

Ketchum polls top travel influencers on the trends to track in the year ahead.

KETCHUM'S ASK AN INFLUENCER

2019 TRAVEL PREDICTIONS

Ketchum

THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AT SUPERSONIC SPEED.

There's been a shift in who influences our travel decisions, and we now have completely new ways to book travel. Not to mention the experiences we now seek are very different than previous years. With all these changes, travel and hospitality brands are trying to keep up with it all.

As we prepare to close out a decade of rapid change in 2019, the Ketchum Travel & Economic Development team collected insights from some of the industry's most well-known and knowledgeable travel influencers to create our *Ask an Influencer: 2019 Travel Predictions* report.

Our conversations took us on an adventurous path where the increasing legitimacy of travel influencers, technological advancements, and the evolving media landscape intersect to play a key role in the year ahead. And most importantly, the ubiquitous presence of social media in our lives is a huge factor.

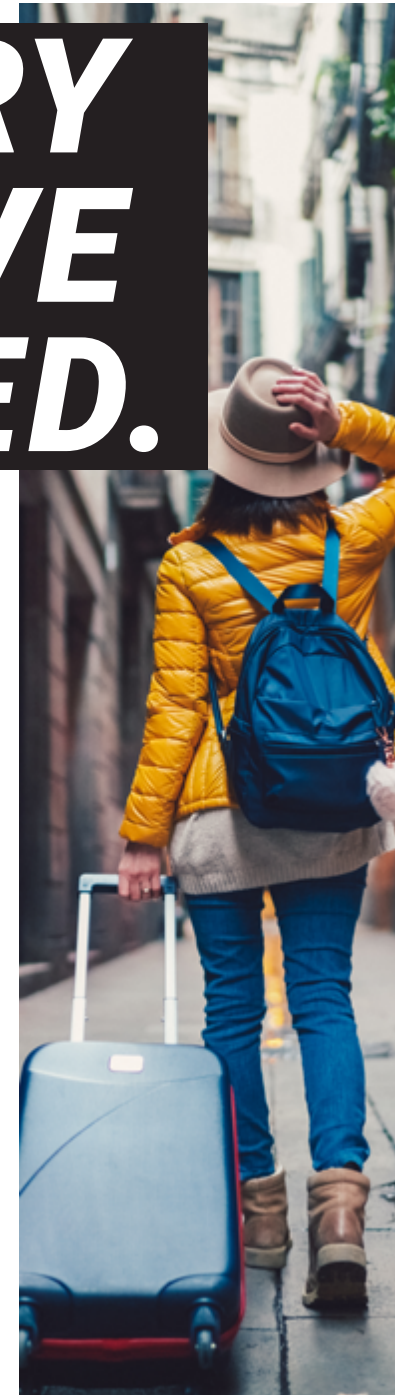
We live in a world where consumers can get a glimpse of near and far cultures on their mobiles, where social feeds inspire us daily for a quick mental or much desired real-life escape, and where many of our choices are driven by the type of content we want to post on our own social channels.

At Ketchum, we weave influencer engagement and marketing into the core of everything we do. We take a comprehensive approach early in our planning process to ensure travel and hospitality brands are working with influencers in the right ways. We leveraged our strong relationships with a handful of these influencers to gather the top trends they feel will shape travel in 2019. Read on to take a tour through these wide-ranging trends.



Sara A. Garibaldi

MANAGING DIRECTOR
TRAVEL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
KETCHUM



MEET THE INFLUENCERS



@nataliediscala

NATALIE DISCALA

Founder and editor of Oh! Travelissima, Natalie has risen to prominence as an influencer who shares her favorite products that help make travel easier, more efficient and even more stylish. Having worked with some of the top travel and lifestyle brands, Natalie is also an accomplished photographer.



@johnnyjet

JOHNNY JET

Johnny Jet has traveled more than 100,000 miles a year since starting his newsletter in 1995 and has visited approximately 100 countries. On his website, he writes about how to maximize credit card points, find travel deals and how to benefit from insightful tips. He has hosted a television special on The Travel Channel and was named one of Forbes' Top 10 Travel Influencers in 2017.



@markjellwood

MARK ELLWOOD

A seasoned writer for Condé Nast Traveler, Mark is an accomplished TV host and producer who has lived out of a suitcase most of his life. He regularly guests on NBC's "Today" Show and ABC News, commenting on lifestyle and pop culture trends and is co-host of CNBC's new primetime lifestyle show, "The Filthy Rich Guide."



@thecameronlee

CAMERON LEE

Cameron combined his passion for travel, visual journeys and photography with his professional luxury PR and marketing background to become an influencer. Cameron's photos have been featured by numerous tourism boards and many travel Instagram accounts. He has also shot for designers including Zac Posen, Monique Lhuillie and Zuhair Murad.



@landlopers

MATT LONG

Matt is the founder and creator of Landlopers, one of the leading travel sites with reviews and tips for the average person – everyone from the novice to pro traveler. His content helps readers travel the world comfortably and affordably and features vibrant visuals. Matt's content has been featured everywhere from BBC Travel to Lonely Planet to The Huffington Post.



@theblondeabroad

KIRSTEN RICH

The Blonde Abroad, Kirsten Rich (aka "Kiki"), is a California native who left her career in corporate finance to become a world traveler. She has now traveled to more than 70 countries for adventures of all kinds and has grown to one of the industry's most prominent influencers with more than half a million followers.



@thepointsguy

THE POINTS GUY TEAM

Founded in 2010 by Brian Kelly while working as a Wall Street road warrior, the site has since grown to become one of the world's leading travel sites. Specializing in loyalty programs, credit cards and travel, The Points Guy now boasts monthly views well up into the millions.



INFLIGHT WI-FI FOR ALL

Staying connected inflight will become easier and cheaper. Given increasing traveler demands to stay “on” even while traveling and being disconnected simply not being an option, airlines are realizing this and investing in faster inflight Wi-Fi service while also dropping prices.

@thepointsguy

THE POINTS GUY TEAM

TRAVEL CREDIT CARDS WITH LARGE SPENDING BONUSES

Travel credit cards will continue to shift toward offering large spending bonuses instead of large sign-up bonuses, as card issuers focus on getting long-term customers rather than short-term bonus seekers. Consumers will have to work harder, but rich points opportunities will persist.

@thepointsguy

THE POINTS GUY TEAM





TRAVEL REWARD CREDIT CARDS ON POINT

Travel rewards are becoming easier to use as credit card and travel partners realize the importance of strong loyalty programs. Loyalty programs have also become commonplace — the perks members once cherished as special are increasingly seen as entitlements — so companies are staying competitive with sign-up bonuses, spending bonuses and promotions. With all the resources available to consumers to help them take advantage of promotions and maximize their accumulated points, 2019 travel reward credit cards will be more popular than ever.

@theblondeabroad

KIRSTEN RICH

EMBRACING THE CHINESE TOURIST

Understanding the emerging Chinese market and catering to those travelers' needs is critical for travel and hospitality brands. While fewer than 10 percent of Chinese nationals currently hold a passport, that's still 130 million people and climbing. That's up 7 percent from the previous year, and they spent more than \$115 billion, according to data from the China Tourism Academy. Chinese travelers can also now explore 74 countries without a visa.

 *@markjellwood*
MARK ELLWOOD





DNA TOURISM

With the increasing popularity of DNA genetic testing and analysis, more and more people are learning about their ancestry. As a result, armed with a new knowledge of their ancestors, people are traveling to learn more about their heritage and exploring their homelands, and many destinations and tour companies are jumping in on this.

@johnnyjet
JOHNNY JET

BIOMETRICS FOR TRAVELERS

We'll start to see biometrics being used more and more for travelers. A popular car rental company recently announced that its customers can use facial recognition to expedite the car rental experience. Airlines are starting to test biometric boarding at gates. More and more travel and hospitality companies will start to use biometrics to provide travelers with a more efficient travel process and added security. Speedier bag drop? Lounge access entry? We'll see travel providers really step it up this coming year.

@nataliediscala

NATALIE DISCALA





LUXURY'S SHIFT FROM BIG TO BOUTIQUE

Luxury travelers are shying away from larger luxury properties and are embracing the concept of boutique luxury. This is evidenced by the recent increase in major hotel brands' acquisitions of smaller, boutique properties. The intimate and authentic feel and individually-designed look and feel of a boutique experience is a growing appeal to travelers.

@landlopers

MATT LONG

LESS BOUNDARIES FOR LGBT TRAVELERS

The LGBT community is increasingly looking for more adventure and culturally-immersive experiences versus traveling to attend one event or party geared towards LGBT travelers. This is due to increased acceptance of the community in many countries. By and large, they are the group of travelers increasingly exploring destinations rich with unique people and culture that they hadn't once considered.

@thecameronlee

CAMERON LEE



HOP ON BOARD WITH KETCHUM TO REACH TODAY'S TRAVELERS.

Travel is a specialized team inside Ketchum, the world's first true communications consultancy. We're a group of scrappy, result-oriented travel communications specialists who are experts in the travel industry, the media, digital/social channels, target audiences and our clients' businesses. As part of our unique value proposition, we give you fast access to some of the best issues and crisis experts and sports and entertainment talent in the communications world. We deliver the best of both worlds — the grit of a travel boutique with all the resources of the Ketchum communications consultancy at your fingertips.

We're not your typical travel publicists — we're brand marketers and communication specialists first, some of us with MBAs in marketing or graduate degrees in communications. We've supported tourism organizations and travel brands through some of their biggest challenges, and we understand the traveler's path to purchase.

We weave influencer engagement and marketing into the core of everything we do. Our systematic approach creates highly relevant content with the most impactful voices across earned and paid tactics. We focus on creating meaningful connections between brands and consumers with artful, co-created content that is relevant to influencers' loyal fans.

**WANT TO HARNESS THIS YEAR'S TOP TRENDS TO HELP YOUR BRAND BREAK THROUGH THE SEA OF SAMENESS?
WANT TO ENGAGE WITH INFLUENCERS?**

Get in touch with Sara Garibaldi, managing director of Ketchum's Travel & Economic Development team, to discuss your business challenge and how we can help you.

Ask Sara about our award-winning work with Discover Puerto Rico and the recent #CoverTheProgress campaign and other travel work we're proud to call ours.

Sara A. Garibaldi

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