

The State of Luxury Experiential Travel

February 2026

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TRAVELS

The art of luxury custom travel



OVERVIEW

Experiential Travel has been loosely defined over the past two decades as travel “to do” something rather than only “to see” something. Or it can mean to be immersed in a different culture and to understand what it’s like to “live like a local”. The consumers that started this trend have now grown into their 40s and 50s and still want to experience the world. However, with more responsibilities and concerns like families and careers, they are more likely to demand comfort, safety, and peace of mind. For this demographic, **travel has evolved from a status symbol into a profound investment of their most precious and non-renewable resource: time.**

These affluent travelers prioritize frictionless logistics and intelligent delegation, seeking to eliminate decision fatigue by trusting experts to curate seamless, end-to-end journeys. They often gravitate toward privacy, distinction, and understated environments that offer a sanctuary from their high-pressure professional lives.

Driven by a desire for personal transformation rather than passive sightseeing, their primary objective is a high emotional ‘return on investment’, measuring the success of a trip by the depth of connection it allows them to foster with their family, the local culture, and themselves. Ultimately, they favor authentic, small-scale experiences that offer a sense of scarcity and cultural immersion over standard options.

Enchanting Travels has been delivering luxury custom travel experiences for more than 20 years to destinations around the world. Under the guidance of Founder and CEO Parik Laxminarayan, we have grown our global operation with experts positioned in twenty different countries. After caring for 60,000+ guests and earning a 4.9/5.0 rating on TrustPilot, we have perfected the art of experiential travel for our guests in 70 destinations across seven continents.

The following report highlights the travel habits and changes in behavior of our US-based guests during the past few years, as well as upcoming plans in 2026. All listed data is proprietary unless otherwise noted.



WHERE ARE LUXURY CONSUMERS VISITING?

Most popular destinations

Today's experiential luxury travel landscape is defined by a balance between heritage and adventure. While the timeless appeal of **Italy, France, and the UK** continues to draw those seeking world-class dining and history, there is a growing appetite for the natural wonders of **Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe**. This global interest extends to **Japan**, which remains a gold standard for hospitality, and **Australia**, celebrated for its cultural depth and diverse scenery.

Fastest-growing destinations

In 2026, the luxury travel market is shifting toward destinations that pair remote natural settings with high-end, intentional service. **Portugal** has moved beyond the popularity of Lisbon, with travelers now seeking the quieter landscapes of the Alentejo cork forests and the Algarve's coastal retreats. In North America, **Alaska and Canada** are leading the "frontier elegance" trend with private expeditions and exclusive lodges. Across the globe, **New Zealand** rivals its neighbors as a top choice for adventure.

WHEN ARE THEY GOING?

When you choose to travel can be as important as where you go. There is a reason “peak” travel seasons exist. The best weather and accessible attractions are very attractive when going to any destination, and for some destinations that importance has grown over the last three years. **But in Europe, some affluent travelers are willing to forgo perfection in order to avoid the largest crowds and visit during less popular times of year.**

Percent of Trips During Peak Season

	Global	Africa	Asia	Europe
2025	57%	52%	72%	40%
2023	54%	50%	64%	47%

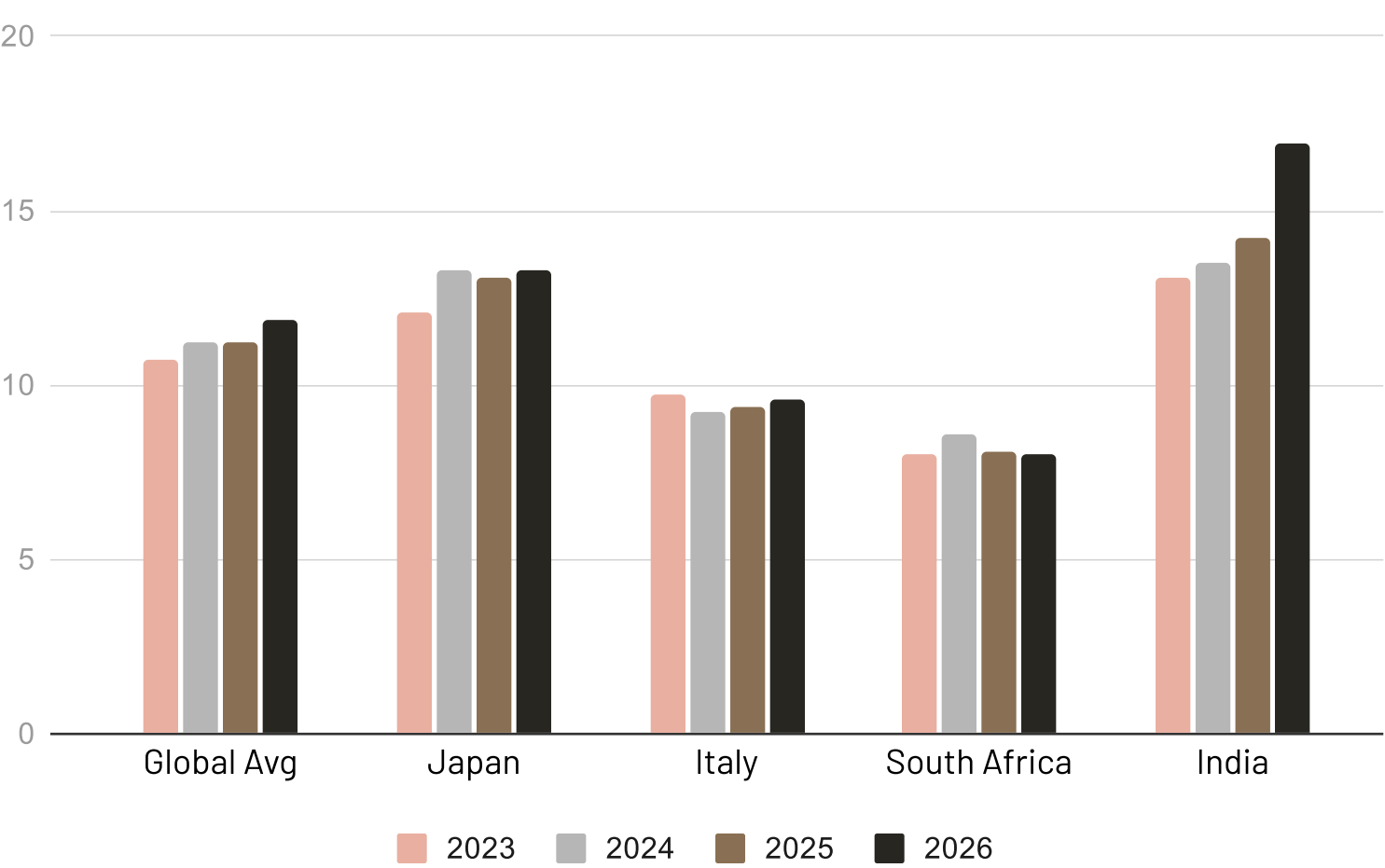
“We are seeing a clear shift toward ‘intentional seasonality.’ While the pull of iconic moments like Japan’s Cherry Blossoms remains non-negotiable for many, there is a growing sophisticated traveler who views Europe’s shoulder season not as a compromise, but as a strategic choice for deeper, crowd-free connection.”

— Parik Laxminarayan,
CEO of Enchanting Travels

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF AN EXPERIENTIAL TRIP?

Most luxury custom journeys last 10-16 days and guests travel to 4-6 cities during that time. The number of stops has increased slightly (10%) since 2023, but that doesn't mean travelers extend their trips to accommodate for that additional stop. The length of the trip is often more dependent on the size of the country by area and population. As shown below, trips to India tend to be longer than Italy or Japan because there is simply more ground to cover.

Average Number of Nights per Trip



GOING BEYOND THE MUST SEE AND DO

Affluent travelers increasingly seek more than iconic landmarks or surface-level sightseeing; they want to feel genuinely connected to the places they visit. For them, meaningful travel is about cultural immersion — engaging with local traditions, people, and rhythms of daily life in ways that feel personal and authentic. This might mean private access to artisans and historians, time spent in lesser-known neighborhoods, or experiences designed around local cuisine, nature, and heritage rather than crowded attractions. At Enchanting Travels, we specialize in immersive opportunities like those below.



Off-the-Beaten Path Cuisine

Explore Kyoto’s culinary delights from a local’s point of view during a private ramen tour. Learn how each ramen shop has its own way of doing things, from the flavor of the broth to the firmness of the noodles.



Discover Hidden History

Experience the Sassi di Matera in Southern Italy - a truly immersive historical experience where you can walk through millennia of human habitation and participate in themed rituals and meals.



Sleep Under the Stars

Discover the unique experience of sleeping under a star-studded Kenyan sky in a Star Bed at Il Ngwesi. A transformative experience spent in rhythm with the sights and sounds of the African night.

WHERE DO THEY STAY?

Affluent travelers visiting multiple cities within a destination have the unique opportunity to stay in different types of accommodations. When traveling to lesser-known places, familiarity leads to comfort. **Therefore, premium and luxury hotels are the most common accommodation type, especially in large cities, accounting for 92% of nights in 2025.** However, the selection of sustainable hotels and unique accommodations is growing around the world. Some of our guests’ favorites include:

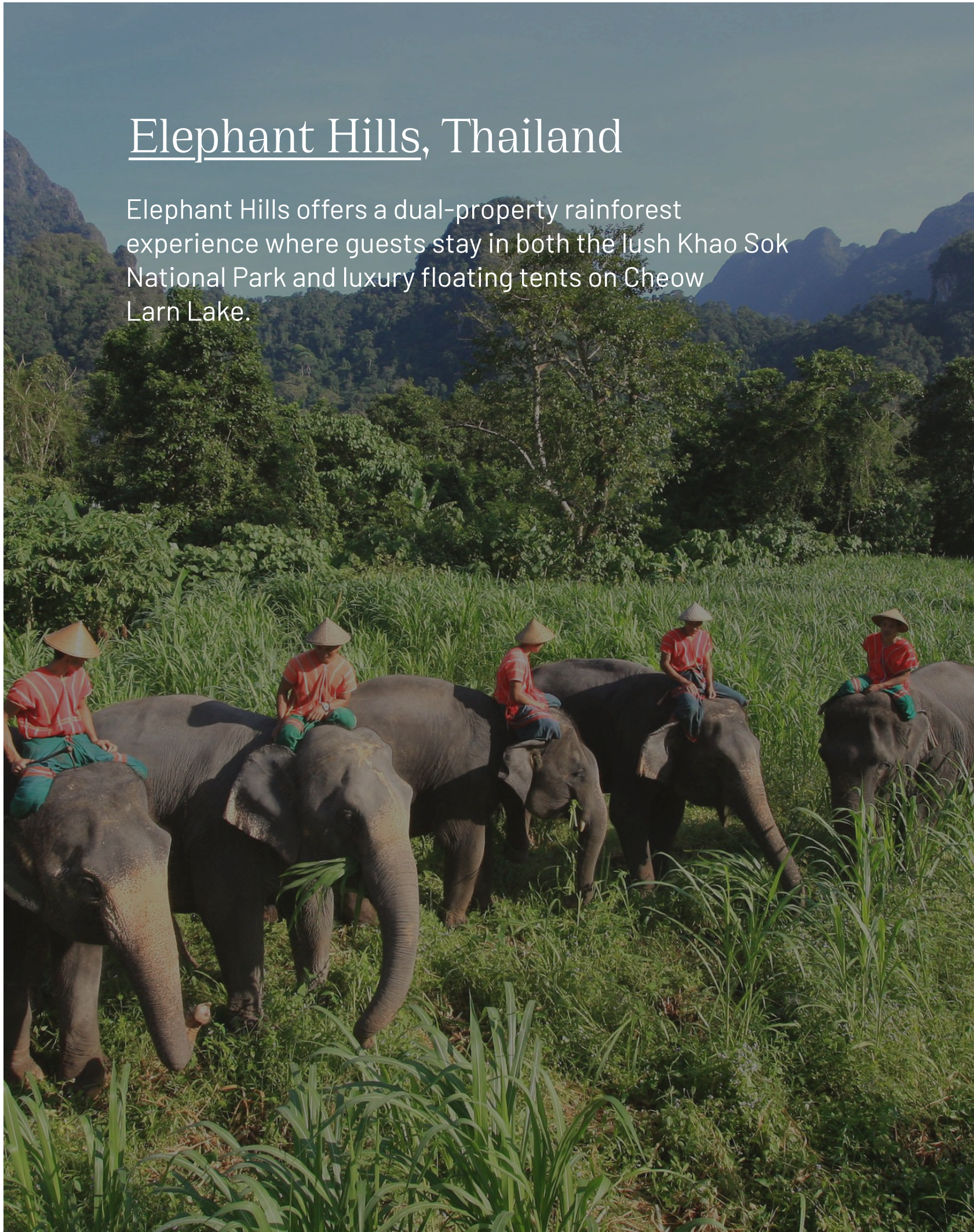
Emboo, Kenya

Emboo has reimagined the traditional safari as the Maasai Mara’s first carbon-neutral camp, offering guests a silent, eco-friendly experience through the use of electric vehicles and sustainable infrastructure.



Elephant Hills, Thailand

Elephant Hills offers a dual-property rainforest experience where guests stay in both the lush Khao Sok National Park and luxury floating tents on Cheow Larn Lake.



Awasi Mendoza, Argentina

Conceived as a tribute to Mendoza’s winemaking heritage, Awasi is set on a 55-acre vineyard estate surrounded by the Andes and offers a rare balance of privacy and accessibility.





85%

of luxury travelers believe
advisors are the best way to book
personalized luxury travel¹

84%

agreed that a trusted travel
advisor is more valuable than
unlimited internet research²

HOW DO LUXURY CONSUMERS PLAN EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL?

When considering experiential travel, luxury consumers are quick to realize the complexities within their plans. Logistics, language barriers, and lack of regional travel experience are reasons they are more likely to plan with a luxury travel advisor.

1. Luxury consumers value time more than anything else.

For this demographic, time has surpassed material goods as the ultimate status symbol. In this market, the greatest luxury a brand can provide is a seamless experience that leaves the client free to be fully present.

2. They can't afford to waste that limited time on mishaps when traveling.

The cost of a travel mishap far exceeds the price of the ticket; it is a costly drain on their most limited resource. They seek the freedom to explore without the burden of crisis management. **Ultimately, peace of mind is the true luxury**, ensuring that their journey remains focused on enrichment rather than navigating logistical failures.

Luxury travel advisors, like Enchanting Travels, bring proven experience, local relationships with in-destination guides, detailed knowledge of travel restrictions and health and safety guidelines, along with easy, secure payment and on-call troubleshooting before, during, and after a trip. Luxury travelers choose Enchanting Travels for our in-market expertise around the world in 70 destinations. Discerning consumers can rely on one advisor, but get the expertise of many, plus a personal concierge in your timezone during your trip to address any unexpected needs.

¹Deloitte
²Preferred Hotels & Resorts survey

As the luxury custom travel landscape continues to evolve, Enchanting Travels remains committed to monitoring these shifts through our internal metrics and guest feedback. We look forward to seeing how these emerging preferences shape the future of travel in 2026 and beyond.

For further insights or media inquiries regarding this report, please contact press@enchantingtravels.com

Data Note: The insights presented in this report are based on proprietary internal data and guest analytics collected by Enchanting Travels. This information is provided for informational purposes and reflects internal trends rather than broader market-wide statistics.

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