

A person wearing a backpack and a hat stands on a rocky cliff, looking out over a vast blue ocean. The scene is framed by the branches of trees in the foreground. The sky is a pale blue, and the water is a deep blue. The overall mood is one of adventure and exploration.

MILES TO GO

A journey through the evolving travel trends in India, and how our wanders within have been guiding our wanders into the world.

TBWA INDIA

WHAT WE DISCOVERED

As we sat down to explore travel, we began with the most elementary question: What does travel say about us? Are we aspiring Arjuns (Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara), signing up for PTOs to go on a soul-search disguised as a bachelor party? Are we Ayeshas and Kabirs (Dil Dhadakne Do), stuck on a yacht with nothing to do but fix our troubles? Or are we Ranis (Queen), escaping town to escape our lives?

We realized that we are none of them anymore. As we journeyed through our travel impulses, we found out that the strength of our identification with these instincts has weakened. Where once travel was solely a way to ask-and-answer meaningful questions of ourselves, today travel itself is where true meaning lies. We have entered a new era of personal identity. Spotify wrapped, aesthetic cores, carefully curated Instagram feeds are the norm, with our every move dissected and decided in advance — all in service of putting together a very specific persona of ourselves into the world. This has changed everything, with travel being no exception.

Because of this, unlike the Arjuns, Ayeshas, Kabirs and Ranis of yore, we do not look to travel to merely take a break from our monotonous lives. We have evolved, seeking to not divide our time between work – play – pray. Instead, we have collapsed these barriers, leaving behind a life in which we strive to have everything, everywhere, all at once.

Be it when we travel, where we travel, or who we travel with. The old, definable prototypes and templates of travel have gone for a toss. Travel from being a mere hobby, has now become our favorite investment in ourselves. Today, we quest for vacations that do not simply show us the path to inner progress, but actively enhance our always work-in-progress selves. The dominant ask is no longer – Show me who I am. But – This is who I am; and I travel to further refine and shade this outline of myself.

Seeking more? Zip your bags, and jump in. We have a lot of fresh ground to tread.






CELEBRATION VACATIONS

Travel is now its own reward





81% Indians are now choosing to travel to celebrate unique milestones like birthdays, anniversaries and children's good report cards.

LOOKING AT TRAVEL AS A SELF-TREAT FOR A TASK WELL ACCOMPLISHED, INDIANS HAVE TRADED CONVENTIONAL TRAVEL TIMES, LIKE THE ANNUAL SUMMER HOLIDAY OR NEW YEAR PACKAGES FOR THESE PERSONAL MOMENTS OF VICTORY.

Peaks like festive season or end-of-year are not the dominant norm anymore, with travel staying high around the year.

To facilitate this, listicles like best times to take leaves for long weekends and short-trip locations have become all the rage, with nearly 62% looking to treat their loved ones to quick getaways. YouTuber Gauarav Chaudhary (Technical Guruji) and

BookMyShow founder, Ashish Hemrajani have mentioned in interviews how they take trips to Dubai and Spain respectively after professional achievements to reflect and recharge.

Celebrity-choreographer Nishant Bhat is also infamous for his annual birthday gigs in Goa with a close-knit group of friends, exemplifying OYO's conclusion that more than 46% of travelers today celebrate their birthdays not through parties but travel.

Trading glory-parties for intimate excursions, people have found their new favorite excuse to gather travel miles, through the whole year.



GIG TRIPPING

The reason to travel now decides the season to travel





In the past, travel was about visiting destinations at the ‘right’ time. European countries during the long summer months, USA during the fall and Christmas. Today, the story has changed.

WITH GLOBAL FANDOMS AND BETTER ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND DESTINATIONS, PEOPLE ARE TREADING NEW GROUNDS FOR GIGS, WHENEVER THE RIGHT MOMENT STRIKES.

From music to cricket and football, the reason to travel, now decides the season to travel.

After the announcement of Coldplay’s ‘Music of the Spheres’ world tour, search for accommodations in Singapore went up by 556% from Indian travelers. When it comes to cricket, around 20% of the footfall for the Men’s ICC Cricket World Cup in 2023 was international.

The showcase of unique festivals and events in films, like the famous Tomatina festival of Spain featured in Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara, have also been a big influence. Indian interest in traveling to France for the 2024 Olympic Games also surged, with Airbnb reporting a 30% increase in bookings from Indian guests in Paris and nearby cities. And at the time of the Hornbill Festival, there was a 13% rise in passengers flying to Nagaland, notes Karthick Prabu, Head of Strategy, Cleartrip.

Clearly, to satiate their curiosity and want for meaningful adventures, no place is too far and no time is too late/early for Indians.




ADIEU PLANS



The trendiest travel sidekick on the block is spontaneity





Say goodbye to your travel planners and ten-step checklists. People are trading in carefully curated travel plans for spur-of-the-moment getaways.

THIS IS FACILITATED BY THE RISE OF VISA-FREE DESTINATIONS, IMPROVED AIRLINE CONNECTIVITY, AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS LIKE AIRBNB AND OYO ROOMS AND COMPETITIVE TRAVEL DEALS.

Furthermore, according to a latest report by rating agency CRISIL, disposable income for Indians has risen to unprecedented levels. Because of all this, off-the-cuff, last-minute bookings have become the latest rage, with the suddenness of these plans being its own reward.

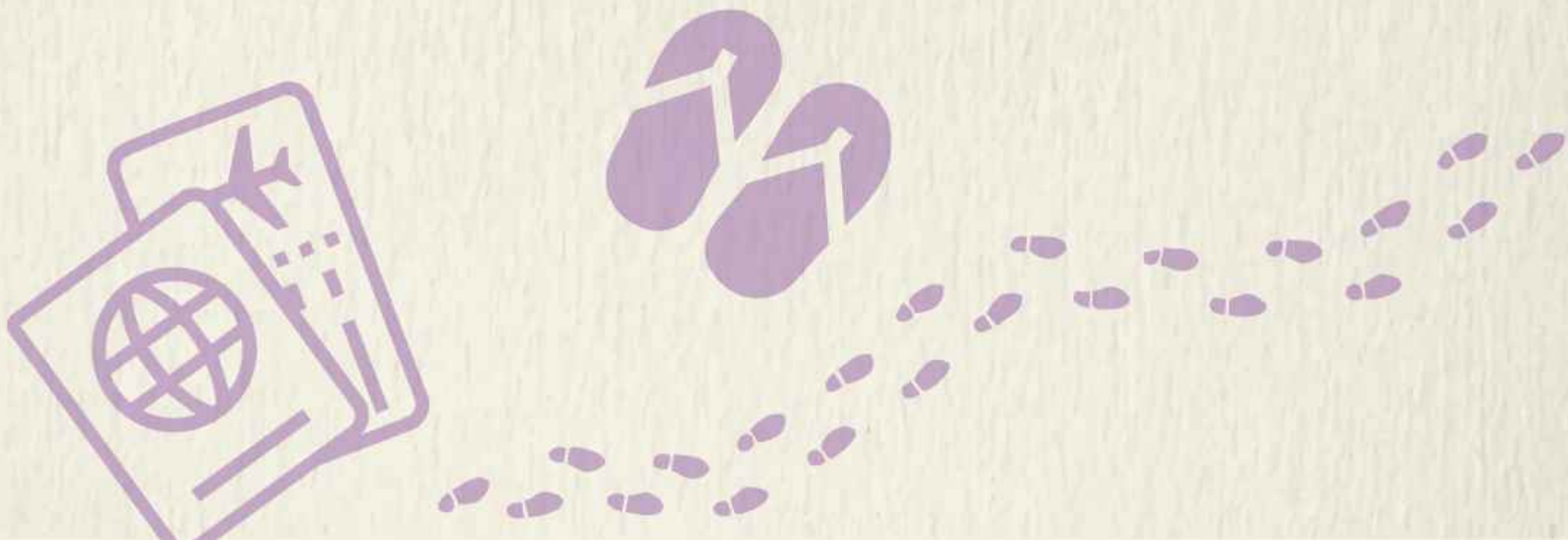
Sterling Holidays Resorts Limited recently reported that the lead times of bookings has gone down from an average of 7-8 days to 2-3 days. More impromptu plans are being made, with 81 per cent of the domestic bookings happening within a month and 36 per cent of international bookings happening within a week of travel. Brands like Yatra also offer fantastic last-minute deals, facilitating seamless pocket-friendly spontaneous travel. And recent reports also revealed that a remarkable 58 per cent of Indians have expressed interest in taking last-minute trips this year.


Today, Indians are beginning to outpace their global counterparts in embracing the thrill of spontaneity.



SKIP-GEN TRAVEL

Trips to nani's house are being replaced by trips with nani





Bye bye parents. In 2024, Gen Z is twisting the age-old Indian tradition of visiting grandparents over the summer, to spend their vacations instead traveling with their dadi-dadas. The child-grandparent bond has always been special. Unlike relations between parents and children, there are little to none unspoken rules guiding these dynamics.

THIS NEW VACATION ORIENTATION ENABLES BOTH GENERATIONS TO BRING THEIR REGULAR SELVES TO THE JOURNEY, UNBURDENED BY THE NEED TO PUT THEIR SUPPOSEDLY BEST FOOT FORWARD.

This new vacation orientation enables both generations to bring their regular selves to the journey, unburdened by the need to put their supposedly best foot forward.

By joining hands, both the younglings and young-at-hearts (who anyways are discontent to spend their sunset years stuck at home) get the chance to explore to their hearts' desire. Listicles around luxurious gateways, catering to grandparents/children are doing the rounds. Travel companies like Veena World are gearing up to soon offer special tour packages catering to this dynamic. And influencer Pooja Vegesna also exemplifies this trend by spending quality time with her grandparents, recently launching an Instagram series showcasing her shared exploratory journeys.

Skipping continents alongside skipping generations — travelers have found a new way to redefine travel not as something external to their everyday selves, but as another piece in the jigsaw of what makes them them.




WANDER WORK



Neither travel nor work take a backseat for each other





Indian Gen Z have redefined the traditional concept of work-life divide, with the rise of remote work and flexible schedules. Earlier, taking a vacation required employees to formally apply for leave from their workplace.

NOW, MANY GEN Z PROFESSIONALS NO LONGER NEED TO TAKE TIME OFF TO TRAVEL, THANKS TO THE "WORK FROM ANYWHERE" CULTURE.

They can blend travel with work, making use of flexible hours and digital tools to stay connected with their jobs.

Sula Vineyards, Fab Hotel and Mahindra Holidays have started offering workcation packages, enabling travellers to work while relaxing.

Offering reliable Wi-Fi, work spaces, alongside opportunities for leisure, these hotels/resorts are growing into popular office spots. A survey by the platform Workcations revealed that 82% of remote workers in India have demonstrated a strong interest in this model. Listicles around best workcation spots have become the latest rage. And the introduction of packages like Workation Tourism under Kerala Travel Mart exemplifies even governments' proactive approach to cater to these evolving needs of travellers.


Crafting their own new travel templates, Indians are embracing travel as a way to incorporate regular lofi-vacations into their high-strung quotidian routines.



TRAVEL CURRENCY

Being well-traveled is a facet worth its weight in gold today





The rewards of travel are no longer restricted to memory walls and eclectic souvenirs.

WITH THE RISE OF A GLOBALIZED, ALWAYS-CONNECTED CULTURAL ECONOMY, INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE HAS TODAY RISEN INTO AN ADVANTAGE WELL-WORTH QUOTING ON OUR CVS.

Because of this, from only looking at real estate, diamonds or the like as favorable investments, people have now turned their eyes to literally explore new horizons.

OYO Travelopedia's report revealed that 15% travelers would like to 'invest' by opening a savings account solely for travelling purposes, emphasizing this shift in outlook.

Academic spheres like the INSEAD B-School have entire sections devoted to understanding applicants' global endeavors. This is underlined by the ever-increasing cross-continental partnerships between universities, offering students opportunities to gain valuable exposure. AISEC also recently revealed that 64% of employers find international experience in a candidate extremely desirable whilst they look for recruits. Another factoid which we have lately seen play out in real-life as Bollywood stars of yore choosing to send their children to first study abroad, before they return to put down professional roots in India.

Putting increasing value on travel as a means to get ahead in the world, this leisurely activity has gained much more purpose.

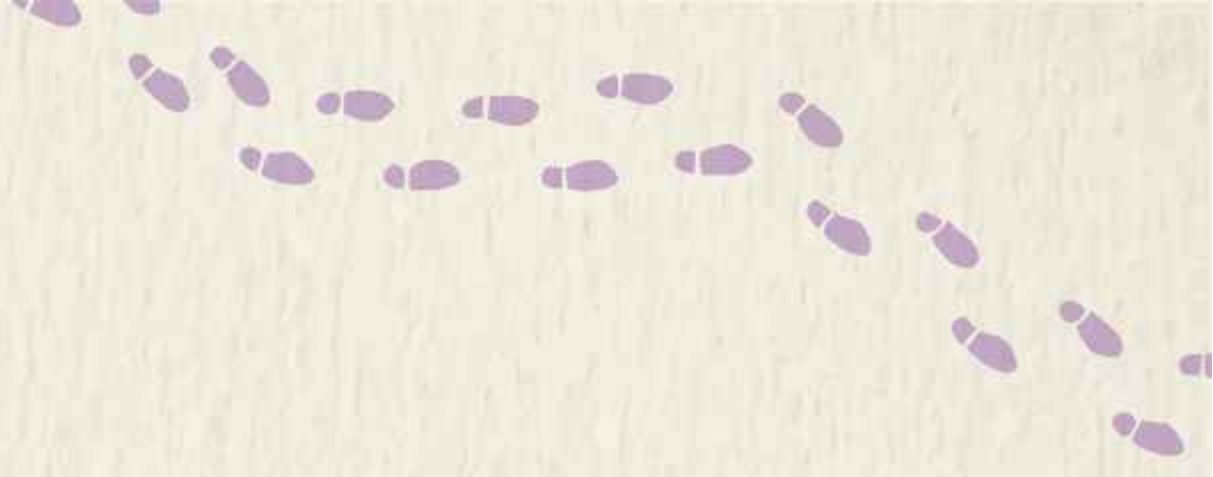


MEMORY LANES



Nostalgia is gaining currency, with old meaningful spots replacing new flashy destinations





The cult of nostalgia is alive and thriving.

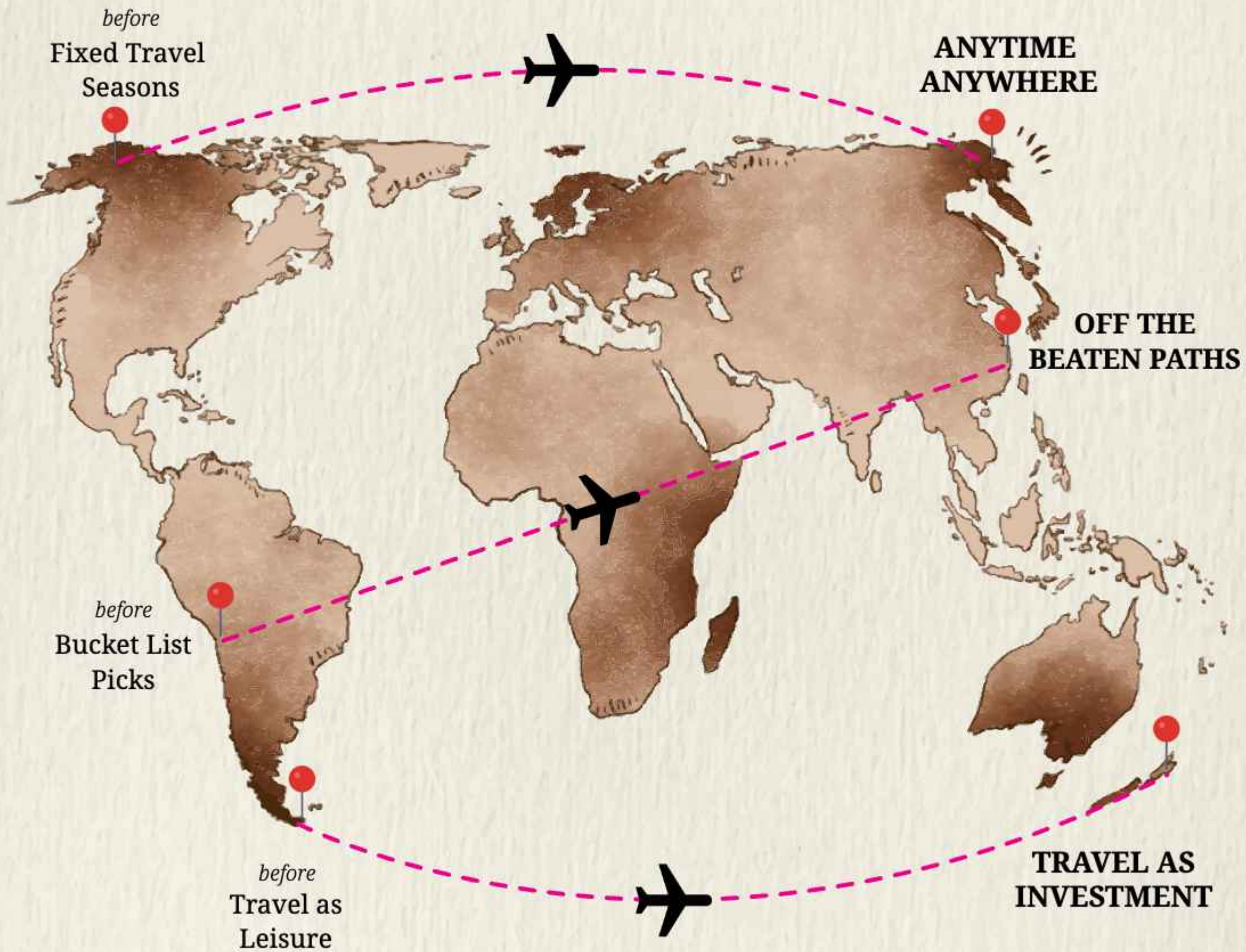
INSTEAD OF SCRATCHING OFF THINGS ON THEIR BUCKET LIST, PEOPLE NOW SEEK TO GO BACK IN TIME AND EXPLORE OLD, HEARTFELT HAUNTS.

Instead of scratching off things on their bucket list, people now seek to go back in time and explore old, heartfelt haunts. One-third who are planning travel this summer are being influenced by nostalgia and are leaning towards destinations they have already visited in the past, including their ancestral places. In terms of age groups, 25-34 year olds are the most interested in visiting nostalgic destinations that they might have visited during their childhood or teen years, keen on taking their own children to recreate old precious memories.

Furthermore, with the rise of the 'kinder cohort' i.e., adults turning towards childlike joys to let off steam, childhood haunts are once again gaining prominence in people's consciousness.

Pooja Vegesna, a Telugu influencer, perfectly embodies the cult of nostalgia as she revisits Narsapuram on the Godavari River for a boating adventure, embracing her inner child. Her reel captures the essence of this trend, with the caption "explore old places, make new memories." Actress Priyanka Chopra has often also spoken about her keenness to drop by her childhood place in Bareilly, epitomizing even global trotters' desire to find their way back home. From leveraging travel to solely explore who they are, these emerging travelers now are utilizing vacations as yet another way of reinforcing their selves and identities.

AND HERE WE ARE



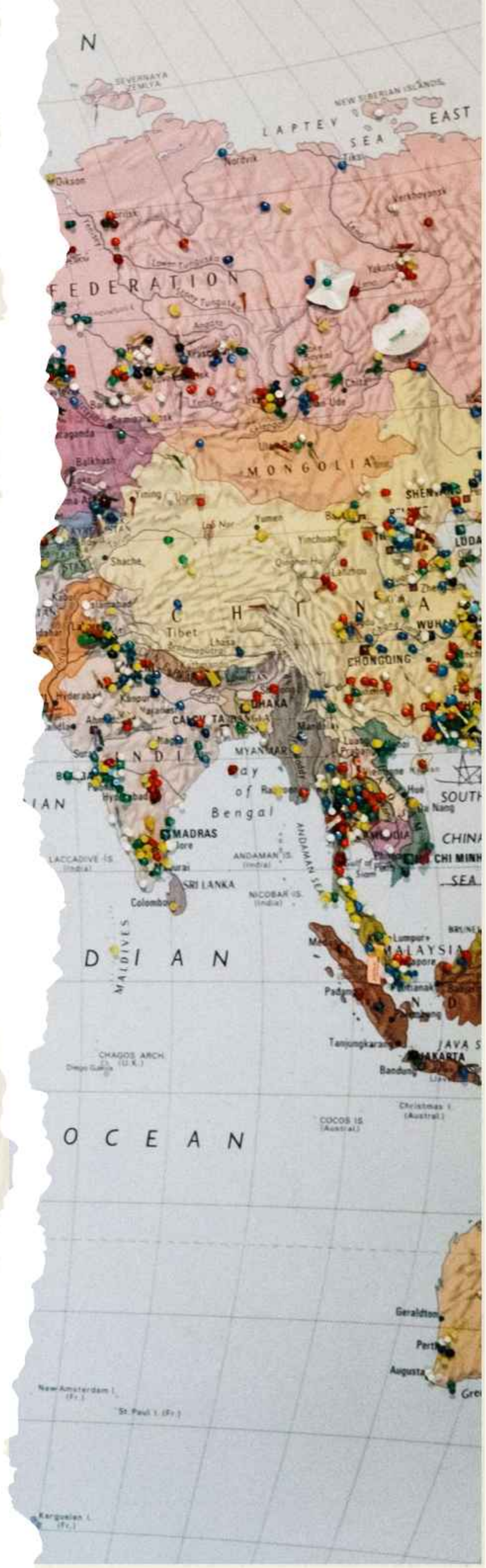
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