

Tomorrow's world

Find out what you should be booking next year with a look at 2016's hottest trends

@Katie_McGonagle

On the catwalk, next year's trends are all 1970s suede, paperbag-waist trousers and lingerie-like gowns. But staying up to date is a different story in the travel world.

Your clients won't be flicking through fashion mags or keeping an eye out for the latest model's look to stay current - they'll be coming to you for inspiration, wanting to know where they can go to set the trend, not just follow the crowd.

So keep your finger on the pulse with our round-up of some of the key travel trends for the coming year.

▶ FLYING HIGH

New direct flights always come with a flurry of excitement, opening a destination up to the swathe of travellers who hate the inconvenience of a connection. That's why there's been so much chatter around British Airways' launch of flights to Costa Rica

and Peru (twice and three times a week respectively, starting May 4), adding an alternative to Thomson's Dreamliner flight to Costa Rica, which began last month.

Costa Rica has been a star performer for The Family Adventure Company in particular, whose product manager Tim Winkworth says: "This is an exciting destination but with Western standards in terms of roads, hygiene and accommodation. Families love the combination of tropical landscapes, volcanoes and beaches along with fascinating wildlife."

Peru is another obvious choice for direct flights, appealing to both ends of the market, from backpackers hiking the Inca Trail to well-off retirees seeking a grand adventure. It's the latter that Insight Vacations is targeting with its first Luxury Gold tour in South America, Treasures of the

“

Clients will want to know where they can go to set the trend, not just follow the crowd

Inca, which starts in February.

These - along with more options to Colombia from Air Europa (via Madrid) and now-daily direct flights from Avianca - signal a growing appetite for Latin America.

Don't overlook destinations closer to home, though. The Azores topped Skyscanner's list of ones to watch, scoring an impressive 63% increase in flight searches. Ryanair launched flights from Stansted to Ponta Delgada, the islands' largest city, in April.

Monarch is tipping Israeli resort

Eilat as its up-and-coming winter sun spot. The carrier is adding a weekly flight from Luton to Ovda this month, along with thrice-weekly services to Tel Aviv.

▶ GOING PAPERLESS

On a similarly practical note, streamlining the visa process also eases the journey. India's switch to e-visas in August has given the subcontinent a boost - Cox & Kings has seen a 35% rise in forward bookings for 2016 - which will no doubt continue as the tourism ministry extends the system to cover multiple-entry visas and allows visitors to apply up to six months ahead instead of just 30 days.

Vietnam is also cementing its transition from rising star to mainstream holiday destination by relaxing visa restrictions. Until June 30, 2016, anyone visiting for fewer than 15 days no longer needs a visa - making it that much easier to arrange the



PICTURE: ISRAELI MINISTRY OF TOURISM/DAFNA TAL



FAR LEFT:
Israel
LEFT:
Costa Rica
BELOW:
Kyrgyzstan

→ classic two-week tour-plus-beach trip – and for those staying longer, the price of a three-month visa has been cut from \$95 to \$50. Viewed alongside Vietnam Airlines’ introduction of B787-9 Dreamliner flights from Heathrow to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, which increases to a daily service next summer, and this snowball effect shows no signs of slowing.

As Vietnam gains a higher profile, there are plenty of pretenders to the ‘up-and-coming’ crown, not least fellow southeast Asian country Indonesia. It boasts a similar mix of

exotic culture, soft adventure and picture-perfect beaches, and is also relaxing its rules this year to allow UK citizens to stay for up to a month without a visa.

G Adventures has tipped Indonesia as a growth area along with central Asia – namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – where relaxed visa restrictions make it that much easier for intrepid types to build yurts or sleep in homestays alongside local families. G Adventures has added five trips to ‘the ‘Stans’ for 2016, including a 14-day Central Asia Adventure priced from £1,149, land-only.

▶ SEE IT SOON

The clichéd ‘go now, before it changes’ line has been trotted out so often about Cuba that you would think it had ceased to have any effect. But the sentiment is still so strong that when the White House announced it was

re-establishing diplomatic ties with the communist country, it prompted another explosion of interest.

Sales have doubled for Intrepid Travel, placing Cuba in its top-three best-sellers, while Western & Oriental saw a 200% jump in year-on-year demand as Brits rush to book before the anticipated American influx. Such has been the demand for hotels and homestays that Journey Latin America now recommends travellers book eight to 10 months ahead, or consider staying in lesser-known areas such as Matanzas, two hours from Havana, or east-coast resort Guardalavaca. MSC Cruises is launching Cuba sailings this winter, with seven-night itineraries from Havana running until April.

Demand is just as urgent for South Africa, albeit due to price rather than politics, as a favourable exchange rate with the rand makes an already good-value destination even more →



ASK THE EXPERT



Gordon McCreadie, B2B sales and marketing director for the UK, Travel 2 and Gold Medal:

“Florida continues to go from strength to strength, with bookings for 2016 up more than 26% year on year from the UK. Its family appeal continues to grow thanks to the fact it doesn’t stand still. With new attractions for 2016 including Skull Island: Reign of Kong and the I-Drive 360, combined with the pound continuing to be strong versus the dollar, it’s set to be an attractive destination for next year.”

Sporting life

Rio de Janeiro’s hosting of the Olympics and Paralympics next year is set to inspire travel not just during the event – tickets are already sold out – but afterwards, taking advantage of infrastructure investments for the Games and 2014 World Cup. A World Travel Market survey found 60% of those questioned expected the Olympics to offer more of a boost to Brazilian tourism than other sporting events such as the European Championships in France.



→ affordable. That's especially true if clients fly indirectly, taking advantage of competitive fares from the likes of Ethiopian Airlines and Turkish Airlines – both have added Durban services in the past month – and look beyond Cape Town and the Winelands. Expect even more enquiries during the January peaks, as the England cricket team kicks off a month-long South Africa tour on Boxing Day.

These established favourites are riding a wave of popularity, but there are other reasons why travellers might want to prioritise a destination. Nepal has been steadily rebuilding its tourist industry since the devastating earthquake in April, prompting some operators to actively promote travel as helping the recovery effort. Trips include Explore's 15-day Annapurna Sanctuary trek, and Dragoman's new 13-day Nepal Heritage tour visiting off-the-beaten-track villages most in need of tourism (from £880, land-only).

▶ **HOT RIGHT NOW**

Japan's visitor numbers are already on the rise, but between lower costs – a Post Office report found Tokyo is now 50% cheaper for UK travellers than in 2013 – and better flight connections, with a Finnair flight to Fukuoka, via

Screen time

Film and TV adaptations are likely to spark excitement around these destinations next year:

Kenya – it's the 50th anniversary of Oscar-winning film *Born Free*, and combined with relaxed Foreign Office restrictions for the Kenyan coast, this safari star is ready to make a comeback.

Russia – the BBC is set to broadcast a six-part adaptation of *War and Peace* in January, filmed in Moscow and St Petersburg and showcasing the epic landscapes around the cities.

Corfu – ITV will show six-part series *The Durrells*, based on the memoirs of conservationist Gerald Durrell, who famously grew up on the island. Ryanair is also opening a Corfu base in April, serving routes to Birmingham, Stansted and the East Midlands.



LEFT: Cuba



Interest in Japan is only set to continue as attention grows for the 2019 Rugby World Cup and 2020 Olympics

Helsinki, starting in May and a thrice-weekly Edinburgh-Helsinki flight offering better Scottish connections from April, this juggernaut is only just getting started.

Wendy Wu Tours' forward bookings have soared 350% this year. Marketing manager Ben Briggs attributes the

rise to the 'authentic tradition and values not seen elsewhere'. The interest is only set to continue as attention grows for the 2019 Rugby World Cup and 2020 Olympics.

Gold Medal director of product and commercial Matt Appleby cites Canada as a destination to watch. "It is going from strength to strength, with new routes from Westjet and Air Canada," he says. "Our focus for 2016 is all about the experiences on offer – from wildlife encounters and helicopter tours to rail travel and skiing holidays."

Those are key to the resurgence in interest for this old favourite, as appetite for wildlife and soft adventure drive demand for new →



LEFT: Nepal

5 OF THE BEST ANNIVERSARIES

Queen's 90th

Newmarket Holidays has put on two tours around the birthday parade on June 11 and street party on The Mall the next day.

Battle of the Somme

The centenary on July 1 will be marked by battlefields tours visiting Thiepval and events in Amiens.

US National Park Service

The 100th anniversary takes place in August and operators such as Trek America, Grand American Adventures, Trafalgar, Explore and Funway have added parks-focused itineraries.

Barbados

A year of celebrations to mark 50 years since independence from the UK will kick off in January with the 80th Mount Gay Round Barbados Race.

Trans-Siberian Express

Golden Eagle Luxury Trains is adding two commemorative journeys from Moscow to Vladivostok to mark the route's centenary.

→ flight options. Total capacity from the UK and Iceland (including routes via Reykjavik) will reach more than two million seats next January-October, up 16.6% on the same period this year.

New flights include Air Canada Rouge's routes to Toronto from Glasgow and Gatwick; Westjet services from Gatwick to Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto and St John's; Air Transat flying Glasgow-Montreal; and services via Reykjavik with Icelandair to Montreal and Wow Air to Toronto and Montreal, both starting in May.

The Reykjavik flights also point to growing interest in Iceland - no longer just a city break with scenery, it's now a great stopover for the US or Canada, as well as a touring destination. Trafalgar has taken its first steps into Iceland with a 10-day trip, while Taber Holidays has added Northern Lights itineraries.

▶ BEACH BOOST

With mid-haul beach resorts such as Sharm el-Sheikh and Tunisia having been seriously affected by terrorist incidents this year, it's important to think about where to switch-sell clients who want to explore other options.

At one end of the market, Bulgaria suits those in search of a bargain: Balkan Holidays has seven-night holidays in Sunny Beach from as little as £259, including flights. The operator has added accommodation there, as

well as in lesser-known resorts such as Obzor, Nessebar and Golden Sands.

Spain - both the mainland and islands - looks set to maintain its pole position with the British public, already accounting for eight of Jet2holidays' top 10 destinations for summer 2016.

Perennial favourite Greece is still going strong - its financial problems have paled compared with the troubles faced by some destinations this year - with Thomas Cook adding Thassos and Olympic Holidays reporting good forward bookings for Skiathos, Kefalonia and some smaller islands.

Olympic's commercial director, Photis Lambrianides, says: "The Greek islands, in general, look set to experience a very good season. Despite Greece's financial woes in 2015, the islands have shown strong resilience, and we've even seen growth in some cases.

"The Greek economy depends, to a large degree, on tourism, and with



ABOVE: Japan

destinations in North Africa and the Middle East suffering, I'm optimistic Greece will shine in 2016."

Croatia is also likely to pick up extra business, cementing its spot as a mainstay of the short-haul market. Operators are increasingly going beyond Dubrovnik or Split to cover coastal cruising - Great Rail Journeys and Rail Discoveries have added cruise product for 2016 - and soft adventure in rural areas such as Plitvice National Park, or zip-lining and canyoning in the countryside around Split, both of which feature in Anatolian Sky Holidays' new programme. →



ASK THE EXPERT

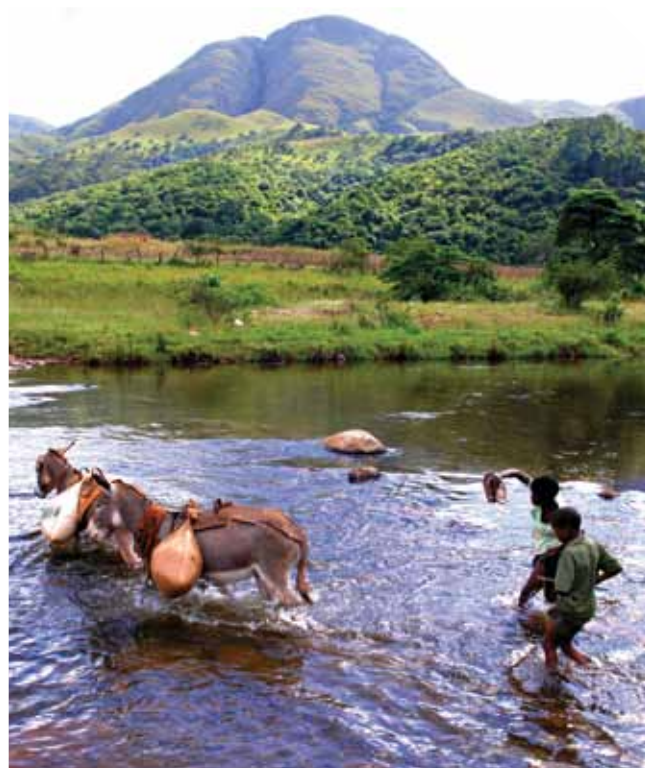


John Dixon,
managing director,
Prestige Holidays:

"Holidaymakers are moving away from destinations such as Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, which they perceive to be risky, and opting to travel to those they are familiar with. We've seen a 22% increase in Canary Islands business, and Cyprus and Majorca are up 37% and 27% respectively. Madeira is skyrocketing, with a 100% rise in bookings, and Croatia is also selling well, with 58% growth."



RIGHT: Iran
FAR RIGHT:
Swaziland



HOW TO SELL

More than 10% of ski resort visitors skip the slopes in favour of alternative winter activities, according to research by Club Med. Sports such as cross-country skiing, dog-sledding, ice skating, rock climbing and snowshoeing are becoming more popular, with more than half of those surveyed adding at least one other activity to their time on the slopes.

ON THE RISE

No trends forecast would be complete without a look at which countries are starting to crop up on the radar of the really adventurous – and Iran certainly fits the bill. Not only did the Foreign Office dial down restrictions on travel to all but border areas in July, but the reopening of the British Embassy in Tehran in September also sent positive signs for tourism.

It's still very much a niche seller, but Regent Holidays has introduced its first small-group tour there in years, with the 14-day Journey from Tabriz to Shiraz (departs September 26, from £3,495 with flights via Istanbul). Cox & Kings has nine departure dates on its Iran: Treasures of Persia group tour, while Intrepid Travel reports a 50% rise in UK bookings to Iran for 2016.

With the likes of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe claiming the African limelight in recent years, Swaziland looks set for its share of the attention, as Explore has introduced a standalone tour to the country. Previously offered as a two-day extension on South Africa trips, the 10-day journey covers walking safaris, a hike to the country's tallest waterfall and a stay with the Shewula mountain community (departures May-September, starting at £2,356 with flights).

TW

Riding the Wave

Burma is the latest cruise hotspot, with new 22-suite *Scenic Aura* sailing the Ayeyarwady from September, an itinerary on *Seabourn Sojourn* starting on February 14 and APT beginning river cruises next month.

Angela Waite, APT's sales manager for the UK and Europe, says: "January marks our first sailings to Myanmar and, at this point, 90% of cruises in the region are already sold out. To meet demand, our 2017-18 sailings are now on sale."

China is a growth area for Royal Caribbean International, which will bring *Ovation of the Seas* to the destination when it debuts in April, joining *Quantum of the Seas* which is already sailing there.

Less exotic, but no less important, UK cruising is back in vogue. Voyages to Antiquity has added Falmouth and Dartmouth to itineraries – most sailings are already 75% sold – while Fred Olsen Cruises has expanded its UK programme with departures from Falmouth and Newcastle.

The inexorable rise of river cruising also continues, with Leger Holidays reporting a twofold increase in river bookings next year.

There will also be many more themed itineraries, including two new garden holidays from The River Cruise Line, tapping into the trend towards special-interest escapes.

