

Purpose, Connection and Immersive Experiences Guide Gen Z Travellers in the UAE, New Wyndham Research Reveals

New research from Wyndham Hotels & Resorts reveals a shift toward experience-led, culturally immersive, and digitally curated travel among UAE's next generation of travellers.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - 28 April 2025 – Gen Z travellers in the UAE are redefining what it means to explore the world, placing cultural connection, personal purpose, and digital empowerment at the heart of their journeys. New research from Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, uncovers a decisive shift among the next generation: toward experience-first, value-driven travel, shaped by social media and powered by technology.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) prefer accommodation that reflects local culture, while 26% say platforms like Instagram and TikTok are their biggest travel influences. And as planning becomes increasingly self-directed, a striking 79% are already using or eager to use AI tools to help design their perfect getaway.

As the UAE continues to position tourism as a key driver of economic growth, Wyndham is leading the way in understanding the evolving needs of travelers. With a strong and growing presence across the region, Wyndham commissioned the in-depth research to explore the preferences and priorities of young travelers in the UAE, one of the most dynamic markets for hospitality growth. From eco-conscious guests seeking sustainable stays, to digital nomads and business travelers in search of extended-stay comfort, to experience-driven explorers prioritising prime locations, Wyndham is committed to shaping travel experiences that reflect the values and lifestyles of all generations.

“This generation isn’t just travelling, they’re curating journeys that reflect their values, their identity, and their aspirations,” said **Dimitris Manikis, President EMEA, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts**. “Gen Z wants to connect with something bigger than themselves, to travel with purpose, but they also expect the flexibility and convenience to make it all happen on their own terms. It’s a balancing act, but it’s one they’ve mastered with the help of social media and AI. Wyndham hotels across the region offer authentic cultural experiences, placing guests in the heart of great locations, while delivering personalized, sustainable stays that combine essential quality, convenience, and flexibility they can count on. For Gen Z, travel isn’t just about where you go - it’s about how it makes you feel.

Key Findings: What Matters Most to Gen Z Travellers in the UAE

Self-planned, Socially Influenced

26% of UAE Gen Z respondents say social media is the most influential factor in how they plan and book travel, more than traditional ads, family, or travel agents. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become travel discovery tools, helping Gen Z shape where they go, how they go, and what they want to

experience once there. To further their interest in self-planning their trips, 79% of UAE Gen Z respondents either already use AI tools or are keen to use them to plan or book their trips.

Purpose-Driven Travel Choices

The top motivation for travel is to unwind and disconnect (32%), followed by a desire to explore new cultures and seek out adventure. These behaviours reflect a shift away from passive or conventional high-end tourism, and toward immersive, experience-first travel that contributes to personal growth.

Women Are Leading International Travel

54% of Gen Z women in the UAE travelled internationally in the last six months, compared to 34% of men. This trend reflects a growing sense of independence, mobility, and cultural engagement among young women in the region. Notably, more than half (51%) of female respondents said that safety and security risks are a key consideration when planning their travel, indicating that their choices are both adventurous and intentional. This reflects a generation that is confident in exploring, but conscious of the conditions that make them feel secure and supported while doing so.

Travel Is a Priority, Not a Privilege

The data challenges outdated assumptions that travel is reserved for the affluent. Gen Z in the UAE are demonstrating that they're willing to cut back on material consumption to make space for travel, prioritising experiences that offer personal meaning and cultural connection over short-term indulgence. Even non-working students and earners in the AED 5,000–10,000 range reported international travel in the past six months. In fact, 41% of these respondents said they travelled abroad during this period, with another 25% combining domestic and international getaways.

This is a generation that's choosing to save, plan, and invest in moments that matter, favouring flexible, culturally authentic travel over status-driven spending. They seek out loyalty programmes that deliver real value and make decisions based on connection, not consumption.

Staying Local—Culturally Speaking

63% of Gen Z respondents in the UAE say they prefer accommodation that reflects the local culture, through design, food, or curated in-destination experiences. For this generation, travel is as much about understanding a place as it is about visiting it. They gravitate toward brands that feel rooted in the local community and hotels that reflect the identity of their surroundings.

Sustainability and Conscious Travel

The research also indicates that Gen Z in the UAE are thinking beyond personal fulfilment. Environmental awareness is increasingly shaping their travel choices, with a growing preference for destinations and properties that align with their values. More than half (55%) of Gen Z respondents say they actively choose sustainable transport options, and over a third (36%) seek out eco-friendly hotels.



Wyndham: Built for Every Generation of Travel

With 25 brands and over 9,300 hotels worldwide, including a rapidly expanding presence across the Middle East, Wyndham Hotels & Resorts is built to meet the evolving needs of Gen Z travellers. As a global hotel leader, Wyndham's purpose is to make travel possible for all and offers the perfect balance of value, quality, and experience, enabling young travellers to explore more with ease. In the UAE alone, properties like [Wyndham Residences The Palm](#), [TRYP by Wyndham Dubai](#), [Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche](#), [La Quinta by Wyndham Abu Dhabi Al Wahda](#), [Ramada by Wyndham Downtown Dubai](#) and [Ramada Hotel & Suites, Dubai JBR](#) offer vibrant, flexible, and experience-rich stays that reflect the spirit and lifestyle of this new generation.

Wyndham's award-winning Wyndham Rewards® programme, with more than 114 million members globally, caters to value-conscious travellers seeking real benefits, easy redemptions, and meaningful loyalty. At the same time, the company's global Wyndham Green sustainability programme ensures that every stay contributes to a lower environmental footprint, aligning with Gen Z's prioritisation of responsible travel.

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About the Research

This research was conducted by YouGov in March 2025 on behalf of Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. The study surveyed a total of 457 Gen Z respondents (aged 18–26) across the United Arab Emirates (n=230) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (n=227), using an online quantitative methodology. Respondents were selected to reflect a broad demographic cross-section within each market. For more information, visit: <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/en-uk/hotel-deals/discover-gcc-region>

About Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts (NYSE: WH) is the world's largest hotel franchising company by the number of franchised properties, with approximately 9,300 hotels across over 95 countries on six continents. Through its network of approximately 903,000 rooms appealing to the everyday traveler, Wyndham commands a leading presence in the economy and midscale segments of the lodging industry. The Company operates a portfolio of 25 hotel brands, including Super 8®, Days Inn®, Ramada®, Microtel®, La Quinta®, Baymont®, Wingate®, AmericInn®, ECHO Suites®, Registry Collection Hotels®, Trademark Collection® and Wyndham®. The Company's award-winning Wyndham Rewards loyalty program offers approximately 114 million enrolled members the opportunity to redeem points at thousands of hotels, vacation club resorts and vacation rentals globally. For more information, visit www.wyndhamhotels.com.

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