

A photograph of an airplane wing flying over a sea of clouds at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow that illuminates the clouds and the wing. The sky is a mix of blue and orange.

# TO TRAVEL IS TO FEEL

How the search for meaning  
drives modern travel decisions

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# How modern travelers turn journeys into expressions of identity and meaning

In 2025, travelers aren't just booking trips – they're seeking meaning, connection, and expressing a sense of self in every journey.

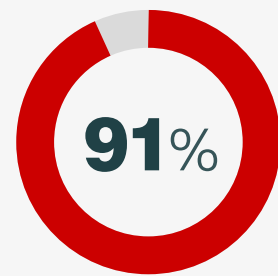
Despite widespread economic uncertainty and rising geopolitical tension, the desire to travel hasn't faded – it's evolved. Travelers are seeking their own 'happy place' – a chance to meet their emotional, mental, and physical needs. For brands, this signals a growing opportunity: to connect on this human level.

## THE STORY

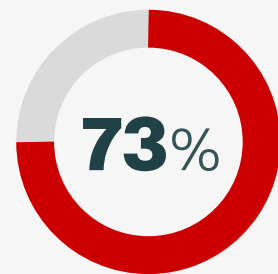
### Today's travelers are led by emotion, ethics, and experience

Travel has become an expression of identity and passion. The CNN audience isn't just interested in where to go, they care about how they experience a place, and that experience is shaped by doing what matters to them. In fact, 86% say having authentic and immersive cultural experiences is one of the influencing factors for choosing vacation destinations<sup>1</sup>.

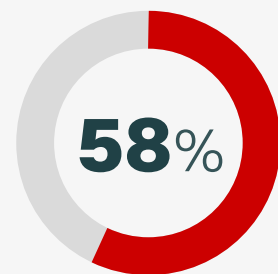
From perusing local markets (88%) to attending a local cultural festival (69%) or hiking the outdoors (58%), today's CNN traveler tends to follow their passion and curiosity while considering their impact on the locations and communities they interact with<sup>2</sup>.



of the CNN audience are willing to pay more for authentic, locally rooted experiences<sup>1</sup>



of global travelers aim to support small local businesses when visiting new destinations<sup>3</sup>



of the CNN audience enjoy slow travel, to explore, relax, and immerse themselves in local culture<sup>1</sup>



A desire to live by their values fuels behavior: In 2025, traveling sustainably remains important for 84% of travelers<sup>4</sup>. Almost two thirds (63%) of consumers say they are likely to visit a lesser well-known destination on their next trip<sup>5</sup> and 63% want to have a positive impact on the environment through their daily actions<sup>6</sup> coinciding with concerns of overtourism.

In short, travelers today aren't just looking for a vacation, they're looking to connect more deeply with their values and feel something real.

## WHY IT MATTERS

For marketers, tapping into emotional drivers opens new doors for authentic engagement. When content aligns with values, brand trust deepens. CNN's travel-savvy audience is especially receptive. They turn to trusted media to inspire their travel planning and lean into content that inspires discovery.

Media environments that mirror their values – like trusted news publishers – offer brands a context-rich space to connect meaningfully with premium audiences across regions.



# 83%

agree that events or activities featured on CNN inspire their travel planning<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Want to connect with audiences on a deeper level through powerful, emotional storytelling? Get in touch to explore how CNN's travel insights can invite your brand into our audience's travel plans – help your brand find its way to someone's happy place.

For further information about this report please contact:

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Sources: (1) CNN International Commercial Audience Insight Tracker conducted by BVA-BDRC. July 2024. Sample: All CNN audiences aged 18+ (N=850). 12 markets: FR, DE, NL, UK, AU, HK, IN, AG, AR, BR, MX, US. (2) CNN International Commercial Audience Insight Tracker conducted by BVA-BDRC. September 2023. Sample: All CNN audiences aged 18+ (N=800). 12 markets: FR, DE, NL, UK, AU, HK, IN, AG, AR, BR, MX. (3) 2025 Global Travel Trends report by American Express Travel. This Morning Consult online poll among global adult respondents: N=8,137. US, AU, CA, UK, JP, MX, IN. N=8,137 January 2025. (4) Travel and Sustainability Report 2025. Commissioned by Booking.com. N=32,000 respondents across 34 countries and territories. (5) Unpack '25 The Trends in Travel. Expedia Group conducted by OnePoll – 19 Markets. N= 25,000 adults. (6) Euromonitor International. Voice of the Consumer: Lifestyles Survey, fielded over Jan-Feb 2024 (n=40,691).

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