indigenous-focused trips in 2023. Focusing on local communities will also be key, helping prevent ‘tourism leakage’, when money flows out of the destinations.

PROMOTED



Meeting local communities is key to Intrepid Travel's experiences.
(CREDIT: INTREPID RAVEL)

“One of the problems with tourism at the moment is that it is the opposite of regenerative,” explains Darrell Wade, co-founder and chairman of Intrepid Travel. “It's extractive—and this cannot continue for much longer.”



A typical Polynesian barbecue at the Conrad Bora Bora Nui.

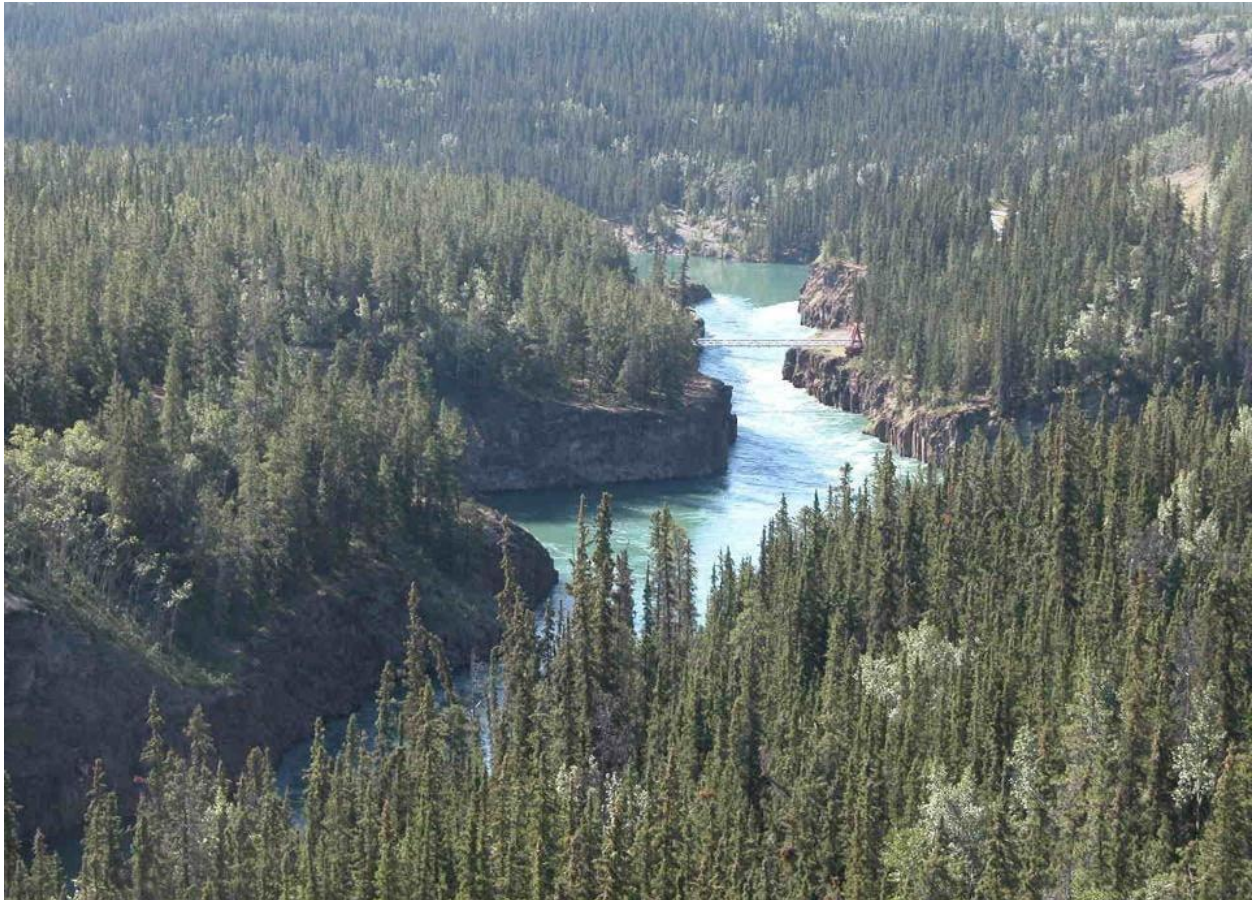
(CREDIT: ADAM BRUZZONE 2018)

Meanwhile, **Hilton's 2024 Trends Report** finds the makeup of the modern traveller is evolving. It identifies an emerging theme of travelers prioritising experiences (85%), with many looking forward to exploring the unknown (81%), trying the local cuisine (64%) and learning about local customs and traditions (48%) when on holiday. And people are saving the pennies to make it happen, with more than half (52%) reducing spending in other areas to prioritise travel. Hilton's global trends report found over half (56%) of people in Britain plan to spend more on travel in 2024 than in 2023. Some are going further to immerse themselves into local traditions, with 25% looking for locally-sourced food while away.



A Sri Lankan cookery class, with Cartology.
(CREDIT: CARTOLOGY)

Cartology Travel, a bespoke, luxury travel agency, describes its focus as curating unique experiences around the world by working with select local partners to ensure memorable stays. The company agrees that the search for authentic travel experiences has been a growing trend over the past few years. “Clients are keen to meet and connect with local people and delve into new experiences,” says co-founder Justin Huxter. “This could be learning more about conservation alongside researchers in South Africa or a cooking class in Sri Lanka, in the home of a villager, which focuses on traditional recipes handed down through the generations.”



The Yukon River, Canada. Travel deeper with Audley Travel.
(CREDIT: AUDLEY TRAVEL)

Clients are asking for more 'unique' experiences when they travel, says **Audley Travel**. The specialist in tailor-made travel says its North America specialists are responding with suggestions of experiences such as guided kayak and camping trips to see whales and wolves; or exploring lesser travelled regions, such as Saskatchewan and the Yukon. This trend is also being recognised by Audley's partners in destinations. While arranging tailormade trips has always been at the heart of Audley's operations, the

country specialists report that an increasing number of partners are also customising the excursions and experiences that they offer for individual clients.



Original Travel has identified 'waterculturalists' as a specific upcoming trend.
(CREDIT: DROITS RÉSERVÉS)

Original Travel is also reporting a similar trend for travellers wanting to 'deep-dive' into a destination. In fact, it has created 10 new itineraries to satisfy the demand from what they are calling 'waterculturalists': divers who want to deepen their understanding of the seas and the life and cultures they support. Just as horticulturalists are students of the land and plantlife, 'waterculturalists' want to better understand the seas they explore, educate themselves on issues which need addressing and get involved in ways to protect and cultivate the waters and the cultures which depend on them—and it's becoming a vital part to many more dive trips than ever before. The new and innovative projects include: building reef highways in Fiji; planting coral in the Philippines; restoring coral in French Polynesia; diving with Bubu fisherman in Indonesia and observing local traditional fishing practices from a unique perspective underwater; and joining a safari dive in Tanzania, where you will be equipped with an earpiece to listen to the dive guide as they take you on a tour of coral gardens.

TREND 2: AI AND TRAVEL

How advances in technology and artificial intelligence can aid the hospitality sector and secure the future of the planet.

Timbers Resorts, a boutique hospitality developer and operator, says that AI can play an important role in hospitality. CMO, Heidi Nowak, says: “In the luxury travel sector we stress there is no substitute for personalized service when it comes to providing a truly meaningful experience for guests. However, AI can and does play an effective role both for guests and staff. We discovered that the optimal approach in utilizing this technology is for tasks that require less of a human touch, such as expediting requests for fresh linens or addressing various housekeeping requests.”



Timbers Resorts, Kaua'i, Hawaii.
(CREDIT: SHAWN O'CONNOR)

She continues: “Through AI, guests can share their needs via text which can be sent from anywhere and at any time throughout their stay. So if there is a request for fresh glassware or towels, they can make that ask while they’re

working on their swing on the golf course or spending a day on the slopes and can expect the delivery to occur before their return. We strongly believe technology could never replace the personal connection creating lasting memories with every guest's stay. We recommend AI for routine tasks where efficiency is the top priority.”



Wearable Carbon Tracker.
(CREDIT: INTREPID TRAVEL)

Intrepid Travel's aforementioned 'A Sustainable Future for Travel' Report also touches upon artificial intelligence. The report says: "A genuine concern for the state of the planet and its people manifests as holding the travel industry accountable. These are Travel Transformers, who not only want to

mitigate any further harm but plan to drive positive change through travel. They won't let the travel industry get away with greenwashing, and they want tangible results. By 2040, it will be unusual to see members of Generation Alpha without a carbon footprint tracker on their smartphones. Every Uber ride, plane journey and trip to the supermarket will be logged in their devices, noting their carbon footprint in real time."



Tehnology can only assist the travel of the future, says Intrepid Travel.
(CREDIT: INTREPID TRAVEL)

The report also forecasts how technology can aid regenerative travel: "Tracking travel metrics in real time will create an era of live traceability and accountability within the travel industry. 2040's travelers will hold themselves accountable, leaning into technology to measure and optimize their behaviours in line with environmental values and targets. By 2028, the global travel technology market is predicted to reach £11.2bn, up from £7.3bn in 2022. This booming category will give Travel Transformers and other cohorts the means to log their daily emissions and track their travel metrics in real time to help them reduce their footprints. Noteworthy strides have already been made in shaping this landscape. Ariel, a sustainability platform, is recognised for its accuracy in gauging carbon footprints and subsequently offsetting emissions for individuals and businesses. Other platforms, such as

Klima, Earth Hero and Joro, calculate travel and everyday footprints travel, aiding people to achieve decarbonisation goals.”

“In 2020, Intrepid Travel adopted science-based targets, which set out a path to reduce emissions in accordance with the Paris Climate Agreement. The World Economic Forum’s Mission Possible Platform aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century from a group of traditionally ‘hard-to-abate’ sectors, including aviation.”