

Top 10 travel trends for 2024

 By [Martin West](#)

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In the ever-evolving landscape of travel, each passing year brings exciting new trends that shape the way people explore the world. The travel industry is poised for a transformative journey, driven by emerging technologies, shifting consumer preferences, and a global mindset that seeks unique and immersive experiences.



Martin West, CEO, Tourvest Destination Management

Here are 10 key travel trends, challenges, and opportunities the tourism industry is expected to face in 2024.

1. Time to shift from luxury to mainstream

Post-pandemic, South Africa's 5-star tourism surged ahead, but mainstream 3-star tourism is facing hurdles, including a shortage of flight seats, which are now 50-60% more expensive than pre-2020.

This reality is diverting travellers to other destinations, which can be seen in East Africa's tourism growth. Though 5-star luxury travel is enjoying rapid recovery, it is approaching capacity – and the priority is to reignite the mainstream segment in South Africa to ensure sustained tourism growth in 2024.

2. Open skies now

Meaningful tourism growth necessitates legislative changes, which include open skies policies. The call is to address capacity constraints and ensure that anyone willing to fly to South Africa is allowed to.

3. Infrastructure reinvestment vital

Tourism entities need to reinvest significantly in infrastructure. Customs and export restrictions on luxury coaches, for example, result in a shortage, among other challenges. The tourism industry is capital-intensive, and government amendments for tax-free coach imports will boost infrastructure.

4. Streamline visa regulations

Government deciding to boldly adjust visa regimes, e-visas, and visa-free arrivals will make a material difference in attracting tourists, as will taking recommendations discussed at TBCSA level and implementing them swiftly.

5. Fix educational sector challenges

Educational shortcomings have led to numerous unfilled positions at Tourvest, for example. Scalability hinges on addressing deep structural issues in education, CATHSETA, and the lack of specific qualifications for inbound leisure.

The shortage of tour guides and travel consultants, for instance, must be addressed.

6. It's about scalability

We must grow tourism if we want to earn more foreign exchange for this country and create decentralised employment in rural areas – which we do.

We're all trying very hard to get these things right, but we need to fix the bottlenecks to achieve scalability in the industry. Anything that hinders us from scaling up should be reviewed and reworked in a hurry, and that's not happening... yet.

7. Government quandary on tourism vs immigration control

While the Minister of Tourism strives for accessibility, the Minister of Home Affairs must navigate the delicate balance of protecting borders and limiting illegal immigration.

The tourism industry understands these challenges, and it is a delicate area for government to navigate while trying to promote travel to the country and maintain immigration control at our borders.

8. Marketing immersive experiences

SA Tourism's key marketing message is 'Live again' which sums up the call to come and explore, and immerse yourself in the culture, fauna, and flora. South Africa positions itself as a destination for experiences that appeal to the shift in post-pandemic tourism trends, focusing less on pure consumption and more on cultural exploration. A lot of good work has been done in this from a marketing and social media material aspect.

9. Connecting travelable parts of Africa

According to [Statista.com](https://www.statista.com), of the 969.39 international tourist arrivals in 2022, the African continent attracted only 46.61, while Europe attracted 594.9 and the Americas, 156.18. This means Africa attracted less than 5% of global tourism, but it also means there are endless opportunities for the travelable parts of the continent.

For instance, just focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, would include Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Benin in West Africa; Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya in East Africa; and all SADC countries in southern Africa.

10. Multi-destination travel

A surge in pan-African connectivity, as seen in Ethiopian Airlines, is enabling multi-destination travel. This novel trend attracts travellers by combining destinations like Cape Town and the Serengeti, or a safari in South Africa with a beach

holiday in Zanzibar and fosters more significant global interest in the continent.

From embracing sustainable travel practices to the fusion of technology and tradition, these trends are not just predictions; they are glimpses into the future of how we will embark on our journeys, create memories, and connect with the world around us.

ABOUT MARTIN WIEST

Martin Wiest is CEO of Tourvest Destination Management and a member of the Tourvest Holdings executive committee.
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