2026 Tourism Day Summit

POCONO MOUNTAINS VISITORS BUREAU

BREAKOUT SESSION 2B

TOURISM TRENDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Presented by

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AMERICA 250 PA

SESSION
2B

POCONO MOUNTAINS℠
VISITORS BUREAU

2026 Tourism Trends on Social Media

Hello, I’m Kevin…

- 15+ years in social media and photography
- 5 years as the Social Media Manager at the PMVB
- Manage and maintain our DAM and Media Hub
- Manage and oversee our Pocono Experience Passports

2026 Tourism Trends

2026 Vibe Check

Travelers are over-stimulated.

They aren't looking for a "vacation"; they are looking for a "re-set."

Source: International Trade Administration

2026 Traveler Wishlist

Destinations renowned for breathtaking natural landscapes, vibrant local culture, and thrilling outdoor adventures are on traveler’s wish lists.

Natural Landscapes

Local Culture

Outdoor Adventures

That’s us…

POCONO MOUNTAINS

How are travelers “resetting”

- Meaningful travel has emerged as the key travel trend and is shaping 2026 and beyond.

- From off-peak exploration and outdoor restoration to cultural heritage and community-led experiences, travelers are seeking journeys that feel intentional, immersive, and aligned with their values.

Source: Tourism Cares, Inc.

What’s trending with travel…

"Off-the-Beaten-Path" & Rural Escapes

The "Big City" vacation has lost its luster.

About 84% of Gen Z and Millennials now prefer smaller cities or rural areas over major hubs.

- The Motive: Seeking "breathing room," lower costs, and avoiding overtourism.
- The Vibe: Local bakeries, quiet lakes, and "hidden gems" that haven't been "ruined" by viral social media crowds yet.

Off-the-Beaten-Path

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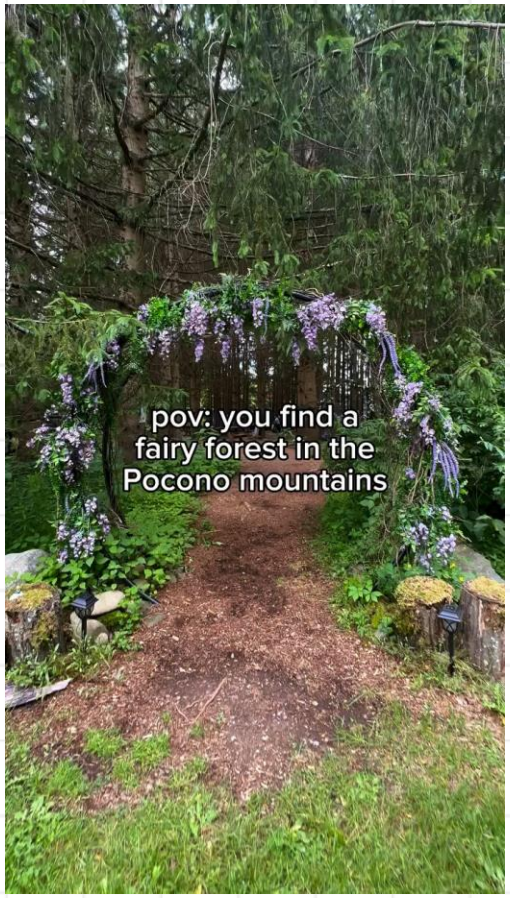

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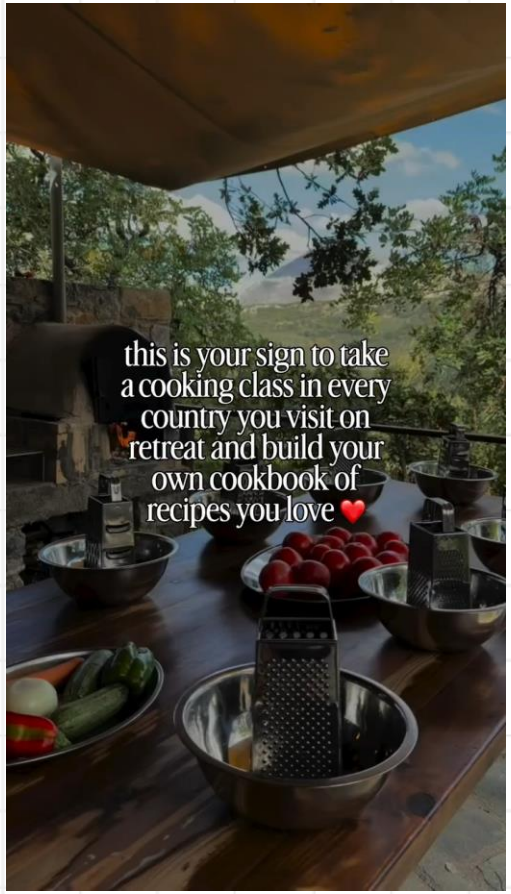
Culinary Curiosity

Culinary travel is heating up with classes, workshops, and interactive food and drink experiences.

- 50% have planned entire trips around a specific restaurant or a viral food event.
- Surge in coffee culture tours.
- Hyper-local and hands-on experiences.

Culinary Curiosity



iamfit4travel

georgeandcris

wheres_ivy_

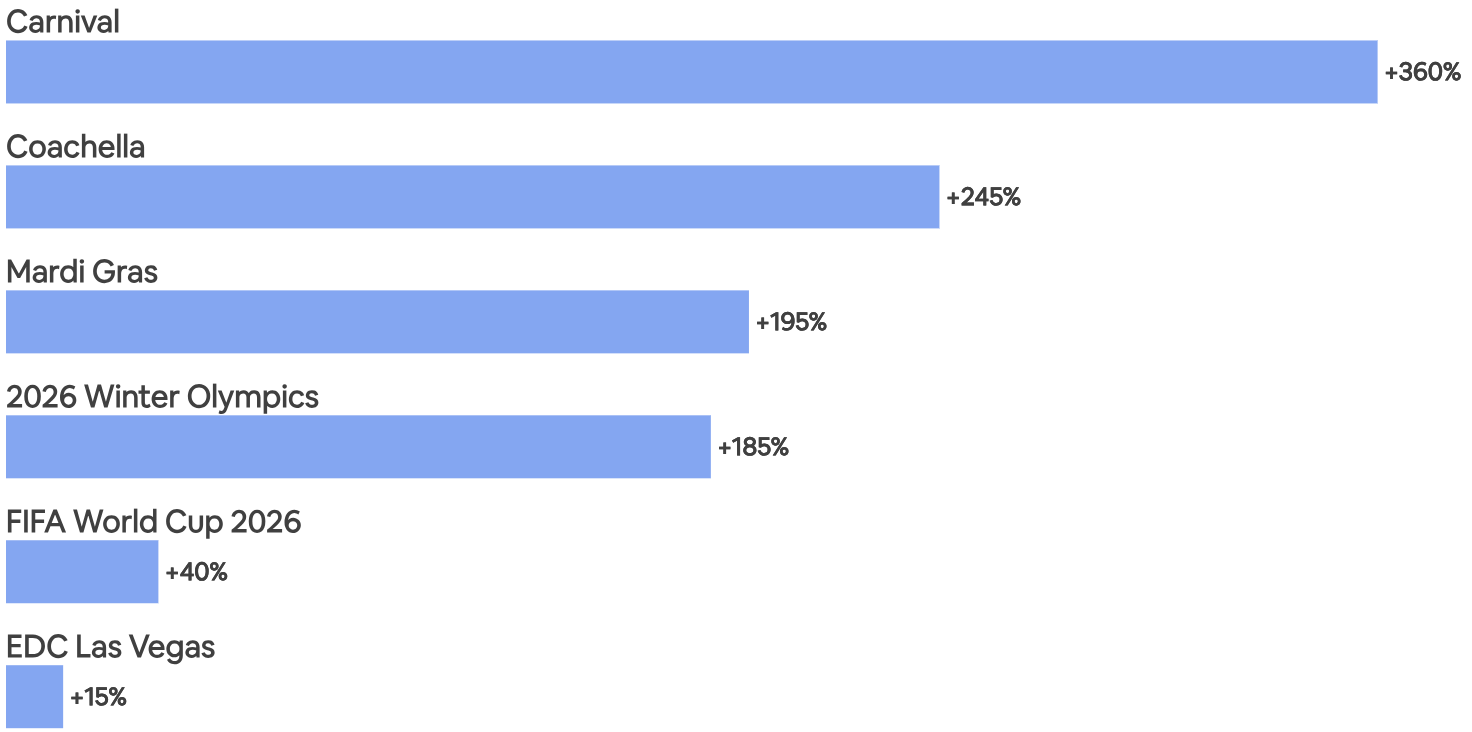
"Mainstage" Journeys

- 65 percent of the top-searched 2026 travel dates and cities align with major global events such as the Winter Olympics, America 250, NFL Draft, and FIFA World Cup, with event tourism showing no signs of slowing.

Source: Airbnb

"Mainstage" Journeys

Increase in searches for destinations during major event dates in 2026, compared to the same destinations and calendar dates in 2025.



Source: Airbnb

Intentional Travel

Travelers are now more intentional with when and where they are booking.

- Choosing intimate, authentic experiences with locals.
- Traveling responsibly and sustainably by supporting
  local merchants and eliminating waste.
- Booking shoulder season travel rather than contending with big crowds at busy hotspots.

Intentional Travel

kikokauai

hammettshotel

Gen Z travelers are fueling a trend in 1-2 day getaways, favoring quick, high-energy and culture-packed trips over longer vacations.

The Digital Detox

- Travel content creators predict that places with awe-inspiring scenery, lively local culture, and exhilarating outdoor adventures will be the most exciting destinations to visit in 2026.
- The trend of “hushpitality” to strip away all that noise on vacation.
- Also known as the "Dead-Zoning" Trend

Source: Airbnb and Odysseys

Seriously… Touch Some Grass!

Travelers are stepping away from screens, with interest in U.S. national parks surging, and bookings for nature and outdoor experiences outpacing all other categories.

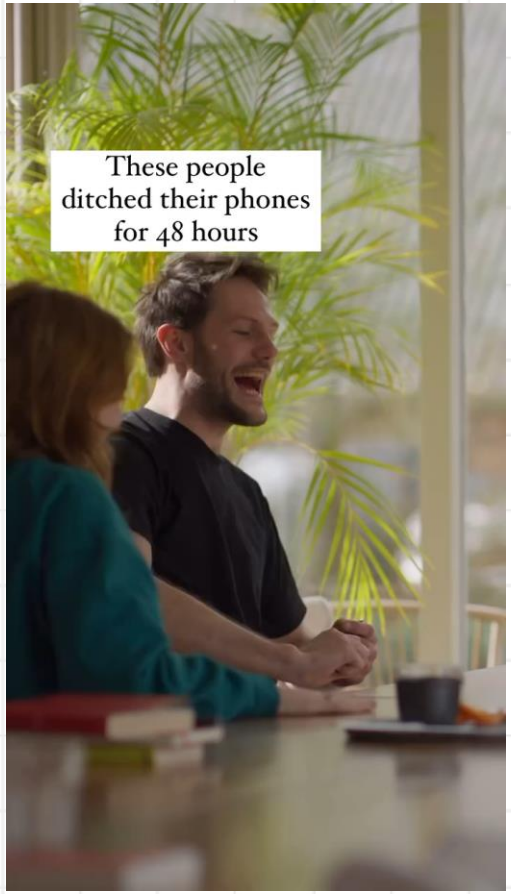
Digital Detox Search Trends

- Searches for stays “near a national park” are up 35 percent in the U.S. in 2026
- Nature and outdoors experiences are the top booked experience category.
- The social movement to “touch grass” has over 97.6K posts with #TouchGrass hashtag on TikTok.

Source: Airbnb

Digital Detox

theoffline_club



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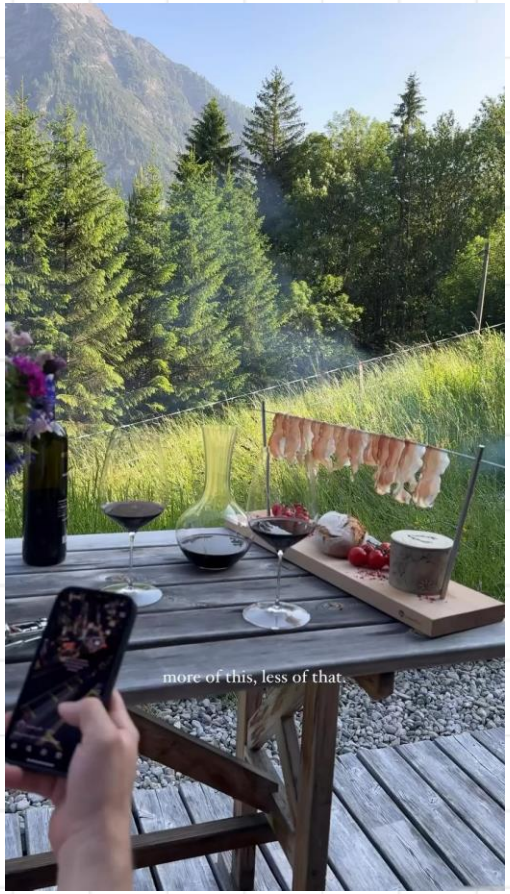


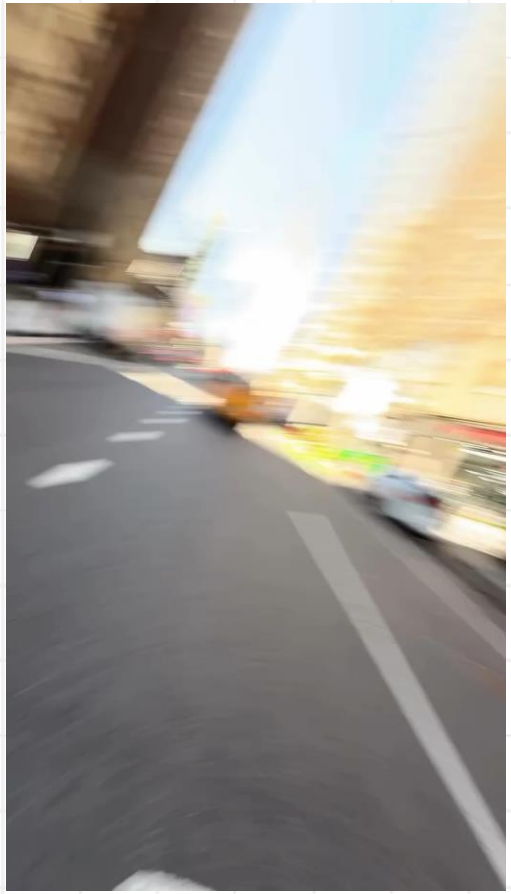
Solo Travel

Solo adventurers are prioritizing self-discovery in many smaller destinations.

- Self-discovery over relationship status.
- “me time” replaces “plus one"
- These travelers are drawn to scenic escapes offering a slower pace and soulful reflection.
- No agenda, no waiting for others, always on “you” time.

Solo Travel

thekatieromero



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Vacation Dupes

Affordable, less-crowded alternative destinations offering similar experiences to popular, overpriced hotspots.

Travel Twin or Second Cities

- Niagara Falls vs. Niagara of Pennsylvania.
- New England towns vs. Charming Small Towns of
  Jim Thorpe, Milford, Honesdale, and Stroudsburg.
- Luxury close to home
  at Woodloch, French Manor, Mount Airy, Skytop,
  The Swiftwater.
- Disney vs. indoor waterpark.

AI-Validated Discovery

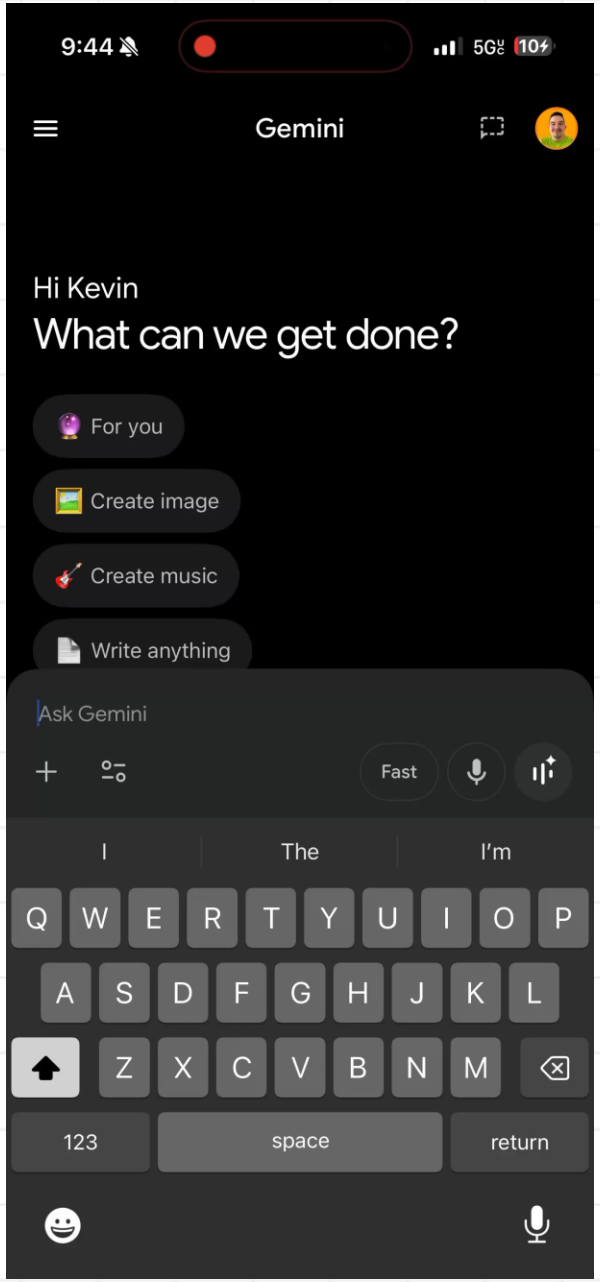
While social media (TikTok/Instagram) still sparks the idea, AI is now the "validator."

- The "Dual Engine": 91% of travelers use AI to filter those viral dreams into reality… checking affordability, logistics, and building hyper-personalized, "dead-zoned" (offline-friendly) itineraries.

- Efficiency: They use AI to find "mini-journeys" (1–2 days) that maximize their limited PTO.

GPT Powered Plan

- Share your timeframe, what you like, ask about hidden gems, refine current search, and plan a budget.
- Update your search as you go.



Other trending travel…

- “lore chasing”
  seeking unique stories/adventures
- “set-jetting”
  to filming/book locations,
  and quiet, crowd-avoiding luxury
- “soft adventures”
  active, yet accessible,
  nature-rich experiences
- “ancestry & heritage ”
  discover personal roots
- “hidden season”
  off-season or shoulder season
- “cool-cations”
  rise of fall and winter itineraries and
  cool climate locations
- “shelf-ie souvenirs”
  collecting experiences, not things

Questions?

Connect on LinkedIn
or email kfurst@poconos.org

Social Media Updates You Need to Know!

High Level…

- Social users are already experiencing AI-fatigue.
- A view now only counts when your post is stopped on and interacted with.
- Community > Followers.
- Rise of Episodic Content.
- Shift to Social SEO.
- Video still king. Hook in 3 seconds. Deliver value in 20. Earn trust in under 60.
- Carousel posts are ranking higher in engagement.
- Quality over quantity.
- AI for ideas, not the final post.

Instagram Updates

- More reach using Edits.
  - Teleprompter, captions, templates, storyboarding,
    AI-effects, etc.
- Prioritize original content and penalize "unoriginal" posts.
- Human speech within the first three seconds see a 25% increase in 10-second retention.
- Rearrange Carousel Posts after publishing.
- Thumbnail post editing for Profile Grids.
- Original content guidelines.

Threads Updates

- Dear Algo to customize your algorithm.
- Post directly to Instagram Stories from Threads.
- Threads surpasses X in daily active users.

Facebook Updates

- DMA’s are out, Comscore Markets are in – June 22.
- Prioritize original content and penalize "unoriginal" posts.
- All videos are now Reels.

TikTok Updates

- TikTok now under U.S. ownership in the United States only.
- More than 40% of U.S. users use TikTok as a search engine.
- Rolling out a local feed in the U.S. to discover what’s nearby.

LinkedIn Updates

- Auto scan for AI created text posts.
- Blocking automated comments.
- Video on the platform increasing in reach and engagement.