

## ***Meet the Millennials: The Tourists to Change it all***

Increasing knowledge and experiencing everyday life by doing things like devouring exotic regional food and schmoozing with friendly locals are at the top of the to-do list for many millennials when traveling in the United States and foreign countries.

The millennial generation is growing up in a technologically advanced world where traveling and communication go hand-in-hand and are easier than ever before.

**Cultural experiences reign over partying** The “experience economy”, a term deemed by businesses to create memorable events for their customers, is consuming the travel industry with 72 percent of Millennials choosing to spend more money on experiences than material items. According to internal research company, Topdeck Travel, more than three quarters (86%) of Millennials would rather experience a new culture compared to 44 percent who prefer to party or 28 percent who prefer to shop. While baby boomers tend to seek the safety and convenience of an overcrowded touristy restaurant near a major attraction, Millennials are taking a step outside their comfort zone to experience that sought after authentic meal. In fact, just under half of Millennials said they would pick a destination because they want to experience a particular culture, and 78 percent want to learn something new while they travel.

**A surge in “bleisure” travel** For past generations, business travel was merely an added benefit of the job, but today, we’re seeing Millennials base their entire career decisions around the ability to travel generating a completely new concept-bleisure travel. Mixing business with leisure, “Bleisure” travel is more popular than ever amongst Millennials. According to Expedia, employees under 30 are traveling 4.7 times per year on business compared to 3.6 times for those above 30 years old. Millennials are taking advantage of having fewer responsibilities at home, such as children or families, and therefore have the opportunity to extend business trips more often than previous generations. 62 percent are more likely to extend their business vacations to gain cultural experience on the company’s dime.

**Group travel is on the rise** Despite the idea that solo travel can be “dangerous,” 37 percent of Millennials reported their intention to take at least one overnight trip unaccompanied in the next six months. But, going solo doesn’t have to mean going alone. In fact, solo travel is becoming increasingly attractive, safe and easy when planned with a group tour operator. Traveling solo but with a group gives Millennials the freedom to explore alone while also having the safety net of a larger group should something go awry.

Millennials are growing up in a world where travel is easier and relatively cheaper than for previous generations and they are taking full advantage of this to travel the globe in search of new experiences.

- Millennial travelers want technology. They expect great WiFi, apps and accessibility via a lot of different technology channels.
- Millennial travelers believe their peers. They're less likely to listen to a straightforward advertisement for a hotel, but they will follow the comments and recommendations of their friends and colleagues via social media (likewise, they'll pay attention to negative comments, too).
- Millennial travelers want to leave their hotel rooms. The increasing popularity of more social lobby areas, with lots of space to plug in and work as well as socialize, is testament to the fact that millennial travelers are less likely to sit hunched over their hotel room desk when traveling for business or pleasure.
- Millennial travelers want unique hotel experiences. I had an interesting conversation with someone from Marriott International, who said that Millennial travelers prefer unique experiences over cookie-cutter hotels, and so that will likely play out in the design of hotels in the coming years.
- Millennial travelers are both high budget and low budget. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, Millennial travelers represent diverse economic preferences. They may stay at an expensive, trendy hotel during one trip, but then opt for a near-budget property on the next. But their demand for technology and design remains the same.

From a surge in bleisure travel to an increase in hostel like hotels, its clear Millennials are having a huge impact on the travel industry. Whether it's taking a foreign bus out of the city center to taste homemade pasta, or taking a pay cut to travel more often for work, Millennials are a truly different breed of travelers.

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