

Uzbekistan's increasing international tourism visibility creates favorable conditions for becoming a leading gastronomic tourism destination in Central Asia.

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NEW FACTORS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GLOBAL TOURISM MARKET

Abstract: This article analyzes the key transformational processes taking place in the global tourism industry by 2026. It highlights digital technologies, artificial intelligence, changing consumer behavior, and the growing development of experience-oriented tourism as the main driving factors. In addition, the study examines, from a scientific perspective, the impact of sustainability, innovation tourism, hyper-personalization, and the “bleisure” trend on the tourism industry. As a result, it is substantiated that modern tourism is evolving through the integration of technological advancement and human needs.

Keywords: global tourism, transformational processes, digital technologies, consumer behavior, sustainability, innovation tourism, bleisure tourism, tourism industry, digital transformation, tourist demand, tourism market, global economy.

Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada 2026-yilga kelib global turizm industriyasida yuz berayotgan asosiy transformatsion jarayonlar tahlil qilinadi. Unda raqamli texnologiyalar, sun'iy intellekt, iste'molchilar xulq-atvorining o'zgarishi va tajribaga yo'naltirilgan (taassurotlar) turizmning jadal rivojlanishi bosh harakatlantiruvchi omillar sifatida ko'rsatib o'tilgan. Bundan tashqari, tadqiqotda barqarorlik, innovatsion turizm, giper-personallashtirish va “bleisure” (ishbilarmonlik va hordiq sayohatlarining uyg'unlashuvi) trendining turizm sanoatiga ta'siri ilmiy nuqtayi nazardan ko'rib chiqiladi. Natijada, zamonaviy turizm texnologik taraqqiyot va inson ehtiyojlarining integratsiyalashuvi orqali rivojlanib borayotgani asoslab berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: global turizm, transformatsion jarayonlar, raqamli texnologiyalar, iste'molchi xulq-atvori, barqarorlik, innovatsion turizm, bleisure turizm, turizm industriyasi, raqamli transformatsiya, turistik talab, turizm bozori, global iqtisodiyot.

***Аннотация.** В данной статье анализируются ключевые трансформационные процессы, происходящие в мировой индустрии туризма к 2026 году. В качестве основных движущих факторов выделяются цифровые технологии, искусственный интеллект, изменение потребительского поведения и активное развитие туризма впечатлений (ориентированного на опыт). Кроме того, в исследовании с научной точки зрения рассматривается влияние концепции устойчивого развития, инновационного туризма, гиперперсонализации и тренда «bleisure» (совмещение деловых поездок с отдыхом) на туристическую индустрию. В результате обосновывается, что современный туризм эволюционирует через интеграцию технологического прогресса и человеческих потребностей.*

***Ключевые слова:** мировой туризм, трансформационные процессы, цифровые технологии, потребительское поведение, устойчивое развитие, инновационный туризм, bleisure-туризм, индустрия туризма, цифровая трансформация, туристический спрос, туристический рынок, мировая экономика.*

Introduction

The global tourism industry stands at a transformative crossroads in 2026, having not merely recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic but fundamentally reinvented itself. What was once a sector defined by standardized packages and mass-market appeal has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem shaped by technological disruption, shifting consumer values, and unprecedented global connectivity. The industry is no longer in recovery-it is in transformation. Travelers are demanding personalization, sustainability, authenticity, and technology-driven convenience simultaneously, creating both challenges and remarkable opportunities for stakeholders across the value chain. This article examines the new factors reshaping global tourism, the emerging opportunities for industry players, and the dominant trends defining the market in 2026 and beyond.

The Acceleration of Digital Transformation: Digitalization has emerged as the most consequential factor reshaping tourism in the post-pandemic era. The European Commission's vision for "Europe's Digital Decade" by 2030 has established a roadmap for tourism's digital transition, focusing on skilling, sustainable digital infrastructures, business transformation, and public service digitalization. For the tourism sector-where small and medium enterprises (SMEs) constitute the vast majority of businesses-this digital shift is not merely about adopting new tools but about fundamental business model reinvention. The integration of artificial intelligence has moved from novelty to necessity. Google's expansion of AI Mode with advanced trip-planning capabilities now assembles complete day-by-day itineraries incorporating hotels, events, local activities, and loyalty program integration. This represents a leap toward fully agentic, AI-powered travel experiences that raise guest expectations for predictive personalization across the entire journey. Hotels and travel providers that integrate AI-driven personalization into booking engines and guest communications are gaining clear competitive advantages, while those failing to embrace these tools risk obsolescence. Mobile technology has cemented its position as the essential travel companion. From AI-powered translation to augmented reality city guides, travelers depend on their smartphones throughout the entire journey. The smartphone has effectively become a travel agency, guide, and tour operator, providing maps, restaurant recommendations, and real-time destination information. This ubiquity demands that hotels and

destinations maintain mobile-optimized experiences or lose ground to digitally integrated competitors.

Changing Consumer Values and Behaviors: The psychological impact of the pandemic has permanently altered what travelers seek from their experiences. Experience-led travel has risen sharply since COVID-19, with the once-popular pursuit of ticking off famous landmarks giving way to more meaningful journeys that allow visitors to genuinely connect with local people, culture, and landscapes. Travel is no longer defined simply by destination or distance; what matters most is what travelers take home—the experiences, emotions, and personal connections they carry with them. This shift has manifested in several behavioral changes. Multi-generational travel has become one of the fastest-growing market segments, with more than half of families now traveling with adult children, and many trips including three generations or more. The rise of "SKI trips" (Spending Kids' Inheritance) reflects a reprioritization where families choose to invest in shared experiences rather than deferred financial legacy. In an era of geographic dispersion and fragmented attention, shared travel becomes concentrated presence—a way to create collective memory. The concept of "anti-tourism" has gained significant traction, representing a deliberate move away from overcrowded hotspots toward quieter, more authentic destinations. According to Agoda, searches for accommodation in secondary destinations across Asia are growing more than 15% faster than those for traditional tourist hubs. This trend is driven by multiple factors: climate change influencing destination choices, sustainability concerns about overtourism, and a genuine desire for peace, space, and genuine connection away from urban rush.

The Wellness Imperative: Wellness travel has transcended its spa-centric origins to become a holistic movement permeating all aspects of the travel experience. In 2026, wellness concerns and overtourism pressures now influence whether a holiday feels worthwhile to discerning travelers. This evolution reflects a broader societal recognition that travel should restore rather than deplete, and that the quality of the experience matters more than the quantity of sights seen. The "no-think" holiday concept has emerged as a direct response to modern overwhelm. Travelers, burdened by decision fatigue in their daily lives, are increasingly willing to hand over full control of their itinerary to trusted operators or hotels, provided it guarantees genuine relaxation. This represents a shift from the efficiency-driven planning of the past to a desire for mental offloading—a recognition that true vacation means liberation from the cognitive load of constant choice.

Innovation Tourism: Experiencing Tomorrow Today: One of the most fascinating opportunities to emerge is "Innovation Tourism"—travel motivated by the desire to experience future-forward technologies and urban infrastructure before they become commonplace. South Korea's Pangyo Techno Valley and Shenzhen's tech ecosystem have become destinations in their own right, with flight searches to Shenzhen for the first half of 2026 up 48% year-on-year, driven by viral social media exposure of cutting-edge facilities like the 24/7 Tenz Tanguan Life Spa. This trend extends beyond Asia. In Austin, Texas, "Submersive"—an immersive experience from Meow Wolf cofounder Corvas Brinkerhof launches amid the city's startup ecosystem, offering 12 sensory rooms with biometric-reading technology that responds in real-

time to guests' nervous systems. Looking further ahead, Amadeus research indicates that 60% of global travelers are interested in hypersonic air travel capable of London-to-New York journeys in under an hour, while 58% would try ultra-fast Hyperloop ground transport. These technologies, once realized, will democratize access to far-flung destinations and redistribute tourist flows in unprecedented ways. The economic impact is substantial. Visit Bath expects Netflix's "Bridgerton" to contribute approximately £5 million annually to the local economy, while the Labubu phenomenon generated an estimated \$1 billion in sales in 2025. For destinations and hospitality brands, the opportunity lies in building sustained relevance through strategic IP partnerships that convert digital fascination into physical travel.

The Pet-Inclusive Travel Market: The "Pawprint Economy" represents a previously underestimated market expansion. More travelers are choosing to include their pets in their vacations, encouraging the sector to develop sophisticated services specifically for animal companions. Hotels are introducing premium pet-friendly amenities, while transportation providers and destinations are creating solutions that make traveling with pets easier and more comfortable. This trend reflects a broader shift in how consumers view pets-as family members rather than property-and tourism offerings are gradually adapting to a reality where pets are integral to travel plans rather than afterthoughts.

Point-to-Point Precision in Aviation: Advances in aircraft technology, particularly the expansion of long-range narrow-body aircraft, are enabling airlines to operate more direct routes between cities that previously required connecting flights. This "Point-to-Point Precision" significantly reduces travel times and opens new international links for secondary and emerging destinations. Travelers gain access to a wider range of places without the inconvenience of traditional hub-and-spoke routes, while destinations previously bypassed by major carriers can now attract direct international visitors. This technological evolution democratizes access and redistributes tourist dollars to emerging markets.

Dominant Trends Defining Tourism in 2026: AI and Human Expertise Convergence: Travel Mixology: The future of trip planning lies not in AI replacing human expertise but in their strategic integration-a concept termed "Travel Mixology." AI-powered tools analyze vast volumes of traveler data to generate recommendations tailored to individual preferences, past behaviors, and interests. However, human insight remains essential for bringing creativity, cultural understanding, and contextual knowledge that algorithms cannot replicate. The most successful travel experiences in 2026 are those designed through hybrid approaches where technology enhances rather than replaces human expertise, combining algorithmic efficiency with the irreplaceable nuance of professional judgment.

Hyper-Personalization: The "Pick 'n' Stays" Model: In the hospitality sector, hyper-personalization has evolved from preference to expectation through the "Pick 'n' Stays" trend. Hotels increasingly offer guests the ability to customize multiple aspects of their stay-from selecting room features and amenities to adjusting services based on individual lifestyle needs. The hotel room is transforming from a standardized space into a flexible environment designed specifically for each guest. This model requires sophisticated operational capabilities but delivers significantly

higher guest satisfaction and loyalty, as travelers come to expect environments that adapt to them rather than requiring adaptation.

The Work-From-Anywhere Revolution: Remote work has permanently changed travel behavior, with the blending of business and leisure travel-"bleisure"-becoming the norm rather than the exception. Guests are booking longer stays, seeking hotels that provide reliable workspaces, and combining professional obligations with leisure experiences. Properties that invest in co-working lounges, strong connectivity, and packages designed for digital nomads are capturing a growing segment of high-value travelers who combine productivity with exploration. This trend has also sustained domestic travel momentum, with regional exploration remaining robust even as international borders fully reopened.

Sustainability as a Core Value Proposition: Sustainability has moved from peripheral concern to central value proposition. Advanced IoT systems now allow businesses to track and measure environmental impact in real-time, from energy consumption to waste generation, linking smart devices to impact measurement programs. This data-driven approach to sustainability enables genuine accountability rather than greenwashing. Blockchain technology is increasingly deployed to guarantee information reliability, manage supply chains, and reward sustainable traveler behavior. The integration of sustainability into core business strategy is no longer optional-it is a competitive necessity as 74% of consumers now prioritize environmental responsibility in their travel choices.

Biophilic Design and Airport Transformation: Asia is leading a revolution in airport design that transforms these spaces from utilitarian transit points into destinations worth experiencing. Cambodia's Techo International Airport, opened in October 2025, rises like a cathedral of biophilic design, filled with light and living greenery. Vietnam's lotus-shaped Long Thanh Airport, set to open in 2026, continues this trend, rivaling Singapore's iconic Changi with its cascading indoor waterfall and tropical gardens. This evolution reflects a fundamental reimagining of travel infrastructure-not as necessary evil but as integral part of the journey experience, places where people linger rather than merely pass through.

Brand Trust and Authentic Social Proof: In an era of information overload, brand trust has become a decisive factor in booking decisions. Travelers demand clear policies, transparent communication, and confidence that brands will deliver on promises. This extends beyond safety and cleanliness to include honoring flexible bookings, maintaining consistent quality, and engaging openly across channels. Simultaneously, social proof has evolved in format-travelers respond less to polished campaigns and more to authentic, raw content that feels relatable. Short-form video, real guest stories, and behind-the-scenes moments prove more persuasive than glossy advertisements, requiring brands to embrace vulnerability and transparency in their marketing approaches.

Conclusion: The global tourism market in 2026 is characterized by a profound paradox: it is simultaneously more technologically mediated and more authentically human than ever before. The industry has successfully leveraged digital transformation to remove friction and personalize experiences, yet the most successful innovations are those that facilitate genuine human connection, cultural

immersion, and personal restoration. The opportunities before the industry are substantial—from innovation tourism that monetizes technological curiosity. However, realizing these opportunities requires stakeholders to move beyond incremental adaptation toward fundamental reinvention of their value propositions. The trends defining this era—AI-human collaboration, hyper-personalization, work-from-anywhere flexibility, sustainability integration, biophilic infrastructure, and trust-based marketing—are not passing fads but structural shifts that will continue to evolve. For tourism enterprises, the imperative is clear: those who embrace these transformations with strategic intent will find growth, loyalty, and strengthened market position. Those who resist will fall behind in an industry that no longer waits for anyone. As we look toward 2030 and beyond, the tourism industry is poised to become not merely an economic sector but a primary arena where technological capability, environmental responsibility, and human wellbeing intersect. The journey ahead promises to be as transformative as the destinations it serves.

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