

Travel trends are going to dominate the itinerary of people in 2026



By 2026 the global hospitality industry has crossed a threshold that is unlikely to reverse. Hotels are no longer primarily places to stay. They are increasingly systems designed to influence how people live, feel, function, and recover. For decades the industry was built around a familiar equation, which is location, brand, occupancy, and cost control. That equation still matters but it no longer explains where value is being created. Across markets from Asia and Europe to island destinations in the Indian Ocean the premium traveller is no longer buying a destination alone. They are buying a state change. The implicit question has shifted from what am I getting to what will this place do to me.

This shift is subtle but structural. It explains why wellness tourism is forecast to grow at nearly twice the pace of traditional tourism through 2028. Wellness travellers already spend over 40 percent more per trip on average than conventional travellers. And it explains why hotels are absorbing functions that once sat outside their remit fitness diagnostics recovery lifestyle programming and even elements of preventive care.

Ranjit Batra, CEO, Ventive Hospitality Limited talks about the travel trends that are going to Wellness in this context is often misunderstood. It is not a category and certainly not an amenity. It has become infrastructure as fundamental as lighting, air, acoustics, water quality and energy efficiency. The global wellness economy crossing 6.8 trillion dollars is not a headline milestone. It is confirmation that optimisation of physical, cognitive and emotional has become a primary organising principle of modern consumption.

Luxury travel once sold escape. In 2026 it sells a return. Return to regulated nervous systems stable energy restorative sleep and mental clarity. Guests are no longer asking whether a hotel has a spa. They are asking whether they will leave better than they arrived. The operators who understand this are redesigning hotels from the inside out. Wellness is no longer expressed through isolated programs but through systems. Kitchens that understand metabolic response rather than just technique. Rooms designed around sleep architecture. Schedules aligned to circadian biology. Landscapes treated as biological inputs rather than scenic backdrops. The hotel of 2026 is not a break from life but an extension of it.

This is also where spiritual and meaning led travel has reasserted itself globally. Not as religion alone but as grounding. Pilgrimage circuits, heritage cities, forest retreats, islands, deserts and mountains are seeing sustained demand driven by repetition rather than novelty. What was once informal is becoming formalised as travellers seek comfort dignity and quality alongside purpose

Food and beverage is undergoing a parallel redefinition. The industry still frames it as a margin discussion. The most resilient hospitality platforms are no longer optimised around RevPAR alone but around total revenue per guest and total lifetime value. Hotels where food and beverage contributes 40 to 50 percent of total revenue consistently demonstrate greater resilience across cycles than those where it sits closer to 20 percent. Restaurant gravity attracts local demand stabilises cash flows and reduces dependence on transient occupancy. This has become critical as volatility is no longer seasonal alone but increasingly calendar driven. Equally important is what guests now define as good food. The most memorable culinary programs are not indulgent in the traditional sense.

Fitness has followed a similar trajectory. The global fitness industry valued at approximately 240 billion dollars is shifting away from aesthetics toward health span and measurable outcomes. Gyms are becoming longevity hubs integrating diagnostics coaching recovery and community. This shift has accelerated with the rise of pharmaceutical assisted weight management. Doctors can prescribe medication but they cannot coach behaviour. Hospitality environments uniquely control sleep food movement recovery and environment making them natural platforms for adherence and outcomes.

Another underappreciated shift is how demand itself is changing. Major concerts sporting events cultural festivals destination weddings and global summits are now programmed into travel calendars. Hotels increasingly operate as dynamic venues embedded within wider cultural and urban ecosystems. This requires faster pricing decisions more sophisticated inventory management and deeper partnerships than traditional seasonality models allowed.

Technology underpins this evolution largely behind the scenes. In 2026 digital innovation that matters is not guest facing novelty but operational intelligence. Energy costs can account for 6 to 10 percent of hotel operating expenses and even higher in island destinations. AI led energy management systems predictive maintenance and labour optimisation are becoming material drivers of margin expansion rather than experimental tools. Artificial intelligence is emerging as an operating layer rather than a marketing feature quietly improving consistency sustainability and profitability.