

Old school gets *a modern twist*



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The global COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on every element of our daily lives and may also have long-lasting consequences for the tourism and hospitality industries. In 2020, we saw a shift in consumer behaviour with the revival of trends from a bygone era with people finding a greater appreciation for nature, a sense of community and the joy of travelling locally.

Back to the Nature

During the pandemic a trend towards resort destinations and more rural locations has emerged, making these concepts more crisis-proof than others. As an example, the city of Vienna recorded a significant decrease in tourist arrivals (- 74.7 %) and overnight stays (-73.9 %) from 2019 to 2020 whereas the Viennese Alps, a diverse region near Vienna, only showed a decrease of -41.1 % in terms of arrivals and -33.3 % in terms of overnight stays over the same period.

This can also be noticed in the various marketing strategies and shift of tourism-related projects.

The Viennese Alps region grew in popularity in the 19th century due to the enhanced infrastructure and celebrity guests such as Arthur Schnitzler, Sigmund Freud and Empress Elisabeth of Austria. Guests took trips to the mountains in order to aid respiratory health and the concept of Sommerfrische was omnipresent. Sommerfrische refers to the escape of the hot summers of Vienna or Graz to more rural surrounding regions, such as the Viennese Alps. Now, over 100 years later, these destinations are once again gaining popularity, peaking the interest of both travellers and investors. The previously well-known concept of Sommerfrische is again actively integrated in marketing strategies and has experienced a significant boom due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions and increase in domestic tourism and day trips. In Austria, you can see advertisements for Sommerfrische on billboards, paintings and magazines with resorts such as Grand Hotel Panhans and Südbahnhotel Semmering being revitalised. Besides leisure travellers, the region is also prospering from the renewed interest in rehabilitation centres (e.g. in Bad Schönau, Rax) with particular focus on treatments for long-COVID sufferers.



Source: wieneralpen.at/wiener-alpen-sommerfrische-1

Back to the Roots

Simultaneously, people are rediscovering some of life’s simple pleasures, whether it is picnicking in the park or growing their own vegetables and plants. In the UK, the newly opened Birch Community advertises itself as “Your escape from urban living”. Located about 30 minutes outside of London on a 55-acre expanse of nature, the hotel offers guests the opportunity to collect eggs from their chickens in the morning, join a pottery class or learn how to make the perfect sourdough. As their name suggests, they are also striving to create a community for their members, allowing them a place to meet and engage with each other, something which has been sorely missed in the past 18 months.

The success of Soho Farmhouse further adds to the intrigue of this segment. The property is spread across 100 acres in Oxfordshire including a dilapidated watermill that now houses a country pub and aims to create the feeling of being a guest cottage on a farm. Similar trends and phenomenon can be discovered in other cities across the world.

The trends above highlight, once again, that exploring your own backyard can be as rewarding as going abroad.

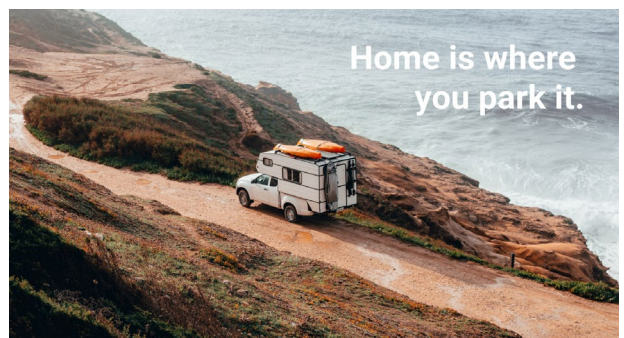
People do not necessarily need to travel very far to gain a completely different experience than at home, being located only one or two hours outside the city.



Source: birchcommunity.com

Living the van life

In addition, the hotel brand Hoxton has launched the concept Camp Hox in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following their success of the Camp Hox glamping pop-up in Oxfordshire last summer, this year they are branching into camper vans. Camp Hox provides you with your very own Hoxton van and a thoughtfully curated four-day itinerary of pre-tested experiences and pre-booked stops at campsites across several destinations in the United Kingdom, United States, France and the Netherlands. Each road trip leads up to a stay at the local Hoxton hotel to combat post-holiday blues. The trend of living the van life is becoming increasingly popular, not only being promoted through scenic Instagram photos but also due to the flexibility and freedom which has been becoming extremely valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Austria, for instance, the new registrations for camper vans increased by +74.2 % from 2019 to 2020 and an even bigger increase is expected for 2021, depending on the COVID-19 related travel restrictions and recovery.



Source: caracda.de/blogs/journal/living-the-van-life

Conclusion

The past year has shown us that guests are excited to travel again. They may not travel as far, or to the same destinations as before, but they will certainly find creative ways to satisfy their wanderlust. The travel and tourism industry is resilient and while the opportunities may look slightly different, they are still there for those willing to look.

Elaborating on the trends outlined above, my colleagues and I have published very insightful articles on workcation and glamping which have developed and grown in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and are here to stay – the articles may be found on our website.

About PKF hospitality group

The PKF hospitality group is the first fully integrated global advisory firm to serve the hotel and tourism sectors.

Currently, the PKF hospitality group has 14 main offices worldwide, including in Argentina (Buenos Aires), Austria (Vienna – headquarter), China (Hong Kong, Shanghai), Croatia (Zagreb), Germany (Munich – network office), Italy (Milan), Russia (Moscow), South Africa (Cape Town), Turkey (Istanbul), Ukraine (Kyiv), United Arab Emirates (Dubai), United Kingdom (London) and USA (New York).

The PKF hospitality group consists of PKF hotelexperts (hotel consulting), PKF livingexperts (serviced living consulting), PKF tourismexperts (tourism consulting), PKF leisureexperts (leisure consulting), PKF research (hospitality benchmarking), PKF technology (hospitality innovation), PKF marketing (hospitality promotion) and 196+ events (hospitality networking).

Please feel free to contact us for further information about this article or if we may assist you in any way.



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