

Travel Report 2023

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UNiDAYS 2023 Travel Report

Contents.

03 Intro

04 Affordable but
high-end travel

05 Safety is priority

06 Gen Z are planners,
not impulsive travellers

07 Students value tech
that removes the
hassle

08 Your one-way ticket
to Gen Z's favour

10 Appendix



Intro.

The travel industry is bouncing back

It's been a gruelling few years but the travel industry is bouncing back. The global tourism sector **grew by 41%**¹ in 2022 over 2021, with further growth projected for 2023.

Out of survival mode, it's time for travel brands to take notice of Gen Z — a key **demographic**² for future growth. Gen Zers are ready to roam, be it a local escape or a global odyssey. That's according to our latest research. **We surveyed 4,395 student members across the USA, UK and Australia to understand Gen Z's travel purchasing trends and demands. It revealed:**

Zero

Not one student across the UK, US and Australia said they were NOT planning to travel

2 in 3

Are actively planning to travel for a holiday this year

1 in 3

Are considering it



Cost of living looms large, with 2 out of 3 student vacationers predicting it'll impact their 2023 travel plans. They're not spending less on travel — 43% plan to spend the same in 2023 compared to last year.

Still, they're **prioritising price**. Yet students aren't compromising on what they truly desire from a vacation. Discover their unique preferences to tailor packages and experiences that are both affordable and attractive.

Gen Z wants affordable but high-end travel experiences

81% of students say **good value for money** is the most important factor when booking a vacation. And most students are paying for their holidays out of their own pocket, either through their jobs or savings. It's why most are sticking to one-week holidays rather than taking longer trips. Every penny counts.

'Good value for money' isn't necessarily a discounted offer for a budget destination. We've got to ditch the idea that all student travellers are broke backpackers wearing ripped jeans. Sure, there's a market for cheap travel, but Gen Z's appetite for high-end holidays is ever-increasing — a **PYMNTS luxury travel study**³ found that nearly half (47%) of Gen Z took at least one luxury vacation in 2019. Our **research**⁴ has also repeatedly shown that students dig quality.

One way Gen Z affords high-end holidays is by supplementing them with cheap flights. Nearly 1 in 3 books via flight comparison sites, such as Skyscanner or Google Flights, to get the best deals. They also split costs with their friends or family: most students typically vacation with their parents or partner.

Payment flexibility, so Gen Z can fund upscaled holidays, will help you attract students and build trust — **55% of Gen Z**⁵ will use a "buy now, pay later" option. And of course, discounts will impress students on a tight budget, making luxury travel more accessible.

Also remember that the travel experience actually begins before the "book" button is even pressed. As digital natives, Gen Z has a zero tolerance policy for poor user experiences. They want to secure cheap travel without having to jump through a million hoops. So, make sure that the entire travel experience — from the first click to the last — is slicker than Harry Styles in a sequined jumpsuit performing 'Watermelon Sugar' on a moonlit beach.

81%

Of students say good value for money is the most important factor

1 in 3

Book via flight comparison sites

55%

Will use a Buy Now Pay Later option

Safety is a priority, but not at the expense of adventure

Safety is important to almost half of students (44%). Which tallies with [research from Edelman](#)⁶: seven in 10 Gen Z respondents make safety and security the top priority.

That doesn't mean students are satisfied with resort vacations. According to [Collage Group](#)⁷, more than half (57%) of Gen Z agrees that a vacation should be exciting. And research from [Expedia Group Media Solutions](#)⁸ also highlighted how Gen Z ranks activities or bucket list experiences well ahead of deals, even more so than other generations.

Gen Z finds excitement in exploring uncharted territories and immersing themselves in diverse cultures. In 2020, the European Travel Commission (ETC) [found that](#)⁹ 67% of Gen Zers travel to Europe because they want to learn about urban culture, while 62% want to do cultural activities.

And in our research, just over half of students are planning to book a city break.

Appeal to Gen Z's love of excitement and need for safety by offering reassurances throughout the customer journey. Provide live (and mobile-friendly) updates on safety in target destinations that are in line with guidance from governmental sites, like GOV.UK. And create content with safety advice for adventurous travel. You could also have a page on your site dedicated to your safety credentials, like [this one](#)¹⁰ from Discover Adventure.

When it comes to interacting with Gen Z during their travels, keep in mind that they want to be independent explorers, free to chart their own course and make their own mistakes. That doesn't mean they don't appreciate a little guidance every now and then – just make sure it's on their terms. Providing them with all the information they need to make informed decisions, but never telling them what to do.



Gen Z are planners, not impulsive travellers

They're giving themselves time to save for holiday expenses, organise itineraries and plan around their work or studies:



Nearly **3 in 4** students book their vacations one to six months before they travel



Just over **1 in 10** book last minute

Are last minute bookings out? Forgiving cancellation policies will sway those willing to wing it for bigger savings.

For those who must plan ahead, they want travel brands to make their lives infinitely easier. Students love convenience, and a site like Booking.com appeals with the option to organise the entire trip from one platform. They'd also **seriously consider**¹¹ using online travel agencies (OTAs) to save time and money without sacrificing quality or convenience.

Travel companies that help students plan their holidays will stand out with personalised communications. According to [European Travel Commission](#), 37% of Gen Zs are more likely to book a flight from travel brands or agents after receiving a personalised notification.

Students also value technology that removes the hassle:

3 in 4

Students use services or tools to make their vacations easier

41%

Consult TripAdvisor

1 in 3

Will use a physical or digital version of a guide book to assist them with their travels

Build loyalty with user-friendly apps that make travelling as chill as an afternoon sunning by the pool. Like a personalised itinerary planner that creates an individualised travel schedule for each user based on their preferences, budget and travel style.

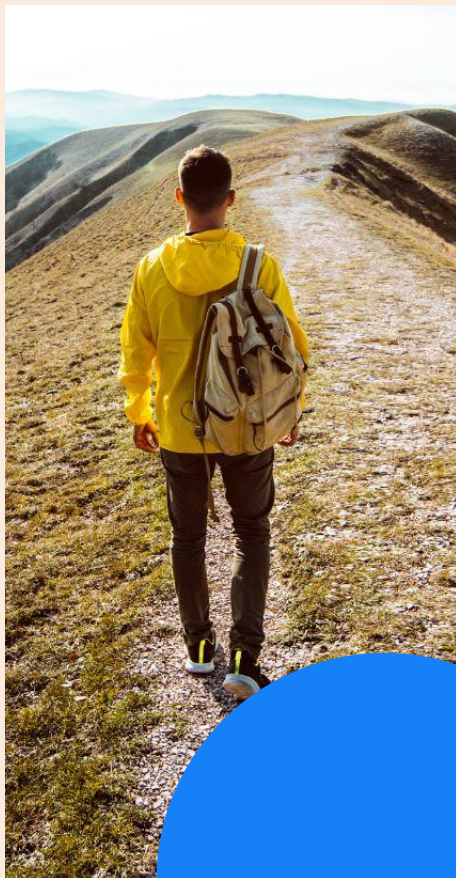
Your one-way ticket to Gen Z's favour

Gen Z, which represents **40% of the total consumer base¹²**, is set on travelling in 2023.

Targeting them is a no-brainer. But to make your travel brand stand out, you need to find unique and compelling ways to appeal to Gen Z's preferences and values.

Remember, Gen Z:

- 1 Values top-notch travel experiences with affordable or flexible pricing.
- 2 Desires safety guidance, while still having enough freedom and independence to keep their adventures thrilling.
- 3 Would rather plan a trip in advance than book last minute.
- 4 Love travel brands that simplify their lives while planning a trip.
- 5 Love technology that creates organisational bliss.



Keep these takeaways in mind as you charge into 2023. They'll help you provide more value, build trust and credibility, and craft campaigns and brand experiences that make a big splash with Gen Z.

Get in front of Gen Z

There are 28M **UNiDAYS** members across the globe. Talk to us if you'd like to get your fashion brand in front of them.

Get in touch

Discover the power of the **UNiDAYS** Marketplace

[Learn more](#)

Make student verification a breeze

[Learn more](#)



Appendix

01 [Statistica, 2023](#)

02 [Bloomberg UK, 2021](#)

03 [PYMNTS, 2019](#)

04 [UNiDAYS, 2022](#)

05 [Insider Intelligence, 2022](#)

06 [Edelman](#)

07 [Collage Group, 2022](#)

08 [Business Wire, 2018](#)

09 [European Travel Commission, 2020](#)

10 [Discover Adventure, 2023](#)

11 [UNiDAYS, 2021](#)
