

5 tourism and travel megatrends to take note of in 2024



By [Sabine Lehmann](#)

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The tourists are back! In fact, airline carrying capacity in Cape Town has reached new heights with more than one million international seat capacity projected for the 2023/24 peak summer season.



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This is great news for the SA tourism sector, still carrying the costs of three years of slow or no business since the Covid-19 pandemic. But we can't afford to rest on our laurels. We need to make sure that we are delivering a world-beating experience to our domestic and international tourists to keep them coming back for more.

One way to do this is to understand the megatrends shaping the travel industry – trends such as health and wellness and eco-travel that will be around for the mid-to long term – and to make sure that we cater to these. But an even better way to keep SA's tourism sector fresh is to keep an eye on the microtrends to see whether they gain strength and momentum so that we can get ahead of the megatrends.

Here are five such trends, that were microtrends pre-pandemic, and are now moving into megatrend territory, that could give SA's tourism sector the edge.

Trend 1: The anxious traveller

Anxiety levels are on the rise. According to the World Health Organisation, the prevalence of anxiety and depression has increased by 25% since the outbreak of Covid-19. Travellers will likely need more reassurance than ever – around issues such as health and safety, eco-anxiety and social anxiety. This means that maybe we shouldn't be throwing out our hand sanitiser stations just yet. They are good no-water health installations for anxious and non-anxious travellers alike.

Some travellers will also want more evidence that they are keeping their eco-footprint as small as possible, while others may need the industry to go above and beyond to address their social anxiety. For example, one theme park in Europe now offers “a friend for the day” to hold your hand on roller coasters!

Trend 2: WFHS: Work From Here Specifically

A post-pandemic sea change has been the rise of the digital nomad and the Work From Anywhere (WFA) phenomenon (both are predicated on excellent connectivity). But let's not forget the Work From Here Specifically (WFHS) cohort. These are the travellers that need to hand in leave forms for every day out of the workplace – each day needs to count.

Another consideration is that in the tourism and leisure industry, staff fall into the WFHS cohort. This means that not only do we have to vie for talent that would rather be in the WFA cohort, but we have to compete with the global north, that is poaching this talent from the global south. This will be particularly difficult in the tourism and hospitality and tourism-conservation industry where WFHS includes anti-social work hours.

Trend 3: Insta-disappointment

Insta-cafes, Insta-museums and Insta-aesthetics have not yet peaked. Sites specifically designed to look good on Instagram or to make your own Instagram posts look good abound and are popular. We've all seen the queues for the perfect tourist-free background shot!

I predict, however, that there will be a growing “is that all” feeling for the superficial bubble-gum experience that lives on in a “Gram” only. The opportunity here is to provide authentic off the insta-grid experiences that provide deep memories and increase traveller loyalty.

Trend 4: Travel with fur-babies

Pet ownership worldwide has soared, and with it the humanisation of pets. “Fur-baby” is now an official word in the Oxford Dictionary. Pet parents are not only prepared to spend on pets but also demand the best, often fit-for-human grade, for them. This means they often want to take their fur babies with them when they travel and not leave them in a pet hotel.

Pet-friendly establishments of all varieties have an opportunity to meet this rising demand in creative ways including by upselling to these tourists, everything from pet popsicles and pet-accinos.

Trend 5: Dynamic pricing

The tourism supply chain – from airlines to hotels, car hire, and short-stay accommodation – has embraced dynamic pricing. This means that the price changes depending on market conditions, notably its higher when demand is high, but also lower during quiet periods of the day or week.

Now this megatrend is catching on for attractions too. Internationally museums, aquariums, cableways, theme parks, concerts and even bars have introduced dynamic pricing with great success. It allows the operator to maximise capacity and create a smooth experience, while visitors get to choose a time and price that suits them.

Travellers post-Covid have become used to greater flexibility, including generous cancellation policies, great for the traveller, not so easy for the supplier. Hotels, guest houses, attractions and restaurants all need to give some thought how to create flexibility and convenience for their guests without compromising their bottom line and dynamic pricing is one way to achieve this.

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