

expedia group™

Traveler Value Index



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A message to our travel partners



At Expedia Group we believe travel is a force for good. This was true before the global shut down of travel in 2020 and remains even more true today. Our hope is to use the lessons learned during this time of adversity to generate opportunity for the whole global travel ecosystem.

This is why we created the Traveler Value Index, new research to understand the impact of the pandemic on traveler behavior and how COVID-19 will continue to influence booking decisions. More importantly, we examine ways you, our partner, can adapt to the new world of travel.

The Traveler Value Index reinforces what we've learned about new expectations on health and safety while pointing towards more industry transformations. For

example, travelers are putting more emphasis on values-based booking decisions, like seeking accommodations that share their views on inclusivity and sustainability. And we've found that people are so eager to travel that more than a third would swap a salary increase for more vacation days.

We hope this research helps you adapt to these new traveler preferences, and enables you to capture post-pandemic demand.

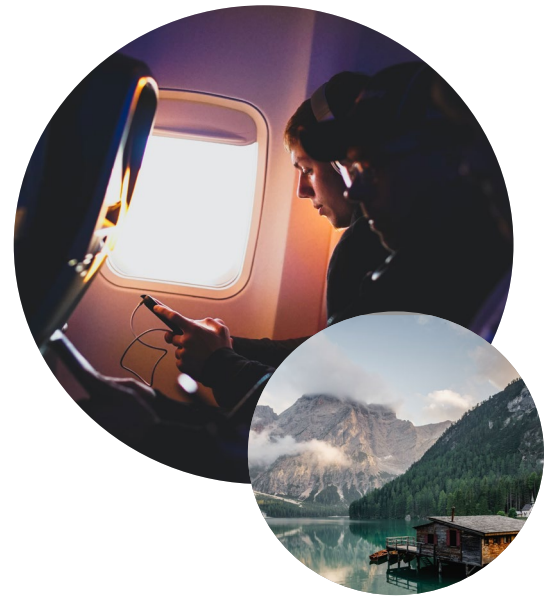
We travel for many reasons – exploring our history at museums, sampling new foods in an outdoor market, holding a newborn family member for the first time, and many more. Ultimately, we travel to connect with our humanity. After a year of constant change, we are thrilled to work with you to help our shared customers rediscover the world, reconnect with the people that matter most, and rebuild a brighter future, together.

Thank you,
Ariane



What travelers value in 2021

Are people willing to trade a pay raise for more vacation days? Our latest research reveals that more than a third (36%) of travelers would jump at the chance for more time off to live out their vacation dreams post-COVID-19. In fact, nearly three-quarters (72%) say they plan to take a trip in the next 12 months, a surge of optimism welcomed among the community of global travel professionals.



More than a third of people would trade a pay raise for more vacation days.



While industry recovery gains traction in many parts of the world, it's important to reflect on the changes that will define traveler mindsets and shape decision-making in this new reality. Predictable and expected behaviors — from shopping and education to work and travel — were altered by the pandemic.

For the industry, it is critical to meet evolving traveler expectations to capitalize on pent-up demand in the wake of the pandemic. We created the Traveler Value Index to better understand how COVID-19 continues to influence traveler decisions and find out what people are seeking when booking travel. The research uncovered some novel and surprising findings, signaling industry transformation is on the horizon.

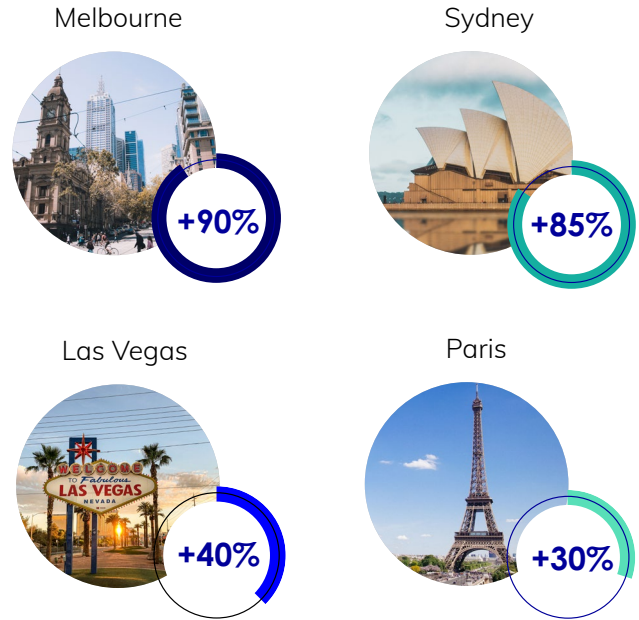
Conducted in partnership with Wakefield Research, this research included a global consumer survey of 8,000 respondents from eight major markets: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Promising signals

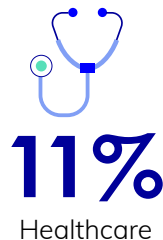
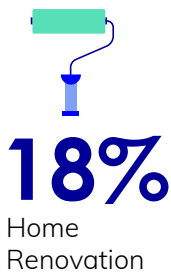
Before diving into specifics on traveler value and the post-pandemic mindset, it is worth reviewing the promising signals that will expand industry recovery in the second half of 2021.

The return of urban escapes: Vacation rentals in remote areas are surging due to the volume of domestic travel to drivable destinations. Most travelers (81%) are considering a trip to a remote area, mountain, or small town in the next 18 months.¹

However, city-centric trips are on the rise. Searches for major cities are increasing across our marketplace: Las Vegas, (+40%), Melbourne (+90%), Paris (+30%) and Sydney (+85%).²



Nearly one in five travelers expect travel to be the thing they spend the most on in 2021



Travel is the top priority: More than a third (34%) of travelers have larger travel budgets now compared to 2020. In fact, nearly one in five (18%) expect travel to be the thing they spend the most on in 2021, on par with major spending items like home renovation projects (18%) and ahead of entertainment (12%), buying or taking care of their car (11%), or healthcare (11%). People are also willing to cut back on other expenses to save more for travel.

Our previous research shows that nearly half (43%) of Americans would limit dining out or takeout and more than a third (38%) would give up alcohol to save money for travel.³

¹What Travelers Want in 2021, Expedia Group

²Expedia Group domestic and international searches from May 3 to June 14, 2021 for travel dates in from August 1 to September 30, 2021 compared to previous year; city growth compared to country growth

³2021 Travel Trends Report, Expedia Group



Nearly three-quarters are comfortable with the concept of a vaccine passport.



Vaccine passport to the world: Vaccines are key to reopening international travel corridors, and nearly three-quarters (71%) of travelers are comfortable with the concept of a vaccine passport. This is especially pronounced in the United Kingdom, where most travelers (81%) are comfortable with showing proof of vaccinations.

Finding meaning

The worldwide pause in travel spurred by the pandemic underscored the importance of being together, and further demonstrated how travel serves as a force for good.

Travel expands worldviews and deepens understanding between people and places. According to this research:



56% Of travelers say new experiences are the top benefit of travel

48% Say physical and mental wellness is the top benefit of travel

51% Strive to learn about other cultures and communities through trips

33% Use travel to become a more well-rounded person

Three-quarters of travelers are likely to select a destination they've never been to before



The year at home not only created pent-up demand for travel but also increased the desire for new experiences and places:

New places and experiences: People are ready to use travel to outside their comfort zone. Three-quarters of travelers are likely to select a destination they've never been to before — which more than half (53%) say reflects their desire for new experiences. More than half of travelers (52%) who have a trip planned are likely to take a mode of transportation they've never taken before. And, nearly a quarter (22%) are seeking once-in-a-lifetime experiences on their next trip.

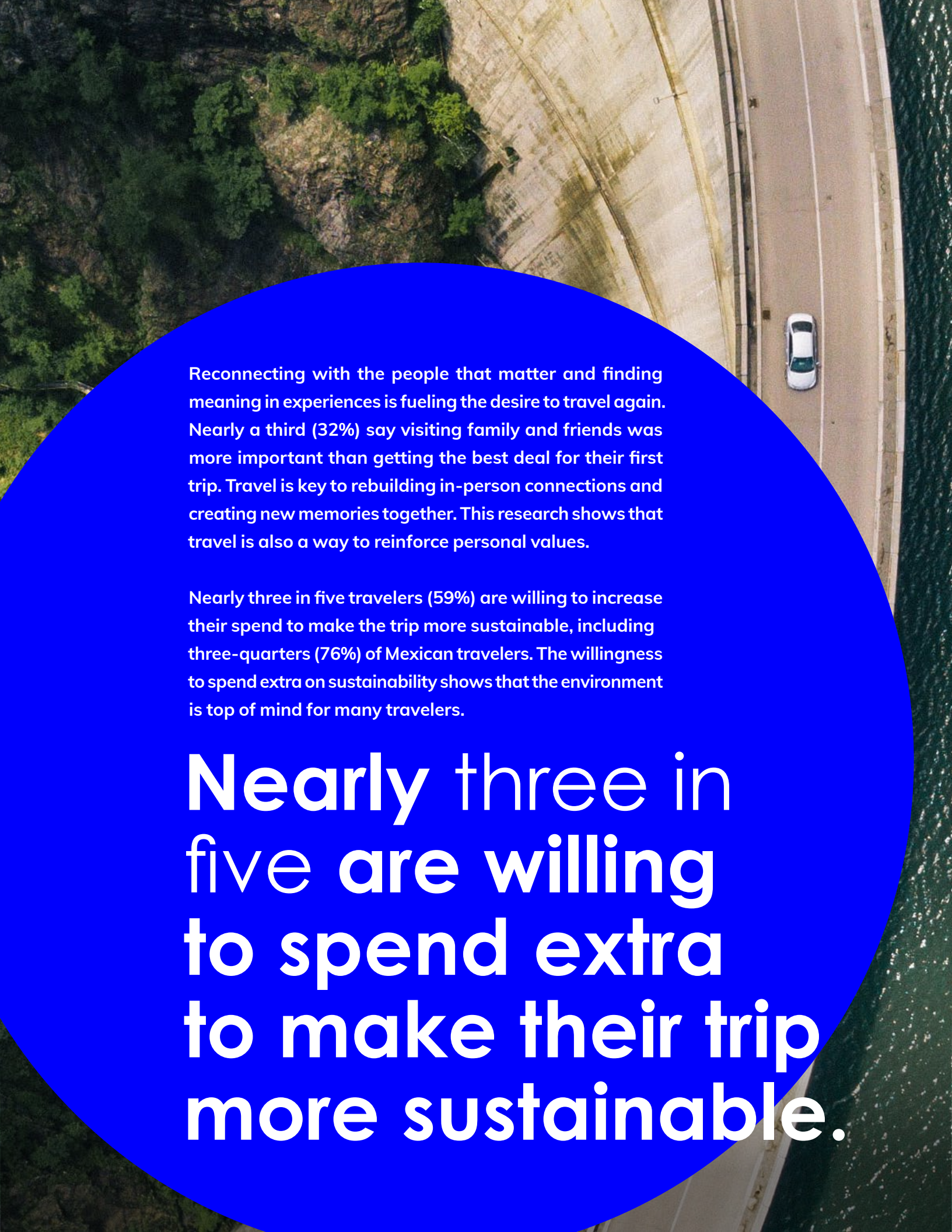
Half of travelers (50%) plan to board a plane in the next 12 months

Back to the air and sea: Half of travelers (50%) plan to board a plane in the next 12 months, while two-thirds overall prefer to drive. In fact, respondents in Australia are most eager to return to the skies and expect to travel by air at nearly the same rate as car for their next trip, at 62% and 65% respectively. One in 10 travelers say they plan to travel by cruise, a significant signal that the travel recovery is expanding. In fact, according to our data, nearly half (44%) of new cruise bookings in the US market are for 2021 departures – demonstrating that people want to cruise again as soon as possible.⁴

Booking travel on new sites: Nearly half of travelers (48%) are open to booking through sites and companies they have never used before, if they believe that the travel provider can be trusted.



44% Of new cruise bookings in the US are for 2021 departures

An aerial photograph showing a large concrete dam on the left, a road on the right with a white car driving, and a body of water on the far right. A large blue circle is overlaid on the image, containing text.

Reconnecting with the people that matter and finding meaning in experiences is fueling the desire to travel again. Nearly a third (32%) say visiting family and friends was more important than getting the best deal for their first trip. Travel is key to rebuilding in-person connections and creating new memories together. This research shows that travel is also a way to reinforce personal values.

Nearly three in five travelers (59%) are willing to increase their spend to make the trip more sustainable, including three-quarters (76%) of Mexican travelers. The willingness to spend extra on sustainability shows that the environment is top of mind for many travelers.

Nearly three in five are willing to spend extra to make their trip more sustainable.



Nearly two-thirds are more likely to book with travel providers that identify their practices as inclusive.

Nearly two-thirds of travelers (65%) are more likely to book with travel providers that identify their practices as inclusive. This includes properties that are owned by women, welcoming to the LGBTQIA+ community, or supportive of people with disabilities. This is particularly important to German travelers, where nearly three-quarters (71%) are more likely to book accommodations with inclusive policies.



How people travel is also changing. According to our research, the interest in international trips, put on hold due the pandemic, is increasing. However, quick getaways close to home remain top of mind for more travelers in the short-term.

Close to home, for now: Most travelers (60%) will opt for domestic travel for the short-term, though the outlook for international travel is improving with more than a quarter (27%) of travelers eyeing a trip to another country in the next 12 months. Our exclusive Expedia Group first-party data validates that trend, as nearly 60% of searches for domestic travel fell within the zero to 21-day search period from January to March 2021.⁵ Germans are most eager to cross the border, with nearly two in five (38%) saying they are likely to take an international trip in the next year.

60%

Of travelers will opt for domestic travel for the short-term

27%

Of travelers are eyeing a trip to another country in the next 12 months

Quick getaways: More travelers want to take frequent, shorter trips (41%), compared to those who want fewer, longer trips (28%) or a combination of shorter and longer trips (31%). Japan is a hotspot for quick getaways, where most travelers (58%) expect to take more frequent, but shorter trips.



**Travelers will look for
ways to get away
with more frequent,
shorter trips**





Traveler Value Index

We created the Traveler Value Index to better understand the impact of the pandemic on traveler behavior and help our travel partners adapt to ever-evolving traveler preferences. The inaugural Traveler Value Index examines seven values shaping how people make decisions about travel by asking respondents to rank the values across multiple travel experiences. The values include:

- 1. Ability to get a full refund**
- 2. Atypical, low pricing**
- 3. Contactless experience**
- 4. Environmentally friendly policies**
- 5. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection**
- 6. Flexible policies to change bookings**
- 7. First-class benefits and upgrades**



Across travel segments — hotels, vacation rentals, air, car rentals, and cruise — travelers now value full refunds or enhanced cleaning above all other considerations. This is a significant shift from the conventional wisdom that price drives purchasing behavior. The shift in value from price to flexibility and cleanliness is consistent across the surveyed markets, reflecting the global scope of the pandemic and the universal need to restore stability after the time of vast uncertainty.

1 in 4 travelers **most value the ability to get a full refund across all travel experiences**



Hotels

24%



Vacation Rentals

26%



Air Travel

26%



Car Rentals

23%




Cruise Travel

24%



Traveler
Traveler



#1 value to travelers: The ability to get a refund if their plans change

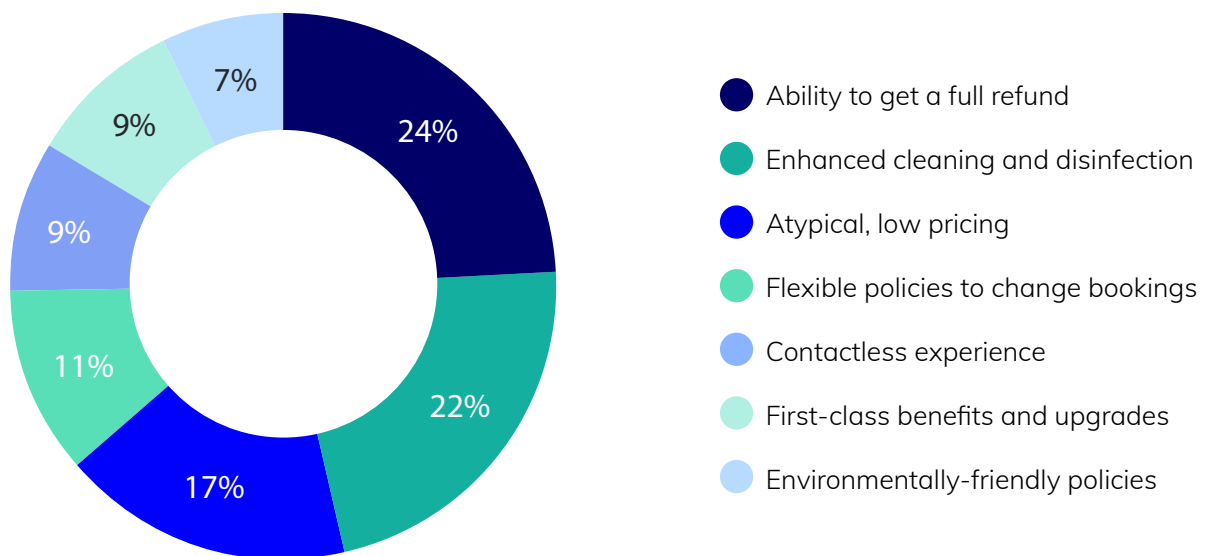
The Traveler Value Index is remarkably consistent at the global level. However, there are noteworthy differences across some demographics, including countries, age, gender, and trip type. Understanding the motivations and nuanced distinctions among types of travelers is key to attracting their business. In other words, as travelers demand more flexibility, businesses need to be flexible themselves.

Hotels: Generations split on top consideration

Above all, travelers value the ability to get a full refund on cancelled hotel bookings. However, this value varies across different generational groups. Travelers under the age of 40 in the US and Japan rank enhanced cleaning the most important, while also valuing contactless experiences and premium benefits, indicating that younger groups are less focused on price and refunds.

The lower ranking of full refunds in the US is consistent with our [What Travelers Want in 2021](#) study, which shows US travelers are more likely than others to book a non-refundable hotel room in exchange for a reduced rate.⁶

Across regions, higher shares of women select enhanced cleaning as their top value. This is particularly evident in Mexico where a third (33%) of women rank enhanced cleaning as their top value, compared to just a quarter (25%) of men.



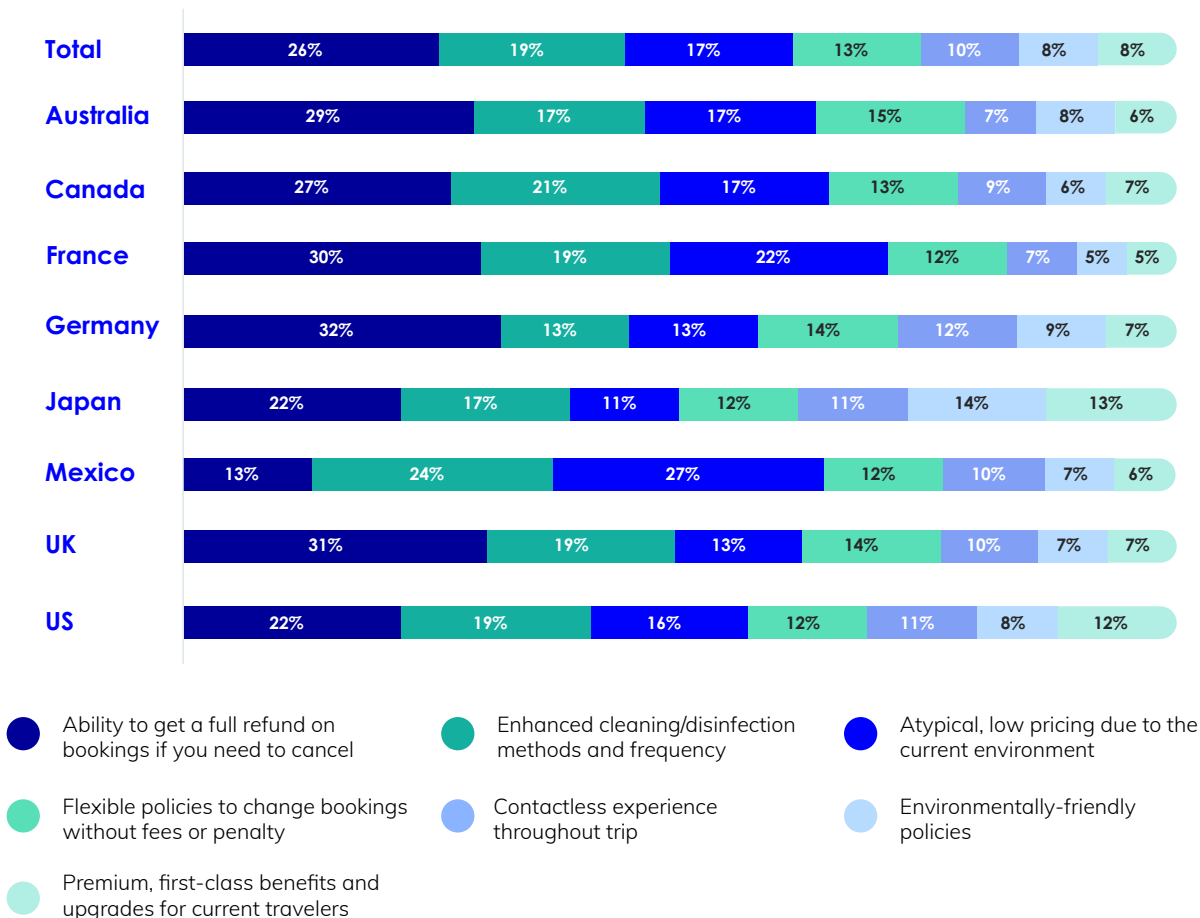
Vacation rentals: Financial security is key

The ability to get a full refund is valued by a larger margin of travelers for vacation rentals, followed by enhanced cleaning methods. Enhanced cleaning does not rank as high for vacation rentals as it does for hotels, potentially due to the perception that vacation rentals are used less and, therefore, more sanitary.

Travelers in Mexico strongly value affordable pricing for vacation rentals (27%), a trend consistent with our recent [What Travelers Want in 2021](#) research that shows travelers in Mexico are most likely to filter booking websites by price.⁷

Flexible policies that allow travelers to change their reservations without fees or penalty ranked fourth overall, but the value of flexibility tends to rise based on the number of children in the travel group. North America is the major standout, where travelers with three or more children rank flexible policies number one overall, showing how flexibility becomes a major consideration when booking family vacations.⁸

Lastly, in Japan, environmentally friendly policies rank third for vacation rentals (14%), notably higher than its sixth-place ranking across all other markets.

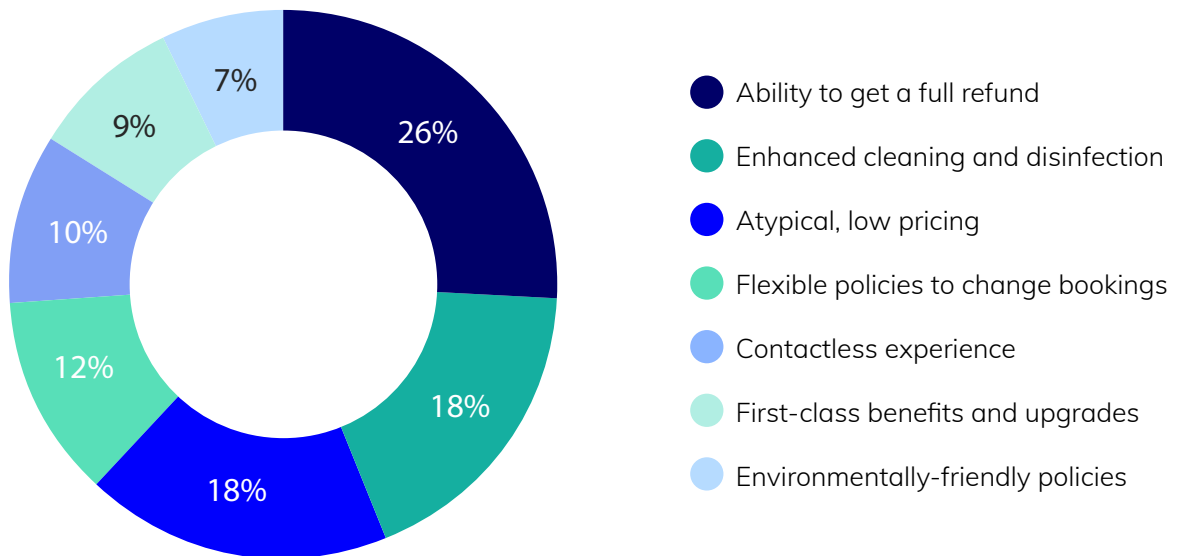


⁷ [What Travelers Want in 2021](#), Expedia Group
⁸ Small base size, findings are directional

Air: Refunds fly high

Air travelers also most value the ability to get a full refund, notably in the UK (31%) and Germany (34%). Travelers view low pricing and enhanced cleaning as being the next most important values after refunds, ranking them at the same level, with younger travelers being the exception. Millennial and Gen Z travelers love a great deal and rank low pricing ahead of enhanced cleaning.

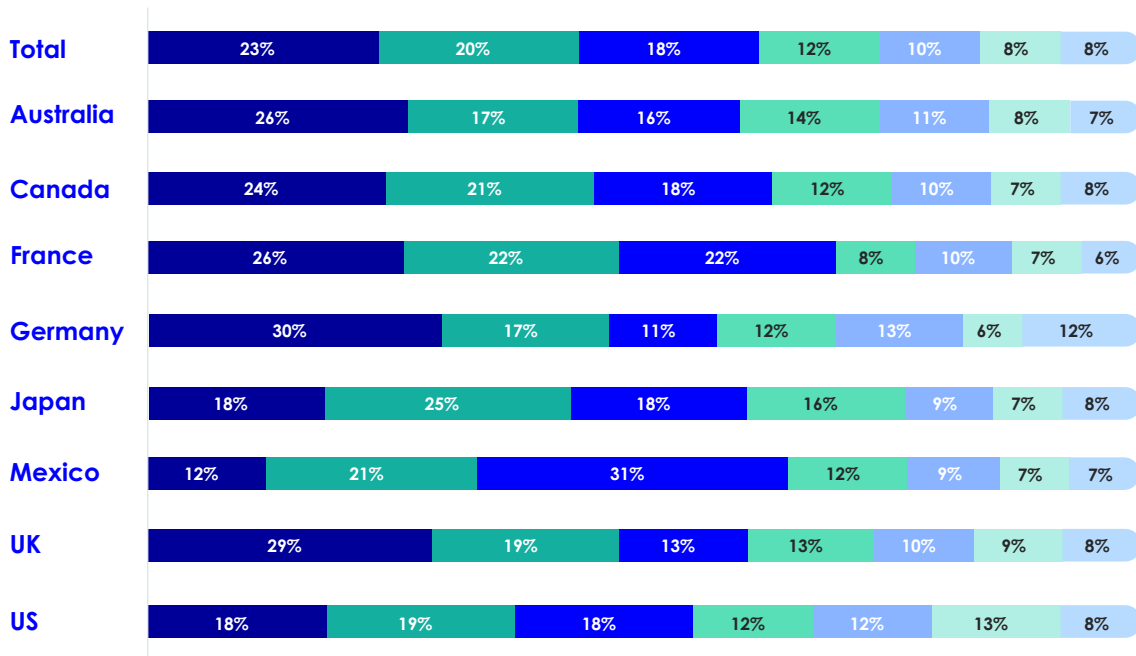
Younger generations also see more value in contactless experiences compared to older generations. This is particularly evident in the US and Canada, where there is a seven-point gap between the percentage of Gen Z respondents who rank the contactless experience as their top value compared to baby boomers.



Car rental: Flexibility over price

The ability to get a full refund is also most valued by travelers when renting cars, followed by enhanced cleaning. This is consistent with pre-pandemic traveler behavior and is possibly due to car transportation being perceived as lower risk than other methods.

Millennials in the US and Canada value flexibility, ranking the ability to make changes second. The trend of North American millennials valuing flexibility is also evident in air travel, showing how the ability to change plans without penalty is worth more than lower pricing.

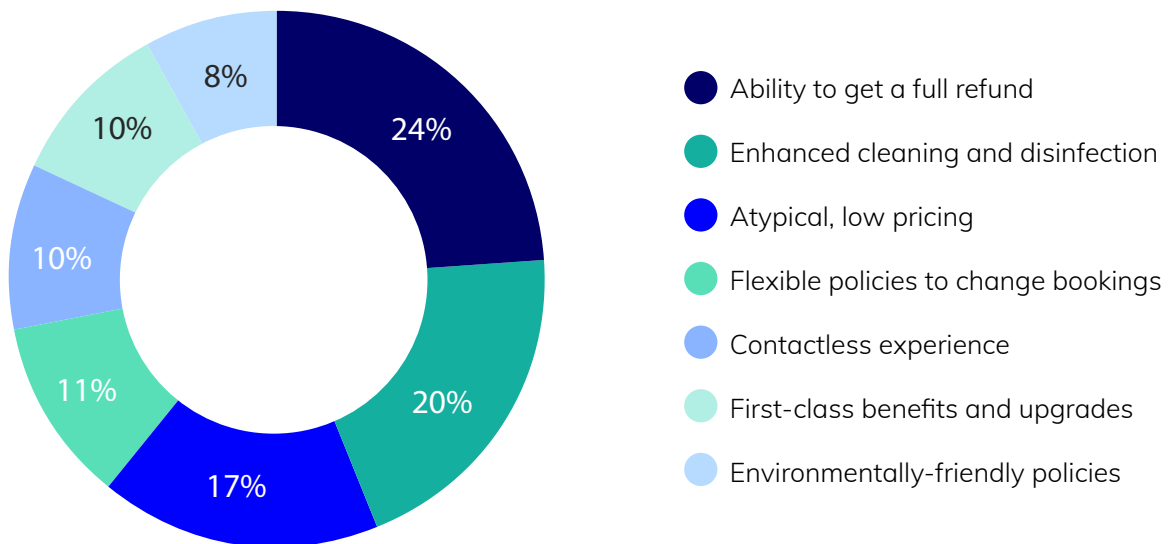


- Ability to get a full refund on bookings if you need to cancel
- Enhanced cleaning/disinfection methods and frequency
- Atypical, low pricing due to the current environment
- Flexible policies to change bookings without fees or penalty
- Contactless experience throughout trip
- Premium, first-class benefits and upgrades for current travelers
- Environmentally-friendly policies

Cruises: The environment is top of mind for younger travelers

Cruise travel is the only segment where respondents from numerous countries rank low pricing as the top value. Both France and Mexico value it above all else, showing that they want to see lower-than-normal pricing when booking cruises. However, in large cruise markets like the US and Canada, travelers most value the ability to get a full refund.

Older generations, especially baby boomers, are more attracted to the ability to get a full refund and enhanced cleaning than younger travelers. While younger generations also rank these highly, they also see value in environmentally friendly policies. Most notably, Gen Z travelers in North America rank environmentally friendly policies second, showing that younger age groups consider the environmental impact of cruise trips.



Delivering on promises

Building trust early and quickly with travelers is key to converting their interest into a reservation. When booking trips in the next year, more than half of travelers (53%) want to trust that the provider will deliver on their promises.

When booking trips in the next year, more than half of travelers want to trust that the provider will deliver on their promises.



Building trust online comes with challenges, but a deep understanding of how travelers make decisions can help. Providing clear information about cleanliness measures and cancellation policies will reassure travelers that their financial investment is secure and their safety is top of mind. Travelers also want choice and convenience. Our research shows that many people (52%) want to see a range of prices and options for a specific type of experience and the ability to book accommodations and transportation all in one transaction (38%).

Travelers who prefer to book online have specific needs as well. Meeting these needs will build a trusted experience, helping ease any lingering anxieties about returning to travel. For online bookings, many value a site that provides the right price for the type of travel experience they want (57%). Other important considerations include a site that is easy to navigate (49%), a quick booking process (45%), customer support (38%), a high number of listings (32%), and a variety of travel methods (27%). Interestingly, nearly half (48%) of travelers say they are open to booking through companies they have never used before, showing an openness to new experiences and options.

A brighter future

After a period when nothing seemed steady or reliable, familiar patterns are re-emerging in the global travel ecosystem. The arrival of vaccines is restoring freedom of movement and renewing the desire for connection. However, more travelers are seeking experiences that match their own values: trust, connection, and inclusion. And, ultimately, travelers want experiences that prioritize their safety and security.

Those in the industry that adapt to and deliver against new traveler values will gain a clear advantage in the race to capture post-pandemic demand.



- Our findings on the importance of cleanliness is consistent with our [Travel Recovery Trends Report](#), which shows that four in five travelers expect to make accommodation decisions based on implemented pandemic measures.⁹ Ensure your content is up to date and clearly communicate your cancellation policies and cleanliness measures in your marketing and listings.
- As more people get vaccinated and travel restrictions ease, we expect international and domestic travel will continue to increase in 2021 given the pent-up demand. Now is the time to re-engage with marketing across channels and devices to reach travelers eager to explore again.
- More travelers seek accommodations with inclusive policies that welcome all types of travelers or support sustainability efforts. Highlight your commitment to social values in your marketing and listings to build a connection between travelers and your property.
- Build trust with travelers. Ensure you can deliver on the specific amenities, features, or policies included in your listing. Provide a range of options and prices, so travelers can ease their anxieties and focus on their upcoming dream vacation.

For more than a year, the world could only dream of travel. For many, that dream was not complete without friends, relatives, and for some, the family dog. As travel professionals, we're not just providing a seat or a bed. We're helping people rediscover their world, reconnect with the people that matter most, and rebuild a brighter future.

Dive deeper into the data

Download the snapshot report for your travel segment
for more insights and actions.



Lodging



Vacation rentals



Air Travel



Car rentals



Cruise Travel



Methodology

The Expedia Group Traveler Value Index research was conducted by Wakefield Research among 8,000 nationally representative adults ages 18+ in eight markets: US, Canada, Mexico, UK, France, Germany, Japan, and Australia, between April 16 and May 7, 2021, using an email invitation and an online survey. The data was weighted to ensure reliable and accurate representation. The overall margin-of-error for this study is +/-1.1 at the overall level and +/-3.1 in each market, at 95% confidence.

About Expedia Group

Bringing the world closer to you, one booking at a time.

Comprising 200+ travel websites and 20+ brands in 70+ countries, the Expedia Group platform powers the travel industry by connecting our airline, car, cruise, conventional lodging, and vacation rental partners with their ideal travelers — those who bring the most value. Our partners benefit from comprehensive data analytics, superior service, and advanced technology that help drive quality bookings at scale, so they can spend more time focused on what matters most: providing an exceptional, inclusive experience to their travelers. Work with us to strengthen connections, broaden horizons, bridge divides, and —above all — power global travel for everyone, everywhere.

[Partner with us.](#)

