

# OUTBOUND TRAVEL IS CHANGING IN 2023



The year 2023 is an important milestone for the travel industry, as many travel destinations and businesses are still struggling to recover from the impact of COVID-19. While the recovery speed varies by region, recovery is expected to be complete by the end of 2024, even for countries that recently lifted travel restrictions. This means that destinations can now focus on pre-pandemic issues, such as determining the types of tourism, destinations, and purposes they want to promote. However, the context in which these questions are asked has changed due to geopolitical events, technological advancements, and concerns about sustainability.

## City tourism is in demand

In the past couple of years, due to the impact of the pandemic, travelers have developed a strong preference for destinations that offer sunny beaches. However, in 2023, we saw a remarkable trend shift. Urban destinations are becoming more popular among tourists, with a growth rate of 52% compared to a 26% growth rate in beach destinations over the same period in 2022.

## Climate change is a long-term problem

During the summer of 2023, the Northern Hemisphere was hit by extreme temperatures, wildfires, and floods attributed to climate change. However, these events did not significantly affect travel patterns. Despite the Rhodes wildfires, ticket sales returned to normal within a month. However, climate change is expected to impact travel preferences in the long term. As temperatures continue to rise, demand for hotter destinations during the summer months will likely decrease. Conversely, cooler regions are likely to become more attractive to travelers.

## Family travel is always here

Many travelers highly value shared experiences, which is evident in the increasing popularity of family group travel. This type of travel involves three to five passengers traveling together, and it has shown the fastest recovery rate compared to other travel segments across all regions, especially in the Americas, where it has already surpassed 2019 levels. Although the recovery rate has been slower, couple travel is the second most resilient segment in every region. It is only slightly behind family group travel in Asia and the Americas.

## Luxury travel is on the rise

The demand for luxurious travel options has recovered faster in the Asia-Pacific region than for regular ones. This trend can be attributed to the “revenge travel” phenomenon. However, in the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa, where this phase has subsided, the demand for premium cabin classes shows a more robust recovery than economy seats. This suggests that despite concerns about the cost of living, consumers are still willing to pay more for high-end travel experiences.

## Travelers desire more diverse travel in 2023

An analysis of international tourist arrivals in 2023, including forward ticket data for Q4, reveals several noteworthy trends when compared to the figures from 2019. The analysis reflects the continued recovery of global tourism post-COVID-19.

In 2022, the Caribbean and Southern Europe were the most visited travel destinations, as people longed for beaches. This led to an increase in international tourist arrivals. However, in 2023, there will be more diverse travel patterns. The Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Greece will remain popular, but the destinations will be more varied overall. The Middle East and Africa (MEA) will have a significant presence among the top travel destinations.

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