

Travel influence - inspiring authentic and conscious travel in 2018

 By Dawn Jorgensen 16 Jan 2018

Travel bloggers and influencers have become responsible for providing authentic travel experience to their readers, from destination travel best practices to providing insight into enhancing travel adventures.

Travel writer, beauty seeker and earth advocate, Dawn Jorgensen, a.k.a The Incidental Tourist lets us in on her travel and influencer trend predictions for 2018, including major disruptions on the rise - from travel and tour guide apps enhancing the safari and outdoor experience to how travellers are gaining access to Southern Africa's wildest and remote regions, as well as what businesses in the industry should look out for and focus on.



The Incidental Tourist, Dawn Jorgensen

▣ ***What are the biggest trends in business of tourism and travel?***

With a general increase in consciousness, and the desire of many to keep in shape, I see a move towards active tourism with many travel companies introducing new ways for travellers to maintain their personal wellness while on holiday.

This can easily be packaged to include city cycling tours, yoga and meditation retreats and self-guided walking tours in Europe, with England, Greece, Spain and France being popular options for these. Joining in on the active holiday trends : requests for African safaris, skiing in the Swiss Alps and even ensuring that your travel dates coincide with locally hosted marathons.

Ever on the rise is solo female travel. The industry needs to take this tourism sector seriously and work toward accommodating them, ensuring their safety and possibly moving away from single supplement charges – they are independent, have the means and are looking to explore new and real experiences, inclusive of deciding where to visit, how to get there, and where to invest their holiday money. As some say, the future is female.

A firm favourite that has increasingly dominated travel choices and is set to stay is food tourism with many travellers

selecting their travel destinations based on restaurant guides, food blogs, chefs, and the taste sensations on offer at street vendors, side street café's and in world-renowned Michelin star restaurants.

“ Don't assume that all travellers are created equal and will settle for the same experience. Match them to the correct guide and experience, destination and setting. ”

▣ **What is the game-changing trend?**

Millennials are officially the largest generation in history and the largest market in travel. They have disposable income and are securing their status as leaders in travel and tourism. Given their social media-driven lifestyles; where they go and what they post about is influencing the decision making of others. Where are the cool Instagrammable spots? Will this look good on my timeline? Is it boring or innovative? And for some, can I stay for an extended period here? Millennials are not shy about getting exactly what they want or how they want it and are used to having their options conveniently available to them doing almost all of their research and bookings online.

▣ **Do you expect major disruptions in terms of new technology, new ideas, new business models, etc?**

There are apps available for everything now, from finding best value flights and accommodation to acting as tour guides in your chosen destination, such as VoiceMap. In Southern Africa, new apps such as Whispers of the Wild, Roberts Multimedia Birds of SA and The TreeApp help identify wildlife, offer bird guides and tree species identification, respectively which in turn enhance the safari and outdoor experience.

A recently completed project that had Google Maps partner with South African company Discover Africa, mapping out 170 new nature trails, six UNESCO World Heritage Sites and nineteen national parks, is allowing access to some of the country's wildest and most remote regions.



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That said, the online world has taken some criticism, with YouTubers and influencers being held ever more accountable for their irresponsible behaviour and being called to task when not respecting the areas they visit or the communities they find themselves in, rather than using their reach to send a positive and constructive message. Selfies are now banned at the Eiffel Tower for example, with numerous other attractions following suit.

▣ **What are some traveller trends that the industry should be aware of?**

A lovely trend that has emerged over the last years is **multi-generational travel**, with hard-working couples opting to travel with their children and parents, enjoying quality time somewhere beautiful. **Experiential travel** is still dominating choices and whether it's a walking safari in the bush or a street art tour in Berlin, the insight of local expert guides is recognised to be enhancing any trip and bringing the destination to life. Airbnb experiences are excellent for this.

The move to villas and luxury apartments, or even modest self-catering chalets means travellers can **'live' in the places they visit**, rather than just catch a glimpse of them from their hotels. This allows for shopping at local markets to stock up on fresh produce and to get a real feel for the community.

With global change affecting all of us, more travellers are aware of the impact their travel has on the environment and are opting for sustainable options – industry professionals should expect a shift towards this. Travellers are more interested in **environmental, economic and social impact they're having on the destinations** they visit and are most likely to work with companies and accommodation establishments that subscribe to these values.

Encouragingly, the **'Hands off our wildlife'** trend also means fewer encounters with wild animals, elephant riding and

swimming with captive dolphins. Instagram's decision to launch an alert system to prevent wildlife abuse and selfies with captured, and often abused wild animals, is a game changer and will hopefully be followed by other platforms.

“ Here's to a 2018 that brings more authentic and conscious travel and inspires us all to do the right thing by the places and communities that we're privileged enough to visit. ”

▣ **How will these trends influence your business strategy for the year ahead?**

As a travel blogger, I am lucky enough to have access to incredible places and people and I will continue to strive for the promotion of conscious travel. In my words, 'conscious travel brings me closer to the things that matter, the people and how they'd like their stories told.'

Personally, I will join the many other women travelling solo, with my first trip being to Lisbon on my own later this month. At that, I'm hoping to do more travel in Africa – a definite emerging market that needs to be taken seriously – and touch on some of the new hot spots. Greenland is tugging at my travel heartstrings, so that would be a dream come true.

With destinations such as Italy and Croatia experiencing an influx of tourists, it's important to **look to less-travelled destinations to redistribute the demand**. South Africans can now travel to Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Turkey without visa, making them very attractive destinations. Morocco, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Kenya are African countries that I am always trying to get back to – I will be encouraging my readers to include these in their travel plans.

▣ **Are there any opportunities that businesses in the industry should go for?**

Bring it back to basics. As much as some travellers seek out the glamour and glitz, others are focussing on the things that matter. Offer alternatives and promote more travel into Africa, especially urban and wilderness travel – it is our area of expertise, and there is so much to be explored.

Tour operators and activity providers can benefit from tapping into the trend of capturing and documenting our travels, supplying free Wi-Fi and social media handles on check-in, engaging with travellers and monitoring any posts that are linked to the service they are providing. It will add to their marketing efforts and is the perfect way to build user-generated content.

Everybody is booking on their mobile. Make sure that your website is easy to navigate on a phone or tablet and that your response is prompt, or you could lose your booking.

▣ **What do you hope to see more of in 2018?**

More time disconnecting from the busy world and opting for technology free breaks that allow us to reconnect with ourselves and with nature and the surrounds. With more emphasis placed on accessible travel – an important and often neglected sector of the industry – and of course for me, a bigger move towards responsible and sustainable tourism with an increased focus on animal rights in tourism, alongside a reduction in single-use plastic, and the millions of plastic water bottles that ultimately litter our oceans. We need to think about these things, as travellers and in our personal lives.

Here's to a 2018 that brings more authentic and conscious travel and inspires us all to do the right thing by the places and communities that we're privileged enough to visit.

▣ **Any advice you would like to share with the industry in planning for 2018?**

Listen to what your clients want. Don't assume that all travellers are created equal and will settle for the same experience. Match them to the correct guide and experience, destination and setting. Embrace sustainable and responsible practices, green is definitely the new black.

Do away with single supplements and make sure that whatever service you're offering can be researched, booked and paid for in a trouble-free manner, online. Then above all, personal service is still the main ingredient of success.

As interviewed by [Robin Fredericks](#).

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