

Exploring Gen Z trends shaping European bus tours and travel approaches

In today's rapidly evolving world, the landscape of travel and tourism is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the unique preferences and expectations of Generation Z.

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As the CEO and Managing Partner of *Eurotrips*, a trailblazing travel company focused on reshaping the European travel experience for young adventurers, I've witnessed firsthand the significant shifts shaping this industry.

Compared to millennials, Gen Z exhibits a more adventurous spirit and a stronger desire for authentic cultural immersion. While millennials paved the way for prioritising travel as a lifestyle choice, Gen Z seeks off-the-beaten-path experiences and meaningful connections with locals. They are also more inclined to prioritise sustainability and social responsibility when making travel decisions, signaling a shift towards more conscious and ethical tourism practices.

Millennials' travel statistics also reveal interesting trends. While they take more trips per year, they're not the biggest spenders by far, with an average summer vacation budget of \$1,373, excluding airfares. In contrast, Baby Boomers will spend \$1,865, and Generation X will spend \$2,628 on their summer vacation. Interestingly, Gen Zs allocate an average of \$2,788 for their travel expenses, indicating a significant portion of their budget is dedicated to exploring the world.

The travel industry is at a crossroads amid the ongoing Russia-Ukrainian war and the aftermath of a global pandemic. As restrictions ease and borders reopen, a new generation of travelers is emerging, armed with a fresh perspective and unique priorities. Gen Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, redefines how we explore the world, demanding authentic experiences, sustainable practices, and meaningful connections. As we delve into the intricacies of this paradigm shift, we uncover challenges and opportunities for innovation and growth.

Let's explore how Gen Z alters travel dynamics, how their tendencies differ from those of millennials, and how companies can adjust to provide a better travel experience.

Embracing change

A staggering 73% of Gen Z report feelings of loneliness—the highest level among any generation. This statistic underscores the profound impact of loneliness within the travel community, prompting a reevaluation of traditional travel norms. For Gen Z, travel is not just about ticking off destinations on a bucket list; it's about forging genuine connections, immersing oneself in local culture, and creating lasting memories. As such, companies must adapt their offerings to cater to these evolving needs, prioritising experiences that foster camaraderie and belonging.

More than half of Gen Z adults are already considered frequent travelers. Travel analyst Lindsey Roeschke said, "Millennials paved the way and created this idea that travel is a right, not a privilege." Gen Z has built upon this mindset, prioritising travel over more traditional paths. While other generations are more likely to wait until they have a certain income level before spending on trips, 61% of Gen Z travelers earn less than \$50K annually, according to a study by Bankrate.

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Navigating challenges

The growing trend of solo travel and the quest for unique experiences away from the usual tourist spots bring challenges and opportunities for the travel industry. Solo travel offers unmatched freedom and personal growth opportunities but raises safety and logistical issues, especially for younger travelers. Companies must find a balance between providing independence and assistance, ensuring solo travelers have the support and guidance to venture out confidently on their own.

Harnessing innovation

Innovation is key in the quest to redefine European travel. As the travel industry evolves, it's important to recognise younger generations' shifting preferences and priorities. Gen Z is reshaping group travel, seeking more authentic experiences and meaningful connections. 79% of Gen-Z and Millennials would love to partake in a day in the life of locals in their destination. By focusing on cultural immersion, adventure, and fostering community, companies can better cater to this demographic's needs. Embracing technology, sustainability, and immersive activities will be key to meeting modern travelers' expectations.

Gen Z is more likely to research how companies treat employees and their approach to sustainability, and these considerations impact their purchasing decisions. This generation is more likely to prioritise adventure, mental health benefits, and cultural experiences. This attitude makes them more likely to visit places they have never been and travel for extended periods.

Part of this is age-specific rather than generation-specific, but it solidifies travel as an outlet for these young adults to connect with nature, different

cultures, and themselves.

Looking Ahead

Together, we can reshape European travel and ignite a sense of curiosity, compassion, and bravery in a new generation of explorers.

Based on our experience over the years, we've identified the following core principles for traveling:

1. Organise travelers' experiences better than they could do it themselves.
2. Care for our travelers as if they were family.
3. Introduce important new people into travelers' lives.
4. Help them create core memories and share them with like-minded people.
5. Ensure traveling with us is advantageous for them.

This season (spring-summer), we're observing a decline in demand due to uncertainty, but we anticipate significant growth in the next season. Next year is poised to surge in demand from students taking a gap year. Once everyone adapts to the changes, we expect rapid growth, as Gen Z lives by the principle "If Not Now, Then When," prioritising rich, emotionally charged experiences and memories over stability.

In conclusion, Gen Z's rise profoundly reshapes the travel industry, challenging companies to adapt and evolve to meet today's travelers' changing needs and expectations.

Prepare to capture Gen Z's attention and wallet share in the travel and hospitality industries. The mighty generation of digital natives and experienced enthusiasts seek authenticity and uniqueness in their adventures. Gen Z demands tailor-made experiences that resonate with

their values. This shift in consumer behaviour underscores the importance of innovation and personalised offerings in the travel sector, reinforcing the need for companies to adapt to this influential demographic's evolving preferences continuously.

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