

**Carpe Diem to Going Slow: Explore Reveals Top Travel Trends for 2023**

Leading small group adventure operator Explore Worldwide has crunched the numbers, looked into thousands of trips and passengers, analysed booking patterns and scoped global trends to provide its annual travel outlook for the year ahead yet. Operating 400 small group itineraries in more than 100 countries worldwide, Explore is well-placed to see changes in travel behaviour as they happen. From cycling expansive coastlines to safaris in Tanzania, from last-minute cultural tours to epic polar expeditions, and from solo ambitions fulfilled to talking on a mountain summit challenge, here are Explore’s top predictions for how our 2023 adventures will look.

**Slow travel, ‘Carpe Diem’ adventures and walking holidays – how we’ll travel in 2023**

Holidays are getting more active. The number of people booking **walking holidays with Explore is** **up by almost a third** on 2019. A recent report from Expedia showed that consumers have tired of the traditional ‘wellness’ and spa holidays, and are now seeking more experiential activity. Explore’s report showing a 30% increase in [walking holidays](https://www.explore.co.uk/experiences/walking-and-trekking-tours) certainly backs up this claim.

“*During the pandemic, we all got used to walking more and exploring under our own steam. As a result we’ve a renewed love for discovering places on our own two feet. This is such a rewarding and enriching way to travel that we see this trend only continuing into the future”* says Explore’s Managing Director Michael Edwards.

More people will be joining group tours solo. **Solo travellers** have always been a huge part of Explore’s groups, and yet as a trend it continues to grow. This year, 67% of Explore’s bookings came from solo travellers; up from 64% in 2019. And this is a trend that is growing more widely too, with average monthly web search volume for solo travel up 52% year on year.

They’ll spend more. **Average spend has increased** across most regions – 7% on Europe trips and 8% on Americas, for example – a reflection of increased costs, but also a hangover from two years of not travelling. Longer haul, bucket-list type trips are selling incredibly well, reflecting a Carpe Diem mindset of those that have not been able to travel for a couple of years. In many cases they’ve saved money and they want to ensure that their next adventure goes some way to make up for that.

**And where we’ll go - top adventure travel destinations for 2023**  
**Europe** and the UK are consistently up since the pandemic, but now longer haul destinations are taking over the fastest growing destinations list. Aside from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, both new countries to Explore’s programme, destinations like Costa Rica (up 44%), Egypt (up 124%) and Morocco (up 34%) are currently seeing great demand.

Edwards says: “*we expect to see European and Middle Eastern destinations continue to grow in 2023 as easy-to-access, great value options. But we’ll also see the big return to more Asian and African destinations.”*

Ten fastest-growing travel destinations of 2022

1. Pakistan
2. Saudi Arabia
3. United Kingdom
4. El Salvador
5. Montenegro
6. Cyprus
7. The Ivory Coast
8. Guyana
9. Iceland
10. Egypt
11. Croatia
12. North Macedonia
13. Azerbaijan
14. Bosnia and Herzegovina
15. Portugal

*Growth measured by % increase on 2019.*

Explore’s new [Natural Wonders of Guyana](https://www.explore.co.uk/holidays/natural-wonders-of-guyana) trip will take advantage of British Airways’ new twice weekly flight to Guyana launching in March, with the operator expecting to see the country continue to grow in popularity as a destination.

**Polar expeditions** are selling strongly for 2023, with bookings leaning more strongly towards Antarctica, perhaps influenced by David Attenborough exposure and the sense of Carpe Diem that the pandemic has induced.

And it’s not just Antarctica that has been given a boost by this mindset. Other traditional **big-ticket bucketlist trips** like Kilimanjaro Climb (up 9%), Maldives Dhoni Cruise (up 17%) and Inca Trail (up 37%) have seen similar growth. Online search terms around ‘bucketlist’ travel, including ‘ultimate bucketlist’ and ‘bucketlist ideas’ are up 39% post Covid.

On the post-Covid ‘Seize the Day’ mentality of adventure travellers, Explore’s Marketing Director Jae Hopkins says: “*we’re all guilty of saving the epic big adventures we’ve long dreamed of to a mental ‘to-do’ list, for when we have more time, more money or are celebrating a special milestone. Since Covid, I think we’re more aware how quickly things can change, and how we so often don’t get around to those ‘one day’ plans. Since travel has opened up post-pandemic, perhaps unsurprisingly we’re seeing these once-in-a-lifetime trips being booked in far greater numbers. More people are taking on challenges, more people are travelling solo – rather than waiting for friends and family plans to align – and just doing* it.”

**How we’ll book it – how our travel booking habits will change in 2023**  
Across the board, whether booking cycling trips in Europe, family safaris or far-flung cultural tours, travellers are starting to **book their holidays much closer to departure**. The average time between tour booking and travelling for summer holidays in 2022 was 131 days – that’s almost seven weeks later than bookings were made for summer 2019.

In the last 12 weeks, Explore has seen a 50% increase in travellers booking Explore adventures via **travel agents**. Director of Sales, Ben Ittensohn, says “*our travel agent relationships have gone from strength to strength over the last couple of years. We really value the wealth of knowledge and the fantastic relationships our agents have with our clients, and we support them with excellent training opportunities, FAM trips, and 50% discount on their own holiday with us*.”

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