



# Travel Insights

TRAVEL HACKING



## Travel Hacking

In 2026, travelers are taking a strategic approach to travel, looking to maximize every dollar, day off, and experience through travel hacks. Americans are combining motivations into multipurpose trips, exploring closer to home, embracing short getaways, and packing lighter to leave room for spontaneity. For travel brands, the opportunity is to help travelers discover, personalize, and optimize journeys that deliver the greatest possible value through the easiest possible means.





# Travel Hacking

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## New Value Equation

Americans are recalculating budgets and weighing priorities, with travel coming out on top for many but requiring some savvy tradeoffs. When life feels under pressure, short trips to escape or moments of luxury feel like a lifeline for travelers seeking reprieve.

# 55% & 58%

Millennials are leading the prioritization of travel, with 55% prioritizing spending money on travel over spending in other areas of their life and 58% feeling leisure travel is becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity.

- Kantar U.S. Monitor

# 41%

of travelers are choosing destinations closer to home to stretch travel budgets.

- Longwoods International

# 49%

of American travelers say they are being careful with their money because they are concerned about an upcoming recession.

- Future Partners



## 74% of Millennials and Gen Z consider travel a non-negotiable expense.

- American Express



# 69% v. 65%

69% of Americans are finding a way to take at least one short leisure trip (3 days or fewer) each year, while 65% are taking at least one longer vacation (4+ days) each year.

- Kantar U.S. Monitor

## Multipurpose Trips

Travelers are squeezing every bit of enjoyment out of their precious dollars and PTO by fitting multiple purposes into one trip. Whether traveling for marquee events and adding on local experiences or tacking on leisure time to a work trip, Americans are making their trips count with numerous experiences in one.



# 82%

Whether traveling for family weddings, reunions, or other celebrations, 82% of global respondents are planning to build in buffer days surrounding the main celebration of milestone trips.

- American Express

# 65%

of Airbnb's top-searched 2026 travel dates and destinations align with major events, including the FIFA World Cup, Olympics, Carnival, and Coachella.

- Airbnb

Once they travel, **98%** plan to eat at restaurants among other activities.

- National Restaurant Association

# 84%

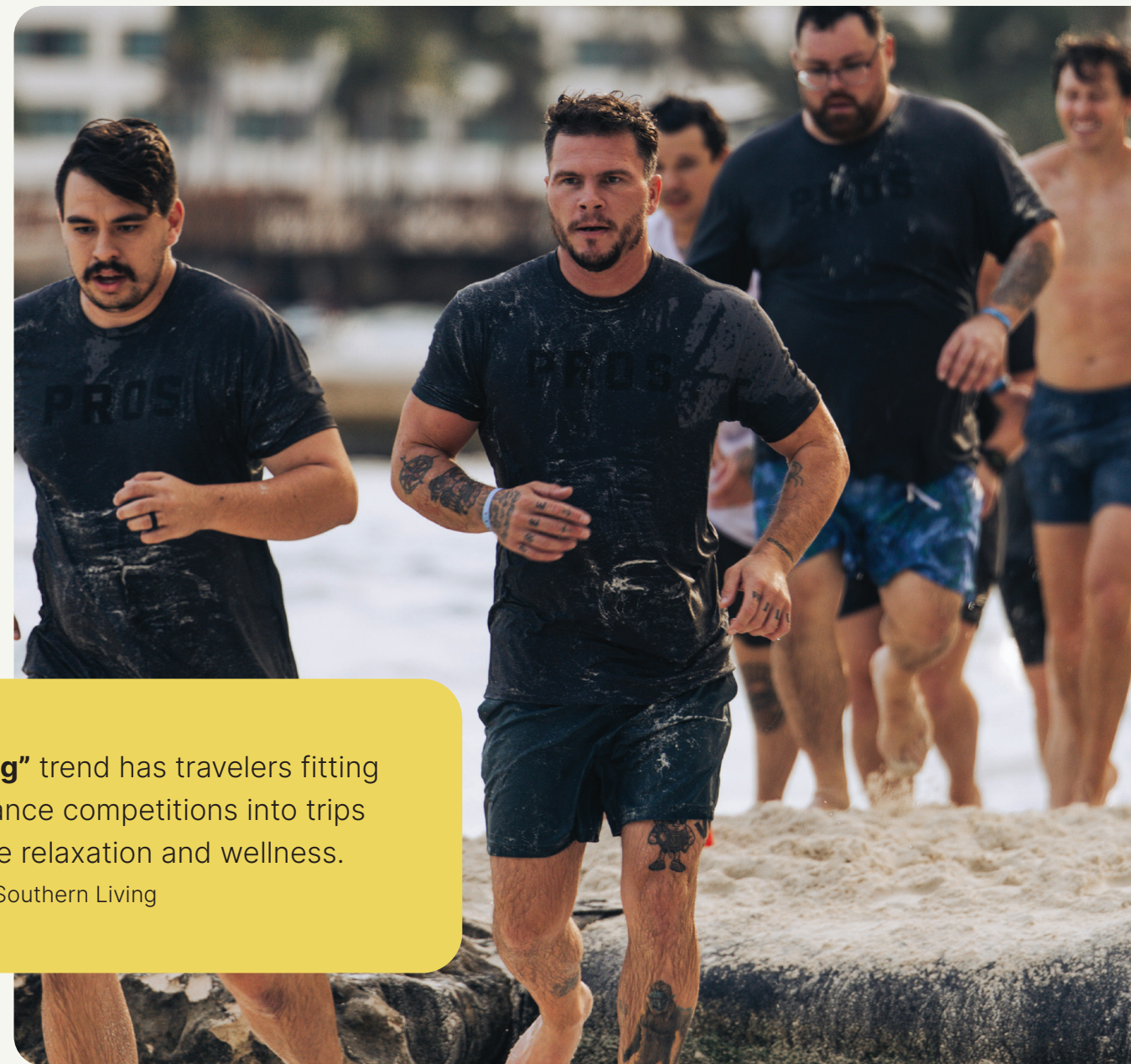
of corporate travelers plan to add leisure time to their next business trip in 2026.

- Arrivia



U.S. travelers are taking fewer trips overall in 2026, but **continue increasing spending across tours, activities, and attractions, prioritizing experiences within each trip.**

- Arival



The **“sweat-jetting”** trend has travelers fitting races and endurance competitions into trips that also include relaxation and wellness.

- Southern Living



## Domestic Draw

With a mix of hometown pride and economic uncertainty, Americans are enjoying domestic travel in 2026. Revisiting nostalgic destinations or discovering new favorites within the U.S. offers appealing and price-conscious alternatives to trips abroad.

Expedia's Air Hacks reveals that January is the cheapest month to fly domestically, driven by lower demand after the holidays.

- Expedia

# 74%

of all U.S. hotel searches were domestic in Q1 2026, reflecting a significant shift toward staying closer to home.

- Lighthouse

# 76%

of families are planning domestic vacations while only 18% are planning international trips.

- KPMG

# 67%

The majority of Americans (67%) planned to take one to two domestic trips over the summer.

- U.S. News & World Report

Domestic leisure travel spending continues to expand, **rising 0.9% to \$909 billion in 2026** and growing more quickly for 2027 and beyond.

- U.S. Travel Association



# Weekend Micro-Escapes

Under pressure from rising costs or chasing desires for a quick escape, people are planning small but mighty trips. Mini vacations are growing in popularity as people satisfy their travel cravings through snack-sized getaways.



The New York Times considers **"Microvacations"** travel's latest buzzword.  
- The New York Times

## 1/4

Approximately a quarter of Americans have taken shorter trips to reduce the amount they spend while ensuring they can still travel.  
- Kantar U.S. Monitor



Reader's Digest created a list of the best destinations for microlocations, highlighting easy-to-reach and/or navigable locations such as Chicago and Washington, DC.  
- Reader's Digest

## 25%

'Micro-cations' started as a TikTok trend but are becoming mainstream in 2026, with 25% of both Millennials and Gen Z planning to fly somewhere for just one day.  
- Expedia

Airbnb reports that 1–2-day international getaways are growing faster than longer vacations among Gen Z travelers.

- Airbnb



## Traveling Light

Travelers are hacking their packing with less cumbersome luggage and more room for in-destination experiences. Whether leaving room to fill suitcases with in-destination finds or intentionally choosing to stay somewhere that has the basics waiting for them, travelers are looking for ways to lighten their mental and physical loads.

# \$35

Most major U.S. airlines now charge approximately \$35 for a first checked bag, making fewer bags a cost saving strategy.

- Skyscanner

# 48% of travelers now fly carry-on only.

- Expedia



# 37%

of travelers would wear extra layers to dodge baggage fees (up to 47% among Gen Z).

- Expedia

**62%** of travelers made a non-travel purchase for their most recent major leisure trip, as many may pack less and buy items in destination to bring home.

- Expedia



# 27%

of Americans have reported staying with friends or family instead of paid accommodations in the past 12 months.

- Kantar U.S. Monitor

If you'd like to learn more or explore partnership opportunities, we'd welcome a conversation.

Please feel free to reach out to **[victoria.simmons@bvk.com](mailto:victoria.simmons@bvk.com)**



8909 N PORT WASHINGTON RD | MILWAUKEE, WI 53217 | 414.228.1990 | [BVK.COM](https://www.bvk.com)