



we travel

MULTI-DAY TRAVEL TRENDS

BOOKING BEHAVIORS IN 2026

WeTravel's Annual Report

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CEO ADDRESS

To our readers,

Every year, the travel industry produces no shortage of trend reports. Many focus on where travelers want to go next or the experience types that are generating interest in the moment. I'm sure that, like me, many of you enjoy reading these reports – they're not only interesting, but offer valuable perspectives into what travelers are looking for and how expectations are evolving.

But they don't always show the full picture for businesses.

That's where this report comes in. Our goal is to surface the business side of the story – what it actually looks like to sell, plan, and deliver multi-day travel that aligns with traveler expectations, at scale.

What makes this perspective possible is the vantage point behind the data. WeTravel works with businesses across almost every country in the world, and looking back at last year's activity, we observed more than 800,000 bookings, representing 350,000 trips and 1.3 million travelers.

But booking data alone doesn't tell the whole story. That's why this report also draws from our Annual Travel Trends Survey, in which operators, DMCs, suppliers, and advisors share what they're seeing inside their own businesses. Together, these two perspectives—observed behavior and reported experience—allow us to move beyond isolated data points and bring to light the industry's full operating reality.

Rather than offering a prediction of what might happen next, this report shows what is already happening, so businesses can see beyond their own booking dashboards and understand how their experience fits into a much wider picture.

When we stepped back this year and looked at the data as a whole, a clear picture emerged of the environment multi-day operators are

working in today. Trips cost more. Expectations are higher. Bookings increasingly involve groups rather than individuals. As a result, businesses are navigating growing operational complexity across planning, coordination, payments, partners, and delivery.

At the same time, the way travelers research and make decisions is changing. In the second half of 2025, new artificial intelligence (AI) search tools began to influence how travelers compare options and choose trips, adding another variable to an already crowded discovery landscape.

Rising expectations, increasing operational complexity, and shifts in how travelers discover trips are changing what it takes to successfully operate. In this new environment, businesses need clearer guidance on how to adapt. That's where this report is meant to help: not by offering predictions or prescriptions, but by grounding decisions in observed behavior at scale.

The year ahead will bring new pressures, but it will also bring real opportunity. Our hope is that this report helps you navigate 2026 with clarity, confidence, and a stronger sense of where to focus so you can keep building trips that matter, in businesses that last.

A portrait of Ted Clements, CEO of WeTravel. He is a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue sweater, smiling. The portrait is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping a dark blue banner.

Ted Clements *he/him*

CEO, WeTravel

A photograph of a cave entrance. The cave is dark and cavernous, with stalactites hanging from the ceiling. A bright waterfall cascades down a rocky cliff face, creating a misty spray at the bottom. A river flows through the cave, reflecting the light from the waterfall. The overall scene is dramatic and atmospheric.

METHODOLOGY

This report draws on two complementary data sources: aggregated, anonymized WeTravel internal booking data and WeTravel's Annual Travel Trends Survey (2025). Together, these sources combine observed booking behavior at scale with reported operator priorities, expectations, and decision-making logic.

WETRAVEL INTERNAL BOOKING DATA

Observed booking behavior is drawn from aggregated and anonymized data across the WeTravel platform, reflecting activity from more than **350,000 multi-day trips, 800,000 bookings, and 1.3 million travelers booked during 2025 for 2026 departures**. This data was pulled in January of 2026.

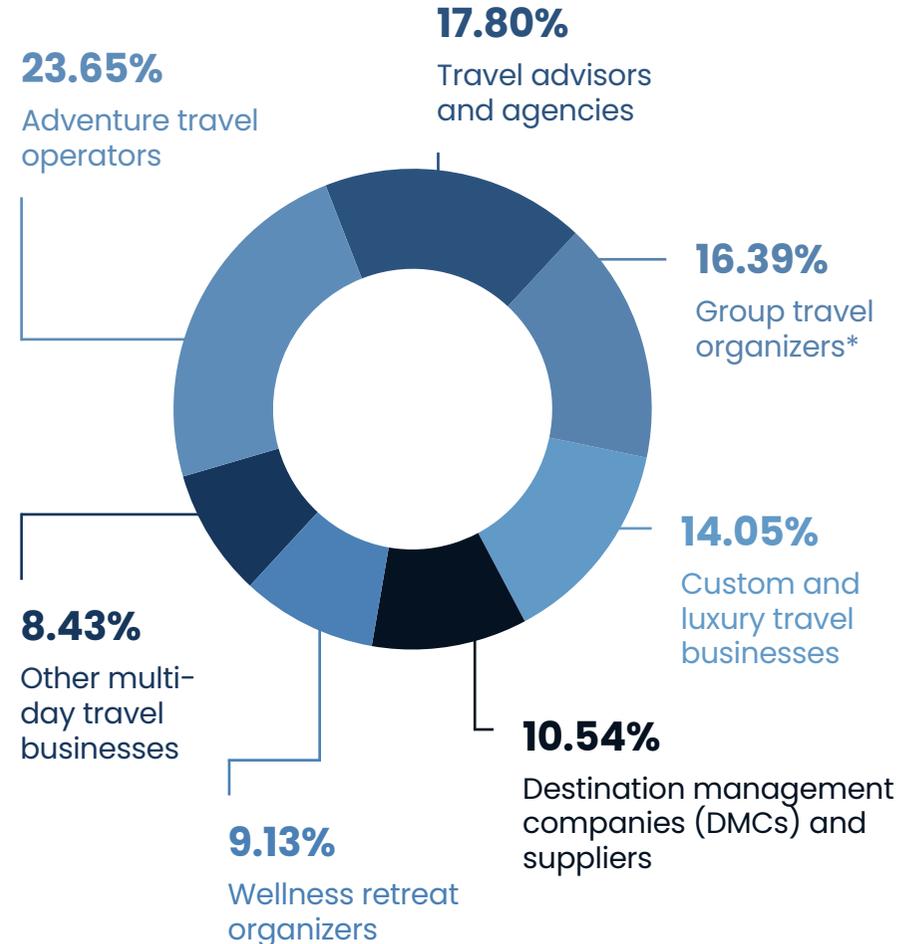
This data captures how multi-day travel is being sold and booked in practice and is used throughout the report to surface large-scale behavioral patterns that are difficult to observe through survey responses alone.

ANNUAL TRAVEL TRENDS SURVEY

WeTravel conducted its Annual Travel Trends Survey between November 4 and December 19, 2025, **collecting responses on behalf of 427 global multi-day travel businesses**.

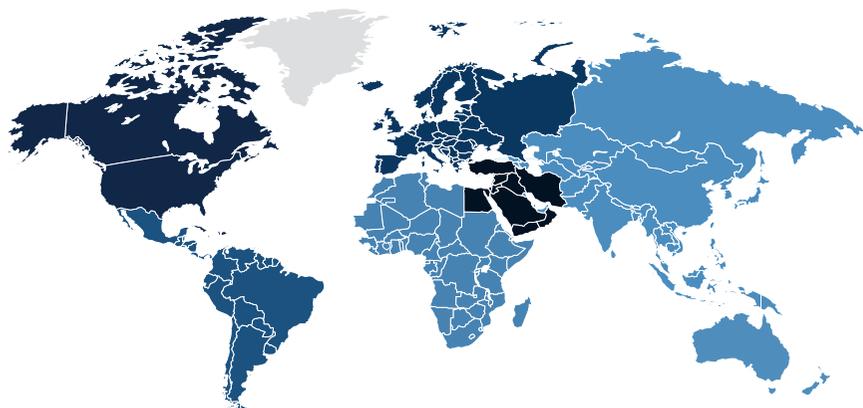
Survey questions focused primarily on trips departing in 2026, regardless of when those bookings were made. Select questions also asked operators to reflect on observed booking activity and operational changes during 2025, providing near-term context where relevant.

BUSINESS TYPES REPRESENTED IN THE 2026 TRAVEL TRENDS SURVEY



*E.g. Student, Youth, Performance, Sport, Event, Women-only, LGBTQ+

PRIMARY MARKETS SERVED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS



66.90%	United States and Canada
20.42%	Europe
6.10%	Latin America and the Caribbean
3.05%	Africa
1.64%	Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands
1.41%	Asia
0.47%	Middle East

**Based on survey responses to: "Select the region where the majority of your travelers reside."*

YEAR-OVER-YEAR CONTEXT

Where year-over-year comparisons are included, they are based on **comparable questions from WeTravel's prior-year Travel Trends Survey**, which informed the 2025 edition of this report. Comparisons are only drawn where question wording, response structure, and sample composition support directional consistency.

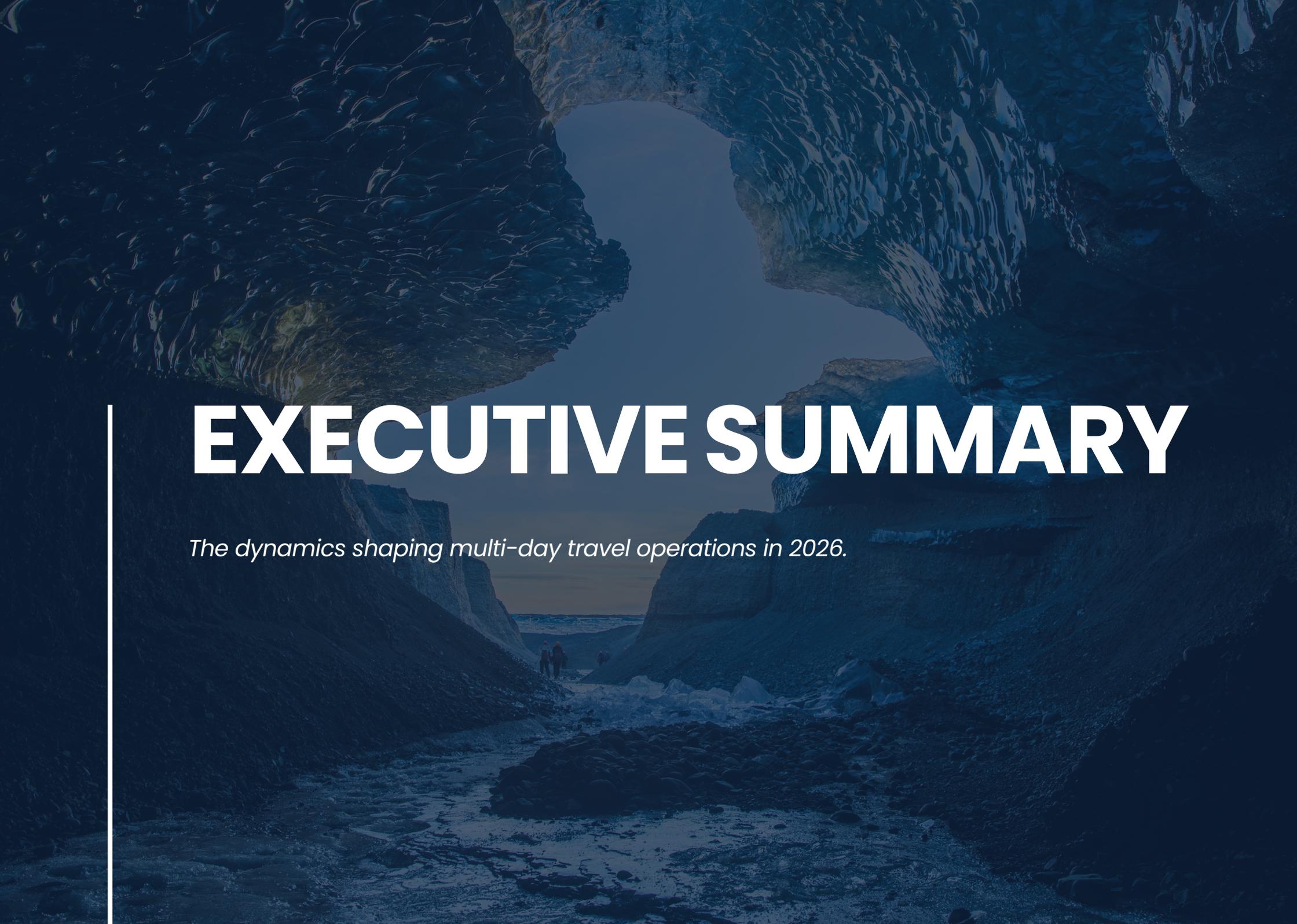
Internal booking data may also provide historical context for observed behavioral shifts; however, **survey-based year-over-year comparisons and platform-based observations are clearly distinguished and not blended.**

DATA INTERPRETATION AND LIMITATIONS

Survey findings reflect self-reported company-level information and may be influenced by respondent perception or recall. Internal platform data reflects observed behavior across WeTravel's network, but does not represent the entire global travel industry.

The insights in this report are intended to function as directional benchmarks for multi-day travel businesses navigating 2026, rather than forecasts, prescriptions, or guarantees of future performance.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The dynamics shaping multi-day travel operations in 2026.

1. PRICES – AND EXPECTATIONS – ARE GROWING

Trip prices are rising across operator segments, with average total trip prices increasing 59% year over year. At the same time, bookings are increasingly involving more travelers per booking. **Expectations for customization are rising, too**, increasing the coordination and operational complexity required to deliver each trip successfully.

Average trip prices

increased

59%

year over year

2. DISCOVERY HAS DIVERSIFIED, AND BOOKINGS ARE DIRECT

Travelers are discovering trips through a growing mix of channels, including AI-powered search tools, social media platforms, and digital marketing. As discovery spreads, **operators' own websites are the primary place where trips are booked**. Half of operators report that direct channels drive the majority of their 2026 bookings.



**Percentage of operators who reported direct bookings via phone or their website as the channel that has driven most of their 2026 bookings so far.*

3. AI IS BECOMING EMBEDDED IN TRIP PLANNING

AI use has expanded beyond marketing into drafting itineraries and proposals, as well as supporting trip personalization. These use cases add capacity in early planning stages, helping operators respond to personalization demands without proportionally increasing manual work.



44%

of operators use AI to create trip itineraries or proposals



4. CUSTOM TRAVEL IS THE NEW BASELINE

Custom and private travel is expanding as more trips are intentionally designed around the needs and preferences of each specific group, rather than a fixed itinerary. This reflects a broader shift across multi-day travel, where **customization is increasingly expected as part of trip design, not a premium add-on.**

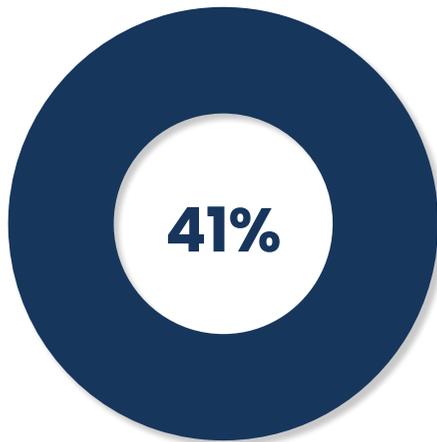
56%

of all operators report increased interest in private or custom trips

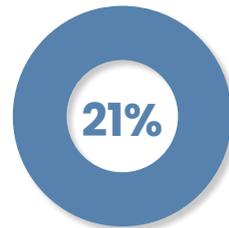


5. OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY IS BECOMING A GROWTH CONSTRAINT

As trip delivery becomes more complex, the operational effort required per booking increases. **Differences in how operators manage planning, coordination, and administrative work now shape how much they can grow without adding disproportionate strain.**



of operators cite manual or time-consuming operational processes as a top pressure impacting 2026 tours



of operators say they have difficulty finding or vetting reliable local partners as a key operational pressure impacting 2026 tours



KEY CHAPTERS



1 – TRAVEL COSTS RISE, EXPECTATIONS FOLLOW

Higher trip prices are raising traveler expectations, shifting booking behavior, and increasing the complexity of delivering multi-day travel.

2 – THE DEFINITION OF LUXURY IS CHANGING

Custom and luxury travel is expanding as more trips are designed to be immersive, flexible, and intentionally crafted – not just premium.

3 – DIRECT BOOKINGS DOMINATE, DISCOVERY DIVERSIFIES

Trip discovery is spreading across new channels, while bookings concentrate on operators' websites.

4 – AI MOVES CLOSER TO THE TRIP

AI is no longer confined to marketing and internal efficiency – it now also supports itinerary planning and early-stage trip design.



1 – TRAVEL COSTS RISE, EXPECTATIONS FOLLOW

Higher trip prices are raising traveler expectations, shifting booking behavior, and increasing the complexity of delivering multi-day travel.

Rising travel costs are shaping the multi-day travel landscape in 2026. As prices climb, travelers are committing differently; booking together more often, expecting more from the experience, and looking for trips that clearly feel worth the spend.

For operators, this translates into more travelers per booking, stronger demand for customization, and greater emphasis on immersive, more meaningful experiences.

Delivering trips that meet these expectations now requires more coordination and precision – increasing the operational complexity behind every departure.





1.1 – COSTS AND TRIP PRICES ARE RISING

In 2026, operators are navigating higher cost pressure across their trips. When asked which supply-side or operational factors have most impacted their upcoming departures, **70% of operators cited rising supplier or accommodation costs** – and these pressures are flowing through to trip pricing.

Across segments, **trip prices are higher compared to 2025**. WeTravel’s aggregated platform data shows higher average trip prices for bookings with 2026 departures compared to trips that departed in 2025.

AVERAGE TRIP PRICE BY SEGMENT FOR TRIPS DEPARTED IN 2025 VS TRIPS DEPARTING IN 2026

	2025	2026	% change
Travel agencies & advisors	\$2,754	\$3,549	+29%
Wellness retreats	\$2,786	\$3,620	+30%
Custom & luxury	\$5,986	\$8,042	+34%
Adventure operators	\$1,900	\$4,906	+158%
Other tour operators	\$1,181	\$3,162	+168%

As trip prices increase, travelers are managing these higher costs by consistently using payment plans.

Across all multi-day trips, WeTravel’s internal data shows that **most bookings for 2026 departures include at least one installment beyond the initial deposit**, reinforcing that travelers are committing to higher-value trips by distributing payments over time.

Add Payment Plan
✕

Number of payments

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18

Payment dates

Deposit	Due at booking	\$1,000.00
1st Payment	April 03 📅	\$3,000.00
2nd Payment	May 03 📅	\$3,000.00
Final Payment	June 03 📅	\$3,000.00

Allow partial payment ?

Total: \$10,00.00

Enable auto-billing ?

Save Plan

PAYMENT PLAN USAGE AND INSTALLMENT STRUCTURE BY SEGMENT

	% of Bookings Using Payment Plans	Avg. Installments per Booking*
Travel agencies & advisors	95%	2.0
Wellness retreats	91%	2.0
Custom & luxury travel	97%	1.0
Adventure operators	96%	2.5
Other tour operators	98%	1.0

**Installments are payments made after the deposit.
An average of 1 installment indicates a deposit plus one final payment.*

Both higher trip prices and rising operational costs form a defining backdrop for 2026, shaping how trips are structured – and what travelers expect in return.

1.2 – MORE TRAVELERS ARE BOOKING TOGETHER

WeTravel's aggregated platform data shows that **bookings for 2026 departures involve more travelers per booking compared to 2025.**



AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRAVELERS PER BOOKING BY SEGMENT IN 2025 VS 2026

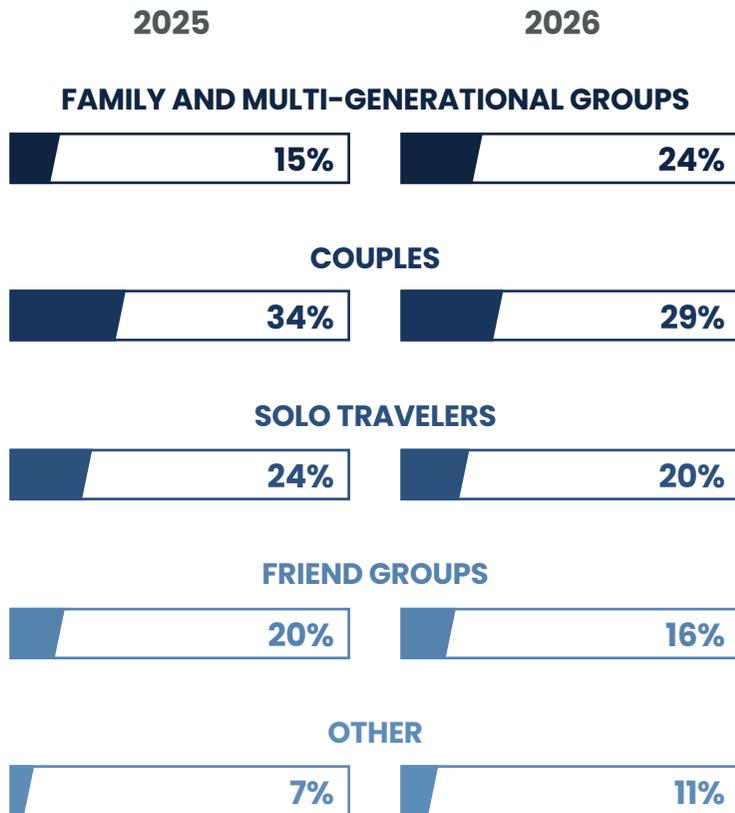
	Avg. Number of Travelers per Booking in 2025	Avg. Number of Travelers per Booking in 2026	Avg. Increase per Booking
Travel agencies & advisors	2.6	3.0	+0.4
Wellness retreats	2.0	4.0	+2.0
Custom & luxury	1.8	2.0	+0.2
Adventure operators	3.0	4.7	+1.7
Other tour operators	5.5	7.6	+2.1

This year, **family and multi-generational travel was the most commonly reported primary group type, increasing by 60% year over year.**

On the other hand, **the share of operators who said solo travelers make up the majority of their bookings declined by 17% over the same time period.**

Along with the increase in travelers per booking, this points to more bookings being made collectively rather than individually. Booking together is one way travelers can spread the financial burden of higher-priced trips and feel more confident committing, especially as total trip costs rise.

PRIMARY GROUP TYPE COMPOSITION BY YEAR



1.3 – CUSTOMIZATION IS BECOMING THE BASELINE

As trip prices rise and more travelers book together, expectations are increasing not just around quality, but around how well a trip reflects the group itself.

The survey revealed that 56% of operators have seen increased interest in private or custom trips, signaling that many travelers now expect trips to be shaped around their group rather than fit into a standardized itinerary.

This expectation for customization is also reflected in how trips are being designed. Many travelers are no longer choosing trips based on a single travel style, but **responding to itineraries that blend different experience elements**.

Data from adventure operators shows that some of their most popular experiences often include elements beyond core adventure activities.

MOST-BOOKED EXPERIENCE TYPES AMONG ADVENTURE OPERATORS



19% Culinary-focused



17% Luxury or bespoke



11% Wellness or mindfulness-related

**Operators could select more than one response.*



A similar pattern appears among custom and luxury operators, where demand is not confined to traditionally “luxury” experiences alone. **For trips with 2026 departures, many operators report that active and wellness-oriented elements are among their most booked.**

MOST-BOOKED EXPERIENCE TYPES AMONG CUSTOM & LUXURY OPERATORS



20%

report that **wellness** experiences are some of their most booked



25%

report that **adventure** experiences are among their most booked

**Operators could select more than one response.*

“While people might sign up for a trip that goes to the Taj Mahal or other major sites, their highlights are almost always the cultural interactions they have.”

Rebeca & Matthew Newton, Founders of



Small-group tour operator focused on culturally immersive and nature-based travel experiences.

Rather than signaling a move away from specialization, this points to a shift in how trips are being shaped on the ground. Expectations increasingly include the ability to combine experience elements in ways that feel relevant to the group, rather than fitting into a single label.



1.4 – HIGHER STAKES, DEEPER MEANING

As trip prices rise, travelers are more conscious of what they get in return. Higher spending raises expectations that trips will deliver something memorable, meaningful, and clearly worth the investment.

This is reflected in the types of trips operators are seeing increased interest in for 2026 departures. Rather than short, surface-level itineraries, operators report growing demand for formats that prioritize depth, participation, and time spent together.

EXPERIENCE-LED TRIP TYPES SEEING INCREASED TRAVELER INTEREST FOR 2026

- 32%** Extended or multi-destination trips
- 25%** Community-based trips
- 18%** Expedition or exploration-based trips
- 15%** Skill-based or learning-focused trips

**Operators could select more than one response.*

 WeTravel's Annual Travel Trends Report, 2026

“Sightseeing isn’t a big thing anymore, at least for our business, since it’s more seen as ‘mass tourism’ and our clients prefer a more unique itinerary – they avoid the major attractions that are nowadays overcrowded.”

Matteo Troiani, Founder of

Be*in*Italy

Custom group tour operator based in Italy offering exceptional, hand-crafted experiences.



This emphasis on meaning and depth is especially visible among adventure operators. For trips with 2026 departures, operators report that their **most-booked experiences tend to center on active participation and purposeful engagement** with a destination.



PERCENTAGE OF ADVENTURE OPERATORS WHO REPORTED THE FOLLOWING TO BE AMONG THEIR MOST POPULAR EXPERIENCE TYPES

Wildlife or conservation-focused experiences



Endurance or challenge-based trips



Remote or less-known destinations



**Operators could select more than one response.*

“We always see guests looking for new, off-the-beaten-path destinations. Our guests are well aware of over-tourism and want to travel to places that won’t be too crowded.”

Paige Davis, President of

adventure
women

Adventure travel company offering active, small-group trips for women.

As travelers commit more financially – and do so together – they expect trips to deliver more in return. For operators, this raises the bar on execution, since higher-value bookings leave less room for generic experiences, misalignment, or under-delivery.

1.5 – OPERATIONAL COMPLEXITY IS INCREASING

As trips involve more travelers per booking and expectations increasingly include customization, the operational demands on each departure grow. More people in a single booking can mean more preferences, approvals, and coordination, while customization introduces additional variation in itineraries, partners, and delivery requirements.

Together, these dynamics increase the amount of work required behind the scenes. Operators reported a variety of operational pressures impacting their 2026 tours.

OPERATIONAL PRESSURES IMPACTING TOUR OPERATIONS IN 2026

- 41%** of operators pointed to manual or time-consuming operational processes
- 21%** of operators cited difficulty finding or vetting reliable local partners
- 14%** of operators said they struggle managing payments or contracts across multiple regions



As trips grow in size and complexity, the effort required to deliver each departure increases accordingly. For operators, the challenge in 2026 will be whether existing workflows can support larger, more customized trips without increasing strain, error, or complexity behind the scenes.

1.6 – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAVEL BUSINESSES?

1. Make customization easy for travelers and operators

Customization is now a baseline expectation. **Allowing travelers to select and pay for add-ons at booking makes it easy for them to shape a trip around their preferences.** For operators, using an AI-powered itinerary builder built on reusable components makes it faster to personalize trips and respond to requests without rebuilding itineraries from scratch.

Select packages & Add-ons

2 ▼ Single Occupancy \$3,000

2 ▼ Balloon Safari \$500

1 ▼ Airport Transfer \$80

Payment options

Pay by installment

\$145 – Amount due at booking

\$1,718 – 1st payment due Apr 03

\$1,717 – 2nd payment due Jun 03

Pay full amount – \$3,580

Check Out

2. Use payment plans to support higher prices

With travelers committing to higher-priced trips by paying over time, payment plans are no longer optional. **Operators should ensure their booking and payment system supports installments by default,** so travelers can commit without completing the full payment upfront, and operators aren't manually tracking deposits, balances, or reminders.

3. Strengthen your partner network as trips diversify

More experience-driven and blended itineraries often require partners outside an operator's traditional network. **Operators who can easily find, vet, and work with a wider range of local partners (guides, activity providers, community hosts, or specialists) are better positioned** to add new experience elements without increasing delivery risk or spending hours searching for and vetting partners.

Name	Operating countries	Business type	Travel types	Rating
Koru Trails	Italy, Chile	DMC	Camping, Trekking, Eco Adventure	★★★★★ (27)
Nómada Atlas	Argentina, Brazil	DMC	Eco Adventure	★★★★★ (88)
Looma Voyages	United States	Travel agency	Culinary Travel	★★★★★ (88)
Wild Horizon Tours	Ireland	Travel Influencer	Luxury Travel	★★★★★ (78)
Solea Retreats	Colombia	Retreat Center	Yoga, Wellness	★★★★★ (72)
Aurora Expeditions	Australia	Hotel	Wellness, Fitness	★★★★★ (71)

2 – THE DEFINITION OF LUXURY IS CHANGING

Custom and luxury travel is expanding as more trips are designed to be immersive, flexible, and intentionally crafted – not just premium.

Custom and luxury travel is a growing market segment, but not simply because travelers are spending more or moving upmarket. **Instead, growth is being shaped by a new definition of luxury** – one that no longer only means yacht charters or Michelin-starred dining, but also includes trips shaped by what’s important to each traveler.

For operators, this shift doesn’t point to a single model to follow. Some are leaning into high-touch, bespoke planning, while others are balancing personalization with efficiency through selective use of technology.

What unites these approaches is the need for clarity: **understanding who their travelers are, what kind of custom experience they value, and how to deliver it sustainably** within their business model.

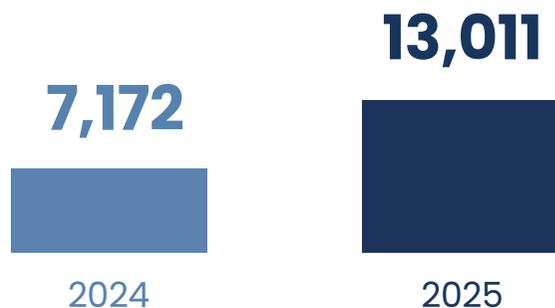


2.1 – CUSTOM AND LUXURY TRAVEL IS GROWING

Across all operators, **56% report increased interest in private or custom trips**, while **38% report increased interest in premium or luxury travel**.

Custom and luxury travel stands out this year as a growing segment, with WeTravel's aggregated data showing the number of trips booked **increasing year over year by 81%**.

NUMBER OF CUSTOM AND LUXURY BOOKINGS MADE THROUGH WETRAVEL

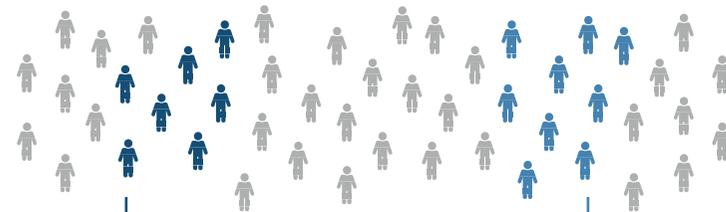


Not only did the number of bookings grow year over year, but the price of trips increased too. WeTravel's data shows that the average trip price for custom and luxury operators increased by **34% from 2025 to 2026**.

In 2026, custom and luxury trip pricing sits significantly higher than other segments, with an average booking value of **\$8,042** – roughly **double the price of trips sold by most other business types**.

Among custom and luxury operators specifically, booking behavior reflects this higher-value demand.

HOW CUSTOM AND LUXURY OPERATORS SAY TRAVELERS ARE RESPONDING TO PRICE INCREASES



14%

say travelers are booking **more trips** despite price increases

18%

say travelers are booking **fewer trips but spending more per trip**

Demand signals are also visible among travel advisors. Amongst travel advisors surveyed, **31% report that luxury travel is one of the segments with the most demand, while 72% say custom or private trips are among their most requested offerings**.

Taken together, these indicators suggest that the custom and luxury segment is expanding not only because of growth at the premium end of the market, but because more trips are being designed and delivered as custom.

2.2 – TODAY’S LUXURY

While luxury travel is often associated with five-star accommodation, fine dining, and high-end budgets, **the definition of what constitutes a luxury experience is evolving**. Premium elements remain for many operators, but this year’s data shows that luxury is increasingly defined by how trips are experienced, not just by what they include.

When asked which experience types are seeing increased interest for 2026 departures, custom and luxury operators point to **formats that emphasize privacy, immersion, and flexibility**.



TRIP TYPES WITH RISING INTEREST FOR 2026

Private or exclusive-access experiences



Cultural or heritage-based experiences



Multi-destination or extended itineraries



Culinary or wine-focused experiences



Adventure or expedition-style experiences



Wellness or mindfulness-based experiences



**According to custom and luxury operator's self-reported inquiries and bookings. Operators could select more than one trip type.*

For operators, this reinforces that luxury can take many forms and show up across different market segments. Rather than being defined by legacy markers or budgets alone, **custom and luxury travel today is shaped by what travelers value most and how intentionally those experiences are designed.**

“Our customers, both new and repeat, are being more demanding with the level of customization they want, and they’re asking for very uncommon experiences: to visit truly off-the-beaten-path areas or experience new things. Anything that’s food or wine related is growing really fast in popularity, and cultural experiences are often combined with small culinary moments, such as museum visits that end with a tea tasting inside one of the museum’s rooms.”

Matteo Troiani, Founder of

Be*in*Italy

Custom group tour operator based in Italy offering exceptional, hand-crafted experiences.

2.3 – OPERATIONS AREN’T ONE SIZE FITS ALL

As traveler expectations evolve, no single delivery model is emerging for custom and luxury travel. Instead, operators are making deliberate choices – both in what they offer and how they deliver it.

To meet expectations around personalization, access, and flexibility, many operators are adjusting the structure of their trips.

HOW CUSTOM AND LUXURY OPERATORS ARE ADAPTING TO MEET CHANGING TRAVELER EXPECTATIONS



82%

are creating more bespoke or tailor-made itineraries



63%

are partnering with local experts to provide unique access



45%

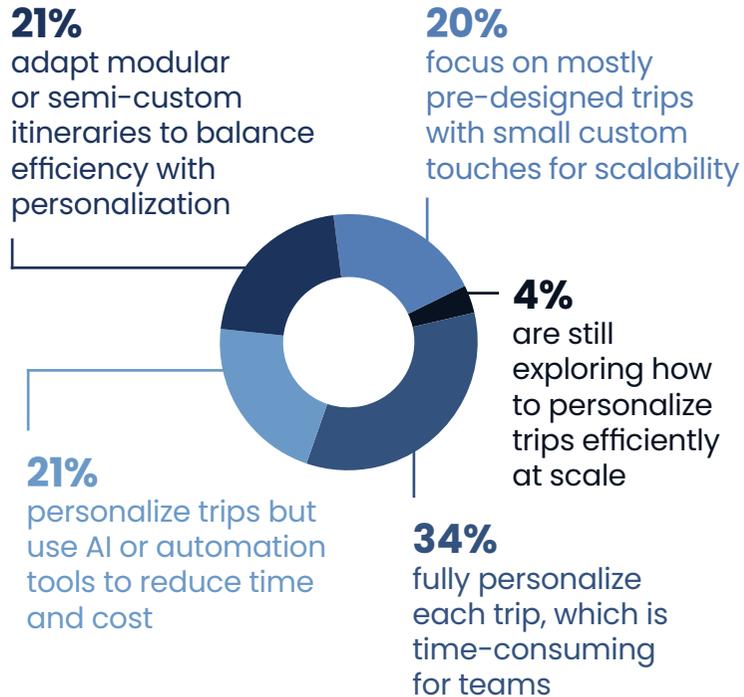
are reducing group sizes or offering fully private departures

**Operators could select more than one response.*

Some operators are leaning into manual workflows to preserve a high-touch experience, while others are selectively using technology – including AI and automation – to support efficiency behind the scenes.

These choices have real cost implications: **27% of custom and luxury operators report increased costs due to the manual time required for personalization**, while **18% say costs have decreased as AI speeds up certain workflows**.

HOW CUSTOM AND LUXURY OPERATORS BALANCE PERSONALIZATION AND EFFICIENCY



2.4 – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAVEL BUSINESSES?

1. Put personalization on repeat

Luxury is increasingly defined by what feels personal to each traveler. This means the operators best positioned to capitalize on the growing demand for custom and luxury trips are those who don't just know their travelers' basic information, but can capture, synthesize, and reuse detailed traveler preferences at scale.

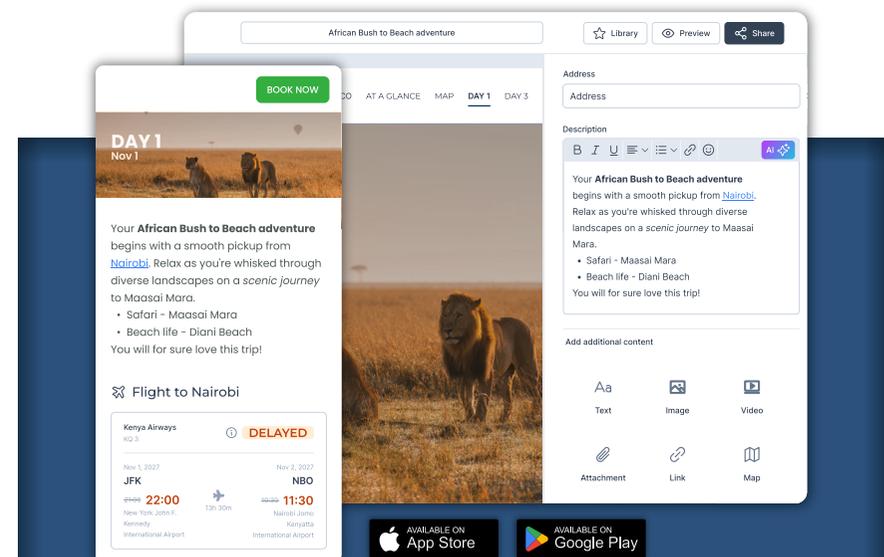
With technology, any operator can:

- **Include intentional questions within every trip inquiry form.** Ask questions to better understand what travelers want and, therefore, how their trip can be personalized (such as why they want to go on this trip, if it's a special occasion, their travel pace, etc.).
- **Keep track of all traveler information in one place:** Once collected, store all of the information in one easily accessible place, including any additional notes taken from emails, phone calls, or past bookings.
- **Create a simple system to find and reuse traveler data:** Organize traveler data, such as by tagging travelers by profile type or preference (e.g., "vegetarian" or "small children"). You can then turn frequently requested customizations into reusable building blocks with preferred hotels, signature experiences, upgrade tiers, etc.

2. Leverage technology to scale

Manual personalization is time-intensive and costly; invest in technology that can help sustainably customize trips at scale:

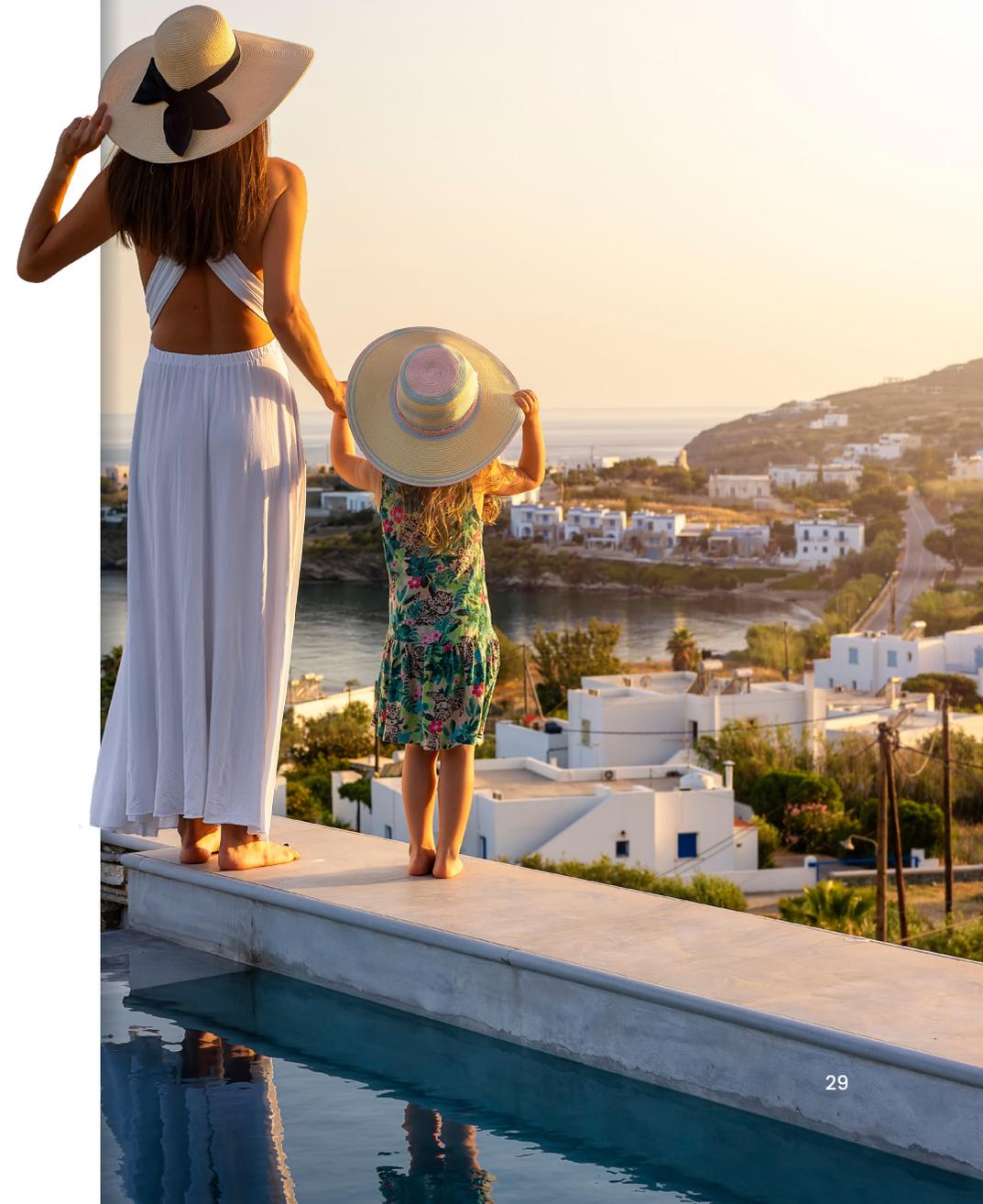
- **A travel-specific CRM to capture and organize traveler preferences:** Centralizing all traveler preferences, past bookings, notes, and communication reduces back-and-forth and ensures personalization is consistent, even as volume grows.
- **An AI-powered itinerary builder to save time:** Make it easier to assemble, adjust, and rework high-touch trips quickly, without starting from scratch each time. This is where inquiry-to-itinerary timelines can shrink from days to hours.
- **Automations for repetitive tasks:** Automating admin-heavy steps like proposals, confirmations, payments, and follow-ups frees up human time for what matters most: final trip design, nuance, supplier relationships, and traveler experience.



3. Offer custom, without overhauling your model

For operators considering expanding into this higher-value market segment, start with these small steps to validate demand and build customization capabilities:

- **Test personalization through flexible add-ons:** Gauge customization demand by allowing travelers to extend, upgrade, or adjust parts of an existing itinerary.
- **Offer custom packages:** Consider selling custom packages of existing trips (for example, an adults-only version or private departure option) to see how many travelers are interested in custom offerings, without having to build a trip from scratch.
- **Grow an on-the-ground network:** Meanwhile, in preparation for offering new custom trips, begin sourcing trusted local experts, accommodations, and other suppliers who have experience delivering personalized travel packages.



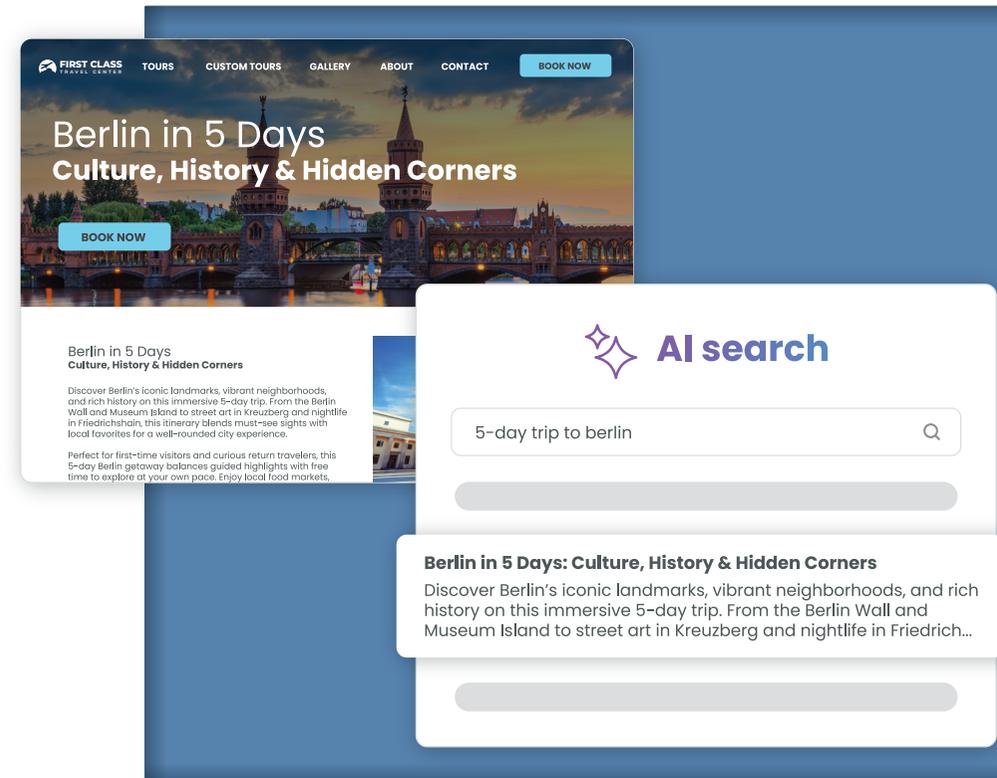
3 – DIRECT BOOKINGS DOMINATE, DISCOVERY DIVERSIFIES

Trip discovery is spreading across new channels, while bookings concentrate on operators' websites.

This year's data highlights that AI-powered search tools (such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini) and social media platforms will play a significant role in how travelers discover multi-day trips. **As trip discovery expands into new environments, travelers are being directed to operators' websites to finalize their purchase.**

For operators, the implication is practical: **be easy to find wherever travelers are searching, and make it frictionless to book once they land on your site.**

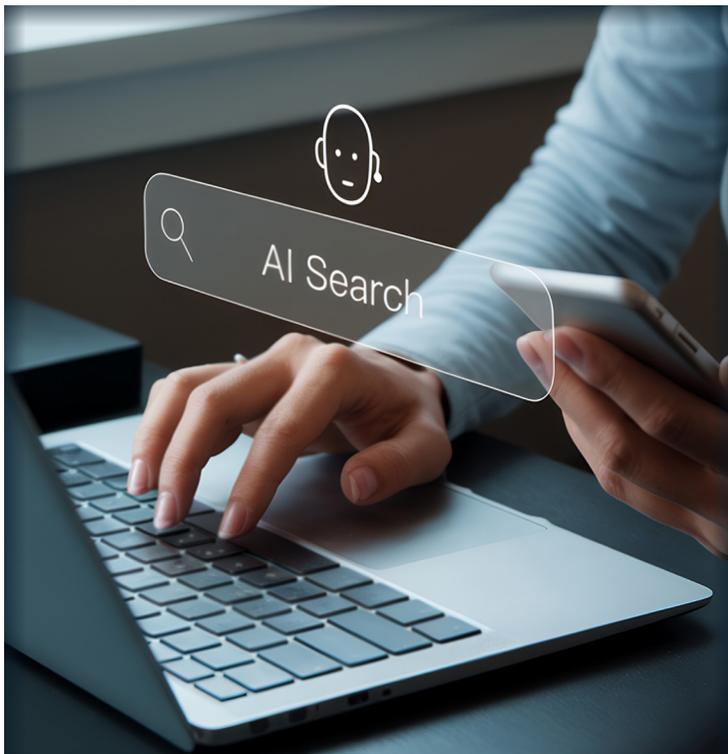
When websites, content, and social profiles are structured to surface clearly in search engines, AI search, and social platforms – and paired with simple, direct paths to book – discovery naturally feeds direct bookings.



3.1 – MULTIPLE PATHS TO DISCOVERY

In 2026, more travelers will encounter trips through a wider range of discovery channels, including AI-powered search tools, digital marketing channels, and social media platforms.

Even with the relative newness of AI-powered search for trip discovery, operators are already seeing effects.



OPERATOR-REPORTED IMPACT OF AI SEARCH ON BOOKINGS

↑ 14%

of operators reported an increase in bookings due to AI search

↓ 7%

of operators reported a decrease in bookings due to AI search

When asked how AI search and LLM-based tools are affecting traveler bookings, 14% of operators reported an increase in bookings in 2025 for 2026 departures, as more travelers are discovering their trips through AI search tools.

At the same time, 8% of operators reported a decrease in bookings, as their trips aren't appearing in AI search results. While these figures signal a change for the industry, **the remaining 78% of operators who reported no change in bookings suggest that the impact of AI search on bookings is still emerging.**

Even so, this underscores the growing importance of AI discoverability: as travelers use LLMs to research and evaluate trips, operators that surface clearly in these environments are better positioned to capture demand.

3.2 – SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE BOOKING JOURNEY

Social media platforms are often cited as a source of traveler inspiration, and the data highlights their emerging role within the booking journey as well. But as only **13% of operators said social media drives a significant number of bookings**, most have yet to capitalize on this opportunity.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION AND BOOKING IMPACT

- 31%** said yes, they plan to experiment with social booking in 2026
- 29%** said yes, they use social booking features, but report limited impact so far
- 27%** said no, they focus on other channels
- 13%** said yes, social media drives a significant number of bookings

**Based on the survey question: Are you currently promoting your trips through social media channels with a direct "book now" feature?*



The responses suggest that many operators recognize the importance of social media as part of trip discovery, but have yet to fully optimize their social strategy to capitalize on the opportunity. **Operators who will see the most traction from social discovery treat social posts not as standalone inspiration, but as the first step in a guided path toward booking.**

In practice, this means prioritizing high-quality, experience-led video and imagery, clearly linking social content to specific trips or itineraries, and making the next step obvious through consistent "learn more" or "book now" pathways.

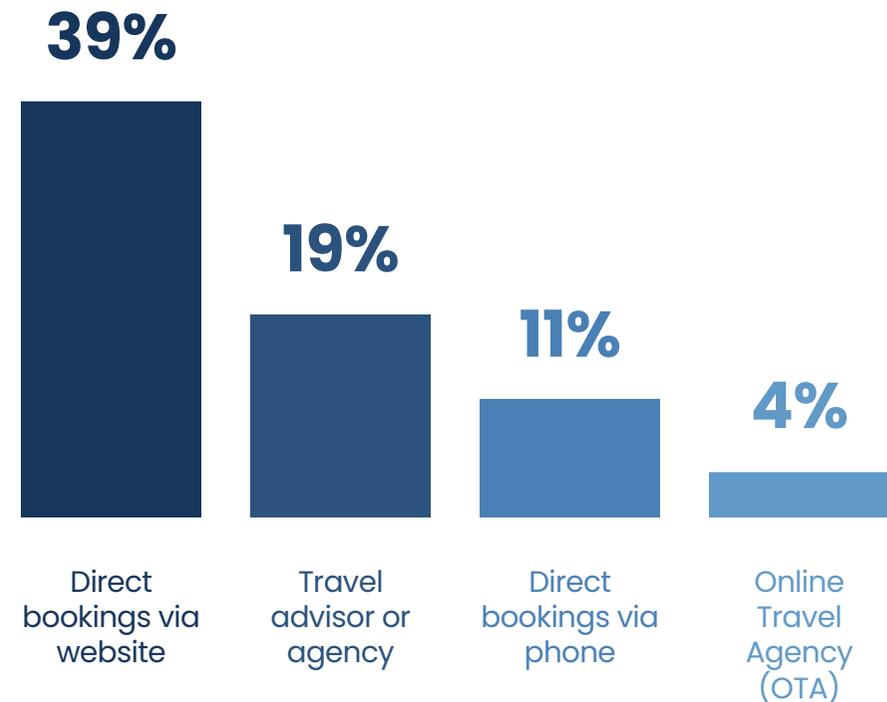
3.3 – DIRECT BOOKINGS DOMINATE

As discovery expands across AI-powered search, social platforms, and digital marketing channels, **operators' own websites are expected to be the primary place where multi-day trips are booked in 2026.**

For bookings of trips with 2026 departures, **50% of operators reported that direct channels (website or phone) drove the majority of their bookings.** Website bookings accounted for the largest share.



PRIMARY BOOKING CHANNEL FOR 2026 BOOKINGS TO DATE



By comparison, only 4% of operators said that an online travel agency (OTA) drove most of their bookings, while 19% reported that a travel advisor or agency was their primary booking channel.

This reinforces a clear pattern: while travelers may encounter trips through many different discovery channels, **bookings for multi-day travel are most often finalized directly with the operator.**

3.4 – OPTIMIZING FOR AI DISCOVERY IS ALREADY UNDERWAY

As travelers increasingly use AI-powered tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini to research trips, some operators are already adapting. When asked how they're responding to AI search and booking tools, **34% said they are actively updating their website or content strategy** to improve visibility in AI search.

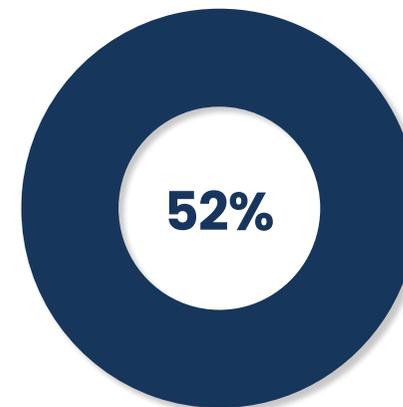
At the same time, **52% said they are unsure how to optimize for AI search discovery.**

While AI-driven discovery is still evolving, operators who begin optimizing their content for AI search now will gain a competitive advantage.

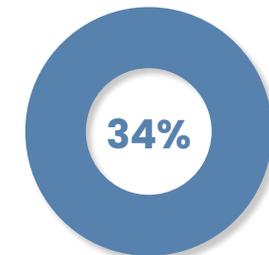
Rather than requiring entirely new strategies, the most effective response mirrors what already supports strong direct bookings on traditional search channels: clear trip information, well-structured content, and straightforward paths to book once travelers arrive.



HOW OPERATORS ARE ADAPTING TO AI-POWERED SEARCH



of operators said they are unsure how to optimize for AI search discovery



of operators said they are actively updating their website or content strategy to improve visibility in AI search

3.5 – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAVEL BUSINESSES?

1. Start building visibility now

AI search and social platforms are already shaping how travelers discover trips. **Operators who begin adapting now have more time to learn, experiment, and build visibility** before these channels become more competitive.

2. Build a strong discovery foundation

Operators should focus on strengthening the assets they control: their website, content, and the channels where they want to be discovered. This includes **clear, well-structured trip pages that surface in traditional and AI search engines**, alongside social media profiles that showcase experiences and guide travelers toward next steps.

3. Ensure booking is frictionless once travelers arrive

As more travelers are funneled from discovery channels to operators' websites, the booking experience becomes critical. **A smooth, integrated checkout**—one that's simple, transparent, and easy to complete—**helps convert interest into confirmed bookings.**

The screenshot shows a checkout page for a travel package titled "African Bush to Beach" for Nov 1-12. The page is divided into several sections:

- Buyer Information:** Fields for First Name (Debra), Last Name (Holt), and Email (debra.holt@email.com).
- Participant Information:** Fields for First Name (Theo), Last Name (Roy), and Email (troy@email.com).
- Passport Information:** Fields for Passport ID, Passport Issue Country (USA), and Date of Birth (1980/01/01).
- Your Booking:** Summary of the package including "Single Occupancy" (2 x \$1,500), "Balloon Safari" (2 x \$250), and "Airport Transfer" (1 x \$80). The total price is \$3,000.
- Select packages & Add-ons:** A dropdown menu showing selected options: "Single Occupancy" (\$3,000), "Balloon Safari" (\$500), and "Airport Transfer" (\$80).
- Payment options:** Three options are shown: "Pay by installment" (selected), "Paying in EUR cc avoid card and" (with a green checkmark), and "Pay full amount - \$3,580". The installment plan shows a first payment of \$1,718 due in April and a second payment of \$1,717 due in June.
- Check Out:** A prominent green button at the bottom right.

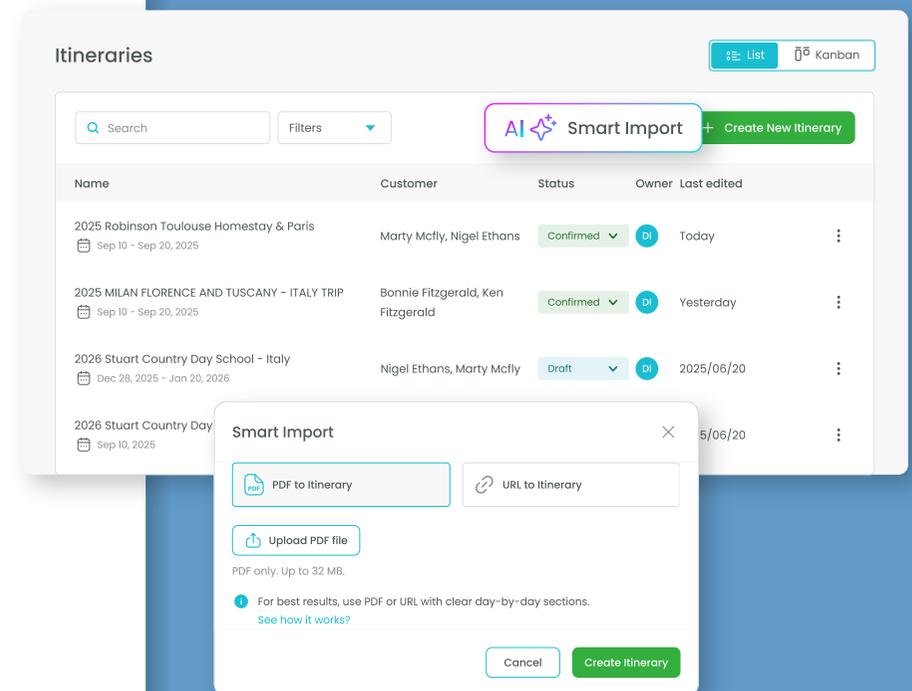
4 – AI MOVES CLOSER TO THE TRIP

AI is no longer confined to marketing and internal efficiency – it now also supports itinerary planning and early-stage trip design.

Last year, AI use in multi-day travel was largely concentrated in marketing, sales preparation, and internal efficiency.

This year, its role is expanding into workflows that directly shape the trip, including itinerary building, proposals, and early-stage planning. Importantly, these new applications don't replace earlier use cases; they build on them, extending AI's role across the planning process.

As travelers increasingly expect more personalized trips, this shift matters most in the early stages of planning, where research, revisions, and coordination are most time-intensive. **By supporting this work, AI enables operators to deliver greater customization without increasing manual strain.**



4.1 – AI ADOPTION IS BECOMING THE NORM

In 2026, AI use among operators is becoming increasingly standard. Comparing WeTravel’s survey data year over year, a clear shift towards AI adoption emerges – **the share of operators using AI increased by 14%.**

PERCENTAGE OF SURVEYED OPERATORS WHO ARE OR ARE PLANNING TO USE AI

2025



2026



As AI becomes more common across everyday workflows, this creates a widening gap in how operators manage time and workload. **Operators already using AI are better positioned to handle growing inquiry volume, personalization demands, and faster response expectations** without proportionally increasing manual effort.

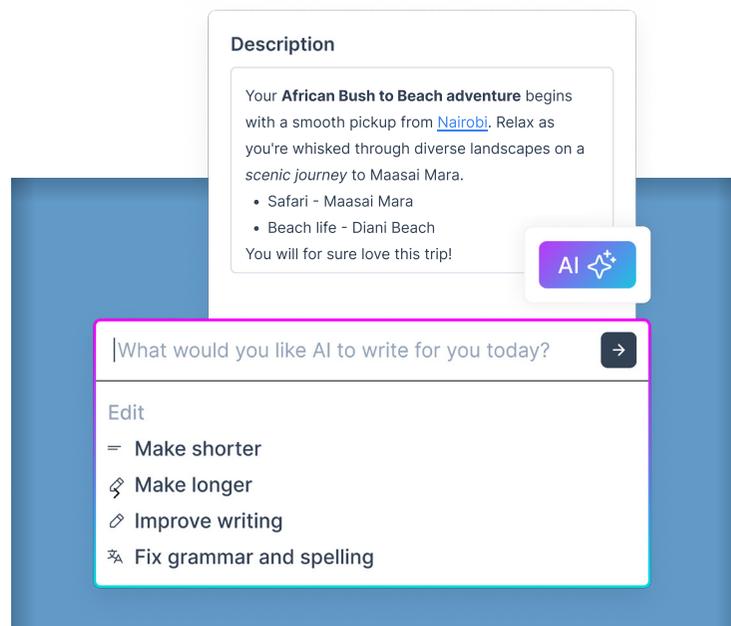
By contrast, operators who remain entirely manual may find it increasingly difficult to match the speed, efficiency, and scalability of peers as AI-supported practices become more standard across the industry.

4.2 – AI IS INCREASINGLY USED DURING TRIP PLANNING AND DELIVERY

While AI use is now widespread, where operators are applying it has evolved meaningfully year over year. **Last year, AI use in multi-day travel was concentrated in marketing and content creation.**

This year, those use cases remain the most common, but they are now being joined by more traveler-facing applications, notably itinerary building and trip personalization.

When asked how they are currently using AI in their operations, operators reported the following use cases.



HOW OPERATORS ARE USING OR PLANNING TO USE AI IN THEIR OPERATIONS

58% To support marketing or content creation

44% To create trip itineraries or proposals

26% To assist with customer support or inquiry management

24% To personalize traveler experiences or recommendations

20% Are not yet using AI, but plan to in 2026

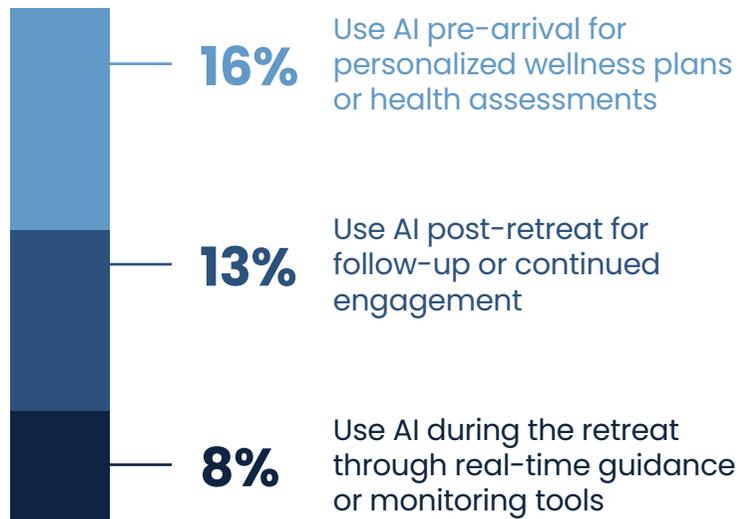
14% Do not use AI and have no plans to

**Operators could select more than one response.*

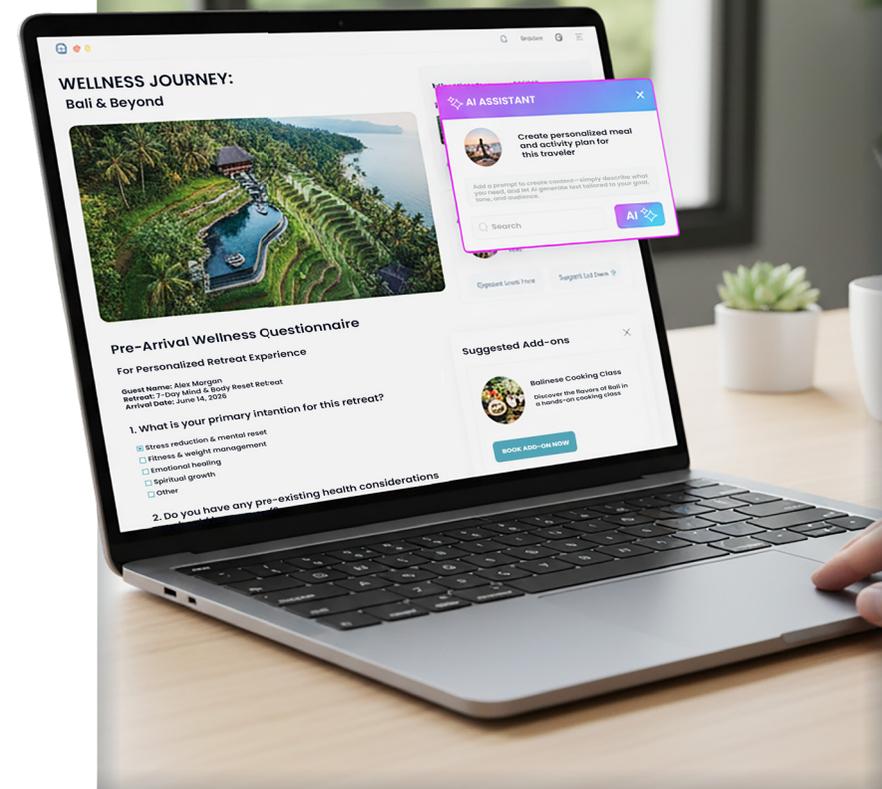
The most notable shift in this year's survey responses relates to AI use for building itineraries. **The use of AI for itinerary or proposal creation increased 57% year over year, rising from 28% to 44%.**

In some cases, AI is even moving onto the trip itself. For example, some wellness operators are trialing various AI use cases in their retreats.

HOW WELLNESS OPERATORS ARE INCORPORATING AI INTO THE GUEST EXPERIENCE



**Operators could select more than one response.*



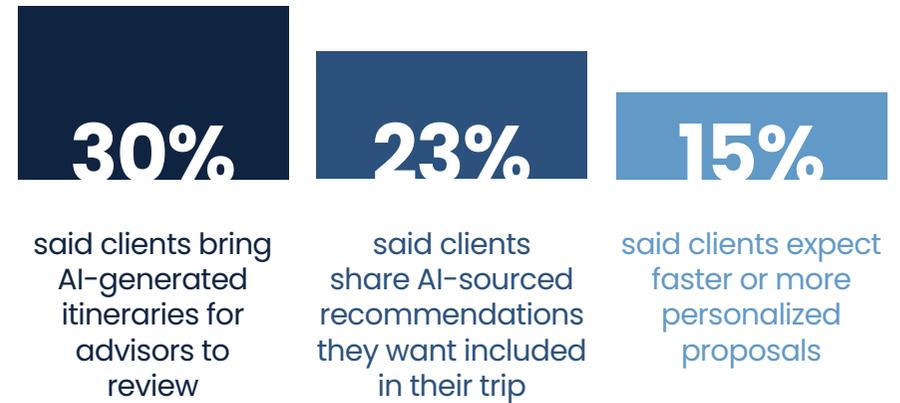
This data shows that AI use in multi-day travel is expanding rather than shifting from one function to another. Where AI is moving closest to the trip, adoption remains selective and purposeful, signaling that **operators are beginning to decide not just whether to use AI, but where it meaningfully fits within their model.**

4.3 – AI ADOPTION AMONG TRAVEL ADVISORS

Travel advisors occupy a distinct position within the multi-day travel ecosystem. Long before AI adoption became widespread, advisors were already customizing trips on behalf of their clients.

As traveler expectations around speed, efficiency, and personalization rise – and as advisors look to grow their businesses without increasing manual workload – **AI use cases among advisors are expanding.**

TRAVEL ADVISOR OBSERVATIONS ON AI'S ROLE IN TRIP PLANNING



**Advisors could select more than one response.*



In response to these changing client behaviors, advisors largely position AI as a way to support their work. **When asked about AI's place in their business, 66% say it improves efficiency and creativity.**

HOW TRAVEL ADVISORS VIEW THE ROLE OF AI IN THEIR BUSINESS

66% A tool that supports efficiency and creativity

25% A useful, though limited assistant

7% A potential threat to the advisor role

3% Irrelevant to their current operations

For advisors, this support translates into capacity. By helping with front-loaded work such as initial research, drafting, and revisions, **AI enables advisors to respond more quickly and reduce time spent on repetitive planning tasks.**



4.4 – EFFICIENCY OUTCOMES

So far, AI's clearest impact for operators has been efficiency, especially in early-stage, repeatable tasks like research, drafting, and admin.

OPERATOR-REPORTED RESULTS FROM USING AI

Faster trip research and itinerary creation	42%
Reduced manual administrative work (e.g., emails, proposals, data entry)	41%
Improved marketing or social media content	39%
Better personalization or traveler recommendations	21%
Higher lead conversion or faster response times	15%
More data-driven decision-making (e.g., pricing or forecasting)	11%

**Operators could select more than one response.*

Efficiency benefits are also visible among travel advisors. When asked how costs for managing custom itineraries have changed over the past year, **28% of advisors said costs have decreased as AI speeds things up.**

At the same time, 13% of travel advisors reported that costs have increased, as more time or manual work is required to keep pace with growing personalization demands.

HOW AI IS IMPACTING COSTS FOR TRAVEL ADVISORS

↓ **28%**

of advisors said costs have decreased as AI speeds up itinerary creation and design

↑ **13%**

of advisors said costs have increased as more staff time or manual work is needed to build custom itineraries

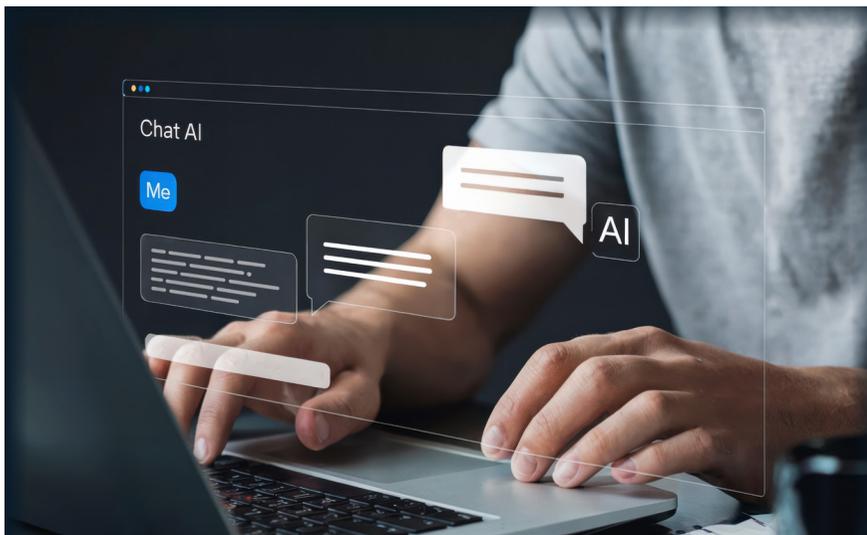
This contrast highlights a key dynamic: AI has the potential to lower costs, but realizing those savings depends on how effectively it is used to reduce manual workload.

4.5 – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TRAVEL BUSINESSES?

1. Start using AI as part of everyday operations

Operators who are not yet using AI don't need to overhaul their operations, but they should begin integrating it into everyday workflows. **This is easier than ever, thanks to tools that integrate AI into existing software and workflows.**

Starting with simple, low-risk applications – such as research, drafting, or internal preparation – can reduce manual workload and build familiarity as AI-supported practices become more common across the industry.



2. Grow bookings with faster, more personal proposals

A travel-specific CRM helps operators sell more trips by keeping traveler history, preferences, and past conversations in one place, making it easier to personalize outreach and proposals without starting from scratch each time.

When that **context feeds directly into an itinerary or proposal builder, operators can turn interest into a polished, tailored trip faster** – improving response time and the likelihood of converting inquiries into bookings.

3. Support customization without sacrificing time or margins

As personalization increases, so does the volume of behind-the-scenes work required to support it. Coordination, revisions, follow-ups, and administrative tasks can quickly consume time, even when trips are successfully sold.

Using AI-supported tools to assemble itineraries, iterate quickly on changes, and automatically reflect updates in one shared version reduces manual work across revisions. When itinerary changes are updated in real time for both teams and travelers, operators spend less time on follow-ups and admin, and more time selling and delivering trips – without scaling headcount.

About WeTravel

Running a multi-day travel business is complex. Trips take months to plan. Payments cross borders. Travelers, partners, and teams all need to stay aligned. Most businesses make it work by juggling multiple tools that were never designed to work together.

Our mission is simple: to make everything – from selling your experiences to managing them – available in one system. **WeTravel is *the all-in-one operating system for multi-day travel.***

Trusted by over 8,000 travel businesses worldwide, WeTravel brings everything needed to sell and manage multi-day travel into one place: websites and itineraries, bookings and CRM, and payments and partner management, including a **global marketplace of 6,500+ partners.**

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