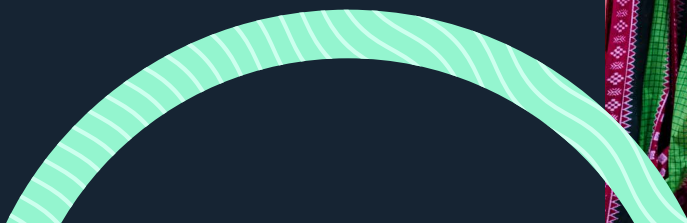


THE
POINTS
GUY 

Travel Trends

2024 REPORT





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Foreword

We've seen a lot of changes this past year in the travel industry – from loyalty program devaluations and new airline route announcements to new airport lounge openings and airlines trying to keep up with the growing demand for travel to new destinations and long-time favorites.

We might finally see the end of revenge travel, but if all indications are correct, 2024 (like 2023) will continue to outpace 2019 in travel volume. The desire for up-and-coming destinations and new experiences is still on the rise, as is the evolution of technology in the industry.

The second-annual TPG Travel Trends Report covers the state of travel today and the trends to keep an eye on. Our team of experts rigorously follows the airline, hotel and cruise industries – with a focus on the credit cards and loyalty programs tied to each.

Whether you are a seasoned traveler or just starting out, there are takeaways in this report for everyone. I hope you enjoy the 30,000-foot snapshot of what actually is going on in travel.

Thank you to our team who worked tirelessly to showcase the details of the industry and what it means moving forward.



Brian Kelly

The Points Guy Founder



Where travelers are going



France

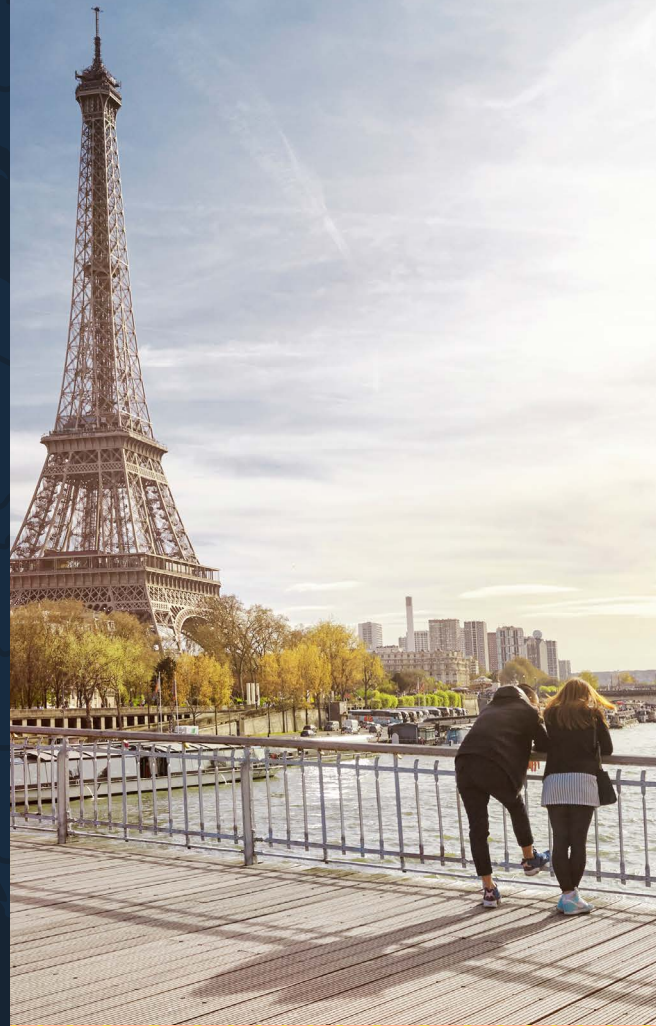
A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS AND COMMEMORATIONS

The stage is set for truly spectacular celebrations in the City of Light and across France next year. The 2024 Paris Olympics will take place in the heart of the city, as well as on the magnificent grounds of Versailles and at various stadiums throughout the country.

In the east, Strasbourg will be UNESCO's 2024 World Book Capital, with events organized around various themes like poetry, refuge and debate. Wine lovers should head to Bordeaux for its famous Fête le Vin from June 27-30 to enjoy the region's world-renowned vintages and gourmet delicacies, along with live music and other performances.

On a more somber note, June 6 will mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, and the region is planning over 100 special events to commemorate this historic event.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024



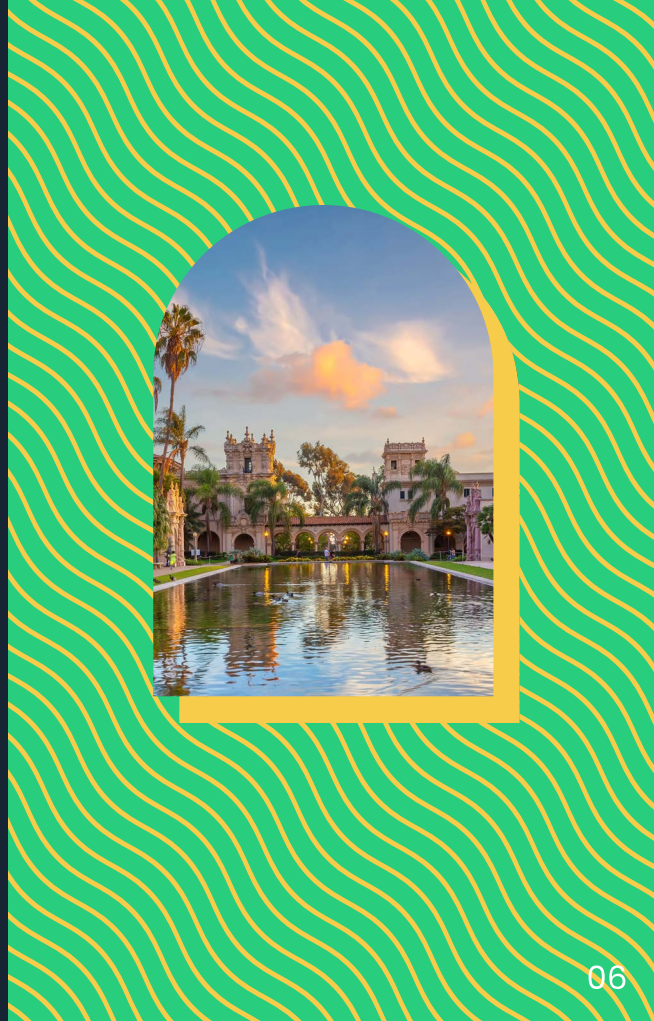
San Diego & Tijuana, Mexico

THE WORLD'S NEW DUAL DESIGN CAPITAL

In a first, two neighboring cities in two different countries have been designated the World Design Capital for 2024: San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico. The accolade recognizes cities that effectively use design to enhance their residents' economic, social, cultural and environmental quality of life. San Diego and Tijuana will celebrate the designation through unique experiences, from events and festivals to exhibitions and summits.

Meanwhile, each city's culinary cachet continues to heat up. In San Diego, Valle won Oceanside's first Michelin star in 2023. New restaurants to look forward to include Wildflour Delicatessen from award-winning chef Phillip Esteban and celebrity chef Brian Malarkey's French-inspired steakhouse, Le Coq.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024





Assam, India

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RICHES ALONG THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER

Home to a fascinating blend of Indigenous tribes, awe-inspiring landscapes, traditional mountain villages and UNESCO-inscribed national parks, the eastern Indian region of Assam has cultural and natural wonders just waiting for travelers to explore – without the crowds you might find in better-known South Asian destinations.

Next year, several new cruise itineraries along the 1,800-mile-long Brahmaputra River will make the region more accessible to travelers keen to get off the beaten path without sacrificing creature comforts.

The highlight of any visit, though, is a Jeep safari to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kaziranga National Park, which provides sanctuary to endangered one-horned rhinoceroses, Asian elephants, Bengal tigers, panthers, bears and gaurs (Indian bison), among other species.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024



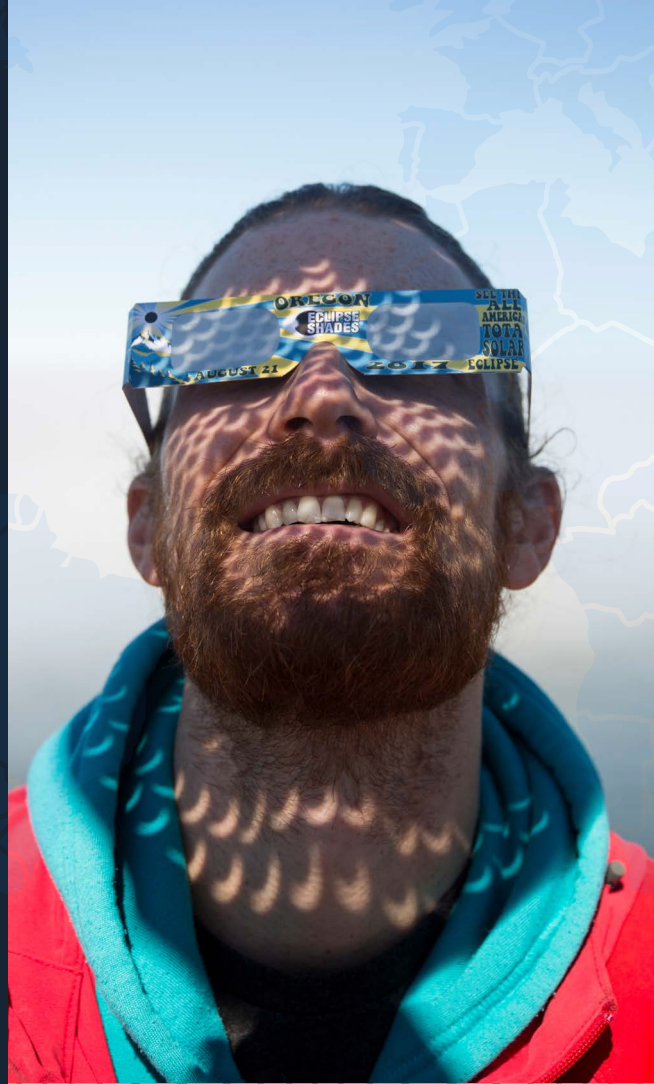
Eclipse path

A MUST-SEE CELESTIAL EVENT ACROSS THE US

On April 8, 2024, some 31.5 million Americans will be able to witness a total solar eclipse from Texas, the Midwest and some states along the East Coast when the moon passes between the sun and the Earth, completely blocking the sun's face. It's a sight you won't want to miss — the next total solar eclipse won't be visible from the contiguous U.S. for another 20 years.

Dallas will be one of the best eclipse destinations, as it will provide four minutes of totality. At the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, 20 astronomers will answer questions. In Cleveland, another NASA partner city, visitors will be able to view the eclipse for nearly four minutes. And in Vermont, Stowe Mountain Resort will whisk skiers and snowboarders via gondola to the top of Mount Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak, for high-altitude views during the nearly three minutes of totality the town is set to experience.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024



Bolivia

HIGH-ALTITUDE FOODIE HAVEN

The magnificent Salar de Uyuni, a vast salt pan of desertlike cracked earth punctuated by cactus-covered rock piles, draws visitors from around the globe to Bolivia every year. Until recently, the area lacked high-end accommodations, but in 2022, the Chilean hospitality brand Explora unveiled an intimate six-room mountain lodge set in a slick glass-fronted building with snug wood-lined rooms overlooking the flats.

Guests can partake in excursions, but the property also forms part of a greater six-night odyssey: a nomadic expedition where guests journey from Chile's Atacama Desert to Salar de Uyuni, enjoying loads of thrilling activities on offer and stopping off at Explora's other mountain lodges along the way.

Whether you decide to begin your journey in the Atacama or Uyuni, don't miss Bolivia's capital city, La Paz, which sits in a bowl at a (literally) dizzyingly high elevation of 11,975 feet. The city's restaurant scene is also arguably one of the most exciting in South America, as it's home to one of Latin America's best restaurants, Gustu.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024





Queensland, Australia

BIG-CITY EXCITEMENT AND WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

It's getting even easier to travel from the U.S. directly to Queensland in 2024 since United Airlines increased its frequencies between San Francisco and Queensland's capital, Brisbane. Daily flights are now available, and the carrier has launched three weekly nonstops between Los Angeles and Brisbane.

The city's once-gritty environs like Howard Smith Wharves have been revitalized with trendy bars and restaurants, and one of the biggest redevelopments is still on the horizon for Brisbane: The 2.6 billion Australian dollars (more than \$1.7 billion) Queen's Wharf precinct is nearing completion on 30 acres of prime riverfront land. It will have not one but three hotels when construction wraps up.

The state has also already invested AU\$7 million (more than \$4,585,000) in the Growing Indigenous Tourism in Queensland Fund. And UNESCO World Heritage-listed Fraser Island — the world's largest sand island and a habitat for diverse wildlife where you can also swim with migrating humpback whales — has officially reverted to its traditional Butchulla name, K'gari.

DESTINATIONS TO WATCH IN 2024



Swiftonomics and experiential travel



The fervor around major concert tours is part of a larger cultural trend toward travel based on experiences. While wellness retreats, eclipse chasing and sporting events have all attracted unprecedented interest (and spawned higher travel prices) in recent years, it's live music — something that the waning coronavirus pandemic's embrace of all things virtual has been unable to replicate — that truly redefined the travel landscape in 2023.

Money seemed to be no object for many Taylor Swift fans in 2023, who paid exorbitant ticket prices (almost \$700 on average, or \$3,800 at resale) to see their icon, often multiple times in different venues across the U.S.

But it wasn't just Swifties that felt the economic impact of the megastar's tour this year, which Time reported has poured over \$5 billion into the U.S. economy. For context, more than 50 countries have a gross national product of \$5 billion or less.

While a Super Bowl attendee could be expected to spend around \$100 on extras such as lodging, food and transportation, a Swiftie spent \$1,300 on average, according to a QuestionPro poll. And this experiential extravaganza doesn't appear to be just a flash-in-the-pan phenomenon, with more than 90% of concertgoers saying they wouldn't hesitate to do it again but perhaps with a little more savviness, reserving hotels and airline tickets as soon as the venues are announced to capitalize on cheaper rates and fares.

Los Angeles

\$320 million revenue for the city; created 3,300 jobs

Pittsburgh

\$46 million in direct spending; highest occupancy rate (95%) since the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown ended

Chicago

A record-breaking average of 44,383 hotel rooms were occupied each night during Swift's concerts, with occupancy rates hitting 96.8% on average.



The rise of ‘set-jetting’

The cinematic appeal of a destination is certainly not a new phenomenon — “Game of Thrones” generated around \$192 million for Croatia’s economy between 2013 and 2018 as travelers flocked to experience the charms of fictional King’s Landing in Old Town Dubrovnik. However, with increasingly stylized pop culture representations, film location-inspired travel (or set-jetting) grew exponentially in 2023 and has become increasingly nuanced.

Travelers don’t just want to visit a particular destination and capture it for their Instagram feed; they want to adopt the lifestyle it embodies and experience a sense of belonging to a place that they haven’t yet physically visited but may have felt immersed in — and attached to — via their TV.

When HBO’s “The White Lotus” series showcased the luxe charms of the lavish San Domenico Palace, Taormina, a Four Seasons property on the Sicilian coast, the property experienced a surge in demand, selling out for months at a time.



HBO’s “The White Lotus”

Sicily dominated social media and Google trends during the show.



Hulu’s “The Bear”

Chicago’s restaurants have experienced a surge of reservations from out-of-town visitors. There was a 50% increase in leisure visitors to Chicago who cited dining as the main reason for their trip, according to data from DK Shifflet provided to Crain’s Chicago Business.



Paramount Network’s “Yellowstone”

A 2022 study conducted by the University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research found “Yellowstone” contributed significantly to Montana’s economy, with \$730.1 million in visitor spending and 2.1 million visitors to the state in 2021 whose decision to visit was the result of the show.

The set-jetting phenomenon has become intricately linked to a desire to live the life portrayed on screen. In the case of “The White Lotus,” sure, enjoy those dramatic views of Taormina, but while drinking an Aperol spritz, wearing a beautiful sundress and flaunting an air of exclusivity from a luxurious Four Seasons suite.

Pop culture enthusiasts increasingly want the properties where they stay to have a unique story behind them, and even if that story is only fictional, they want to live it out for themselves.

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

As the trend continues into 2024, tourism boards will increasingly look to attract television shows and movies to their destinations in order to reap the travel demand and economic benefits that set-jetting brings to its hotel and restaurant owners, tour operators and local guides.

Curbing overtourism with regenerative travel

As travel returned to pre-pandemic levels last year, overtourism in many of the world's most popular destinations reached a tipping point. Images of bottlenecks at the Acropolis, cruise ship traffic jams in Santorini, Greece, and tourists swimming in Venice, Italy's canals or defacing monuments in Rome have led local communities and governments to double down on finding creative solutions that promote more regenerative forms of tourism.

Various destinations have introduced initiatives to protect and preserve not just heritage sites in beloved cities but also the traditional way of life of local residents.

Here are just some of the measures adopted or proposed this year to foster more regenerative tourism:

Athens, Greece

A new timed-entry system and limits on the number of daily visitors (20,000) to the Acropolis were implemented in September 2023.

Bali, Indonesia

In February 2024, a tourist tax of approximately \$10 per person, per visit will be implemented that will further natural and cultural preservation.

Barcelona

On top of implementing noise restrictions and other measures, the city will increase its tourist tax incrementally, with the first increase in April 2023 to 2.75 euros (about \$3).

Hawaii

Rental stays of less than 90 days were banned on the island of Oahu in 2022.

Venice, Italy

A new charging scheme of 5 euros (about \$5.40) per person to enter the Venetian Lagoon area will begin in spring 2024. It will only apply to high-season dates.

New York City

Strict registration, zoning and maintenance rules for all short-term rental properties were introduced in June 2023. Measures include owners being present on the property and sharing accommodation with their guests for rentals of less than 30 days.

Thailand

A tourist fee of 300 baht (about \$8.50) was introduced in June 2023.



Long weekends growing in popularity with families

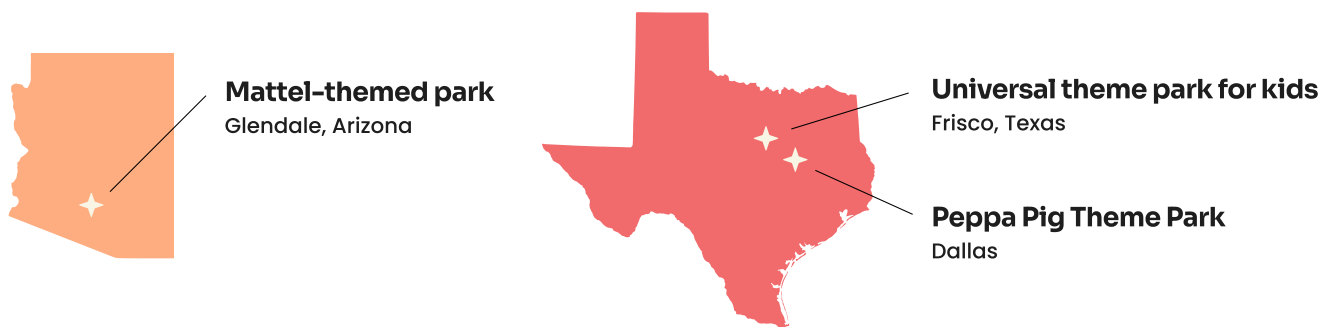
The cost of vacations to major U.S. theme parks like Disney World and Universal Orlando continues to climb. As families search for more affordable vacation options, they are turning to regional theme parks like Dollywood to get their fill of thrills.

Regional theme parks are not only less expensive than their Orlando and Southern California counterparts; they are typically smaller, giving families the opportunity to visit for just one or two days before heading back home or spending the rest of their vacation exploring other attractions a destination has to offer.

Park	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	Kid Tickets
Dollywood	\$92	\$119	\$129	Kids ages 3 to 9 receive a \$10 discount; kids under 3 are free.
Silver Dollar City	\$89	\$109	\$119	Kids ages 4 to 11 receive a \$10 discount; kids under 4 are free.
Hersheypark	\$55	\$104	-	Kids under 3 are free.
Legoland Florida	\$74	\$94	\$139	Kids under 2 are free.
Disney World	\$109	\$229	\$352	Tickets for kids ages 3 to 9 are \$104, \$220 and \$338 respectively; kids are under 3 are free.
Universal Orlando	\$119	\$233	\$266	Kids ages 3 to 9 receive a discount; kids under 3 are free.

*Note that these are starting prices and will fluctuate depending on trip date.

A crop of small regional parks, also referred to as microparks, are in development in multiple U.S. destinations, too, further solidifying regional parks as a popular alternative for families.



What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

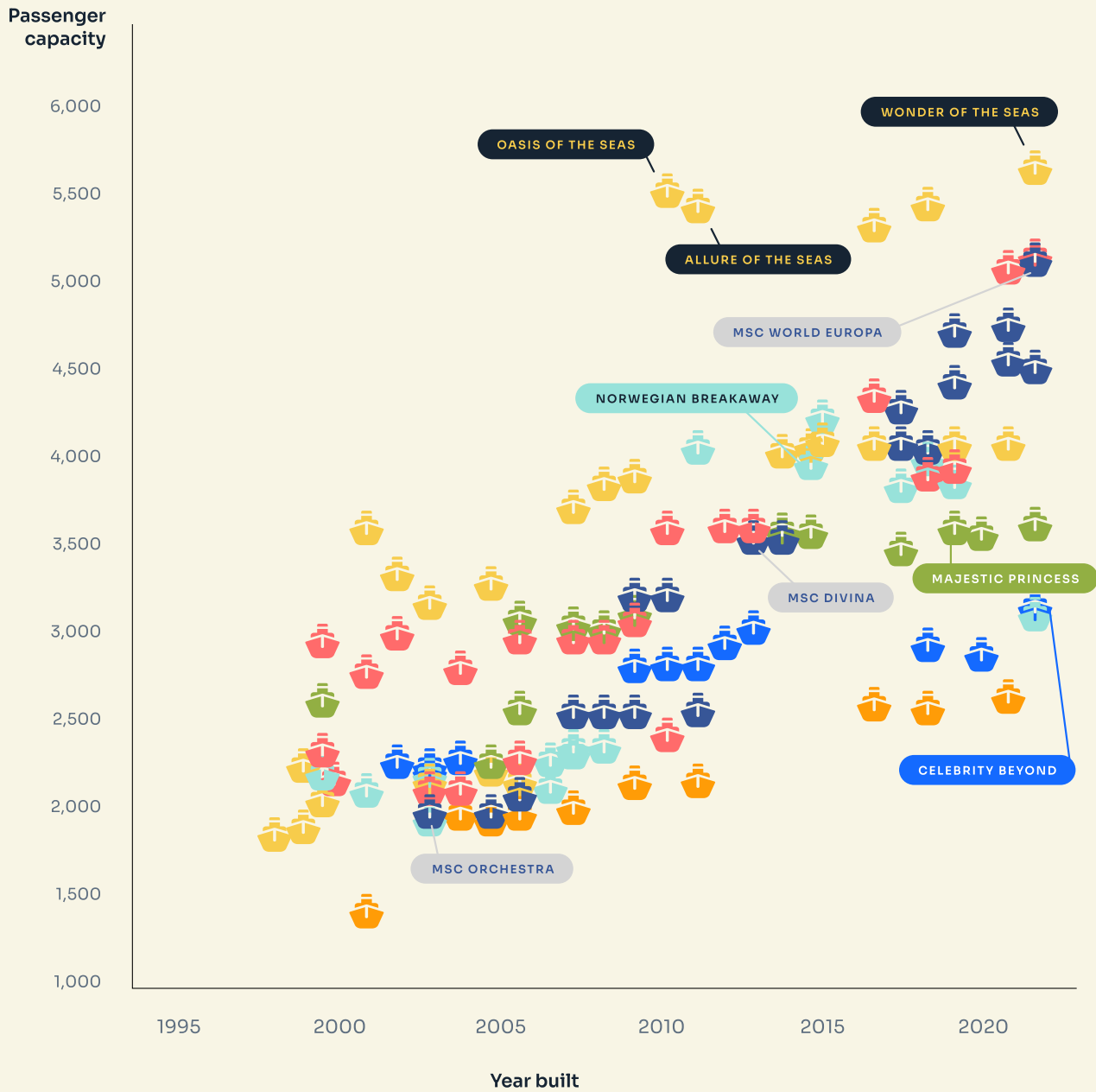
A trend that is cropping up in parks big and small is the addition of seasonal parties (or the expansion of existing events) such as Jollywood Nights, Disney World's new party geared toward adults, in order to create demand for repeat visitation and increase revenues with unique (buy-up) experiences.

Cruises: Big boats turn slowly

A lot of 2023's trends continue into 2024 – most notably cruise ships getting bigger.

Cruise ship size over time

- 
 MSC Cruises
- 
 Celebrity Cruises
- 
 Norwegian Cruise Line
- 
 Princess Cruises
- 
 Carnival Cruise Line
- 
 Holland America
- 
 Royal Caribbean



Travelers searching for small and intimate still look to luxury

5,589



The average passenger capacity of the five biggest cruise ships currently at sea

578



The average passenger capacity of the five most notable new luxury ships of 2023

10:1



The size ratio between the biggest ships and the newest luxury ships

New in cruising: Cruise lines are adding more private beach escapes

Cruise lines are investing hundreds of millions of dollars to create new private island and beach destinations that will soon spice up itineraries. Private island and beach destinations are often the highest-rated component of any cruise.

LINE	PROJECT	LOCATION	OPENING
Royal Caribbean	Hideaway Beach*	Bahamas	2024
Disney Cruise Line	Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point	Bahamas	2024
Carnival Cruise Line	Celebration Key	Bahamas	2025
Royal Caribbean	Perfect Day at Lelepa	Vanuatu	TBD

*An expansion of Royal Caribbean's existing Perfect Day at CocoCay private island destination in the Bahamas





**Where
travelers
are staying**

Hotels are investing in residential-style accommodations

Hotel companies are pushing further into the residential market. The last year saw a mix of new brands and expansions into more condo projects tethered to hotels or even stand-alone residential projects.

Marriott and Hyatt both announced new brands aimed toward luxury travelers: Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy and Homes & Hideaways by World of Hyatt. The new brands add even more hotel company competition in a segment dominated by Airbnb. They won't come with all the bells and whistles (think: meeting spaces and on-site restaurants) of luxury labels like St. Regis or Park Hyatt.

Hotel brands now in the residential rental market

NEW Apartments by Marriott Bonvoy

NEW Homes & Hideaways by World of Hyatt

Accor's Onefinestay

Mandarin Oriental Exclusive Homes

Homes & Villas by Marriott Bonvoy



Keep in mind: Attachments to a hotel brand like Marriott means these kinds of developments play by different regulations than what vacation rental providers like Airbnb and Vrbo face (and could therefore still operate in a market like New York City, which [effectively banned short-term rentals](#) in 2023).

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

Expect more announcements like this, as it also unlocks a new revenue stream by enabling unused condos in a hotel-residential development to go up for rent on the hotel company's vacation rental platform.

Some hotel chains are even pursuing stand-alone residential projects. A new condo-only Ritz-Carlton property is under construction in a skyscraper going up over Boston's South Station train hub, while Hilton announced this year that its first residential-only Waldorf Astoria, the Waldorf Astoria Residences Pompano Beach, is coming to South Florida.

Why all the hotel-branded residential love? Condo sales closing far earlier than hotel revenue starts coming in means developers can have a little bit more financial security in opening a brand in a new market. It's almost an anomaly these days to see a brand like Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, Mandarin Oriental or Waldorf Astoria open a hotel without a residential component attached.

Family-friendly hotel stays

After being apart for a year or more during the pandemic, many families are using their vacation time to reconnect with grandparents and other extended family members.

The 2023 Family Travel Survey conducted by the Family Travel Association found that more than half (55%) of the more than 3,300 parent and grandparent respondents were planning a multigenerational trip within the next 12 months (up from 47% in 2022). The survey also found that 41% of respondents were planning a vacation with family members beyond just their parents and in-laws, and 40% of respondents were planning trips with people outside their family.

55% 

were planning a multigenerational trip within the next 12 months

41% 

were planning a vacation with family members beyond just their parents and in-laws

40% 

were planning trips with people outside of their family

Regardless of who families are traveling with, group trips require more spacious accommodations and a different set of amenities than a trip for only two or three people. Hotels are meeting this need with accommodations designed specifically for larger families. Families no longer have to squeeze into a standard room with two queen beds or pay for connecting rooms at these properties.

Orlando remains one of the most popular destinations for families. Large families and groups will find a variety of family-centric accommodations.

Starting at

\$144

Two-bedroom suites at Universal's Endless Summer Resort — Dockside Inn and Suites and Universal's Endless Summer Resort — Surfside Inn and Suites

- Starting price: \$144 per night plus tax
- Size/sleeps: Sleeps six via two queen beds in one room and one queen bed in the other

Starting at

\$1,100

Family suites at JW Marriott Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort & Spa

- Starting price: \$1,100 per night plus tax (includes breakfast for two adults and two children)
- Size/sleeps: Sleeps seven via one king bed in one room, two double bunk beds in another room and two sofa beds in the living room

Starting at

\$2,000

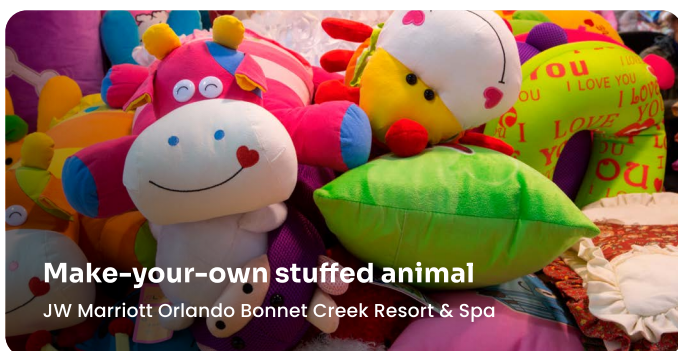
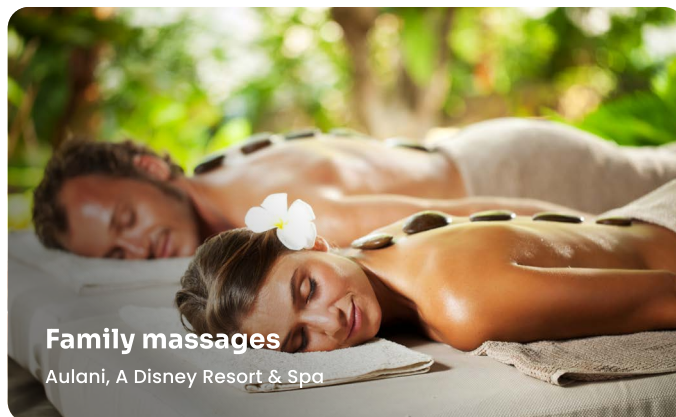
Cabins at Copper Creek Villas & Cabins at Disney's Wilderness Lodge

- Starting price: \$2,000 per night plus tax
- Size/sleeps: Sleeps up to eight via one king bed in one room, one queen bed and one pull-down bed in another room and one queen-size sleeper sofa and one twin-size sleeper chair in the living room

Even if you aren't planning a theme park vacation, you'll find family-friendly accommodations across the country for any type of trip. The Resort at Paws Up has luxury glamping accommodations and cabins in Montana's pristine wilderness with up to three bedrooms. If your family prefers tropical sea breezes to crisp mountain air, Grand Cayman's Kimpton Seafire Resort + Spa has family suites with one or two bedrooms, two or three full bathrooms and a balcony that overlooks the ocean.

These types of resorts cater to families and don't stop at extra beds and more square footage. They also offer amenities and activities that foster family fun and togetherness.

Examples of family-friendly programming available at some resorts:



What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

We expect this trend to continue to grow. The recently-opened Evermore Resort in Orlando has villas and vacation homes with up to 11 bedrooms, and there are more projects in the pipeline such as the much-anticipated Conrad Orlando. Not to mention, there's a noticeable uptick in hotel brands like Marriott, Accor, Hyatt and Mandarin Oriental getting into home rentals.

Tech upgrades

Hotels, along with the real estate market, aren't exactly known for being tech-forward, but recent labor shortages have hoteliers investing in tech-driven solutions out of necessity.

Mobile check-in and checkout are now the norm, as are digital concierge services – both replacing reception-area employees. Wyndham rolled out a mobile tipping feature touted as a way for customers in an increasingly cashless society to still leave a few bucks for a housekeeper. The service was pitched to hotel owners as a way to give more money to hotel workers without actually raising wages.

Anticipate more technology plays down the line. Artificial intelligence is still several years away from making a noticeable impact on the guest experience, Hilton CEO Christopher Nassetta said at a travel conference in 2023. But how will that look when it does roll out? Expect hotel companies to have a way to offer hyper-personalization at a widespread scale thanks to AI. With the help of AI, perhaps you'll avoid getting the dreaded "all our staff is currently busy" notice when pinging your digital concierge at a fancy hotel.

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

Given all the technology oversight ramping up, what can travelers expect?

If hotel companies start discerning customer behavior data more and more, it could lead to a shift in loyalty programs rewarding overall spending instead of its current "heads in beds" model where nights stayed fuels your trajectory to higher loyalty status.



How travelers are getting there

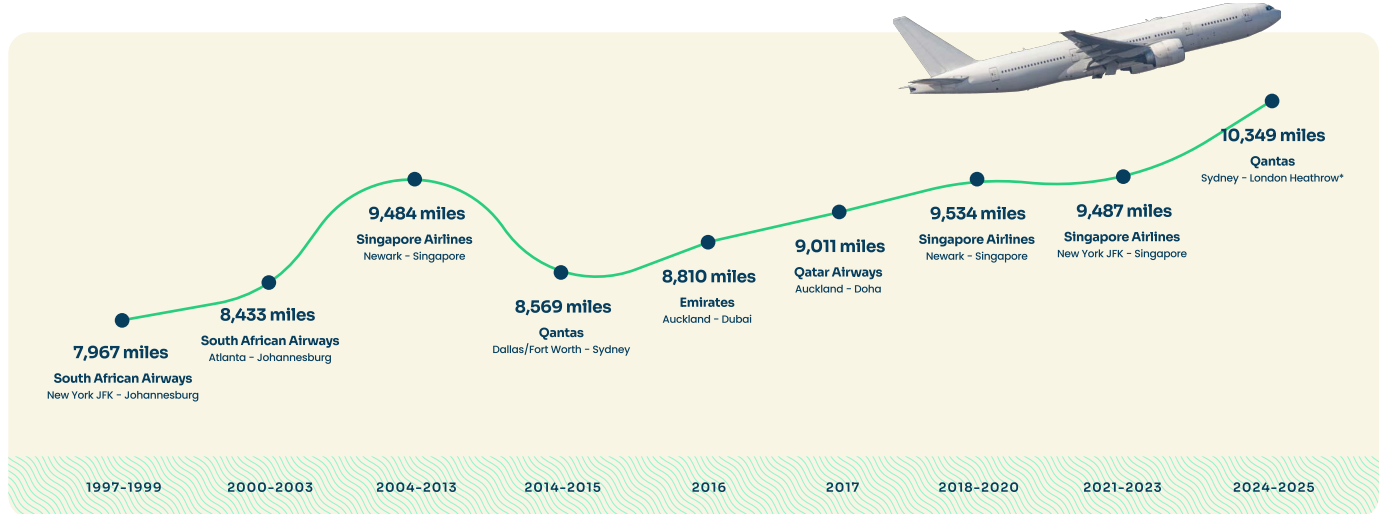
Super-haul flights

“Long-haul” flying isn’t new. Airlines have been flying long overseas routes for decades, but carriers have been pushing the limits of what’s possible as new plane technology enables ever-longer flights.

Airlines have introduced some routes in recent years that are so long that “long-haul” no longer seems to do them justice.

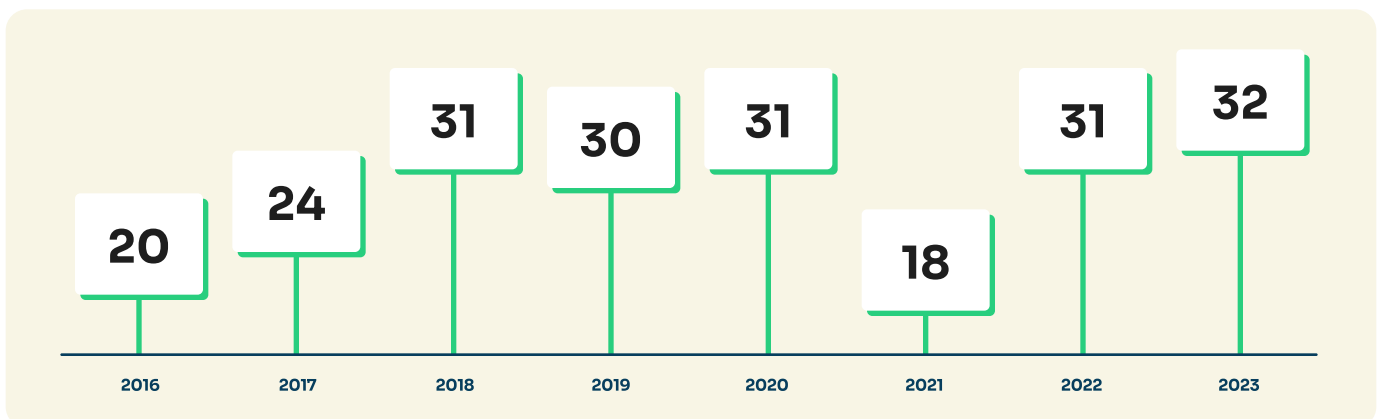
Whereas the longest regular flight in 2003 — from Atlanta to Johannesburg, operated by South African Airways — was 8,439 miles, there are currently 14 nonstop routes being operated around the globe that are the same distance or longer. The current title holder of the world’s longest flight is Singapore Airlines’ route from New York to Singapore, which covers 9,487 miles, according to Cirium. Flight times already can push 19 hours on some routes — and even-longer flights are expected to come by the end of next year.

Longest flight by years



*Expected to launch by the end of 2025 | Data: Cirium, OAG

Routes over 8,000 miles



Data: Cirium

Longest routes by year

2016	8,527 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auckland-Dubai: 8,810 miles (Emirates) 2. Dallas/Fort Worth-Sydney: 8,569 miles (Qantas) 3. San Francisco-Singapore: 8,440 miles (Singapore Airlines and United) 4. Atlanta-Johannesburg: 8,433 miles (Delta) 5. Los Angeles-Abu Dhabi: 8,385 miles (Etihad)
2017	8,717 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auckland-Doha: 9,011 miles (Qatar Airways) 2. Auckland-Dubai: 8,810 miles (Emirates) 3. Los Angeles-Singapore: 8,758 miles (United Airlines) 4. Dallas/Fort Worth-Sydney: 8,569 miles (Qantas) 5. San Francisco-Singapore: 8,440 miles (Singapore Airlines and United)
2018	9,010 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newark-Singapore: 9,484 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Auckland-Doha: 9,011 miles (Qatar Airways) 3. London Heathrow-Perth: 8,988 miles (Qantas) 4. Auckland-Dubai: 8,810 miles (Emirates) 5. Los Angeles-Singapore: 8,758 miles (United Airlines and Singapore Airlines)
2019	9,010 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newark-Singapore: 9,484 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Auckland-Doha: 9,011 miles (Qatar Airways) 3. London Heathrow-Perth: 8,988 miles (Qantas) 4. Auckland-Dubai: 8,810 miles (Emirates) 5. Los Angeles-Singapore: 8,758 miles (Singapore Airlines)
2020	9,156 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New York JFK-Singapore: 9,487 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Newark-Singapore: 9,484 miles (Singapore Airlines) 3. Auckland-Doha: 9,011 miles (Qatar Airways) 4. London Heathrow-Perth: 8,988 miles (Qantas) 5. Auckland-Dubai: 8,810 miles (Emirates)
2021	8,812 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New York JFK-Singapore: 9,487 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Los Angeles-Singapore: 8,758 miles (Singapore Airlines) 3. San Francisco-Bangalore: 8,691 miles (Air India) 4. London Heathrow-Darwin, Australia: 8,611 miles (Qantas) 5. New York JFK-Manila: 8,513 miles (Philippine Airlines)
2022	9,149 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New York JFK-Singapore: 9,487 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Newark-Singapore: 9,484 miles (Singapore Airlines) 3. London Heathrow-Perth: 8,988 miles (Qantas) 4. Dallas/Fort Worth-Melbourne, Australia: 8,973 (Qantas) 5. New York JFK-Auckland: 8,813 (Air New Zealand)
2023	9,188 miles AVERAGE OF 5 LONGEST ROUTES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New York JFK-Singapore: 9,487 miles (Singapore Airlines) 2. Newark-Singapore: 9,484 miles (Singapore Airlines) 3. Auckland-Doha: 9,011 miles (Qatar Airways) 4. London Heathrow-Perth: 8,988 miles (Qantas) 5. Dallas/Fort Worth-Melbourne, Australia: 8,973 (Qantas)

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

By late 2025, Qantas expects to add the first regularly scheduled nonstop flights connecting Sydney to New York and London. The London route would check in at a whopping 10,349 miles — a “super-haul” flight by just about anyone’s definition.

Nontraditional carriers

Move over, “Big Four.” A slew of nontraditional airlines are looking to take a big slice of the pie for U.S. travel.

Sure, this was on our trend list last year, but it's back again as these carriers double down on their momentum from 2023.

At the head of the list are startups Avelo Airlines and Breeze Airways, which will both mark their third year of operation in 2024. Each has grown dramatically since launching in the spring of 2021. They've added new focus cities and dozens of new routes—something that will continue in the year ahead.

But it's not just the new guys. Sun Country Airlines is getting increasingly aggressive in battling Delta Air Lines for leisure flyers out west, while ultra-low-cost stalwarts Spirit Airlines, Frontier Airlines and Allegiant Air look to stay in growth mode – even as the budget sector faces some possible headwinds in 2024.

Destinations served by airline

Airline	Jan. 22	Jan. 23	Jan. 24
Avelo	19	33	43
Breeze	16	29	39
Spirit	81	89	86
Sun Country	46	47	57
Allegiant	128	124	122
Frontier	108	93	82

Source: Cirium



The great US airport makeover

It's been nearly a decade since then-Vice President Joe Biden used “third world” to describe the state of New York’s LaGuardia Airport (LGA).

He wasn't wrong, but my, how times have changed.

Fresh off total rebuilds of terminals B and C, LaGuardia now ranks among the nicest U.S. airports – and it has plenty of company in terms of jaw-dropping new facilities.

These days, travelers across the U.S. are more likely than ever to find themselves flying out of new airport terminals, bringing a massive upgrade to the passenger experience compared to the old terminals that these new ones replace.

SLC – Salt Lake City International Airport

The Utah airport already debuted a brand-new terminal during the pandemic. Its latest expansion, slated to open in fall 2024, will bring additional gates and a much-needed new central tunnel connector.

DEN – Denver International Airport

Denver’s major modernization project is underway with upgraded and expanded gate areas already online in all three concourses. Next, a Great Hall upgrade will bring streamlined security checkpoints and more.

LAX – Los Angeles International Airport

The airport is in the midst of what many would describe a complete facelift. From an all-new people mover to shiny new terminals to airside connectors, the airport is getting better than ever.

EWR – Newark Liberty International Airport

Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) – long a poster child for rundown airports – now has a gleaming new Terminal A, with work underway on upgrades to the two other existing terminals.

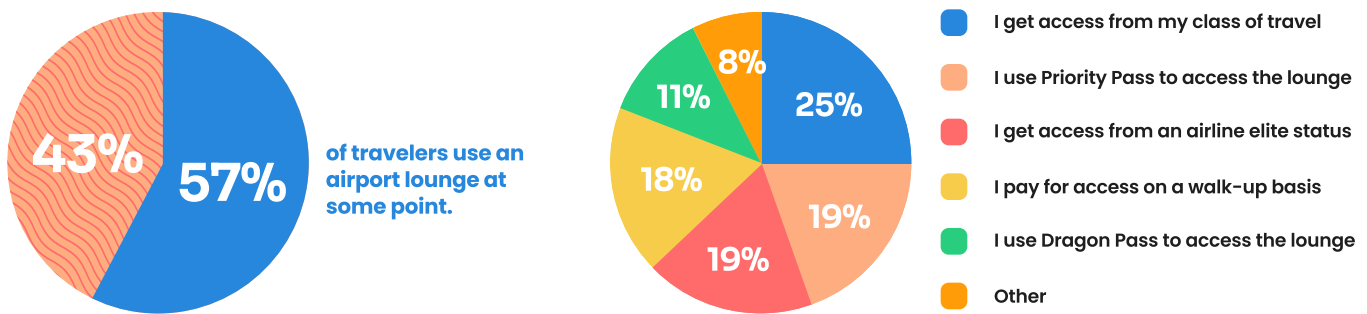
MCI – Kansas City International Airport

But perhaps none is more notable than Kansas City International Airport (MCI), where a stunning new terminal opened its doors in 2023 – replacing the woefully cramped and outdated version that came before it.



And the great U.S. airport makeover isn’t done yet. Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT), Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL), George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) are among other major airports set for major makeovers in the coming years—cementing the broader trend.

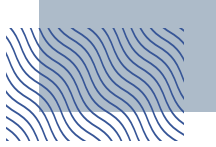
Airlines and card issuers attempt to curb lounge overcrowding



(Graph according to Airport Dimensions’ new Airport Experience Research via [PAX Magazine](#))

With the growing demand for airport lounge access, airlines and credit card issuers – which provide entry to some travelers with the right status or card – are implementing new rules seemingly aimed at combating overcrowding. Airlines and issuer-specific lounges have not only increased fees, but some are limiting the number of guests you can bring into the lounge, as well as restricting the number of visits per calendar year. Additionally, airlines such as Delta are experimenting with “grab-and-go” areas in their lounges for quick entry and exit.

Examples:



The Platinum Card® from American Express:

As of Feb. 1, 2023, cardholders are no longer able to bring two guests into the Centurion Lounge at no additional cost unless you spend \$75,000 or more each calendar year on your card. For each additional adult guest, you'll need to pay \$50 — or \$30 for each child (ages 2 through 17).



Delta Sky Club lounges:

Starting Feb. 1, 2025, those with the Delta SkyMiles® Reserve American Express Card and the Delta SkyMiles® Reserve Business American Express Card will get 15 visits to Sky Clubs per calendar year. They will be able to buy Sky Club passes for \$50 a day after they have used their visits.

American Express Platinum cardholders will receive 10 visits per year.

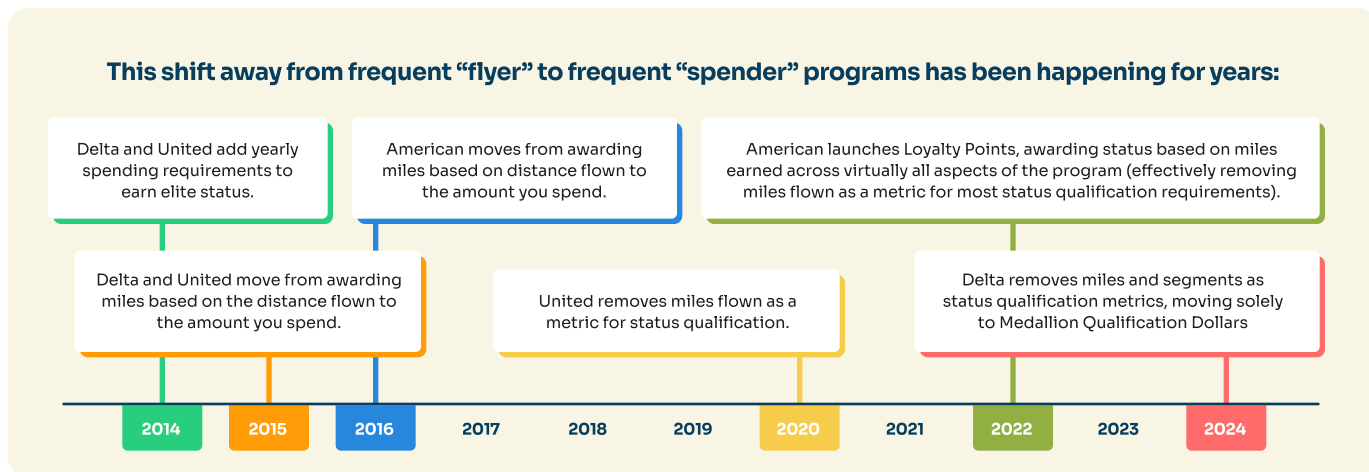
Delta opened two grab-and-go areas in the Sky Clubs at JFK and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) in May.

"Often enough, we see that people are going in the lounge, using the bathroom, grabbing a cup of coffee, grabbing a fruit and coming out," Delta's managing director for Sky Clubs, Claude Roussel, told TPG. "So this will give them the opportunity to just get what they want."

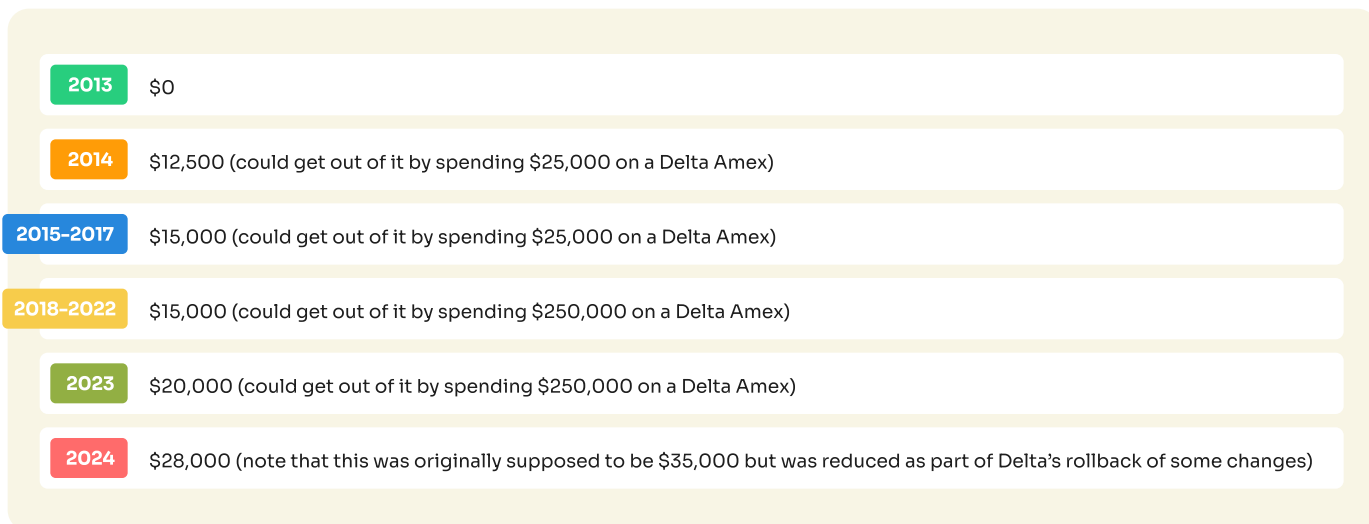


Airline frequent ~~flyer~~ spending programs

We've reached the end of an era for major airline loyalty programs. By mid-2024, the three legacy U.S. carriers — American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines — will no longer use how much you actually fly to determine your elite status. Instead, it's all about how much you spend.



Delta, in particular, is a stark example of how important spending has become. Here's a chart that shows how the minimum amount you need to spend on tickets in a qualification year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31) to earn top-tier Diamond Medallion status has increased since 2013.



A similar refrain often accompanies changes like this: “When everyone’s elite, no one’s elite.” Nevertheless, the ranks of “elite” travelers will look more and more like those with big pockets in 2024.

AI chatbots in loyalty

Throughout 2023, we saw advancements in technology lead to interesting new products, tools and features throughout the travel industry (service robots in airport lounges, anyone?). This has also paved the way for increased chatbot functionality when booking your flights. Generative AI chatbots can analyze passenger data and preferences to upsell promotions and flight offers.

Is the use of AI making for a more personal experience? There's an argument to be made in favor of AI. Customers are now able to request refunds, reschedule flights and add additional services through a faster process. Therefore, this function can help to strengthen a customer's relationship with one airline, increasing customer loyalty.

But, as always, there are downsides to less human interaction within customer service. Frontier Airlines adopted a messaging platform to replace its customer service call line. Customers have voiced their concerns (via [USA Today](#)) when it comes to dealing with the automated chatbot, with one Frontier frequent flyer expressing that her loyalty with the airline was tarnished by the new chatbot process. She is planning to fly with other airlines in the future.

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

However, with a technologically driven society, it's likely that airlines will continue to experiment with AI as a way to analyze customer data to upsell their products, as well as cut labor costs to increase profits.



How travelers are paying

Cards are getting more expensive

Credit card companies charged consumers \$130 billion in interest and fees in 2022, according to a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau report. This follows the trajectory of rising annual percentage rates and general credit card debt, which reached a record high of \$1 trillion in 2022. A portion of that \$130 billion figure was late fees alone, which totaled \$14.5 billion (an \$11.3 billion increase from 2021).

Among the rising fees we're seeing across the board, annual fees are increasing on specific cards. These include:

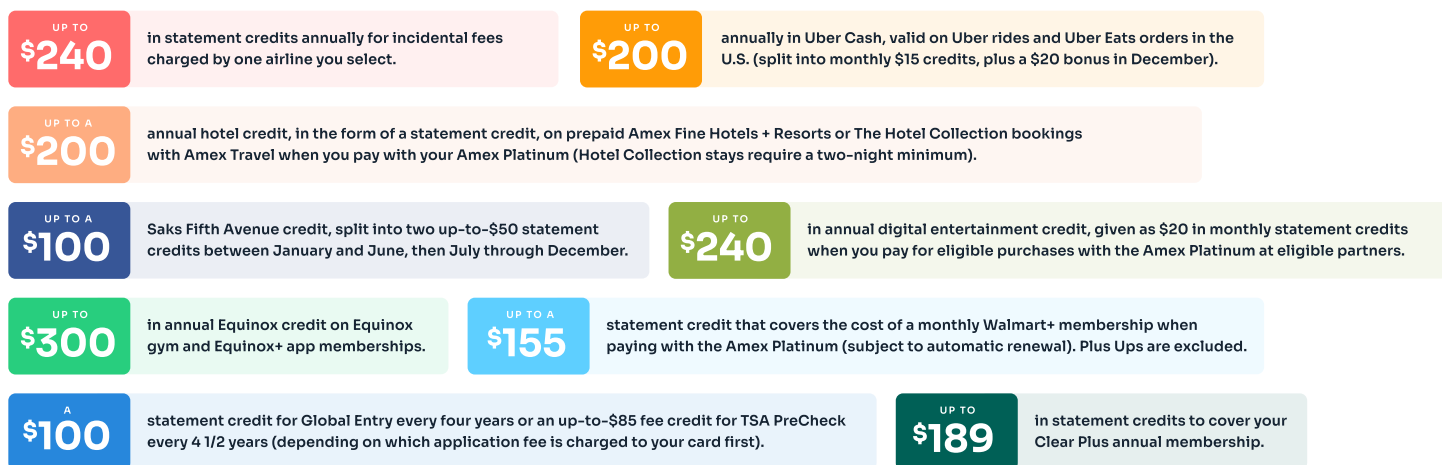
- Citi® / AAdvantage® Executive World Elite Mastercard®: The annual fee increased from \$450 to \$595. In addition to this \$145 increase, cardholders must now pay \$175 for the first three authorized users and \$175 apiece after that.
- The Platinum Card® from American Express: In 2021, American Express raised the annual fee for the Platinum card from \$550 to \$695. Then, in 2023, authorized user fees for additional Platinum cards also increased; previously, Amex offered three additional Platinum cards for \$175 and then \$175 for each additional Platinum card after that. The authorized user fee for additional Platinum cards is now \$195 per card.
- Hilton Honors American Express Surpass® Card: As of October 2023, the annual fee for this credit card is \$150. This is a \$55 increase from the previous fee of \$95 per year.
- Hilton Honors American Express Aspire Card: This credit card raised its annual fee in October 2023 from \$450 to \$550.
- American Express® Business Gold Card: The annual fee for this card will increase from \$295 to \$375 on Feb. 1, 2024.
- Alaska Airlines cards issued by Bank of America: The personal card increased from \$75 to \$95, and the business version from \$50 to \$70 (plus \$25 for each cardholder) in February 2023.

Credit card or coupon card?

We've seen a continuation of the "couponization" of statement credits.

In previous years, we saw the introduction of broad-category or multiple-merchant statement credits, like [The Platinum Card from American Express'](#) \$20 monthly digital entertainment statement credit — to be used with any of seven merchants, including Disney+ and The New York Times.

Breakdown of statement credits on the Amex Platinum



In 2023, we saw issuers introduce more merchant-specific statement credits, often with stricter restrictions. Following a card refresh in the second half of the year, those with the Hilton Honors American Express Surpass Card now receive up to \$200 in annual Hilton statement credits — but it is broken up into \$50 quarterly chunks to encourage frequent stays at Hilton properties.

Similarly, the Citi / AAdvantage Executive World Elite Mastercard was refreshed with three new statement credits, one of which is a \$10 Lyft credit each month — but you have to take three eligible rides each month to receive this credit.

What this means for travelers in 2024 ←

In 2024, we predict that card issuers will continue to offer new statement credits with specific partners. The dual aims of this trend are to encourage cardholders to spend with partners and also — perhaps paradoxically — to increase “breakage,” which is the revenue raised by issuers based on credits that go unclaimed.





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