The Marriage of High-Tech and High-Touch Define the Optimal Future Travel Experience

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American Express Travel Marks 100 Years of Service by Celebrating Journeymakers

It’s not always about having an app for that! While today’s technology is making travel easier than ever, new research from American Express Travel, which marks its 100th anniversary this month, reveals that future travelers will tap into both high-tech options and high-touch human service in order to achieve the ultimate travel experience.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of travelers said that despite digital advances in the travel industry, the value of personal service cannot be replaced. Additionally 83% of Millennials place a premium on personalization and are willing to have brands track their habits in exchange for a more bespoke experience.

To download the research report, click here [1].

“Increasingly, travelers want to see the world on their terms with tailored, personalized and differentiated experiences that reflect their passions and needs,” said Claire Bennett, executive vice president, American Express Travel. “The boundaries between technology and personal service are being blurred, allowing more intimate connections for travelers with the world around them. This presents travelers and our industry with innumerable opportunities for partnerships to make more memorable journeys possible.”

Placing a High Value on Experiences

When it comes to planning an epic adventure, travelers have a me-centric mindset and want to be involved in all aspects of the trip — from preparing an itinerary and documenting and sharing their experiences with others. In addition, travelers are not looking for a cookie-cutter experience: the vast majority of respondents (85%) said that a customized itinerary is far more appealing than a pre-packaged one, and 72% would spend more time planning a trip that is tailored to their interests. Additionally, 90% of respondents say they appreciate the efforts of a travel professional to customize an experience based on their preferences.

Personalized Planning: Where Human Touch and High-Tech Meet

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Human Touch is Irreplaceable

Contrary to the perception that technological advances can replace human customer service, the study’s results show that the personal touch remains critical, with 93% saying they feel the value of personal service cannot be replaced despite digital advances in the travel industry. This is especially true for moments when something goes awry. Eighty-nine percent said they also want human assistance for cancelled flights or lost luggage, and 53% said they want it for getting an insider scoop on a destination.

Where Technology Triumphs

Travelers do note, however, that they prefer to use technology for certain aspects of their trip:

- 82% said they are more interested in making memories than making money;
- 85% say they plan to travel as much, if not more, for leisure in the next five years; and
- 91% would rather focus on meaningful life experiences over their profession.

Celebrating “Journeymakers,” The People Who Make Great Trips Possible

As evidenced by this new research, high-touch personal service will be a critical component of the optimal travel experience, which is why, as part of its 100th anniversary celebration, American Express Travel is launching a new campaign celebrating Journeymakers — the travel service professionals whose commitment to human connection and service help make travel more memorable.

American Express Travel has created a digital experience at www.journeymakers.com [2] where consumers are invited to share their own stories and recognize the Journeymakers they have met through their travels. Travel partners, such as Delta Air Lines and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., are also participating by sharing their own stories on the Journeymakers hub. The platform also lets travelers show their appreciation by sending a personalized, printed note to a Journeymaker, which will be delivered to the Journeymaker by using a map technology powered by TripAdvisor. Additionally, visitors are encouraged to share their Journeymaker moments with a social postcard that can be used on their own social media platforms.

“We want to bring together everyone – our colleagues in the industry, consumers, anyone who is passionate about travel – to celebrate together the people who make great travel experiences possible. As a travel service provider who has the privilege of celebrating its 100th anniversary, we have always believed that connection is at the heart of travel,” added Bennett.

Where to Next? Special Deals and Offers

American Express Travel will be offering special experiences for select destinations and other travel discounts beginning July 13 through August 31 as part of its anniversary celebration. Visit https://www.amextravel.com/hotel-offers/experiential [4] to be inspired on where to go and what to do — next.

About American Express Travel

American Express Travel is a global full-service travel and related lifestyle services provider. For nearly 100 years, American Express has helped those who love to travel customize and elevate their trip experience through world-class service, exclusive programs and premium benefits. Customers have many options for accessing these services and can travel with confidence by having support from American Express whether booking online at www.amextravel.com [4] or speaking with travel and lifestyle experts on the phone or in retail locations [12].

About American Express

American Express is a global services company, providing customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. Learn more at americanexpress.com [6] and connect with us on facebook.com/americaneexpress [7], foursquare.com/americaneexpress [8], linkedin.com/companies/americaneexpress [13], twitter.com/americaneexpress [14], and youtube.com/americaneexpress [15].

About the Survey Methodology

The American Express Future of Travel survey was completed online by 1,007 U.S. consumers who have traveled for leisure at least 2 times in the past 5 years. The survey was conducted by The Futures Company between May 26 and June 3, 2015 and the results reported in this release have an overall margin of error of +/- 3.1 at the 95 percent level of confidence. While this report focuses on the U.S. results, data was also collected in the U.K., Mexico and China.