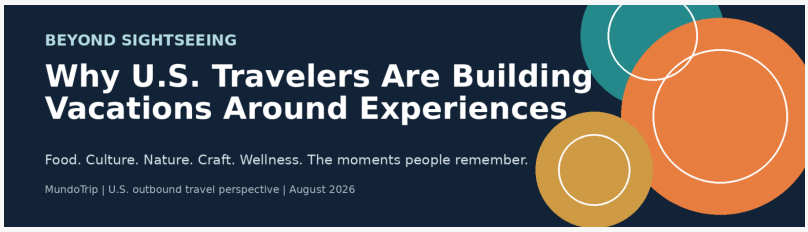
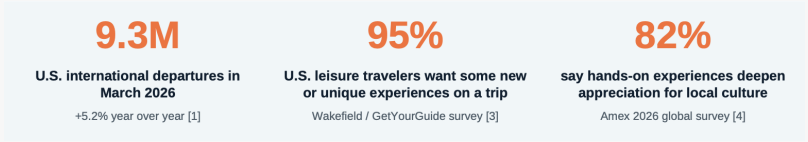
MundoTrip Highlights the Rise of Experience-Led Travel Among U.S. Vacationers

As U.S. travelers look beyond traditional sightseeingand towards food, culture, nature & local experiences are becomes crucial to modern vacation planning.



The new question is not just "Where are we going?"



A useful way to think about the shift: iconic sights remain anchors, but experiences move earlier in the planning process.

JERSEY CITY, NJ, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- MundoTrip Highlights the Rise of Experience-Led Travel as U.S. Travellers Seek More Meaningful Holidays

From destination checklists to immersive journeys, travellers are increasingly prioritising food, culture, nature and local experiences when planning international holidays

The traditional vacation package is evolving. While flights, hotels and destinations remain essential parts of international travel, modern travellers are increasingly defining the value of a holiday through the experiences they create along the way.

> The flight gets you there. The hotel gives you a base. The experience is increasingly what makes the trip worth talking about.”
>
> *MundoTrip USA*

For many U.S. travellers, the question is shifting from simply “Where are we going?” to “What will we experience, learn and remember when we get there?”

This growing movement towards experience-led travel reflects a broader change in how holidays are researched, planned and purchased. Destinations are no longer just places to visit; they are becoming platforms for meaningful experiences built around food, culture, nature, wellness and personal discovery.

According to the U.S. National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), U.S. citizen international departures reached 9.3 million in March 2026, representing a 5.2% year-over-year increase. As international travel continues to recover and expand, travellers are also becoming more selective

about the experiences they prioritise during their trips.



What will we taste, make, learn, feel and talk about when we get home?

Research from GetYourGuide and Wakefield Research found that 95% of U.S. leisure travellers wanted new or unique experiences during their holidays, while 90% expressed interest in experiencing destinations more like locals. The findings highlight a shift towards participation rather than observation, where travellers want to engage with destinations rather than simply visit them.

The Evolution From Sightseeing to Participation

Experience-led travel does not replace traditional sightseeing; instead, it adds a deeper layer of meaning to familiar destinations.

A trip to Rome may still include the Colosseum, but travellers are increasingly looking for neighbourhood food tours, artisan workshops or local culinary experiences alongside iconic landmarks. A Japan itinerary may include Tokyo and Kyoto, while also incorporating a traditional cooking class, a craft workshop or a stay in a ryokan.

The destination remains the foundation, but experiences are becoming the emotional reason behind the journey.

“The flight gets you there. The hotel gives you a base. The experience is increasingly what makes the trip worth talking about.”

This evolution is also influencing spending decisions. The GetYourGuide study found that while travellers may reduce spending in other areas, experiences remain one of the most protected parts of a holiday, with 71% of respondents unwilling to reduce activity and experience spending.

Experience-Led Travel Looks Different for Every Traveller

The rise of experience-led travel is not a one-size-fits-all trend. Different traveller groups define meaningful experiences differently.

Younger travellers often prioritise discovery, local food, social experiences and unique activities, while couples may focus on milestone moments, workshops and memorable dining experiences. Families increasingly value shared activities that work across generations, while older travellers

often seek expert guidance, cultural depth and comfortable pacing.

The opportunity for travel brands is therefore not simply adding more activities to packages, but creating journeys designed around traveller intent.

Japan, Thailand and Italy Showcase the Shift

Several major international destinations demonstrate how experience-led travel is reshaping holiday design.

Japan continues to attract travellers through its iconic cities, but demand is increasingly expanding into immersive experiences such as cooking with locals, traditional crafts, rural stays and cultural workshops.

Thailand is moving beyond the traditional beach holiday model. The Tourism Authority of Thailand's 2026 strategy focuses on higher-value tourism and memorable experiences, combining destinations such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket with food, wellness, cultural and nature-based activities.

Italy remains one of the strongest examples of experience-led travel potential. While landmarks such as Rome, Florence and Venice continue to attract visitors, travellers are increasingly seeking the layers between those destinations — local cuisine, vineyards, artisan experiences and slower cultural exploration.

Where MundoTrip Fits Into the Future of Travel

MundoTrip believes the next generation of vacation packages will be built around how travellers want their journeys to feel.

Rather than treating experiences as optional additions, experience-led packages can use flights, accommodation and transfers as the framework while designing the itinerary around meaningful moments.

This approach allows travellers to begin with inspiration — whether that means discovering Japanese traditions, exploring Italian cuisine or combining Thailand's culture and coastline — before building the practical elements of their trip.

The future of vacation planning is not about replacing classic travel packages. It is about enhancing them.

The strongest holiday experiences will continue answering two questions:

Where are we going?

And increasingly:

What will we actually remember doing there?

As travellers continue seeking more personal, authentic and memorable journeys, experience-led travel is becoming a defining factor in how international holidays are imagined and created.

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