

Travel in 2026 : "Whycations" rise as experience defines destination

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Dhaka : Global travel in 2026 is being reshaped by a powerful new trend: travelers are choosing destinations based on purpose rather than proximity. The era of the generic holiday is fading, replaced by what industry experts call "whycations" - trips designed around a specific experience, from culinary exploration to physical adventure or cultural immersion.

A new global snapshot of top destinations by experience highlights how motivations now map directly onto countries. For beach lovers, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, and Mexico top the list. Culture-driven travelers are heading to China, Mongolia, South Korea, and India. Culinary enthusiasts continue to favor Japan, Italy, Thailand, and Vietnam, while diving hotspots include Indonesia, the Philippines, the Maldives, and Australia.

Street food seekers are gravitating toward Malaysia, Taiwan, Turkey, and Indonesia. Hiking destinations gaining momentum include Nepal, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Canada. History buffs are choosing Italy, Greece, Egypt, and China, while photography-focused travelers are drawn to Italy, Japan, Iceland, and Morocco. Shopping tourism remains strong in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and Italy.

Climate changing travel patterns

Environmental shifts are also influencing decisions. As temperatures rise globally, "coolcations" - trips to milder northern destinations - are surging. Canada and Iceland are seeing increased demand, as are alpine regions such as the Dolomites in Italy.

Another growing trend is "nighttime tourism," with travelers exploring landmarks after sunset to avoid extreme daytime heat and peak crowds. Evening tours, night markets, and stargazing experiences are becoming key itinerary highlights.

At the same time, "anti-tourism" or secondary-city travel is gaining traction. Instead of crowded hubs like Paris or Bali, visitors are seeking quieter alternatives - rural Vietnam's mountain regions or Albania's coastal towns - in search of authenticity and fewer crowds.

Technology powers personalization

Personalization has become central to the 2026 travel experience. AI-driven planning tools now handle logistics, offering travelers a "show up and go" mindset that reduces stress and enhances presence.

Whether it is a solo adventurer trekking through Nepal's high altitudes or families booking multi-generational Mediterranean retreats, travelers are increasingly prioritizing meaningful engagement over sightseeing checklists.