

2026 Travel Trends: Tour Operator Predictions

by [Sarah Milner](#) January 05, 2026



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With a new year comes a new batch of consumer trends, shaping how clients book travel, when they want to depart, and where they want to go.

The [United States Tour Operators Association \(USTOA\) annual members survey](#) showed growth in 2025, with many members predicting further growth in 2026. In fact, nearly 9 in 10 (88%) members stated they anticipate sales growth in 2026, and 84% said they expect passenger growth.

With a bullish outlook ahead, what are these tour operators predicting will be the biggest shifts to watch out for in the coming 12 months?

Travel Market Report spoke to C-suite executives and industry leaders from across the tour operator segment to gain their perspective on how 2026 is shaping up.

CIE Tours

Prediction: changes in booking behavior.

"One of the theories that we have is that somebody who's going to book 12 months out, 15 months out—those people that really want to plan well ahead—a percentage of those [customers] have decided to hold off a little bit to see what happens..."

In terms of people booking far out, there's a bit of a change there because of the economics and the way things are.

And then we're seeing more people booking close in."

– Stephen Cotter, managing director

"We have last-minute specials, which are very appealing for people who are ready to make a more spontaneous decision... we've noticed that trend last year and this year [2025]. We were surprised how far into the year we continued to get bookings for the same year..."

It might be that the window for advanced bookers has narrowed and we're seeing more last-minute bookings."

– Rosanne Zusman, chief commercial officer

Prediction: consumer confidence recovery.

"It's just such an unpredictable time, and things that are completely outside of our control can put fear or caution or hesitancy in the mind of the consumer."

– Rosanne Zusman, chief commercial officer

"Normally you'd be saying you're 'quietly confident' or 'cautiously optimistic'—we're not saying those things [yet]."

I think we will be able to say that... we're coming into this real crunch period now after Thanksgiving, into December, January, and February. The bookings ramp up so much.

So far, we're happy with where we are. Consumer confidence has declined, but it's coming back up."

– Stephen Cotter, managing director

Tauck

Prediction: travelers craving the human touch.

"I think 2026 will be a very good year..."

When you talk about AI and you talk about all of the turbulence and you talk about all of the volatility, I remain convinced that the human connection is as important as ever. And I believe that tour operators— the vast majority of whom rely on the human connection—I think that is a competitive strength that will continue to help us prosper and grow...

I really do believe that now people crave human connection."

-Jeremy Palmer, president, Tauck

Alexander + Roberts

Prediction: Growth in luxury guided travel.

"I think privately guided is going to continue to expand. I think it's going to be a good year. We're all, of course, cautiously optimistic until we see what the first quarter brings, but I predict 2026 is going to be a strong year for land. You know cruise is already up there, but I think land is blossoming quite quickly as well, and I think that [the] luxury segment is where the growth is going to be."

- Scott Avera, president, Alexander + Roberts

Prediction: Egypt's comeback, and a rise in off-the-beaten-track destinations

"Right now, Japan and East Africa are booming, as is Peru and Italy.... Another one that we see creeping in is Borneo. We're happy to see that and people branching out into other areas of Italy, getting off the Rome, Florence, Venice and doing the Dolomites—things like that. It's a little bit off the beaten track.

The other one is Egypt. I think we'll see Egypt come back now... I think the fall will be very good there."

-Scott Avera, president, Alexander + Roberts

Collette

Prediction: Stability and growth.

"I think 2026 is gonna be a great year for the industry, and we see it in the [USTOA member survey]. We're up to almost \$25 billion in economic impact now as an association, and I think that'll continue to grow..."

People are largely expecting growth for next year, and their businesses are doing well. They've seen everything stabilize and start to point upward for next year."

– Jeff Roy, executive vice president and chief revenue officer, Collette

Prediction: A resilient Canadian market.

"Canada, we were worried about earlier this year because they were more deeply affected by some of the politics that are going on right now. But the Canadian market, they're pretty resilient. They weren't down for very long, and we had a record year there in 2025. For 2026, [bookings we're] up quite a bit again..."

I think the Canada outbound market will continue to do well, not so much trans water coming into the United States, but going outbound to all the same destinations that Americans are traveling to."

– Jeff Roy, executive vice president and chief revenue officer, Collette

Perillo Tours

Prediction: More A.I. adoption.

"A.I. is really useful. It's very useful for writing brochures, for doing summaries of brochures... It's been a great to help us... We're gonna teach our chat system on the computer to be an expert in our business."

–Steve Perillo, CEO and owner, Perillo Tours

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