

## Gen Z travelers swap airport pints for matcha, wellness drinks

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**Dhaka: A growing number of Generation Z travelers are replacing the traditional pre-flight pint with matcha lattes, smoothies, and wellness shots at airports across the United Kingdom, reflecting a broader shift in travel culture and consumption habits among younger passengers.**

Data released by Manchester Airports Group shows sales of matcha drinks across its airport network have surged by as much as 165% year-on-year, driven largely by viral trends on social media platforms such as TikTok.

Manchester Airports Group operates major UK airports, including Manchester, London Stansted, and East Midlands. All three locations recorded strong demand growth for matcha-based beverages over the past year.

London Stansted registered the fastest rise, with sales increasing by 174% year-on-year. Manchester Airport followed with a 144% increase, highlighting the rapid adoption of matcha among younger travelers seeking alternatives to traditional coffee or alcoholic drinks before flights.

Matcha, long associated with East Asian tea traditions, has gradually become mainstream in European cities over the past decade. Younger consumers increasingly view the drink as a cleaner source of energy compared to coffee.

The trend is also visible among major food and beverage outlets operating inside airport terminals, including Pret A Manger, Caffè Nero, Itsu, and Pasta Evangelists.

Airport retailers have also reported strong growth in other health-focused items. According to Manchester Airports Group, smoothie sales rose by 650% year-on-year, while so-called “gut health shots” increased by 102%.

Due to their relatively high prices, many of these drinks are reportedly purchased as part of bundled airport meal deals.

Andrew MacMillan, chief strategy officer at Manchester Airports Group, said the trend illustrates how younger travelers are reshaping the airport experience.

He noted that travel choices and consumption patterns are increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence tools and social media platforms, which many Gen Z travelers use to plan trips and discover destinations.

In the United Kingdom, roughly one in four travelers under the age of 25 say they have used or plan to use AI-based tools to organize travel plans, ranging from selecting destinations to building detailed itineraries.

Destination choices are also evolving. Instead of traditional party hotspots such as the Canary Islands or Mediterranean resort strips, many younger travelers prefer short city breaks in places like Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Dublin.

Social media has further fueled interest in so-called “destination dupes,” where travelers visit visually similar but less expensive alternatives to

famous tourist destinations. Countries including Albania and Croatia are increasingly promoted as budget-friendly options by influencers.

Meanwhile, travelers with greater financial flexibility are exploring long-haul destinations such as Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Japan, often opting for short-term rentals through platforms like Airbnb.

Health-conscious habits are also reshaping duty-free shopping patterns. Manchester Airports Group reported a 399% year-on-year increase in sales of skincare products, face masks, and other self-care items.

Viral consumer goods such as the reusable Stanley cup are also selling rapidly in airport stores, largely fueled by social media trends rather than traditional advertising.

Although airport pub sales continue to grow alongside overall passenger traffic, industry observers say the once-iconic pre-flight pint appears to hold less appeal for Gen Z travelers, who increasingly favor coffee chains and wellness drinks before boarding.

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