



**AFRICA
TRAVEL
WEEK**

COLOUR YOUR WORLD

AFRICA TRAVEL WEEK TREND REPORT 2023

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Get ready to colour your world with the latest travel trends from Africa Travel Week!

It's time to get ready to add some colour to your world with the latest trends in African travel.

In this trends report, we'll take a closer look at the ways in which travel to Africa is colouring everyone's world - from the younger luxury traveller to the intrepid adventurer and the LGBTQ+ visitor.

It's no secret that colour can have a profound effect on our mood and emotions. From the greens of the savannah to colourful markets in Africa's vibrant cities and the brilliant blues of the ocean, Africa is a continent that never fails to paint a vivid picture. And when it comes to travel trends, there's no shortage of bright and bold ideas to explore.

So what's hot in the world of African travel this year? First up, let's talk conservation. Sustainability and conservation are more important than ever. Travellers are looking for experiences that not only give back to the environment, but also support local communities and cultures. Whether it's eco-friendly lodges or wildlife tours that prioritise sustainability, there's plenty of room to go green in African travel.

Speaking of green, inclusivity is another trend that's taking off in a big way. From LGBTQ+ travellers to those with disabilities, there's a growing demand for travel experiences that cater to diverse communities. And when it comes to colour, inclusivity means celebrating the full spectrum of human diversity.



Spiritually, Africa also has plenty to offer. Whether travellers are looking to connect with their faith at a holy site or simply seeking a moment of peaceful reflection, there are plenty of experiences that can add a colourful layer to their journey.

Last but not least, adventure tourism is trending. For those seeking a thrill, Africa is the ultimate playground. Whether scaling Mount Kilimanjaro, rafting down the Zambezi River, or bungee jumping off the Victoria Falls Bridge, there's no shortage of heart-pumping experiences to be had on the continent. And with adventure travel continuing to grow in popularity, Africa is poised to be a top destination for years to come.

So there you have it - a colourful look at the trends shaping the travel industry in Africa. From the power of colour to the influence of Netflix and the allure of adventure, there's something for everyone on the world's most vibrant continent.

Yours in Travel,

Megan De Jager

Portfolio Director - Travel, Tourism & Sports
RX Africa's Travel, Tourism, Marketing and Exhibition
Management

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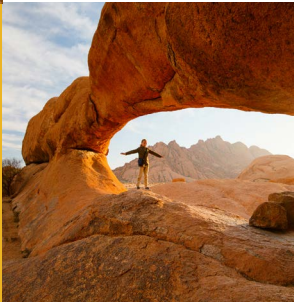


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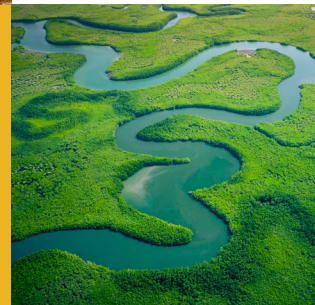
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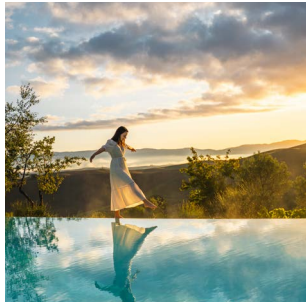
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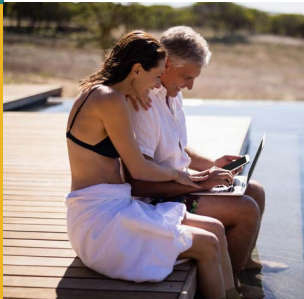


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Introduction: Africa's Tourism Industry - A Look at the Numbers

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa's tourism industry is showing signs of recovery, according to the latest statistics released by Euromonitor and ForwardKeys.

As of the end of 2022, Euromonitor's data shows that inbound arrivals had increased by more than 100%, while domestic trips had increased by more than 25%. While not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, this is a promising trend for the industry.

South Africa is trending

With 5.5 million trips, South Africa topped the list of Africa's most visited destinations in 2022 in terms of inbound arrivals and trips, according to Euromonitor International's latest data.

ForwardKeys shows a similar trend that also reveals that South Africa's popularity remains strong in 2023, according to forward looking international arrivals.

"After the worries of COVID-19, it's reassuring to see South Africa back in high demand with many travellers desperately searching for flights and adding that destination back on their bucket list."



Shingai George Mkudu
Africa Expert

Introduction: Africa's Tourism Industry

Destination	2022 vs 2019	Q1 2023 vs Q1 2019	Q2 & Q3 2023 vs Q2 & Q3 2019
South Africa	-49%	-32%	-28%
Tanzania	+4%	+28%	+32%
Kenya	-28%	-6%	+10%
Mauritius	-18%	-14%	-4%
Ethiopia	-34%	-30%	-14%
Ghana	-13%	-1%	+27%
Nigeria	-20%	-25%	+9%
Senegal	-10%	-7%	+21%
Seychelles	0%	-2%	-4%
Cameroon	+13%	+21%	+39%

Source: ForwardKeys Actual Air Tickets

All the top destinations on the continent are showing a marked improvement in Q1 2023, from 2022. And this improvement continues into 2023. What is also noticeable is that four out of the top 10 destinations are in East Africa. Better still, Tanzania will be the first country to exceed pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2023. This shows the critical role that East Africa will play in the recovery of travel in Africa.

In West Africa, arrivals into Ghana will edge closer to pre-pandemic levels. This is largely due to improvements in connectivity from major source markets such as the USA.

“Ghana is winning travellers by being more strategic with airline connectivity. DMOs in Africa need to up their game in connectivity and destination positioning to attract the new premium markets flying there,” says **Mkudu**.

A deep dive into Africa's source markets

The major source markets for international arrivals are other African countries, according to Euromonitor, which make up approximately 60% of all international arrivals.

Other overseas sources include the UK, Germany, the USA, France, and the Netherlands. Additionally, tourists from Asian markets such as China are entering the region at a higher rate.

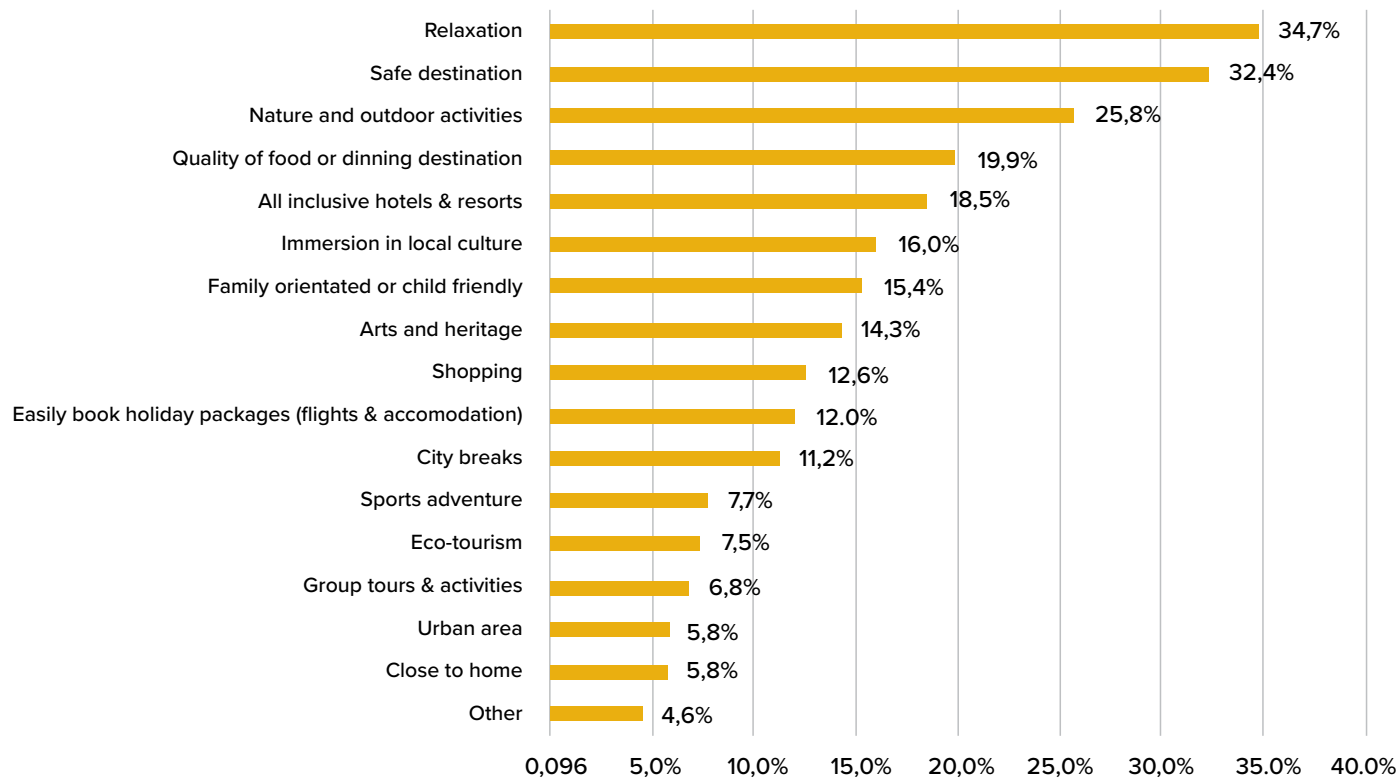
Why do travellers visit Africa?

Travellers are looking for a range of activities in Africa, with relaxation, safety, nature, and outdoor activities being the top four attributes they look for in a destination. This is according to Euromonitor International's Voice of the Consumer Survey for African Markets, indicating that tourists are drawn to Africa for its beautiful scenery, wildlife, and outdoor adventures.



Introduction: Africa's Tourism Industry

Traveller's Interest (Percentage of Respondents %)



Source: Voice Of The Consumer, Travel Survey, Euromonitor International



Safari holidays are also a big drawcard, according to ForwardKeys. Looking at flight searches, the presence of South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya in the top half of the list, suggests interest in safari holidays heading into Q2.

This indicates a return of leisure travel. This is further supported by the increase in the share of searches for South Africa and Kenya. ●

Destination	% share of Flight Searches in Q1 2023	Percentage point difference vs Q1 2022
South Africa	20%	+2
Tanzania	12%	0
Mauritius	8%	0
Kenya	8%	+1
Cape Verde	6%	0
Seychelles	5%	-1
Ghana	4%	0
Nigeria	4%	0
Madagascar	3%	+1
Ethiopia	2%	0

Source: ForwardKeys Flight Search data



Trend 1: The Role of Netflix in Safari Marketing

The small screen is proving to be pure gold as a medium in sharing wildlife experiences and game reserves in Africa with the world – and driving interest in them.

Scotland has for many years been a beneficiary of a travel boom thanks to what is termed ‘The Netflix Effect’, with fans making pilgrimages to locations featured in films like James Bond: Skyfall and the Harry Potter franchise. There’s power to be harnessed in connecting viewers with destinations and experiences through the small screen – and it’s now being exploited to sell safaris to untapped international markets.

“You’ve got immediate access to ad-hoc wildlife activity that happens every day. The production team also live nearby, so we can call on them at short notice to capture it”



Joe Cloete
Shamwari

An exploration into the viewing habits of Netflix users from six nations – Canada, Germany, the US, the UK, Brazil and France – yielded some interesting results. After exposure to South African content on the streaming service, viewers were 3.1 times more likely to consider it their top travel destination.

The rise of niche tourism

In response to the findings, SA Tourism and Netflix decided to investigate collaborative options which could feature South African-generated narratives promoting international travel to the region.

A ‘Made in South Africa’ selection was made available to more than 209 million viewers from around 190 countries – offering ‘armchair travel’ during the pandemic. Among those promoted were *Penguin Town* and *My Octopus Teacher*, showcasing marine wildlife in and around Simon’s Town in the Cape.

Trend 1: The Role of Netflix in Safari Marketing

The 2021 Netflix survey showed that viewers of *My Octopus Teacher* wanted to visit South Africa for its nature and wildlife. The exposure has sparked niche tourism offerings like 'marine safaris', including kelp forest snorkelling. Tintswalo Boulders capitalised on this interest by releasing a two-night package that includes exploring the underwater world of False Bay, where *My Octopus Teacher* was filmed.

Joe Cloete, CEO of Shamwari, who announced the debut of *Shamwari Untamed* on Netflix to coincide with the 30th anniversary of Shamwari Private Game Reserve in 2022, says the primary benefit of 'The Netflix Effect' is that it exposes your product to new markets.

Cloete explains the seed for the show was sown over a decade ago when *Shamwari Wildlife* appeared on Animal Planet. Fast forward to 2018, and members of the original production team approached Shamwari to create a new show telling the Shamwari story from the perspective of wildlife vet **Johan Joubert** and ecologist **John O'Brien**.

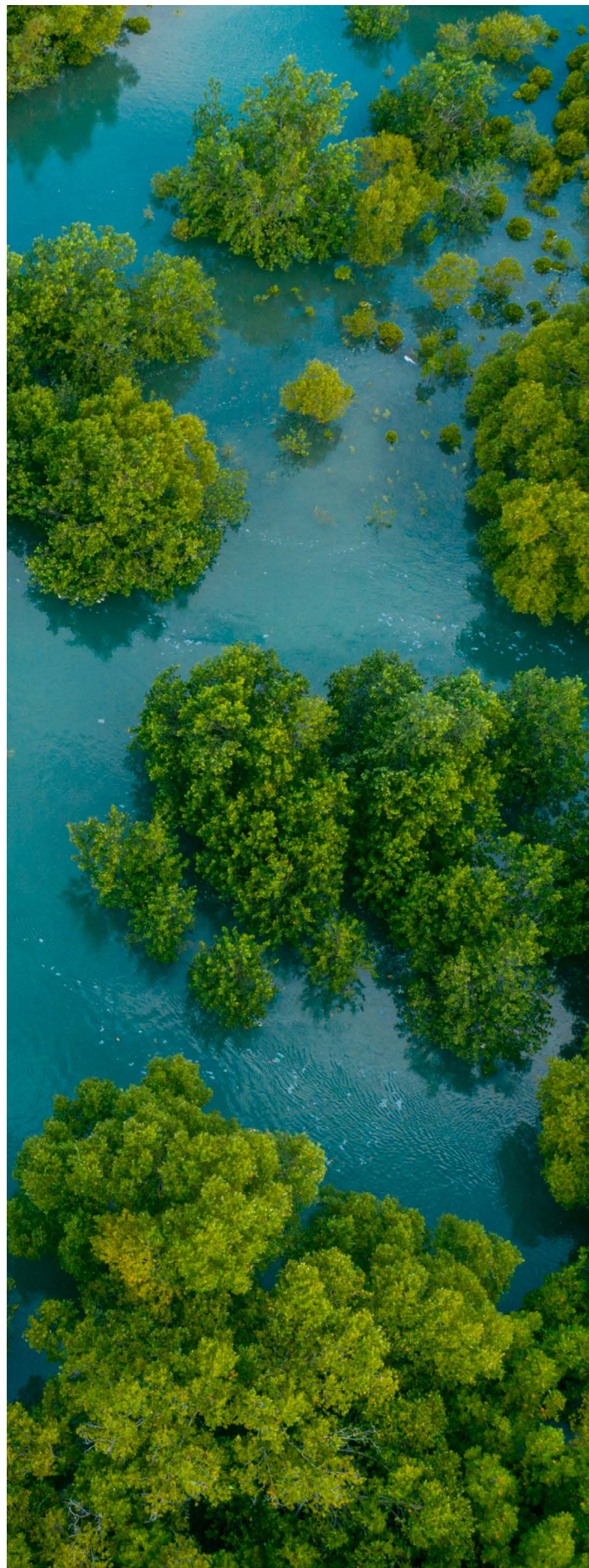
Their success in creating compelling content lies in the reserve having a full-time, on-site vet. If one had to commission a crew to come in and film for two weeks, you wouldn't be able to generate the same quantity or quality of content, explains Cloete.

The biggest win has been exposing the US market to the Shamwari brand, which has actively benefitted direct booking rates. "We've always identified the North American market as a growth point for us. I made a lot of marketing trips on the back of our first production, and our show definitely helped us break into the market. Conservation documentaries on Netflix are very relatable to Americans," says Cloete.

And let's not forget YouTube

Streaming networks like Netflix are one option, says Cloete, but typically deals are brokered through independent filmmakers that pitch concepts through agents that already have relationships with them. However, you can circumvent this by distributing content you generate through your own channels, and another powerful (and economical) medium that shouldn't be overlooked is YouTube.

The democratisation of content generation is incredibly empowering for safari owners, he says. "During Covid, we decided we couldn't sit back and do nothing while the world stood still. So, we started Shamwari TV, a weekly production on YouTube. We sent our rangers out with cell phones to film their encounters with wildlife, interacting with other rangers via Zoom. The viewership of that has grown immensely as well," says Cloete, and now the filming is done through the *Shamwari Untamed* team. "The idea was to keep our product front of mind while we waited for things to return to normal." ●





Trend 2: A New Take on Travelling Light

Aviation accounts for approximately 2.5% of global CO2 emissions. According to a new report from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTTC) and the Trip.com Group, 69% of travellers are actively seeking sustainable travel options this year.

Statistics have left many travellers wondering how to reduce their environmental impact, particularly regarding their flights. The 2023 solution? Travelling light—but taken to a new extreme.

For many, travelling light is simply more convenient. There's nothing heavy to lug around, it's easier to get from the airport to the hotel, and there's no long waiting periods at the baggage carousel upon arrival. And of course, travelling with minimal luggage is great for the environment because the heavier the aircraft, the more fuel it requires and thus the greater the levels of CO2 emissions.

As such, the emerging travel trend sees eco-focused travellers aiming to travel almost luggage free. For many, this means flying with the clothes on their back and a

small carry-on bag for the basics such as a smartphone, a toothbrush, and toothpaste in order to lighten the aircraft's load and in turn, reduce its fuel requirements and subsequent CO2 emissions.

But that's just the beginning. Upon arrival at their destination, these eco-conscious travellers go on to buy all their holiday clothing and essentials from local suppliers (usually small businesses or market vendors). Then before heading home again, they donate most of their purchases to charities and communities in need such as women's shelters and orphanages, thus enabling them once again to be luggage free when hopping aboard the aircraft for their return flight.

How much of an impact is the trend making?

The weight of an average-sized aeroplane such as a Boeing 737-800 is approximately 41 000 kg, so you may wonder how excluding a single 13–23 kg suitcase will make a difference. It's the same as saving water; every drop counts and contributes towards a much greater saving. In this case, every kilogram counts. Imagine reaching a point where at least 50% of passengers travel luggage free on every flight. On a Boeing 737-800 with a maximum passenger capacity of 162 in a two-class layout, that's a saving of up to 1 863 kg and a whole lot of fuel!

This trend has an even greater effect within the traveller's chosen destination. By shopping locally, the traveller

“We’ve noticed that active engagement with local communities and personal contributions provide a deeper and richer experience for our clients, as well as memories that last a lifetime,”



Robyn Stalson
GILTEDGE
Africa

Trend 2: A New Take on Travelling Light

boosts the destination's economy and helps to uplift the community. Shopping locally (particularly at a local market where many goods have been recycled, upcycled, or are second-hand) also reduces the traveller's environmental impact. After all, pollution is part and parcel of importing foreign goods.

The final good deed takes effect when donating the purchased local clothing and items to those in need. In many instances, the travellers responsible for the generous donations also volunteer their time and skills at their chosen charity or within the broader community. As you can see, the positive impact is significant, and as the trend gains momentum, the tremendous ripple effect will quickly become evident.

How travel suppliers can get in on the good deeds

Hopefully, this trend will evolve into a long-lasting approach to travel. In fact, a few travel suppliers across Africa are already doing their part to make this trend easier for their guests and clients to follow.

Some suppliers have partnered with charities and organisations, encouraging travellers to 'travel with a purpose' and helping to facilitate guest donations and face-to-face interactions with members of the local community. GILTEDGE, a global travel company based in South Africa, is a great example. "Over the past few years, GILTEDGE Africa has seen a growing interest from our clients to make a difference in the countries they visit by being of service to the local communities or positively impacting the environment," says **Robyn Stalson**, Philanthropy Specialist for GILTEDGE Africa.

Other suppliers have begun stocking locally produced garments and other travel essentials on their properties,

making it easier for travellers to access what they need shortly after arrival.

Pack for a Purpose

But what about those travellers who can't quite fathom the luggage-free approach but still want to make a difference? They can choose to 'Pack for a Purpose'.

This global initiative, while not aimed directly at eco-friendliness, aids sustainable travel in other ways. It encourages travellers to travel light, saving space in their luggage for supplies needed by community projects around the world. Since 2010, travellers who 'Pack for a Purpose' have brought over 188 000 kg (414 469 lb) of supplies to 55 countries.

The MORE Family Collection is one of the travel suppliers backing the 'Pack for a Purpose' movement.

"A guest's visit may be brief, but when they 'Pack for a Purpose', their stay has a positive ripple effect in our communities," says **Robert More**, CEO More Family Collection. "Because we are a 'Pack for a Purpose' partner, our guests can simply visit packforapurpose.org and search for the MORE Family Collection lodge or hotel they're visiting. From there, they're presented with a list of supported projects, each with its own supplies wish list, thus helping them to fill the space remaining in their suitcases optimally."

Whether travelling luggage free or packing with a purpose, it's clear that 2023 will be the year in which everyone pays more attention to what and how much they're bringing with them on their travels – and how even small changes can have significant and long-lasting impacts on the environment and the communities that they visit. ●





Trend 3: How Safaris Transcend Accessibility Challenges

Though it may be considered niche, accessible travel and tourism is a largely untapped market that has the potential to expand significantly, given that 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the world’s population, live with disabilities.

The yearning for travel is very real within this community. Often travel seems unattainable to those living with disabilities, but slowly, with more accessible initiatives emerging from the travel and tourism industry, this is changing.

The ability that travel experiences, like safaris, have to change lives also cannot be underestimated. **Sertorio Mshothola**, the owner of Ntwanano Safaris, speaks of

“More families are deciding that while they may have a child with special needs in their family, travel is still a normal part of life, and they are seeking ways to make this a reality.”



Emma Perrin
DMC Grand
Africa Safaris

his experience leading accessible tours, saying how many of his visually/audio impaired tour participants “had never thought or dreamt of going on a tour” but that their response had been overwhelmingly positive with many requesting to take the safari tour again. “The idea behind the tour for the blind, especially to places like the Kruger National Park, is to show the world that people with disabilities can still do something. So, the focus of my tour for the blind and visually impaired has been on what they can hear, smell and taste, so I capitalise on those other senses”, says **Mshothola**.

Lucy Edwards, a UK-based blind broadcaster, content creator and disability activist, confirms the significant and positive impact safaris can have on those living with disabilities. She shares her insights from her recent safari experience in Kenya:

“I was nervous when I was asked to travel halfway around the world on a trip which, for most people, would be the opportunity of a lifetime. Going blind made me worry I would never be able to enjoy a holiday again. What would be the point of sightseeing? And yet, it turned out to be the best trip of my life.

Trend 3: A Multisensory Experience

“I felt a lot better after I met my safari guide, William, at the Ol Pejeta sanctuary. He had taken a blind person on a similar trip once before but because every non-sighted person has varying levels of visual acuity, we still needed to get to know each other. William and the keepers brilliantly described the wildlife in front of us – how they were moving, eating, reacting to us and each other. It all helped paint pictures in my head.”

This multisensory approach to safaris is a game-changer with regards to accessible offerings. “Sharing the magic of a safari experience with any guest is special,” **Hilton Walker**, chief marketing officer at Great Plains Conservation, explains in an article in Travel Weekly.

“If there’s one thing Africans know how to do, it’s ‘make a plan’, and so it is with gorilla trekking. Some rangers will accommodate wheelchair-using travellers in special seats so they can be carried to experience the sheer thrill and delight of seeing gorilla families at play.”



Maija de Rijk-Uys
Go2Africa

“How much more amazing would it be if we changed a disabled guest’s life through experiencing those wild and remote moments spent with our guides — listening, feeling, seeing, tasting? Safari is an emotive experience. It allows for those moments in time when Africa can leave its imprint on your soul, no matter if you are able or differently abled.”

Communication, understanding and defying the limits

Even the seemingly most inaccessible safaris are defying the limits. However, accessible travel goes far beyond wheelchairs. Mshothola believes that we need to broaden the understanding of disability in the hospitality sphere: “The tourism industry predominantly caters to only one side of disabilities, those with mobility impairments. We’ve seen the emergence of ramps in most hospitality establishments, so the willingness to improve facilities is there, but it is not enough because not all disabilities centre around mobility.”

The key to a deeper understanding of the disabled community and providing more comprehensive facilities and experiences is communication. Mshothola recommends finding out the specific interests and requirements of prospective clients, as there is no ‘one size fits all’.

People with disabilities also rarely travel alone: “That’s one of the selling points of my tours for the disabled — that they come with a family member, friend or spouse who is going to be part of that experience, so it’s also an opportunity for that person to experience the tours too.” Mshothola adds. Creating accessible experiences and facilities not only attracts disabled customers but the communities around them too. ●





Trend 4: Sshhh... It's Time to Speak Out About Greenhushing

Greenwashing has been around for a while: companies making sweeping – and wholly unsubstantiated – claims about their sustainability initiatives or eco credentials in order to capitalise on the increasing demand for environmentally sound products and services.

Interestingly, the term *greenwashing* is attributed to environmentalist Jay Westerveld, who apparently coined the phrase way back in 1986 when he claimed a hotel chain falsely promoted the reuse of towels as part of a broader environmental strategy; when, in fact, it was designed to save costs. You get the gist.

You may have heard other terms too. Like greenlighting, whereby a company spotlights a particularly green feature

of its operations in order to draw attention away from other, less friendly, activities. Or *greenshifting*, when companies shift the responsibility (or blame) back onto the consumer (have you calculated your carbon footprint? Do you understand your individual impact?) while their operations continue more or less unchecked.

All are equally infuriating and damaging. But unfortunately, over the last few months we've seen a new trend emerge.

Called *greenhushing*, it refers directly to the fact that fewer companies are now publicising their eco goals and accomplishments. In fact, a 2022 survey compiled by South Pole indicated that as many as one in four companies have set (and invested heavily in) science-based emission reduction targets, but they do not plan to publicise them.

“There is no such thing as a carbon positive safari”

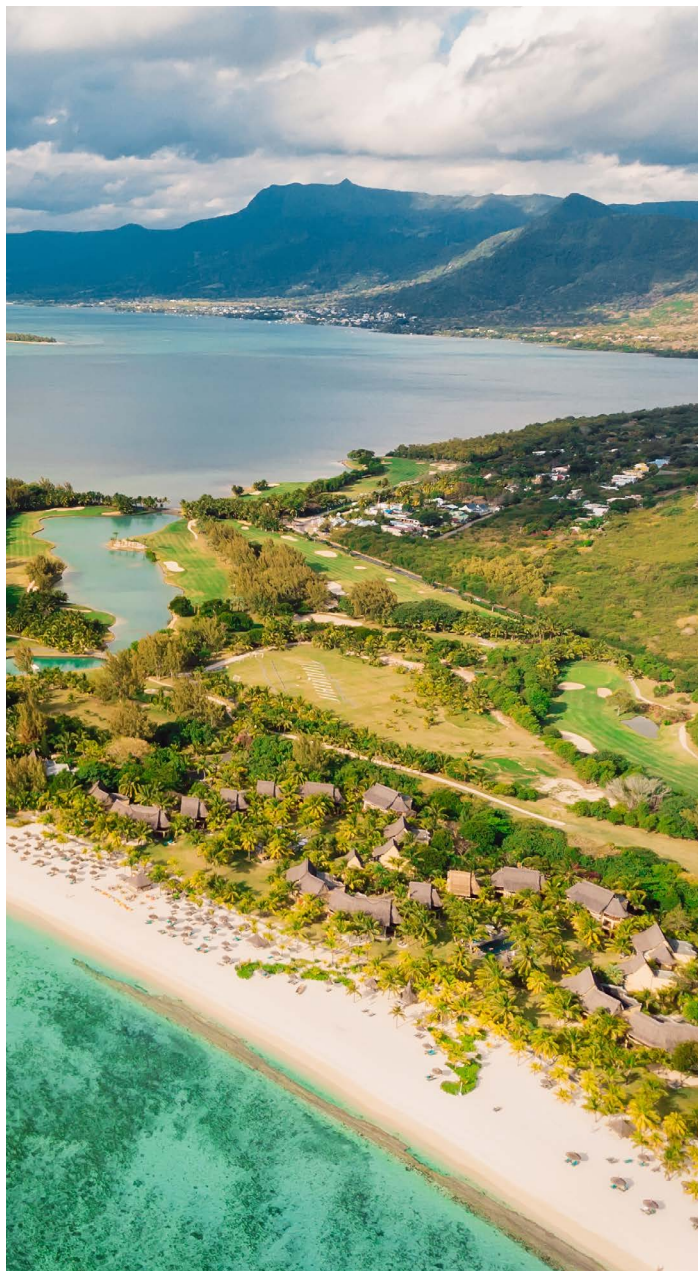


Byron Thomas
Niarra Travel

Increased scrutiny puts the pressure on suppliers

According to **Renat Heuberger**, chief executive and co-founder of South Pole, this may be because companies are wary of increased scrutiny from media, NGOs, environmental bodies and consumer groups – and are

Trend 4: Sshhh... It's Time to Speak Out About Greenhushing



“Looking at our search terms, they’re [customers] looking for experiences, they’re looking for amazing times. Where it [the sustainability message] kicks in is in the conversions, when it comes to actual bookings.”



Tim Williamson
Responsible Travel

unwilling to open themselves up to either criticism (for not making significant progress), condemnation (in other words, accused of greenwashing) or even potential lawsuits.

But as **John Zadkovich**, partner at international law firm Penningtons Manches Cooper (PMC), points out, greenhushing brings with it numerous consequences, including a lack of accountability, lack of knowledge sharing (where sectors and companies could decarbonise by working together), and missed opportunities when it comes to inspiring positive change and encouraging investment in sustainable projects and initiatives.

It’s an issue which took centre stage at London Travel Week in November 2022, with speakers confirming that greenhushing is hampering responsible tourism choices.

Xavier Font, professor of sustainability marketing at the University of Surrey, says that some companies, even if they’re making good progress, are loathe to shout about less than perfect sustainability credentials for fear of a backlash. And this is a problem. After all, how are travellers able to make informed decisions if the information is not available?

According to **Tim Williamson**, director of Responsible Travel, while sustainability might not drive traffic to their website, it does convert.

And so, what can tour operators, accommodation suppliers and tourism businesses (big or small) do about publicising their progress when it appears – at least for the moment – that they’re damned if they do and damned if they don’t?

The need for honest, transparent information that travellers can use

For both Font and Williamson, it’s better to communicate your progress with honesty and help consumers make positive choices than to not talk about it at all. As Williamson said, “Start to be honest about what you’re doing and please avoid all claims around carbon neutrality and carbon positivity, they will be seen through.”

Byron Thomas, founder of Niarra Travel agrees. “There is no such thing as a carbon positive safari,” in an article in Travel Weekly says Thomas. “Most safaris involve a lot of flying, the biggest impact coming from the international and regional flights. Looking at carbon alone, I think people should know that they are adding carbon, there is no way of creatively accounting your way out of it.”

Rather, says Thomas, travellers should be both mindful and realistic about their travels. “Travel costs carbon (a lot of

Trend 4: Sshhh... It's Time to Speak Out About Greenhushing

it), not just money. Think about your carbon budget, which should be around 2.3 tonnes per person per year to stay in line with climate goals. Realize that travel costs carbon and save up for it. At home, try change what you eat, how you heat your home, to 'save up' for your next trip. 'Spend' your carbon in places that look after biodiversity. Because that is the only thing that will get us through this climate emergency."

And it is possible to 'spend' your carbon with responsible operators – but only if they're publicising what they do.

For example, Niarra Travel offers rewilding trips, which ensure travellers are helping to restore and conserve the planet's wild places. While The Safari Collection in

Kenya tracks the impact of every activity. For example, for every hour flown in a helicopter, the company plants six indigenous trees, offsetting its carbon footprint by more than three times. The pilot also has a box of indigenous "seed balls" onboard for guests to toss from the helicopter.

The message then, while operators do need to be modest (for Zadkovich it's better to under-promise and overdeliver), you should be talking about what you're doing, sharing knowledge, plotting your progress and celebrating your wins.

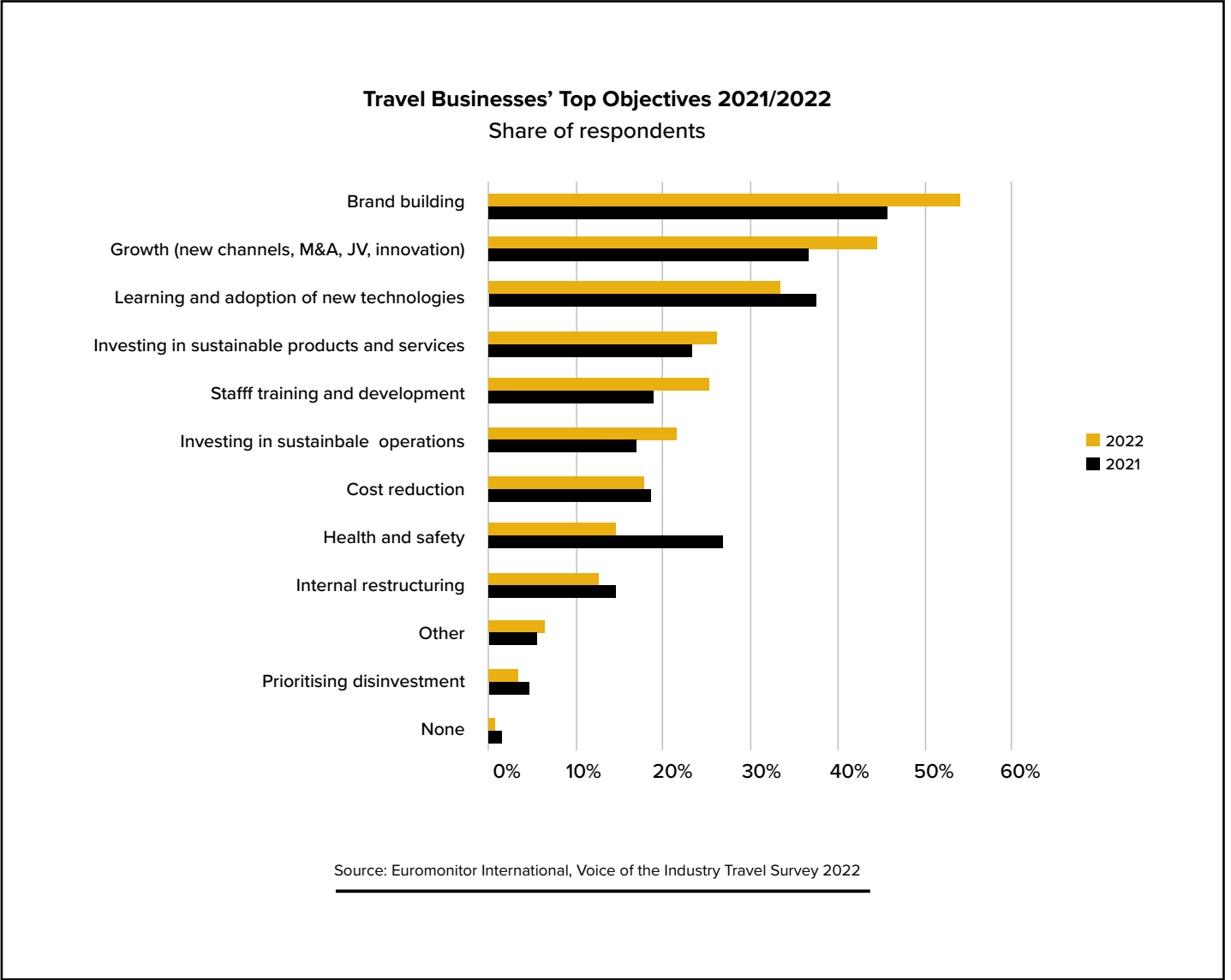
The only option is to avoid any hint of greenwashing or greenhushing, and give travellers honest, transparent information they can use. ●



Trend 4: Sshhh... It's Time to Speak Out About Greenhushing

A brighter, more sustainable future for travel

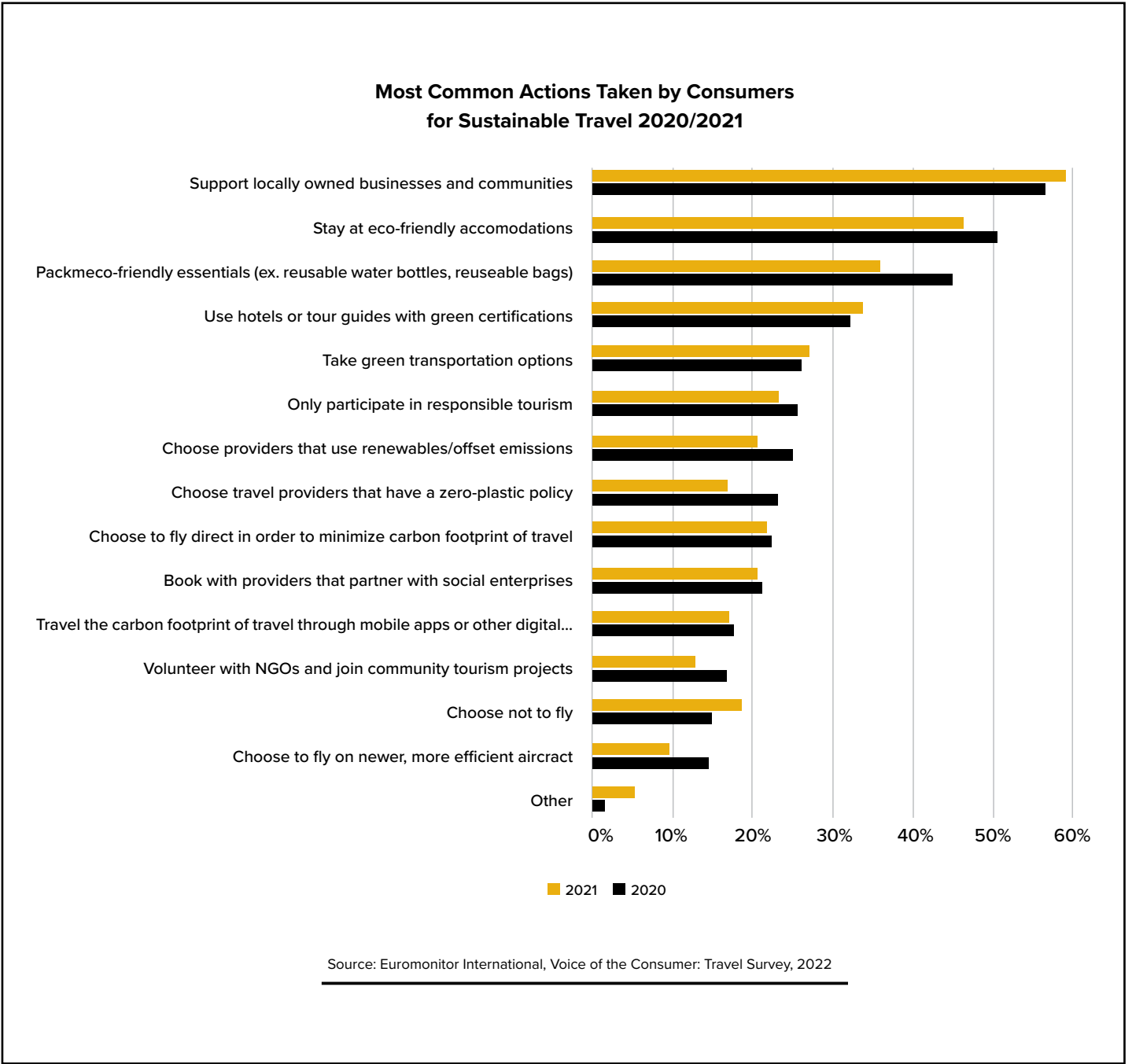
The travel industry is taking a long, hard look at its impact on the world - and it's clear that sustainability is the way forward. Travelers, businesses, and governments alike are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental, social, and economic consequences of travel, and are making moves towards more sustainable practices. In fact, nearly half of travel businesses worldwide invested in sustainability over the past year, recognizing the need to take action.



Trend 4: Sshhh... It's Time to Speak Out About Greenhushing

And it's not just businesses - travellers themselves are also prioritizing sustainability when choosing their travel options. A recent survey conducted by Euromonitor revealed that social responsibility is a top concern for many consumers.

And the good news is, sustainable travel is also good for business. In fact, sustainable travel packages are projected to account for a whopping USD134 billion by 2023 - outpacing mass-market products like sun and sea. It's clear that consumers want to make a positive impact in their daily lives, and the travel industry is listening. Let's work together to create a brighter, more sustainable future for travel.





Trend 5: When Did the Luxury Traveller Become so Young?

It's estimated that by 2026, Millennials and Gen Z will be responsible for more than 60% of luxury spending across all industries, up from 39% in 2019.

The 2023 luxury traveller is throwing the travel and tourism industry a curveball and keeping providers on their toes. These travellers are no longer your stereotypical retirees making the most of their golden years. Instead, these travellers are young (in their late twenties, thirties, and forties), savvy, and craving connection with others, nature, and themselves.

“We’re now seeing a lot of luxury family travel, couples seeking an escape, and honeymooners. I think Millennials and Gen Z prioritise travel.”



Martina Barth
The Liz McGrath
Collection

But what does this ground-breaking shift mean for the industry as a whole? What does it mean for travel suppliers, the experiences they provide, and the marketing of their offerings?

On 28 February 2023, ILTM hosted a webinar titled, When did the luxury traveller become so young? and welcomed esteemed guests, including **Martina Barth**, Group Sales Manager for The Liz McGrath Collection and chairperson for SATSA in the Western Cape, **Elizabeth Gordon**, founder and owner of Extraordinary Journeys in the US, and **Marcelo Novais**, Business Development Manager for Grand Africa Safaris, to chat about the new look and new expectations of the luxury traveller.

What exactly does the 2023 luxury traveller look like?

According to Martina, the luxury traveller is significantly younger than at the start of the decade.

“Research shows that these generations would rather spend money on a holiday than invest in real estate. They simply find the experience more enriching,” she explains.

Trend 5: When Did the Luxury Traveller Become so Young?

“This new luxury traveller also typically spends more money and time in one destination. They’re driven to get more involved in the community, fully immersing themselves and living like a local. Further to this, the 2023 luxury traveller wants less packing and unpacking. They prefer to use one base that they can call ‘home’ while exploring the area or heading off on day trips to nearby locations.”

Elizabeth agrees and highlights how Extraordinary Journeys is crafting vacations for more multi generational families than ever before.

“We see up to 10 people travelling together in approximately 25% of our enquiries. These family groups want to mix and match experiences. Most importantly, they seek experiences connecting them with places and people. They’re also happy to enjoy pure luxury for a few days and then keep it simple for the remainder of their vacation. Finally, they’re willing to spend more to reduce the logistics of a trip and maximise their time spent enjoying the destination.”

Marcelo echoes the multi-generational travel trend and talks about how, rather than changing location every day or two, most families now opt to spend up to five nights at a single lodge.

How to change your marketing approach to cater for the young luxury traveller

Since they’re marketing to a new traveller, travel suppliers need a fresh marketing approach. Marcelo insists that going forward, Instagram should be a key focus for travel brands.

“Instagram is where everyone is right now, especially the younger generation. Prospective travellers use this platform to look for inspiration for trips by scrolling through photos and watching reels.”

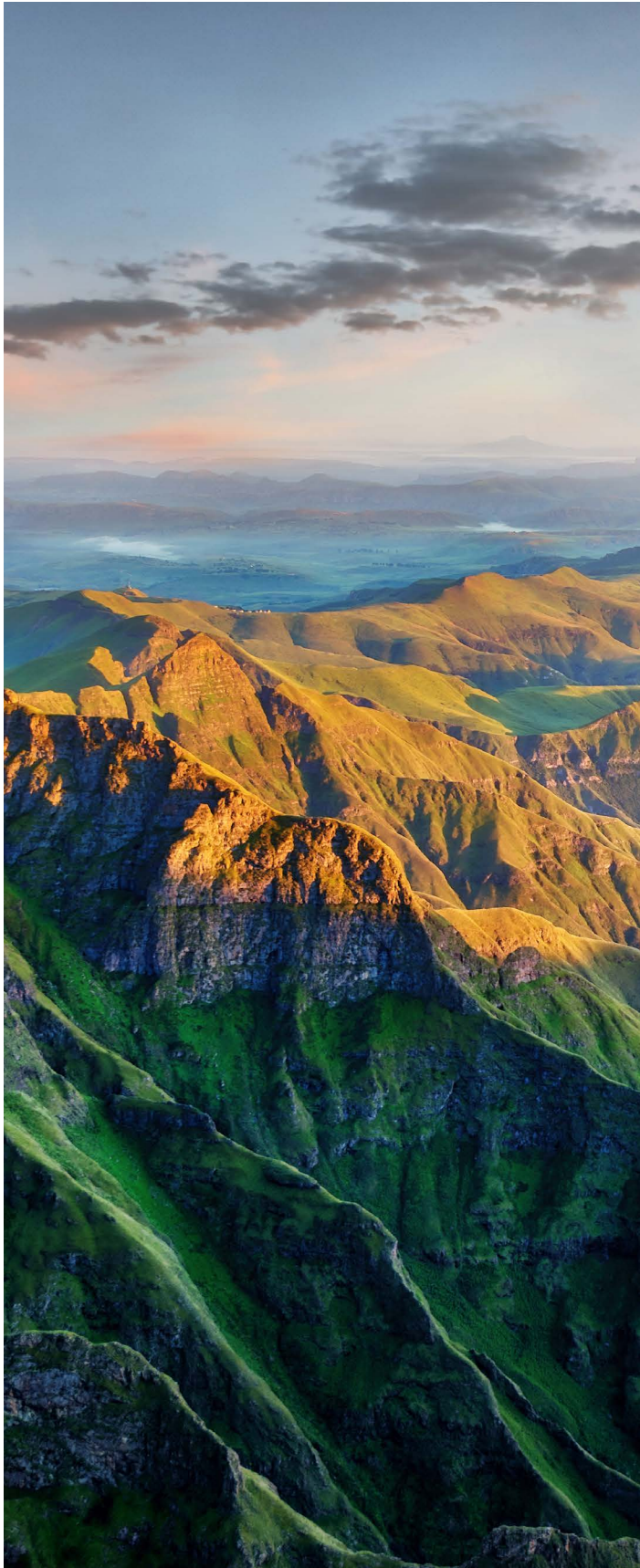
This has led to us selling more villas. Luckily, thanks to the wide-open spaces in Africa, plenty of these large villas are available, ideal for exclusive use and privacy. Another plus is that most of these villas welcome young kids,”



Marcelo Novais
Grand Africa Safaris



Trend 5: When Did the Luxury Traveller Become so Young?



Martina shares how imperative it is to reflect the new luxury traveller in all marketing material. In short, she recommends removing the smiling retired couple from the front of the e-brochure and replacing the image with a young family or solo traveller participating in something extraordinary.

According to Elizabeth, the quality of the experiences on offer goes a long way towards closing the bookings. “It’s not only about game drives anymore. Lodges need to offer—and market—other inspiring activities like walking safaris, community experiences, and cooking classes. They must also ensure their guides know how to cater for children through engaging kids’ programmes. Parents need the break!”

How to please the 2023 luxury traveller

Now that we understand what luxury travellers look like and how best to get their attention, let’s dive into the details of what they want to experience when vacationing in Africa. For Marcelo, the focus needs to be on providing a ‘balanced’ getaway.

“Most first-timers have no idea of the level of luxury that awaits. Start by evaluating each client’s expectations and, if possible, let them go camping in a tent to get them closer to the wild experience before finishing off with a stay at a luxurious lodge.”

Conversely, Martina insists that most young luxury travellers know exactly what they want—and not everyone wants the same thing.

“For these generations, travel has become very intentional—whether they’re seeking out a holiday focused on wellness or they’re after a digital detox. Ultimately, you need to know your customer. Some want a boutique hotel in the bush, while others prefer to keep it authentic,” she comments. Elizabeth promotes the experiential side of luxury travel.

Also, try to include more actual people in your material. Nobody wants to look at a picture of a well-made bed. Remember not just to market the ‘what’. You need to market the ‘why’”



Martina Barth
The Liz McGrath
Collection

Trend 5: When Did the Luxury Traveller Become so Young?

“The 2023 luxury traveller wants memorable experiences. They want to meet people who change their lives, and they want to gain new perspectives. Transformational travel is important to people. Conservation is also something they want to be involved in. They want to not only understand it but become active agents in it. In order to tick all the boxes, the industry needs to open up the ‘kitchen’ and allow guests to cook next to the chef.”

And what about amenities? How important are they?

“Luxury is space and time and not necessarily about the amenities. It’s about having a purposeful holiday and those moments of magic where guests constantly think to themselves, ‘Wow! How did they know that about me?’ It’s all in the detail. That’s the essence of luxury travel going forward,” says Elizabeth.

How much of a concern is loadshedding?

According to all the panellists, it’s definitely a black mark on South Africa’s reputation.

Elizabeth talks about how loadshedding is a growing problem for prospective travellers and how it has received significant bad press in the US.

“For travellers, checking into their hotel in the dark is not the most reassuring experience. It’s definitely a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.”

Marcelo believes that honesty is the best policy when managing the situation. “Loadshedding is a completely foreign concept for most people visiting South Africa. As such, being honest with the clients from the beginning is vital. Luckily, it’s a comfort for them to know that most

high-end lodges are prepared to mitigate the effects of loadshedding with generators or solar panels.”

What does the future hold?

According to Martina, the age of the luxury traveller is going to continue to drop. “For the next few years, we’ll welcome plenty of ‘HENRYs’—high-earning individuals who are not rich yet. The future is exciting, and these travellers will certainly keep us on our toes. My advice? Prioritise visual content and ensure that it’s always fresh and relevant. Properties need to keep the momentum going.”

Marcelo concludes with his thoughts regarding the impact of the pandemic on the new luxury traveller.

The luxury traveller of 2023 “has made the conscious decision to invest in travel. Statistics show that the age at which most people will buy their first house is now 40 and up. This is because they are choosing to invest in experiences. The pandemic taught them to take charge of opportunities and not just let life pass them by.”

Elizabeth agrees, highlighting how these travellers are optimistic that they’ll make much more money in the future so they’re comfortable spending it now, especially if the experiences they’re spending their money on bring them happiness.

“We’re selling Africa as that place where everyone can be happy, and we need to take that position in our marketing. Luxury is about being flexible and going out of your way to understand the client. In short, hyper personalisation is the cornerstone – a cookie-cutter experience definitely isn’t going to cut it anymore,” she concludes. ●

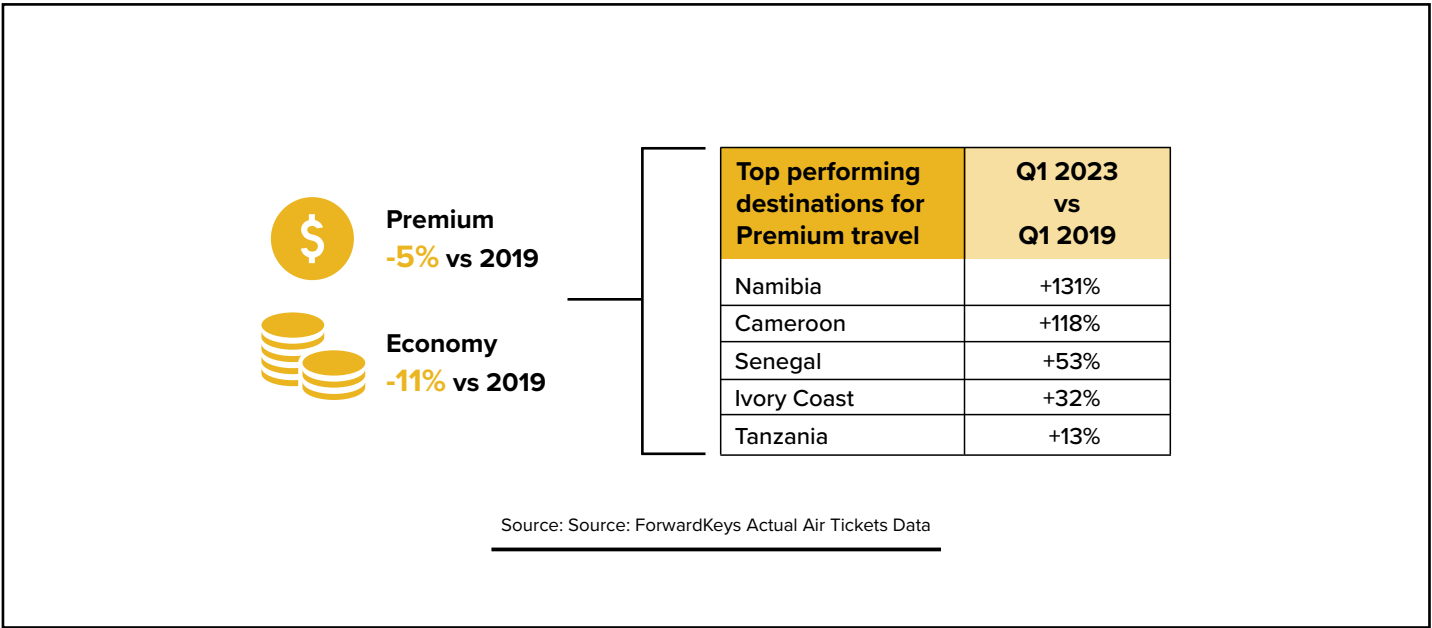


Trend 5: When Did the Luxury Traveller Become so Young?

West Africa is leading the luxury charge

Premium travel is making a faster comeback than economy travel globally, and this trend is taking root in Africa too. It's exciting to witness African destinations catching the eyes of those seeking high-end travel experiences.

Digging into the details, it's Q1 2023 and the West African region is leading the charge in premium class travel to Africa. This surge is largely thanks to VFR passengers, but there's also a noticeable uptick in premium travellers heading to leisure destinations like Namibia and Tanzania. So, whether you're visiting family or just chasing adventure, Africa's got something to offer for every kind of luxury traveller.





Trend 6: Keeping the Faith. Religious Tourism in Africa

Marketing faith-based tours or experiences has potential – for committed pilgrims or simply the culturally curious.

It has been estimated that around 240 million individuals will take pilgrimages annually, most of them being Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Many pilgrims journey to sacred sites hoping to heal and pay homage to their deity, while others are drawn by the sheer curiosity of these holy locations.

“We advise our clients where they can find good Halal restaurants, salaah facilities (prayer rooms) and mosques,”



Latifa Cozyn
Cut Above Tours

Morocco has the Koutoubia Mosque and Hassan II Mosque, which are among the top religious sites in Africa. Côte d'Ivoire is home to the Yamoussoukro Basilica, one of the most significant churches in the world.

Ethiopia has rock-hewn churches that are popular among tourists. Egypt also has many religious sites, such as Cave Churches. Could growing faith-based travel be the answer to some of Africa's tourism prayers?

South Africa's faith-based tourism market holds a 2-4% share in the global market of this niche tourism sector. According to a Future Marketing Insights (FMI) report, this translates into US\$72 million. It is anticipated to increase exponentially thanks to millennial travellers that are increasingly showing an interest in exploring pilgrimage and heritage sites.

Enter Halal tourism

There appears to be tremendous potential for Muslim travel-related products and services. The Mastercard-

Trend 6: Keeping the Faith. Religious Tourism in Africa

Crescent Rating Global Muslim Travel Index 2020 (GMTI 2020) showed an estimated 160 million Muslim international travellers in 2019. The figure is set to grow to 230 million by 2028. This has prompted the Western Cape Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) to run a Halal Tourism Survey to understand the needs of these tourists so that the industry can evolve to meet their dietary and religious needs from a supply side.

Latifa Cozyn, CEO of Cut Above Tours based in Cape Town, says that catering to the needs of Muslim travellers is essential to the customer offering. Many visitors flock to the Cape from Malaysia and Indonesia to visit Kramats – gravesites of religious and spiritual leaders.

A Circle of Islam Tour includes a visit to Kramats in Bo-Kaap, Signal Hill, Oudekraal, Tokai and Robben Island. The Mission Stations route along the West Coast and visits to the oldest mosques in the Bo-Kaap are also popular, says Cozyn.

Thinking beyond the metros

The South African Tourism Board has identified rural tourism as a priority as a pathway to boost the economies of rural areas – and faith-based tourism is high on the agenda. In many rural areas in South Africa, religious tourists already inject money into local economies during Easter, the busiest time of year for domestic religious travel in South Africa.

Every year thousands flock to Buffalo City in the Eastern Cape. The Zion City Moria in Limpopo hosts the largest

Christian gathering in the country during Easter (and again for the September festival), with over five million Zionists converging on the Zion Christian headquarters annually. The pilgrims come from all corners of South Africa and neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Malawi, and foreign countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia.

Naseer Ismail, manager of operations of Amrho Tourism, says that growth in faith-based tourism can be driven by creating bespoke packages, including putting on charter flights and creating transport packages. Container shops in townships and pop-up mall stalls are also opportunities that can be used for promoting niche travel offerings, he says, and what is needed to expand distribution and connect with new markets and direct clients.

There is potential for South Africa's religious and cultural heritage to be marketed towards a broader demographic, agrees the KwaZulu-Natal Province Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. It has identified 'sites of interest' that it recommends local tour operators add to itineraries. They include the Centocow Mission in Underberg, the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre at the Jewish Durban Club, a visit to the Buddhist Retreat Centre near Ixopo and the Juma Masjid Mosque in Durban.

Whether cultural, faith-based, spiritual or even wellness oriented (yoga retreats we see you!) there's no doubt that 'religious tourism' can contribute to regional economic growth and employment in destinations that do not typically feature in travel brochures and 'best of' lists. ●





Trend 7: Is Africa the ‘Next Big Thing’ for Digital Nomads?

Many African countries are working on new approaches to attract and welcome digital nomads with open arms. Currently, Namibia is leading the way, having recently introduced its Digital Nomad Visa.

In a webinar, organised by Africa Travel Week, **Margareth Gustavo**, executive director, strategy and branding at the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board, explained her key mandate has been, and is, to attract investors. “Turning the idea of a digital nomad visa into reality involved dealing directly with our Department of Home Affairs and collaborating with them to open the country up to the world of opportunity linked with this special breed of remote workers. We wanted to position Namibia as a great place to live, work and invest. After all, we’re known for our wide-open spaces and relatively small population,” she explained.

“We managed to make it all happen in a matter of 14 days, and the country now boasts a visa that allows digital nomads to remain in Namibia for six months, with the freedom to renew their visa for a further six months.”



Margareth Gustavo
Namibia Investment
Promotion and
Development Board

Mauritius is another example. In a move to encourage the business of hosting international events in Mauritius, the Economic Development Board Mauritius has announced a Refund Scheme for the MICE industry. An event organizer may apply for refund of VAT amounting to 15% of accommodations charges (excluding alcoholic drinks) by the Mauritius Revenue Authority.

South Africa is unfortunately still lagging behind. In 2022, President Cyril Ramaphosa said in his State of the Nation that a comprehensive review of the work visa system was “currently underway”. One year later, he mentioned that the review is completed and South Africa “will move quickly to implement the recommendations put forward.”

He added: “We will also be introducing a remote worker visa and a special dispensation for high-growth start-ups. While the reform programme is underway, we will continue to support public and social employment to provide work to those who need it.”

For **Rosemary Anderson**, national chair of the Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa (FEDHASA), the delays on this visa are ‘inexcusable’. “Questions regarding tax, length of stay, health insurance and other factors have all been sorted out by dozens of countries, so there is no reason why we can’t do the same,” she says.

Trend 7: Is Africa the ‘Next Big Thing’ for Digital Nomads?

Andrae Smith, founder of Work Wanderers and Digital Nomad Coach (and a digital nomad herself), agrees and explains how entry barriers have been a huge deterrent for the individuals within this market.

“When a country creates an environment of embracing digital nomads, it sends the country to the top of many nomadic workers’ bucket lists, even if it wasn’t originally a consideration for them. In most instances, digital nomads travel to Africa, fall in love and want to stay longer. The issues surrounding visas quickly become a hassle and a major inconvenience, which can stop nomads from coming to Africa in the first place. They want a visa that is easy to obtain and easy to renew, so it’s amazing what Namibia has done – a very smart decision on the government’s part,” she commented.

With so many destinations out there, what are the factors that influence a digital nomad’s decision on where to go? According to Smith, it’s all about community.

“Nomads want to connect with one another. In most cases, they’re solo travellers. They seek out a sense of togetherness and want to meet new people and experience local cultures. They are not holidaymakers. They’re there to experience a place, and fully immerse themselves in it.”

Marketing to the digital nomad

There’s isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to market to digital nomads. “Some of them are solo travellers, some are Millennials, some are Gen Z, some are travelling with their families in tow,” **Collin Thaver**, MD of Southern Africa 360 says.

Providers need to tap into the full scope of their target market, tailoring marketing material to attract them and solve their problems before they even know they exist.

“The market has gone beyond just hotels. Most digital nomads are looking for hotel apartments, and they want locations that will make it possible for them to be self-sufficient: do their own laundry, cook, get their hair done somewhere convenient etc.,” he added.

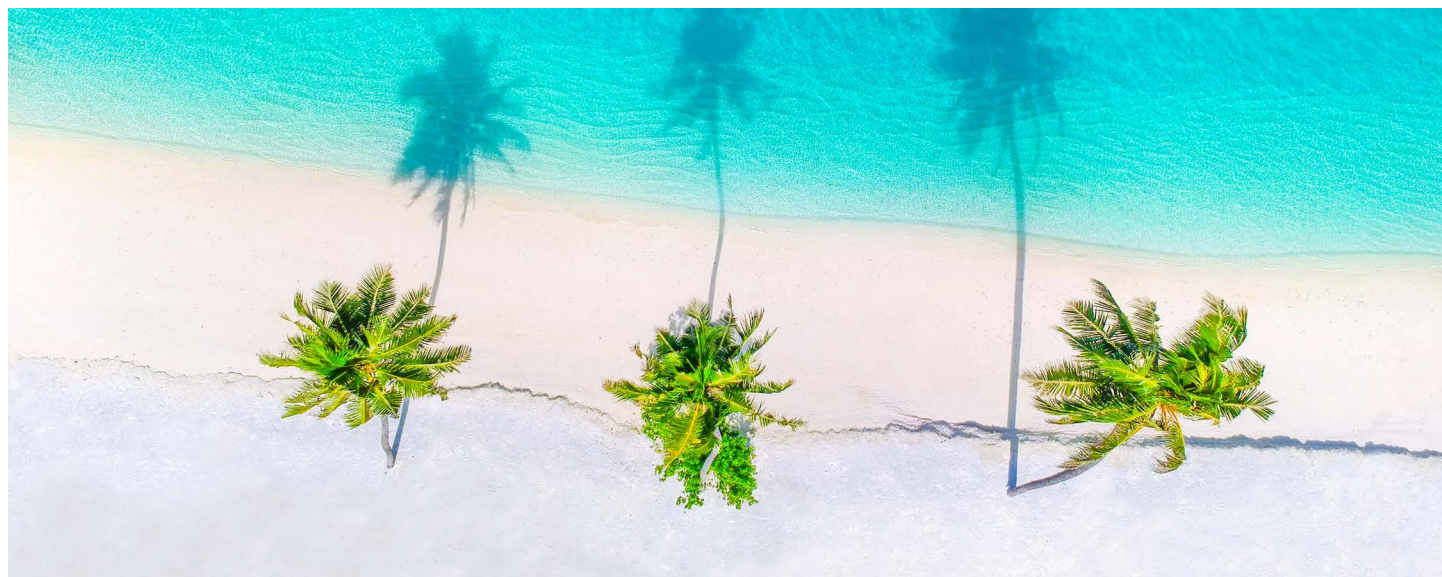
The focus needs to be on thoroughly communicating packages, amenities and facilities to the right target audiences, so that digital nomads feel confident in the idea of living and working stress-free at the destination that they choose.

Countless opportunities

There are countless opportunities on the horizon, as long as the African countries are ready and empowered to grab them, according to Gustavo.

She said: “Decision-makers need to think about what it is that they want to achieve for their nation – and then package it. Where are the gaps and how can they prepare? We have a great opportunity as Africa as a whole. There’s room for synergy, room for growth, and room for expanding the African experience, showcasing the continent as a completely different place compared with what people have heard or the perceptions they’ve formed. The ‘dark continent’? We will prove them wrong!”

Overall, the digital nomad space is here to stay, according to Smith. “Now it’s a matter of continuing to embrace them – and finding bigger, better ways of doing so.”





Trend 8: Inclusivity and the LGBTQ+ Guest. Why Pronouns Matter

The LGBTQ+ travel market has been instrumental in leading the global tourism recovery after the pandemic. The purchasing power, especially in the travel industry, of this market reached more than \$211 billion prior to the pandemic with no signs of it abating since. It's therefore not surprising that Africa wants a slice of the LGBTQ+ pie.

“The silver lining in these trying times is that in many ways, they have given us back our humanity. We’re witnessing a changing narrative, and it’s beautiful to see!”



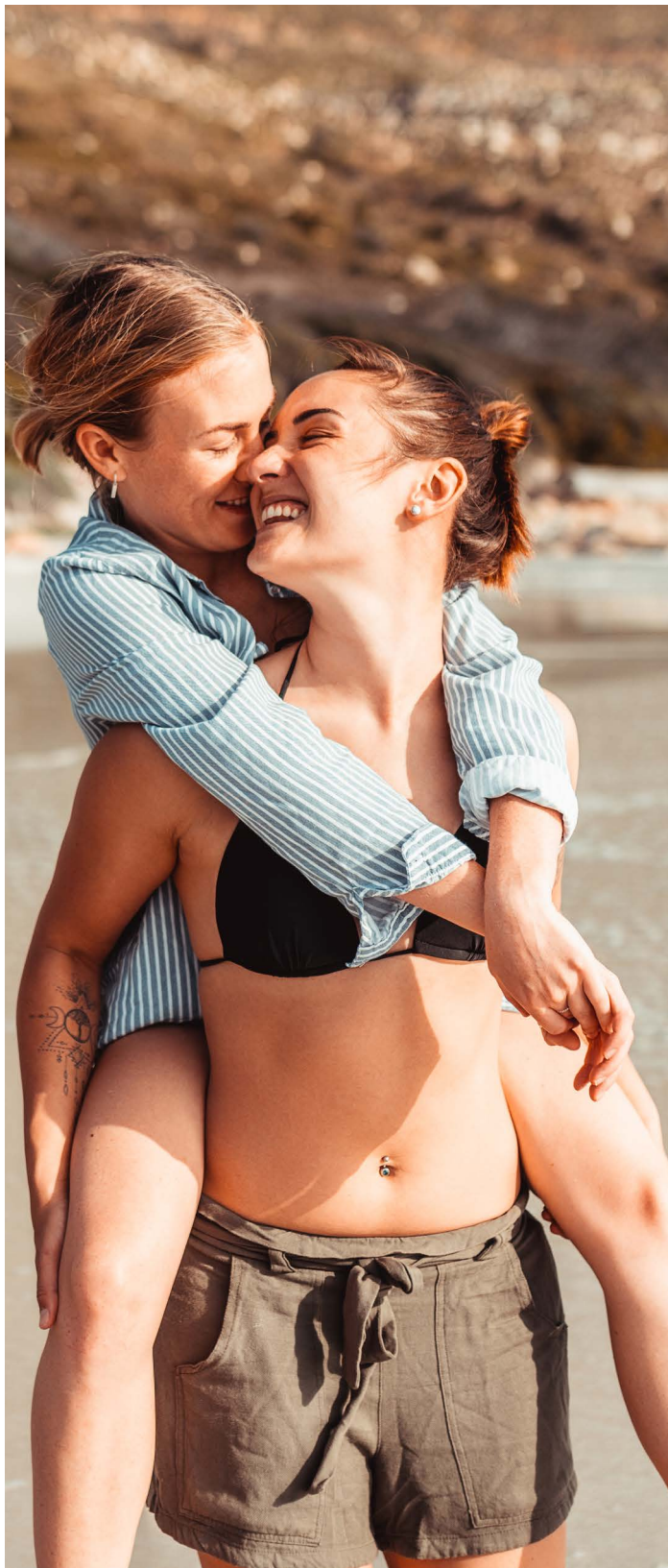
Jillian Blackbeard
Africa's Eden

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However, while plenty of progress is being made, there are still issues that need to be addressed and action that needs to be taken. There are still misconceptions in the travel and tourism industry of the LGBTQ+ market. Current laws and perceptions are leading the LGBTQ+ community to question their safety when contemplating a holiday in Africa.

Trend 8: Inclusivity and the LGBTQ+ Guest.

Why Pronouns Matter



Helping guests feel 'seen'

A big part of inclusivity is going the extra mile to make all guests feel 'seen', and a great place to start is with your marketing material, reviewing both the words and imagery you're using.

Is every brochure and social media post featuring a picture of a smiling heterosexual couple? If so, no matter how welcoming and inclusive your content may be, your message just isn't going to be perceived as sincere.

When you've made the surface-level changes to your brand's content and visuals, don't stop there. The next step, once you've successfully drawn a few LGBTQ+ guests into your doors, is to ensure inclusivity in all your communications with said guests. The most important aspect of this? Using the correct pronouns when speaking to them.

The importance of pronouns

Cisgender people (those whose internal gender corresponds with the gender that they were assigned at birth) often take for granted the correct usage of 'him', 'her', 'he' and 'she'. But address a cisgender man as 'ma'am' or a cisgender woman as 'sir' and you can be sure you won't be met with happiness or understanding!

Essentially, when mis-gendering a person (even if it is accidentally), you're questioning that person's core identity, which will unsurprisingly leave them feeling hurt, embarrassed and/or offended – and this is especially so for a member of the LGBTQ+ community, who has likely been faced with this their entire life! Always keep in mind that, for most people, their pronouns, and the gender with which they identify, are directly tied to their sense of self and their self-worth.

How to prioritise pronouns

Luckily, it's really easy to avoid making the common misstep. Most importantly, make using people's chosen pronouns a priority across your organisation – not just when it comes to your guests. Enquire amongst your staff which pronouns they prefer and proudly display them on their name badges and email signatures.

On a side note, it can be helpful to make an effort to hire a diversity of employees, including professionals from the LGBTQ+ community.

Trend 8: Inclusivity and the LGBTQ+ Guest.

Why Pronouns Matter

Next, don't be afraid to ask! It's highly unlikely that someone from the LGBTQ+ community will be offended when someone asks them about their preferred pronouns, even if they aren't comfortable sharing them with you.

Rather than coming across as you experiencing confusion, it shows a tremendous amount of respect that you're not comfortable making assumptions based on how someone looks or what they're called.

A great way to ask about pronouns is to first introduce yourself using your own preferred pronouns. Here's an example of how you might reply to an email from a potential guest requesting details about your hotel.

"Hi! Thanks for your enquiry. My name is Anne. I'm the hotel's general manager and I use the pronouns 'she' and 'her'. Please could you get back to us with your preferred dates, your preferred pronouns and the size of your travel party and we'll forward you some more info from there!"

Of course, be sure to make this a standard practice within your organisation and not just something you do when you assume that a potential guest might be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. In the event that a cisgender guest enquires why you're asking for such seemingly 'obvious' information, simply respond that it's your intention to address and refer to all guests correctly.

Be sure to ask your guests about their preferred pronouns directly, either leading up to their visit or, alternatively, by including 'preferred pronouns' as part of your booking or 'sign up' forms on your website.

What to do when a mistake happens

With all of the above in place, and by taking the time to educate your staff regarding the importance of correct pronouns, you should have plenty of happy guests. But mistakes happen, and it's vital to know how to handle the situation when they do.

First, stop and acknowledge your mistake and apologise. State how you intend to do better next time and then move on. If it isn't immediately pointed out to you and you realise that you made a mistake at a later stage, it's always worthwhile to make a private apology to the guest or staff member, rather than simply correcting your pronoun usage going forward.

Ultimately, it's the small details that culminate to transform an organisation and to get the industry moving in the right direction. Every change, and every effort, makes a difference. It starts with you! ●





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