

**SENIOR TRAVELLERS: GLOBAL  
TOURISM'S SILVER LINING**

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To board a flight from London to Spain's sunny coastal towns, or one of many other holiday hubs across the globe, is to start a journey with what has become one of the most strategically valuable, yet socially under valued, segments of the global travel population: the Senior Traveller.

Some refer to them as Silver Travellers – silver being a reference to hair colour. Some refer to them as Seniors or Retirees. Deserving of great respect, these are the global tourism community's elders.

To the travelling world, they are the ideal solution to so many destinations' challenges. Demographically defined as those 60 years of age and older, in terms of travel patterns and predispositions, these special souls offer destinations:

- Higher levels of disposable income
- Higher flexibility of choice re. travel timings throughout the year
- Higher excitement about where they can travel
- Higher lengths of stay compared to the average traveller
- Greater kindness, patience and propensity to have a chat about the awe all around them vs. the average traveller.

These characteristics, increasingly rare in today's fast paced, low patience, pause-photograph-post world, can feel like a breath of fresh air, and a deep exhale. In many ways, their higher requirements of attention and courtesy than the average traveller can feel like a reboot of what it means to deliver personal hospitality, a truly one-to-one experience.

These are the people who not only keep destinations buoyant in the off-seasons, they are the travellers that remind us that, for all of the technology at our fingertips, ours is a service industry based on sharing, caring and delivering a personally enriching experience.

### **GROWING NUMBERS GROWING OLDER**

To honour the senior traveller market within the greater global tourism landscape, we, as the global travel & tourism community, celebrated for the ability to connect people of different nations, beliefs and ways of life across the world, need to respect our elders. The numbers around the size of this segment of the travel market are commanding of just that.

In 2013, the United Nations put a magnifying glass on the world's ageing, and established that, as a global population, never has our world aged with such strength of body, mind and spirit. The UN 2013 WORLD POPULATION REPORT ON AGEING concluded clearly and confidently:

*" 1) Population ageing is taking place in nearly all the countries of the world. Ageing results from decreasing mortality, and, most importantly, declining fertility. This process leads to a relative reduction in the proportion of children and to an increase in the share of people in the main working ages and of older persons in the population. The global share*

*of older people (aged 60 years or over) increased from 9.2 per cent in 1990 to 11.7 per cent in 2013 and will continue to grow as a proportion of the world population, reaching 21.1 per cent by 2050.*

*2. Globally, the number of older persons (aged 60 years or over) is expected to more than double, from 841 million people in 2013 to more than 2 billion in 2050. Older persons are projected to exceed the number of children for the first time in 2047. Presently, about two thirds of the world's older persons live in developing countries. Because the older population in less developed regions is growing faster than in the more developed regions, the projections show that older persons will be increasingly concentrated in the less developed regions of the world. By 2050, nearly 8 in 10 of the world's older population will live in the less developed regions."*

Investment group Moody's list of 'Super-Aged Societies By 2030' provides an interesting look at where in the world the ageing (those 65+) populations are at their strongest.

At the top of the list of 10 leading ageing nations is Japan, with a population of 26.4 million elderly, growing to 30.7 million by 2030.

Completing the Top 10 are:

2. Germany with 21.4 million in 2015 and 28.2 million in 2030
3. Italy with 21.7 million in 2015, and 26.8 million in 2030
4. South Korea with 13 million in 2015, and 23.4 million in 2030
5. France with 18.7 million in 2015, and 23.2 million in 2030
6. Switzerland with 18.2 million in 2015, and 21.9 million in 2030
7. UK with 18.1 million in 2015, and 21.7 million in 2030
8. USA with 14.7 million in 2015, and 20.1 million in 2030
9. Australia with 15 million in 2015, and 19.2 million in 2030

and finally,

10. China with 9.5 million in 2015, and 16.2 million in 2015

A common denominator across all of the nations listed is the propensity to travel. With freedom of mobility, choice, spend and time, senior travellers are proving to be a rich source market for the following sub-sectors:

- Luxury travel: valuing high levels of comfort and quality, spending the time and thought to research where best to spend their travel funds, and being very willing and able to pay for it.
- Cruise travel (large ocean liners and river cruise): enjoying the opportunity to enjoy exploring different parts of the world in the comfort of an unpack-once, make yourself at home state room, and a community of like-minded travellers.

- Health and Wellness travel: seeking out, appreciating and enjoying travel focused on their well-being, be it preventative or curative.
- Milestone travel: stopping to richly and meaningfully celebrate life's precious moments as a couple, as a family, or solo.
- Genealogical travel: taking time to take a closer look at one's roots and relations, travelling the world to strengthen one's sense of place in the world.
- Travel Clubs: creating a community of travel companions with whom to share experiences, memories and future anticipation of the next time together.
- Multi-Gen travel: enjoying time with children and grandchildren, sharing journeys to new places and/or returning to reunite, finding things to do that make all happy, building bonds across the generations.
- Bucket List travel: finally fulfilling those greatest life wishes, because they can!

### THE SECRET TO THE SENIOR SEGMENT

Destinations that do the senior segment right, innovating around senior offerings and extending the invitation the right way, know the secret to this rich segment: take it personally.

In so many ways, the senior segment is an invaluable reboot to the travel sector thinking about speed, systemization of experience delivery, self-service and simply hitting 'send' to connect with customers. The senior segment is one in which one-to-one is of exponential value.

Which is why it is critical to understand their needs. The number one need? Peace of mind.

While their words may be the same, the different meanings are what matters. To be 'safe' means not only the assumed meaning linked to security, but also safety when it comes to one's health. Are health services available, just in case...

Similarly 'mobility'. This is not only about ease of connectivity of planes, trains, boats and automobiles, but also ease of making the walks needed through terminals, up to and onto transport, eliminating the hassle and the hurry. While they may move more slowly than busy, headphoned, carry-on-only travellers when at the boarding gate, stay calm, they are getting on.

The same applies to 'innovation'. Product development need not be about invention, but rather reinvention, simply shifting aspects of offerings – times, durations, itineraries, amenities or extra little touches – to be more suitable to seniors' likes and lifestyles.

And so importantly, ‘experience’. The senior segment reminds us of the need to stop and smell the roses, share the moment through words with a stranger standing nearby, through a pause for a smile of appreciation. Then you can take a photograph and share it through a posting. These are the travellers with lifelong refinement of taste, conscious of and caring about the detail.

Senior travellers are the silver lining of global travel and tourism, reinforcing that the beauty of discovery of the world around is not only about breadth, but depth. Therein lies the power of the pause. And our envy of their travelling lives!

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