

Global Hotel Alliance Unveils Luxury Traveller Profile for 2026

GHA DISCOVERY

2026 TRAVEL TRENDS - LUXURY*



IT'S PERSONAL

Travellers design trips that express who they are, not where they go.



SLOW AND STEADY

Meaningful, unplanned and restful trips with safety and comfort in mind are key.



NEW FRONTIERS

Exploration will rule with travellers seeking new places and splurging only on quality.

HOW IMPORTANT IS TRAVEL?

71%

"It expresses my identity and values."

41%

"It matters more than career or education milestones."

2026 TRIPS PLANNED

Business Travel



5 trips planned



74% international

Leisure Travel



7 trips planned



95% international

TRAVEL PREFERENCES

58%

Off-the-beaten path

Smaller cities and rural escapes

83%

Room first

Quality upgrades rather than splurge freely

61%

Time-savers

Concierge services, private transfer, priority access

52%

Exclusivity

Special access to experiences



TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN 2026



JAPAN



CHINA



THAILAND



USA



ITALY

64%

prefer new places, a trend shared across generations and most countries



TOP PRIORITIES FOR TRAVELLERS

Hotel quality	88%
Selective splurging	83%
Safety and comfort	52%
Cultural curiosity	42%



HOW THEY CHOOSE HOTELS

Loyalty programme	43%
Location and neighbourhood	38%
Quality of accommodation	33%



WHERE THEY BOOK HOTELS

Loyalty programme website or app	45%
Hotel website or app	30%
Online travel agent or tour operator site	5%

THE RISE OF AI



65% of luxury travellers use AI for trip planning

70% of Millennials and Gen Z plan trips using AI

82% are comfortable with the idea of an AI concierge

*Based on Oct 2025 survey to GHA DISCOVERY members in EN, DE, SP, ZH and JP with D\$10 incentive. 595 member responses analysed.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates Dec 22, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - [Global Hotel Alliance](#) (GHA) has released its Luxury Traveller Profile for 2026, drawing on insights from the top 10% of spenders within its award-winning [GHA DISCOVERY](#) programme, with 34 million members globally. This includes guests of the [Ultratravel Collection](#), a curated portfolio of the world's most exceptional hotels and resorts known for iconic settings, intimate service, and unforgettable experiences.

The results paint a sharp picture of the luxury traveller of 2026: selective spenders who are identity-led, AI curious, and deeply committed to quality, exploration, and loyalty recognition.

From motivation to mindset, here's how the luxury traveller profile is tracking for 2026:

The luxury traveller will travel to express their values

Luxury travellers are designing trips that say something about who they are: 71% reveal travel expresses their identity and values, and 41% say it matters more than career or education milestones. This mindset is strongest among younger travellers, who increasingly see global experiences as markers of self-expression. Across generations, luxury is no longer defined by excess, but by meaning, individuality, and personal resonance.

The luxury traveller will seek calm, space, and quality

A shift toward slow, restorative travel is shaping luxury behaviour for the year ahead, with a distinct preference for off-the-beaten-track destinations: **58%** prefer smaller cities and rural escapes over large urban centres, while time-saving convenience is essential – **61%** value concierge support, private transfers and priority access. Exclusivity continues to rise, with **52%** saying that special access and intimate experiences define luxury. Comfort, space, and ease now outrank packed itineraries as the markers of a well-designed trip.

The luxury traveller will indulge selectively

Selective spending is the new approach to luxury. Instead of splurging freely, 83% of luxury travellers say they will invest in quality upgrades that enhance comfort and elevate the stay. Hotel standards are non-negotiable: 88% refuse to compromise on where they stay, making premium accommodation – five-star and boutique properties – the clearest indicator of a luxury experience. This thoughtful approach to indulgence reflects a broader desire for substance over spectacle.

The luxury traveller will choose new places over familiar ones

Exploration will define the luxury traveller in 2026. Some 64% prefer to discover new places rather than revisit old favourites, with Japan, China, Thailand, the United States, and key European destinations topping their wish lists next year. This appetite for novelty is strongest among Millennials and Gen Z, who consistently favour culture, curiosity, and discovery, but it resonates across the entire luxury segment as travellers seek deeper, more meaningful experiences. Discerning travellers expect to take seven leisure trips in 2026, 95% of them overseas, yet they are not chasing volume. These journeys are curated with intention, favouring quality, depth, and calm over frequency.

The luxury traveller will be loyalty-led

Recognition and rewards remain powerful drivers of choice, with 43% of luxury travellers selecting their hotel based primarily on loyalty programme benefits, valuing upgrades, early check-in, late check-out, and personalised recognition. This loyalty-led mindset also influences booking behaviour: 45% book through loyalty programme websites or apps, and 30% through hotel brand websites, while only 5% turn to online travel agents. Loyalty has become an integral part of the luxury lifestyle.

The luxury traveller will embrace AI-supported planning

Technology is increasingly shaping how the luxury traveller plans trips, with 65% now using AI tools for travel research and itinerary design, and a forward-looking 82% revealing they are comfortable with the idea of an AI concierge. Millennials and Gen Z lead this adoption – 71% have used AI to plan their trips – while older generations prefer technology that simplifies logistics without replacing human service. In 2026, luxury travel will be human-led but tech-enhanced, with AI making planning easier, smoother, and more personalised.

“The 2026 luxury traveller will explore the world with purpose and clarity,” said Kristi Gole, Executive Vice President of Strategy at Global Hotel Alliance. “Discerning travellers are gravitating toward experiences that feel meaningful, choosing places that inspire them, and favouring services that make every stage of the journey effortless. For this segment, premium travel is defined by thoughtful choices, elevated standards, and a desire for deeper connection, and with GHA DISCOVERY and the Ultratravel Collection, we are perfectly placed to support their evolving expectations in the year ahead.”

For the general global travel trends please follow this [link](#).



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