

Travel trends that will influence those with wanderlust in 2018

According to Theresa Szejwallo, the MD of The Travel Corporation (TTC) in South Africa, the positive strides the rand has taken recently bodes well for travellers in 2018. Expecting travel to enjoy an upwards bounce, Szejwallo shares her top trends predictions that will influence those with a sense of wanderlust in 2018.



Gravin Tollman, Theresa Szejwallo and Brett Tollman May 2016

Destinations trending for 2018

Travellers continue to have a love for Western Europe and Italy takes the top spot. It has always been incredibly popular followed closely by the United Kingdom and Ireland. “I put this down to a big heritage pull with many South Africans who have family connections as well as London being the perfect springboard to start their onward European travels. France is making a good comeback. Their tourism numbers dipped somewhat after the recent incidents but it is resurging in popularity,” says Szejwallo.

Interestingly there is a huge upswing in requests for holidays to Russia and going behind the old Iron Curtain is now an easy and attractive prospect. The reason is two-fold says Szejwallo: “The Russian authorities have dropped the need for South African passport holders to have a visa and the nature of guided holidays makes travel to Russia easier.” However, Russia is not a country that can be enjoyed as an independent traveller, the language barrier alone (and the Cyrillic signage) doesn’t allow for hassle-free travel. Local experts and English speaking travel directors not only bring the destination to life but make all travel arrangements trouble-free and comfortable.

Other European destinations that will be in the top eight in 2018 include Spain, Portugal and Morocco. Their proximity to one another makes it worthwhile to visit all three countries in one holiday.

Buying habits

Travellers are booking closer to departure. In 2017, we picked up on the trend of travellers booking later for travel closer to the departure date. “With the economy taking a little strain many retailers started releasing last minute deals that offered savings of up to 30% and this has resulted in a big change in buyer behaviour. I foresee that this trend will continue in 2018,” says Szejwallo.

Experiential travel

More and more travellers are looking for authentic experiences on their journeys. Theresa explains: “It’s no longer enough to have a list of sights to tick off. Today’s traveller wants to have an experiential, hands-on encounter that exposes them to the locals and the way they truly live.” Travellers want to come home from their holiday with stories to tell about the dinner they had, after hours, in the Vatican. Or the experience of learning, first hand, how the art of Perugian weaving is being kept alive through local artisans.

The rise and rise of technology

“Technology is only useful if it makes one’s life easier,” says Theresa, “and we’re finding a great need to provide our travel agents and clients with facilities to provide seamless, easy transactions.” Online bookings and payments plus intuitive websites are solutions to the age-old problem most people have – that there is simply not enough time in the day.

Wellness travel

Wellness tourism, which affects a traveller’s emotional, physical and social connections, taking in spiritual, occupational and environmental factors, is a faster-growing form of travel than the more typical medical tourism or popular spa tourism. “Wellness travel is not about flying somewhere and having some sort of procedure done and having five days’ recuperation,” says Szejwallo. “Wellness is about doing something that is good for you and your family’s overall well-being. This can be spiritual, physical or emotional.”

Bleisure travel

Those who regularly travel for work know only too well the depressing feeling of yet another windowless meeting room followed by countless dinners spent in the company of one. The next big trend will be to tap into the opportunity for combining business with pleasure - “bleisure” travel.

The recent global study by Visa shows that as much as 20% of all business travellers start or end their trips on a Saturday or a Sunday. This trend indicates that business travellers are increasingly incorporating some leisure time into their business commitments. I believe the scope for solo travel or uniting with partners and/or family is an emerging trend that will continue to grow.

Travel today and sustain tomorrow

Modern-day travellers have a social conscience and prefer to spend their hard earned money with companies who share their desire to protect and preserve the environment they will travel through. It’s simply not enough to come home with a story to tell and a few selfies. Travellers want to know that they’ve made a positive impact.

Szejwallo says there are shifts in what global travellers are looking for from their holidays. “Sustainable travel is not just a

desire anymore, it's almost a prerequisite... it's economic, cultural, and it's about connecting with locals. It's not just about offsetting your flight, it's about doing things that actually matter."

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