



# MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL

The new top travel trend

# Introduction

Travel trends change, and the new top travel trend among Canadian travellers is multi-generational travel. With the baby boomer generation retiring in large numbers and wanting to spend more time with family, and with millennials having an increasing desire to travel and explore the world, more families are choosing to vacation together.

The following takes a look at the new top travel trend of multi-generational travel, the reasons for the emergence of family vacations, multi-generational travel preferences, travel insurance considerations and tips for planning a multi-generational family vacation.



# THE NEW TOP TRAVEL TREND



Multi-generational travel is the new top travel trend. An increasing number of families are choosing to plan vacations and travel together. In the past, grandparents might head south for the winter, and parents might take the kids on a summer vacation. Today, families are choosing to travel as a group: grandparents, brothers, sisters, cousins and grandkids are all taking part in family vacations. This trend is changing the travel industry, as resorts, airlines, hotels and travel agents must adjust their travel offerings to accommodate the larger family vacations.

The Conference Board of Canada believes the growth in multi-generational travel is directly impacted by the baby boomer generation and an aging population that is living a healthy and longer life:<sup>1</sup>

“At the heart of this trend is the Baby Boom generation, of whom four in ten are grandparents. This population segment values travel and doesn’t consider a vacation a luxury, but rather a ‘must have.’ They are living longer and staying active later into life. This group is also wealthier than their predecessors, often allowing them to be the ‘financiers’ of the family vacation. As the number of grandparents continues to increase, multi-generational travel will also grow in size and influence.”

Families are also looking for new travel experiences. The standard family vacation of the past is no longer desired by most families. Canadians are more able and willing to explore, venture farther away from home, and they do so with the entire family.

“Forget solo travel. The big trend now is to bring the entire family along for an unforgettable adventure. Families are forgoing the family vacations of the past, where quality time was spent parked at the beach, and instead are looking for transformative experiences that the whole family can share,” says AFAR editor Jen Murphy.<sup>2</sup>

Murphy expects the trend of multi-generational travel to continue to grow in the years to come, particularly with a focus on educational travel experiences.

## ABOUT MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL

Multi-generational travel is on the rise. In their research, Preferred Hotel Group found that “40% of all active leisure travelers have taken at least one multi-generational trip (defined as a trip of parties of three or more generations) during the previous 12 months.”<sup>3</sup>

Jeri Clausing of Travel Weekly summarizes the key findings of the Preferred Hotel Group survey:

Multigenerational vacations now represent half of all vacations taken by both grandparents and parents. While the party consisted of grandparents, parents and their children on 44% of such trips, on the remaining 56% the definition of multigenerational groups has expanded to include siblings (31%), nephews/nieces (20%), and friends (20%).<sup>4</sup>

Extended family trips are a way to get the whole family together and celebrate each other. Many families live farther apart, making multi-generational travel an opportunity for families to come together beyond traditional family reunions and during the holidays.

One of the biggest reasons why families plan trips of this nature is to celebrate family: 77% of trips were associated with a life event. Specifically, the life events included:<sup>5</sup>

- Milestone birthday (50%)
- Milestone anniversary (40%)
- Family reunions (39%)
- Weddings (37%)

Other events, such as engagements, new jobs and promotions, and retirement, are also reasons for family travel.

## PROFILE OF A MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVELLER

Based on the Preferred Hotel Group survey, the general makeup of multi-generational travellers was as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- 55% women and 45% men
- 74% married
- Mean age of 47 years old
- 67% with a college degree or higher academic qualification
- 41% with a household income \$100,000 or higher
- More frequent travellers than non–multi-generational control group (4.4 trips per year and 3.6 trips per year, respectively)
- More likely to travel internationally than non–multi-generational control group

## REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL TRAVEL

Multi-generational leisure travel has become a big market for several reasons:

### 1. Baby boomers are retiring

Baby boomers are healthier and wealthier than the previous generation, and they are retiring at a rapid pace in Canada. With retirement comes more free time, disposable income and a desire to see extended family and travel. Baby boomers see travel as a must rather than a nice thing to do, and for many, their trip of a lifetime includes the entire family, making family travel a top priority.

How many baby boomers are there? The Conference Board of Canada estimates that:<sup>7</sup>

- Between 2014 and 2019, the number of Canadians between 55 and 64 years of age will increase by 12%
- The number of people aged 65 and older will increase by 20%
- By 2017, there will be more seniors in Canada than children

### 2. Families live farther apart

While it used to be common for families to live down the block or around the corner, today they live farther apart. It's now common for families to live in different cities, provinces and even countries.

Family travel is a great opportunity to get the family together, enjoy a vacation and create family memories. Multi-generational travel has become the best choice for families to come together in one place.

A recent AARP/CARP survey<sup>8</sup> provided some insight into how far apart extended families are living today and the desire of grandparents to see their extended family:

- One-third of grandparents live within 40 km of their grandchildren
- Three-quarters of grandparents wish they could see their grandchildren more often
- "Reconnecting with friends and family" was found to be the main motivation for leisure travel

With grandparents often being the driving force behind family vacations and visiting family, and with them having more disposable income and free time, booking a family vacation is the perfect opportunity to get the family together.

### 3. There is a greater need to get away

People are increasingly feeling the need to get away from their fast-paced jobs and lives. Technology has eliminated the divide between public and private life, and evenings and weekends are no longer solely set aside for family. Other lifestyle and worldly factors have also helped people reassess what they value, placing family at the top of the list:

"The recession and other worldly concerns have only affirmed the need for families to reconnect. Fully 84% of the multi-generational travel surveyed agreed that 'these difficult times have helped me focus on the things that matter most in life.'<sup>9</sup> Multi-generational travel allows people to get away and see the family at the same time.

### 4. Growth of destination weddings and milestone celebrations

The way people celebrate weddings and other life milestones has changed dramatically. Today, it's estimated that about one-quarter of weddings are destination weddings.<sup>10</sup> People are also more willing to go all-out for milestone birthdays, retirements and other life events. The backyard party has now been replaced with a trip with the entire family.

"The older the boomers get, the more family travel they're doing," says Chris Fair, Resonance Consultancy president.<sup>11</sup> He adds that "a lot of that travel is planned around milestone events" and that the market is about "trading memories, convenience and value."

## THE ROLE OF MILLENNIALS

The millennial generation also has a lot to do with the emergence of multi-generational travel. Millennials enjoy travelling. They also do their research and put more time and effort into their vacation planning, and they want to travel with the entire family. A study reported that 91% of millennials stated they try to take a multi-generational trip each year.<sup>12</sup>

Millennials are also more likely to get professional help to plan trips. "Millennials are also among the highest groups using agents for multigenerational trips because the logistics of planning such a vacation are complicated, and they recognize the benefits of tapping into a professional's knowledge when planning a trip to a destination for the first time," says Lindsey Ueberroth, president and CEO of Preferred Hotel Group.<sup>13</sup>

There is no question that millennials continue to be more of a force in the travel industry. What makes them unique is that they are a "much more ethnically diverse group than other generations and so are more interested in international travel," says Fair.<sup>14</sup> He added that millennials are more interested in exploring options beyond resorts, they plan trips based on their interests and they are more likely to travel with friends and family in organized groups.



# MULTI- GENERATIONAL TRAVEL PREFERENCES

Multi-generational travellers' vacation preferences are not unlike those of other travellers. However, they are more willing to travel farther, and they are more specific about their travel needs.

## WHERE FAMILIES ARE TRAVELLING

Multi-generational travellers are going all over the world, and they plan to do so in the future. About one-third of people who travelled internationally vacationed with the family in Europe.<sup>15</sup> Also, Canadians 55 and older are approximately 40% more likely to travel overseas for leisure than their younger counterparts.<sup>16</sup>

Here is a breakdown of where multi-generational travellers plan to travel:<sup>17</sup>

- Europe: 60% (4% more than non-multi-generational travellers)
- Caribbean: 56% (3% more)
- Oceania: 35% (4% more)
- Mexico: 25% (1% more)
- Latin America: 23% (same)
- Asia: 23% (same)
- Africa: 15% (2% more)

Only 10% of multi-generational travellers stated they are not interested in travelling internationally within the next two years.

In terms of trips to Canada and the United States:

- 43% are interested in travelling within Canada<sup>18</sup>
- 53% are interested in travelling to California
- 50% to Florida
- 45% to Hawaii<sup>19</sup>

## DESIRED TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Above all else, people want a vacation spot to unwind and relax in. Relaxation was at the top of the list for 88% of multi-generational travellers surveyed.<sup>20</sup>

What other attributes are these travellers looking for when planning a trip?

- Beautiful scenery (88%)
- A travel destination they had not visited before (83%)
- A beach vacation experience (71%)
- The chance to try different cuisines (69%)
- Outdoor adventure (49%)
- Snorkelling or scuba diving (42%)
- Water sports (33%)
- Whitewater rafting/kayaking (31%)<sup>21</sup>

## TRIP PLANNING PREFERENCES

When planning family trips, multi-generational travellers consider value to be an important factor when booking accommodations. Value, location, previous experience and reputation are the core considerations for these travellers. Value for the price and room rate were ranked as the most important decision factors by 92% of travellers, followed by hotel location (91%), previous experience with a hotel chain (89%) and reputation of the hotel (84%).<sup>22</sup>

In terms of travel booking habits, 19% of multi-generational travellers have used a travel agent at least once in the previous 12 months.<sup>23</sup> For Canadians planning outbound trips, 46% intend to use a travel agent to book their trip,<sup>24</sup> and travellers are more likely to use a travel agent for longer trips to Europe or Asia than for trips within Canada or the US.

When researching trip options, "87 per cent plan to use the internet to research their destination and compare prices. In addition, 79 per cent plan to book some or all of their vacation online."<sup>25</sup>

The most commonly used websites for researching destinations, comparing prices, and booking flights, accommodations and trip activities include Expedia.ca, Travelocity.ca, iTravel2000, Selloffvacations.ca and Flightcentre.<sup>26</sup>

Many multi-generational travellers are also active in the online travel community: 17% have posted content on a travel blog, 13% have made travel decisions based on information found on social media sites and 37% have visited an online community to explore travel options. However, friends and family remain the main source for getting travel ideas.<sup>27</sup>



# TIPS FOR PLANNING A MULTI- GENERATIONAL FAMILY VACATION

Planning a multi-generational family vacation can be a challenge. The inherent logistics of booking travel plans for multiple family members, all with unique travel needs and wants, makes it more complicated than the average vacation.

When booking a family vacation, you need to consider:

- Budget and financing
- Availability, vacation time and best times to travel
- Accommodations that will suit a large group
- Special needs (children, family members with medical conditions)
- Where each traveller lives
- Balancing the travel desires and needs of all family members

Here are some great tips to help book a trip the entire family can enjoy:

## 1. Plan ahead and don't rush

Getting everyone on board can be a challenge. With so many different agendas, schedules and travel preferences to consider, there is a potential for conflict if you try to rush your travel planning or force the issue. Give your family enough time to prepare for the trip properly. Take things one step at a time, and consult a travel expert if you run into planning issues.

## 2. Get everyone involved

Taking a democratic approach is best. If possible, discuss travel plans with everyone in a large group. Ask everyone what they want to see and do, and where they want to visit. Create a list of everyone's preferences and then narrow it down based on what your family wants to do. This way, all travellers feel they were part of the planning process, even if they don't get to do everything they want on the trip.

## 3. Plan something for everyone

Try to plan something for everyone. Remember, this doesn't mean everyone has to participate in every activity. On certain days, you can break up the family into groups based on the activities they want to do that day. For example, some travellers may go hiking while the others spend the day at the beach. Or you take the kids to an amusement park while the grandparents go on a guided tour. As long as everyone gets to do something they like, you should be able to keep everyone happy.

## 4. Be realistic

From the start, try to be realistic about all aspects of your trip – length of stay, budget, number of activities planned, accommodations, travel times and any other aspects of your trip. Trying to cram too many people in a hotel room or planning an almost impossible list of activities could take away from the enjoyment of your trip.

### 5. Plan time together and apart

While the goal of the trip is to spend some quality time with your entire family, it doesn't mean that you have to spend every moment with them, and you shouldn't feel obligated to. It's okay to book some time apart or only with your immediate family.

### 6. Be clear on finances

Always consider everyone's budget before planning the trip. Make sure everyone is clear on who pays for what and when. Discuss all family members' roles in not only paying for transportation and accommodations, but also for meals, activities, trips and other travel costs. Arguing about money is not something you want to do on vacation.

### 7. Don't overcrowd the list of travellers

More is not always merrier when planning a family vacation. Remember that the more people are included in the trip, the more difficult planning and logistics become. Every family is different, so choose a number of travellers that best suits your family.

### 8. Consider health and safety for all travellers

The health and safety of family members should always be the top priority when travelling. You must cater to the needs of the kids, grandparents and anyone with a medical condition. Ask your travel agent or travel insurer about options for travel insurance that may include coverage for pre-existing conditions to ensure everyone has access to emergency medical care should they need it.



# TRAVEL INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Family vacation travel insurance is an important part of your trip planning. The risk of travel issues increases with the number of people in your group. Here are some tips to help get the best travel insurance coverage for your family vacation:

- **Customize travel insurance based on your trip:** If you are staying at a resort, then all-inclusive travel insurance is your best option. If you are planning a family cruise, then cruise travel insurance is worth considering. Customize your travel insurance policy based on family needs and trip details.
- **Get family travel insurance:** Depending on what time of year you travel, you may be able to obtain a family rate, which would help save money on your travel insurance. Be sure to confirm who would be included in the family rate. Usually these types of plans would not include grandparents, and aunts and uncles.
- **Consider an annual plan:** If your family takes multiple trips per year, then investing in an annual travel insurance policy will save you money and time when planning your vacation.

# Conclusion

Multi-generational travel is growing quickly in popularity and continues to represent a significant shift in the way families travel. With the baby boomer generation retiring, and with the growing number of Canadians who have more time and disposable income, planning multi-generational family vacations will become a larger focus of the travel industry.

Multi-generational family trips are changing the dynamics of travel, and it's important to consider all members of the family when planning this kind of trip. Expect travel agencies, resorts and travel companies to reflect this emerging trend by offering more family-friendly and group travel planning options.





- <sup>1</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. *Outbound Canada. February 2015*. A monthly report on Canadian outbound travel. Page 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Travel Channel. *Travel Trends for 2015*. <http://www.travelchannel.com/interests/hot-topics/articles/travel-trends-for-2015> (accessed April 30, 2015).
- <sup>3</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. *Multigenerational Travel: The Next Powerful Growth Opportunity in the Travel Industry*. 2011. Page 1. <https://preferredhotels.com/pdfs/uploads/B2B/MultigenerationalWhitePaper.FINAL.pdf> (accessed May 1, 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> Jeri Clausing. Millennials help drive multigenerational travel. *Travel Weekly: The Travel Industry's Trusted Voice*, February 18, 2015. <http://www.travelweekly.com/Luxury-Travel/Insights/Millennials-help-drive-multigenerational-travel> (accessed May 6, 2015).
- <sup>5</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. *Outbound Canada. February 2015*. Page 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. Page 3.
- <sup>7</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. *Outbound Canada. February 2015*. Page 3.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. Page 2.
- <sup>10</sup> Susan Breslow Sardone. *Wedding Statistics and Honeymoon Facts & Figures*. About Travel, updated April 28, 2015. <http://honeymoons.about.com/cs/eurogen1/a/weddingstats.htm> (accessed May 5, 2015).
- <sup>11</sup> Robin Amster. *Six Travel Trends to Watch in 2014 & Beyond*. *Travel Market Report: Voice of the Travel Professional*, November 14, 2013. <http://www.travelmarketreport.com/articles/Six-Travel-Trends-to-Watch-in-2014-Beyond> (accessed May 5, 2015).
- <sup>12</sup> Jeri Clausing.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Robin Amster.
- <sup>15</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. Page 3.
- <sup>16</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. *Outbound Canada. February 2015*. Page 3.
- <sup>17</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. Page 3.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. Page 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. Page 4.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. Page 4.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid. Page 4.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. Page 5.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. Page 6.
- <sup>24</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. *Outlook for Outbound Leisure Travel. Summer 2015*. Page 4.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. Page 5.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. Page 5.
- <sup>27</sup> Preferred Hotel Group. Page 6.

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