

DRY TOURISM TREND REPORT

JUL. – SEP. 25



SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dry tourism, or alcohol-free travel, is emerging as a significant trend within the global travel and hospitality industry. Propelled by the wellness movement and changing social values, dry tourism appeals to a broad spectrum of travellers, particularly Millennials, Gen Z, spiritual seekers, and health-conscious individuals who prioritise intentional living, mindfulness, and immersive, sober-friendly experiences.

This shift represents a broader change in consumer behaviour toward wellness-oriented, transformational travel, emphasising physical and mental health, cultural authenticity, and personal growth over indulgence. Hospitality providers, travel brands, and destinations are responding by reimagining experiences, services, and offerings that align with the sober-curious movement. From wellness retreats and spiritual journeys to cultural adventures and innovative non-alcoholic menus, alcohol-free travel is no longer a niche; it's becoming a mainstream expectation among modern travellers. Brands that embrace this shift stand to gain from a growing market that values clarity, connection, and conscious consumption.

KEY FINDINGS

Demographic Drivers

- Millennials and Gen Z are leading the shift, seeking **health, balance, and meaningful travel**.
- Religious and spiritual travellers, as well as the health-conscious, are core segments embracing sober tourism.

Wellness & Retreat Travel

- Alcohol-free wellness retreats are in high demand, aligning with interest in **yoga, detox, and mindfulness**.
- Travellers are seeking **transformation** and **personal healing** over escapism.

Spiritual & Mindful Journeys

- Dry tourism supports **inner peace and cultural connection** through religious pilgrimages and mindfulness retreats.
- These experiences reflect the growing expectation for **soul-enriching, sober travel** options.

Cultural and Adventure-Based Travel

- Alcohol-free itineraries enable **deeper authenticity and active participation** in cultural and adventure travel.
- Some destinations are seeing increased interest in **non-party-based experiences**.

Hospitality Innovation

- Hotels, bars, airlines, and lounges are offering **elevated non-alcoholic beverages** to meet sober-curious demand.
- Premium zero-proof offerings reflect the move toward **intentional, inclusive luxury**.

Brand Campaigns & Market Response

- Brands are embracing sobriety in their **marketing campaigns**, aligning with cultural values around wellness and mindful living.
- Sober culture is influencing **product development, guest services, and brand storytelling**.



REPORT OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE

This trend report explores trends in the tourism sector, offering insights that reflect the latest developments. The goal is to support informed decision-making across the industry by highlighting relevant and timely information.

METHODOLOGY

This trend report is based on desktop research conducted to identify and analyse emerging trends in the tourism sector. The research involved a comprehensive review of a broad range of credible sources, including:

- Industry reports and market analyses
- Reputable news and media outlets
- Travel industry blogs
- Social media platforms for real-time sentiment and trend insights

To ensure the relevance and accuracy of the findings, all identified trends were validated using Trend Hunter. This platform utilises a three-dimensional evaluation matrix to assess each trend against the following criteria:

- **Freshness** – Measures how recent the content is, ensuring it reflects the latest developments and market conditions.
- **Activity** – Evaluates the level of user engagement, based on metrics such as shares, comments, and interactions across digital platforms.
- **Popularity** – Assesses the trend's relative appeal by analysing how often it is selected compared to other topics within the same category.




This structured approach ensures that the trends presented are timely, data-driven, and aligned with current industry dynamics, providing valuable insights for stakeholders across the tourism sector.



Alcohol-Free Wellness and Retreat Experiences

Trend: Wellness retreats are emphasising sobriety, mental clarity, and physical health. Demand for alcohol-free environments aligns with rising interest in yoga, detox programs, and mindfulness.

Insight: This shift reflects broader social trends, including the sober curious movement, a growing focus on mental health, and a desire for transformational travel. Travellers are no longer just looking for an escape—they want personal growth and healing.



Bali’s Firefly Retreat and Naya Yoga Retreat Centre offer yoga-centred sober experiences, herbal tonics, Balinese cultural immersion, and strict no-alcohol policies

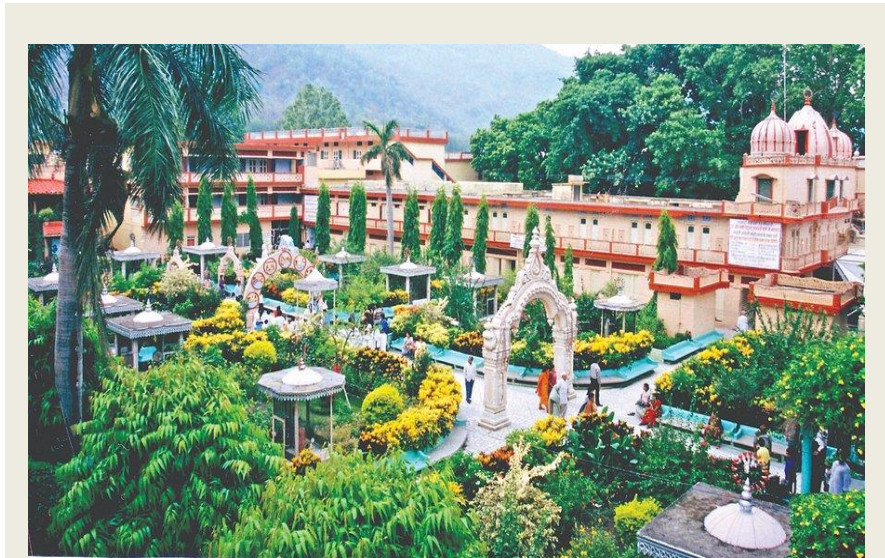


Costa Rica’s Pura Vida Retreat combines jungle yoga, sober surf classes, and restorative nature-based wellness in alcohol-free settings

Spiritual and Mindful Journeys in Alcohol-Free Settings

Trend: Spiritual travel is increasingly being embraced as a form of dry tourism, offering deeply reflective, alcohol-free experiences. Whether it's a religious pilgrimage or a mindfulness retreat, these journeys prioritise inner peace, self-discovery, and cultural connection, all in a setting that supports clarity and sobriety.


Insight: This trend reflects a larger shift toward transformational travel, where personal enrichment, healing, and spiritual depth outweigh indulgence or escapism. For destinations and travel brands, offering sober, soul-enriching experiences is becoming not just a niche offering, but a growing expectation.




Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh, India: daily yoga, meditation, Ganga aarti, Ayurvedic treatments in a sober, vegetarian environment



Anandashram, Kerala, India: offers vegetarian, abstinent, service-oriented living in a contemplative retreat setting



Destinations like Taiwan offer halal-friendly experiences, complemented by comprehensive itineraries provided by the tourism board for travellers.

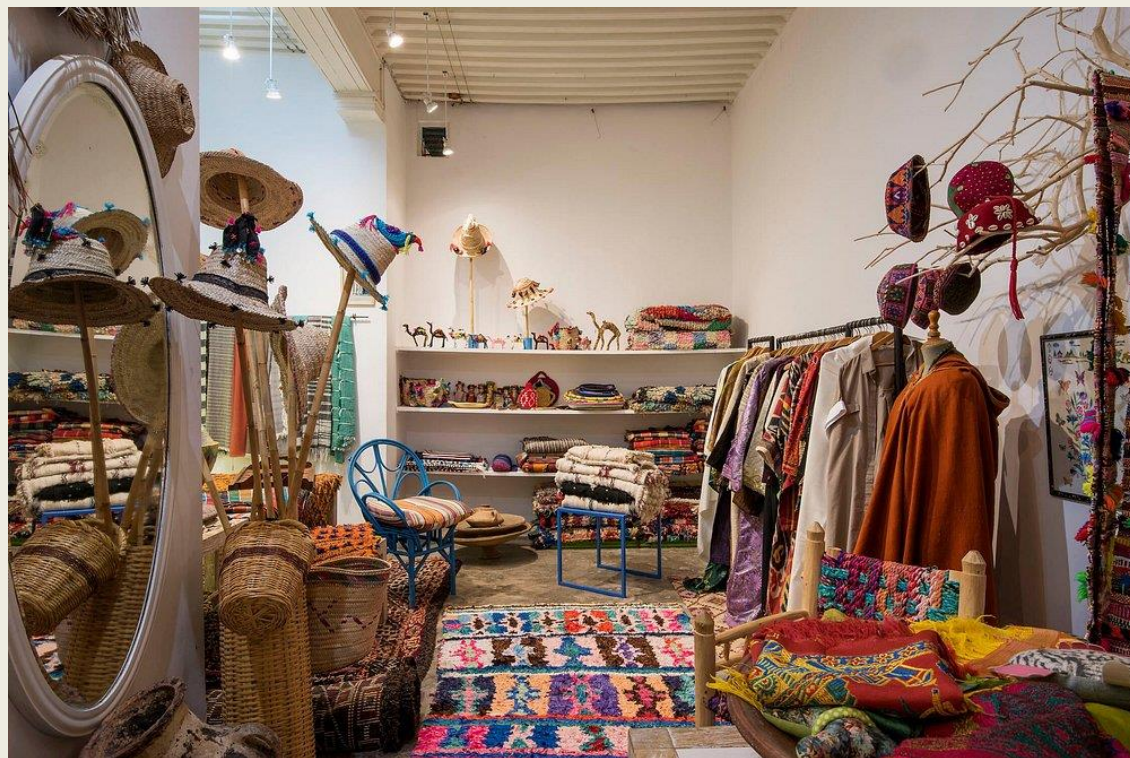


Ashram (Shantivanam) in Tamil Nadu: a Christian-Vedanta fusion retreat emphasizing vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol and drugs

Cultural & Adventure Travel Without Alcohol

Trend: Modern travellers are prioritising authenticity, cultural immersion, and purposeful engagement, and alcohol-free travel is increasingly seen as a gateway to deeper, more meaningful experiences.

Insight: Travellers craving authenticity, local culture, and physical engagement are increasingly opting for alcohol-free experiences that facilitate deeper connection and clarity. This highlights a shift from passive consumption to active participation in tourism. Alcohol-free travel isn't just about abstinence; it's about being fully present. Contiki tours report that Gen Z travellers are open to alcohol-free itineraries, preferring hikes, food and craft experiences, cultural immersion over nightlife in destinations like India and South Korea.



Morocco, sober travel groups explore cities like Fes without nightlife distraction, focusing on heritage sites, guided tours, traditional food, gardens, hiking, and mindful dining experiences at places like Le Jardin des Biehn and Café Clock Byrdie Wander Sober.

Hospitality Innovation & Alcohol-Free Menus

Trend: The sober-curious movement is reshaping hospitality. To meet growing demand, hotels, bars, airlines, and lounges are expanding their menus with creative, premium non-alcoholic offerings that rival traditional options in both taste and presentation.

Insight: This trend reflects a growing shift in social values where inclusivity, well-being, and intentional consumption take centre stage. By embracing elevated non-alcoholic options, hospitality brands are not just keeping up, they're redefining the experience of indulgence.



Munich, a German city known for its famous Oktoberfest beer festival, is introducing its first alcohol-free Biergarten. This new establishment, Die Null (The Zero), is strategically located near the central railway station in Bavaria's capital, providing easy access to commuters from neighbouring cities and towns. It aims to cater to a growing population that prefers non-alcoholic beverages and a more relaxed social atmosphere.



PROXIES, a premium non-alcoholic wine club, caters to the sober curious, non-drinkers, and wine enthusiasts. Unlike traditional de-alcoholised wines, which often compromise flavour, PROXIES offers a unique approach by crafting sophisticated blends from the ground up.

These blends incorporate high-quality ingredients such as varietal wine grapes from European vineyards, premium teas, ripe fruits, and whole spices, resulting in complex, flavourful beverages without alcohol.

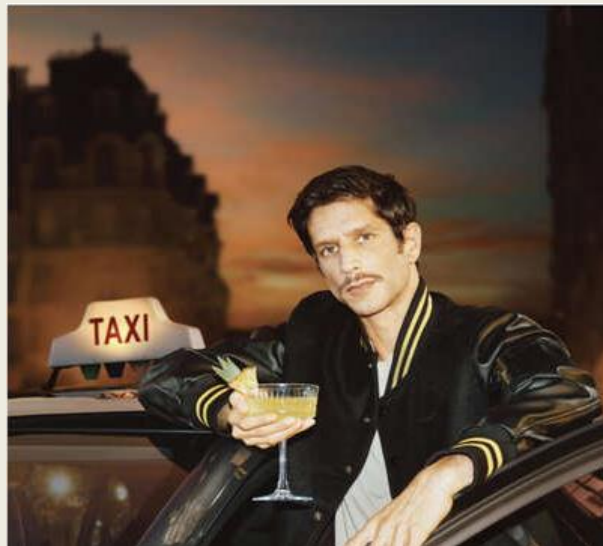
Trend Alert: Brands Embracing Sober Culture

Trend: As consumers increasingly seek alcohol-free experiences, brands are responding with campaigns that celebrate and promote sober living. This shift reflects a growing cultural movement toward wellness, mental clarity, and inclusive social experiences.

Insight: The rise of the "sober curious" consumer is reshaping branding and marketing strategies. Forward-thinking companies are tapping into this trend not only to stay relevant but to champion health-conscious, diverse, and value-driven communities.



'Maison Perrier Chic' has unveiled its 'Sober Chic' campaign, celebrating the rise of mindful, stylish lifestyles with its new line of sophisticated non-alcoholic mocktails. Launching during Dry January, this bold initiative transforms alcohol-free socialising into a year-round emblem of elegance and taste. The campaign spotlights individuals in inspiring professions, from pilots to surgeons, embracing 'Sober Chic' with effortless French glamour. Launching in France and expanding globally.



For Sober October, Free AF gathered athletes, influencers, and artists to normalise "soberish" consumption with a campaign to highlight its non-alcoholic cocktails as "the drink you drink when you're not drinking."



A quarter of Americans participated in 'Dry January' in 2024, and for October, non-alcoholic craft beer brand Kit NA Brewing launched a new campaign, 'Under Your Own Influence Sober October.' The Sober October campaign is all about encouraging people to take a mindful break from alcohol and focus on personal growth in a way that's both enjoyable and rewarding.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SA TOURISM INDUSTRY

- **Promote Wellness-Focused Retreats**

Opportunity:

Position South Africa as a destination that caters to alcohol-free wellness tourism by leveraging natural assets that offer wellness and mindfulness experiences.

- **Promote Spiritual and Cultural Journeys**

Opportunity:

Create spiritually enriching and alcohol-free pilgrimage or cultural routes by designing itineraries around heritage sites, indigenous knowledge systems, and spiritual healing experiences rooted in African traditions.

- **Innovate in the Hospitality Sector**

Opportunity:

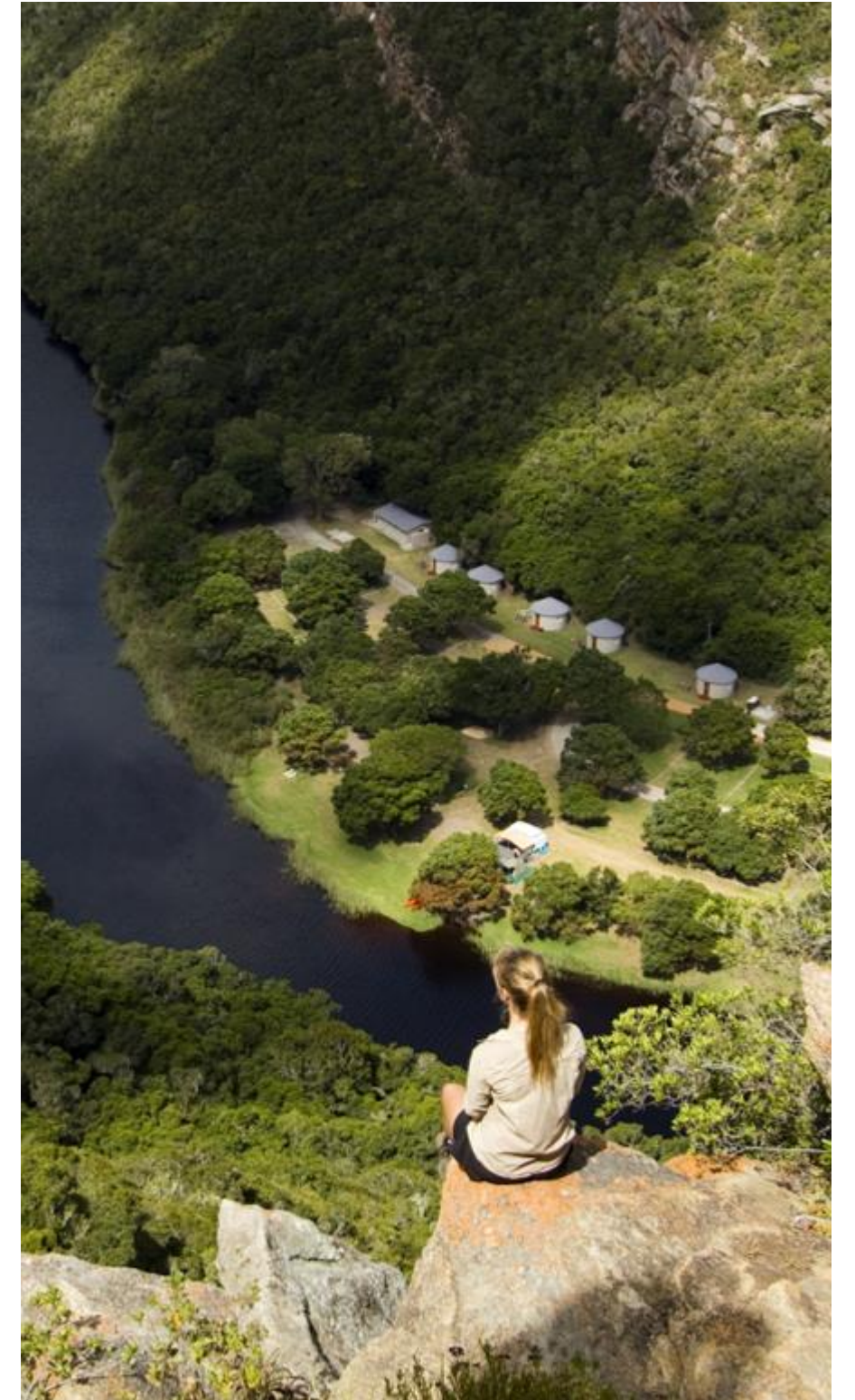
Introduce premium non-alcoholic offerings in hotels, lodges, restaurants, and lounges and train hospitality staff to offer curated alcohol-free pairings and mindful dining experiences.

- **Engage Sober-Curious and Lifestyle-Driven Travellers**

Opportunity:

Design tailored travel packages for Millennials and Gen Z travellers who are increasingly opting for intentional travel over nightlife and tap into emerging micro-trends like solo sober travel, digital detox escapes, and group wellness travel.

South Africa can stand out by offering sober, soulful, and sustainable travel. By integrating dry tourism principles into its tourism strategy, the country can attract new market segments, extend visitor stays, and position itself as a destination of intentional, wellness-driven experiences. This approach not only aligns with global travel trends but also promotes inclusive tourism development that benefits local communities.





THANK YOU

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