

July / August 2026 Insights from Destinations International and U.S. Travel Association Annual Meetings

AI is changing travel discovery faster than expected.

Google's AI products now reach billions of users each month, and the company is testing hotel bookings directly within AI-powered search. At the same time, several organizations reported steep declines in traditional website traffic, reinforcing that destination marketing is entering a new era.

AI planning has become mainstream.

Seven in 10 Millennials and Gen Z travelers now use AI to plan or book trips, according to MMGY. Even Gen X is close behind at six in 10.

Destination marketing success metrics may need to change.

One of the most thought-provoking discussions centered on what happens when AI becomes the primary travel advisor. If travelers book directly through AI, traditional website visits, search traffic and even attribution models become less meaningful.

Travel demographics continue to evolve.

The Hispanic and Latino travel market is now estimated at \$4.4 trillion and continues to grow rapidly. Asian American and Black leisure travel are also expanding at more than 30%, highlighting the importance of reaching increasingly diverse audiences.

Younger travelers are redefining vacations.

Millennials and Gen Z increasingly favor shorter, more frequent trips, and younger adults are often traveling in groups, sharing larger vacation rentals to keep costs down.

International travel patterns are shifting.

While Canadian visitation remains soft, several Latin American markets are showing strong momentum. American Airlines highlighted growing demand from Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Ecuador, with travel from Latin America proving less seasonal than Europe.

Business meetings are making a strong comeback.

More than half of executives surveyed by U.S. Travel expect to hold more in-person meetings over the next two years. The research found leaders value meetings for business outcomes and career development, with cost no longer viewed as the primary barrier.

Wellness is becoming a defining luxury travel trend.

Industry leaders pointed to health, wellness and longevity experiences as one of the fastest-growing segments in luxury travel, fueled in part by a historic transfer of wealth to younger generations.