



priceline[®]

2026 State of Summer Travel Report

A note from our CEO

Every summer, Americans make decisions about how they want to spend their time and their money. This year, those decisions are harder than they have been in a long time. Our inaugural State of Summer Travel Report provides a comprehensive look at how Americans are thinking about, planning, and sacrificing for summer 2026.

What the research reveals is a traveler who has not pulled back on the aspiration but is being more deliberate about how they get there. People are cutting back everywhere else, spending more time hunting for a deal, and making trade-offs they later regret. That tension is exactly what Priceline was built to resolve. Our goal is to help every traveler find the trip they want at the price they can afford, and this report is a reflection of how seriously we take that mission.



Brigit Zimmerman

Chief Executive Officer, Priceline

The story at a glance

This report explores the tension between those two numbers and what it means for how Americans are planning, spending, and sacrificing for summer travel in 2026.

44%

feel a summer vacation is out of reach in 2026

yet

73%

of Americans are determined to make a summer vacation happen this year

Millennials 82% Gen Z 80%

Vacation or bust?

Summer vacation is not something Americans are willing to give up. Seventy-nine percent say they plan to take at least one trip this summer, and 68% say it simply would not feel like summer without one. Only 21% expect to skip a summer vacation entirely in 2026.



plan to take at least one trip this summer



say it wouldn't feel like summer without a vacation

The depth of that commitment shows up in the share of household budgets travelers are willing to put toward it. Sixty-one percent of Americans typically spend 10% or more of their discretionary income on travel, a figure that rises to 73% among parents.

10%+

of discretionary income typically goes toward travel

All Americans



Parents



The affordability squeeze

The commitment is colliding with the math. Eighty-four percent of Americans say they are paying more and getting less when it comes to travel, and 55% find travel less affordable than they did last year. Nearly half (44%) say a summer vacation feels completely out of reach in 2026.



84%

say they're paying more and getting less



55%

find travel less affordable than last year



44%

say a summer vacation feels out of reach

To make it work anyway, Americans are cutting back in other parts of their lives. **More than one-third (36%)** have already started cutting everyday expenses to fund a summer trip, a number that climbs to 46% among Gen Z and 41% among Millennials.



What they'd give up first

The pressure adds up everywhere

52% have noticed extra fees added on for things like Wi-Fi and checked bags

40% are seeing fewer complimentary extras included with their trip

28% say trips that once felt attainable now feel like a luxury

Parents and Millennials are feeling it most

The affordability story does not land evenly. Two groups are reporting more pressure than anyone else, though in both cases that is not changing their plans.

Parents are stretching the furthest

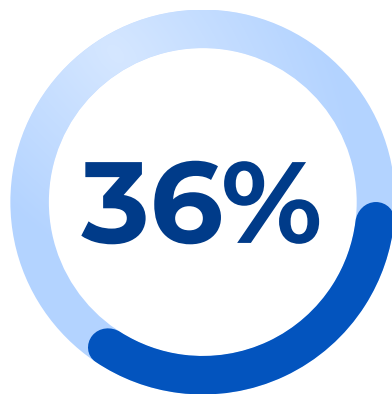
Parents are 34% more likely than non-parents to have already cut everyday expenses to fund summer travel. Yet 89% of parents still plan to travel this summer. The commitment is there. The cost of keeping it is higher.



more likely to have cut everyday expenses



still plan to travel this summer



say attainable trips now feel like a luxury



plan to spend \$5,000 or more

Millennials are the most pinched and the highest spenders

Thirty-six percent of Millennials say trips that once felt attainable now feel like a luxury, the highest of any generation. At the same time, 28% plan to spend \$5,000 or more on summer travel this year, also the highest of any generation. For a cohort navigating peak housing costs, student debt, and in many cases caring for both children and aging parents, vacation has become a non-negotiable line item.



What we're seeing is a traveler who has not pulled back on the aspiration but is being more deliberate about how they get there. People are cutting back everywhere else, spending more time hunting for a deal, and making trade-offs they later regret. Our goal is to help every traveler find the trip they want at the price they can afford.

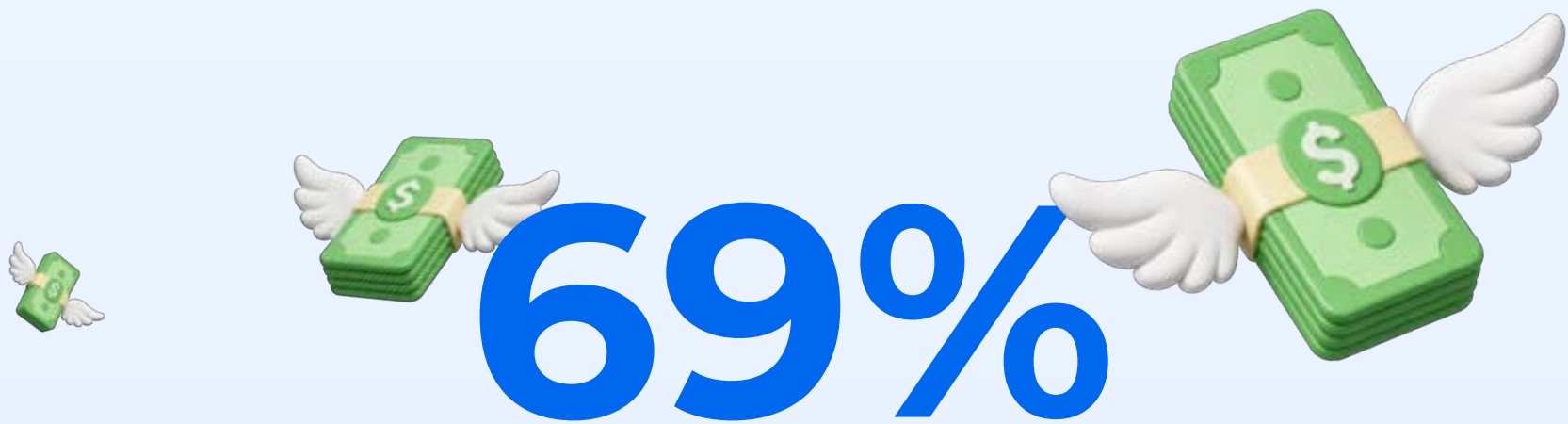
Brigit Zimmerman

Chief Executive Officer, Priceline



Lessons learned the hard way

When travelers cut corners to make a trip work, the savings do not always feel worth it. Sixty-nine percent of Americans say they have made travel cost-cutting decisions they later regretted. Staying with family instead of a hotel, driving instead of flying, and booking layovers to save a few dollars top the list.



have made cost-cutting travel decisions they later regretted



The most common regrets

20%
Staying with family or friends instead of a hotel

20%
Driving instead of flying

19%
Taking a shorter trip

19%
Booking a flight with multiple stops

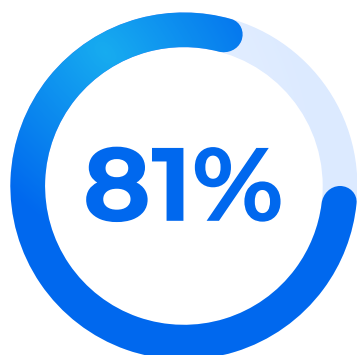


30%

Despite the regrets, many reported that they are considering similar trade-offs this summer.

Burnout at the booking screen

Planning a vacation can be one of the most enjoyable parts of taking one. This year, it's not. Eighty-one percent say planning a summer trip is exhausting, and the burnout is high regardless of every generation and life stage.

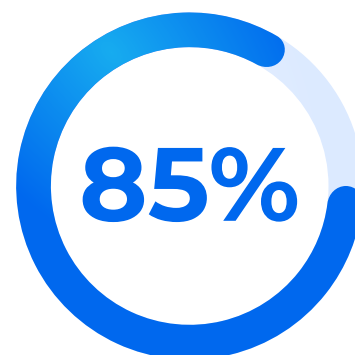


say planning a vacation is exhausting

Boomers 74%

Gen Z 89%

Parents 87%



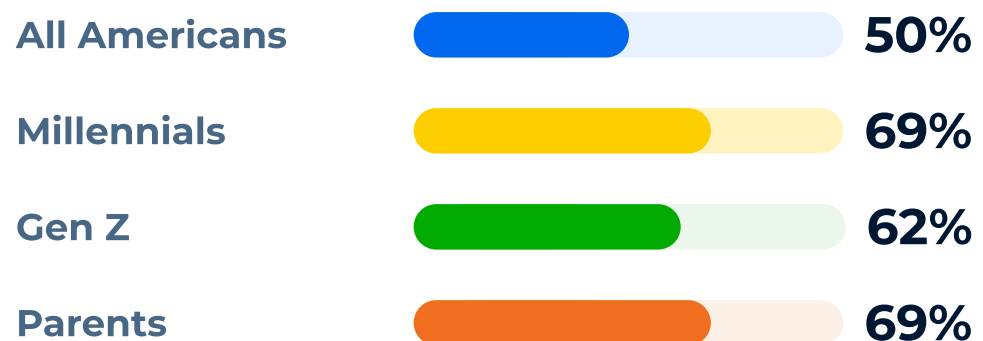
say scoring a **great deal** feels as good as the vacation itself

The deal hunt is the heart of the frustration. Forty-three percent point specifically to searching for the best deal as the source of their planning fatigue. Sixty-five percent believe finding a truly exceptional deal is basically impossible. And yet 85% say scoring a great deal feels as good as the vacation itself. Thirty percent will not spend more than two hours searching before giving up, a number that rises to 39% among Gen X.

AI is becoming part of the answer

Half of Americans (50%) plan to use AI tools to find better travel deals this year. That figure jumps to 69% among both Millennials and parents, and to 62% among Gen Z.

Who plans to use AI



2025 summer travel spend reflects actual spend reported among the 69% of Americans who traveled for leisure in summer 2025. 2026 figures reflect planned spend among all 2,500 survey respondents. Figures are not directly comparable on a per-person basis.

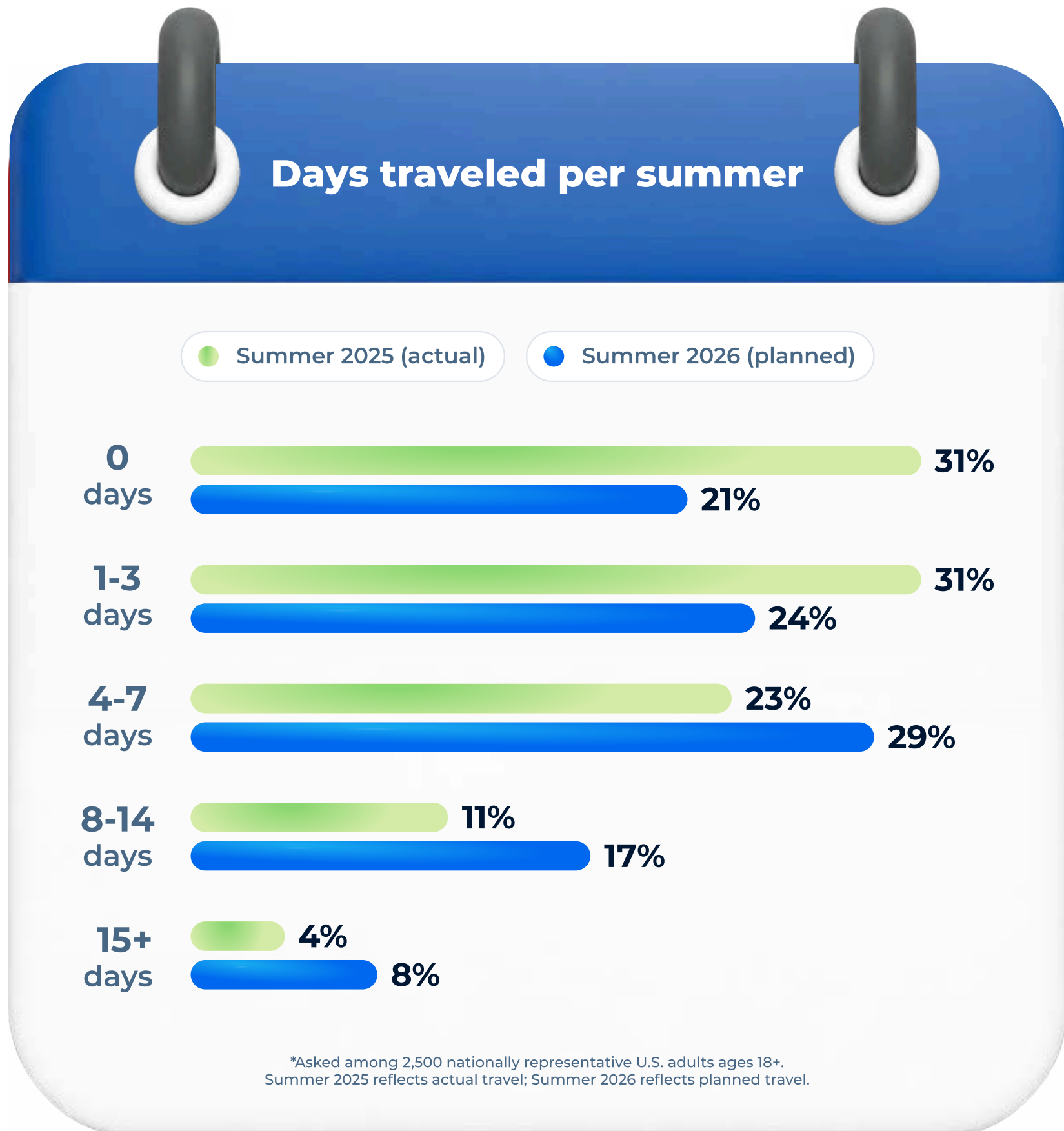
“ Parents and Millennials reported the most financial pressure this summer and the highest planned spend, and they are the most likely to turn to AI for help planning their trips. When the cost of getting it wrong is highest, that is when people want the most help getting it right.

Christina Bennett
Consumer Travel Trends Expert, Priceline



The vacation stretch

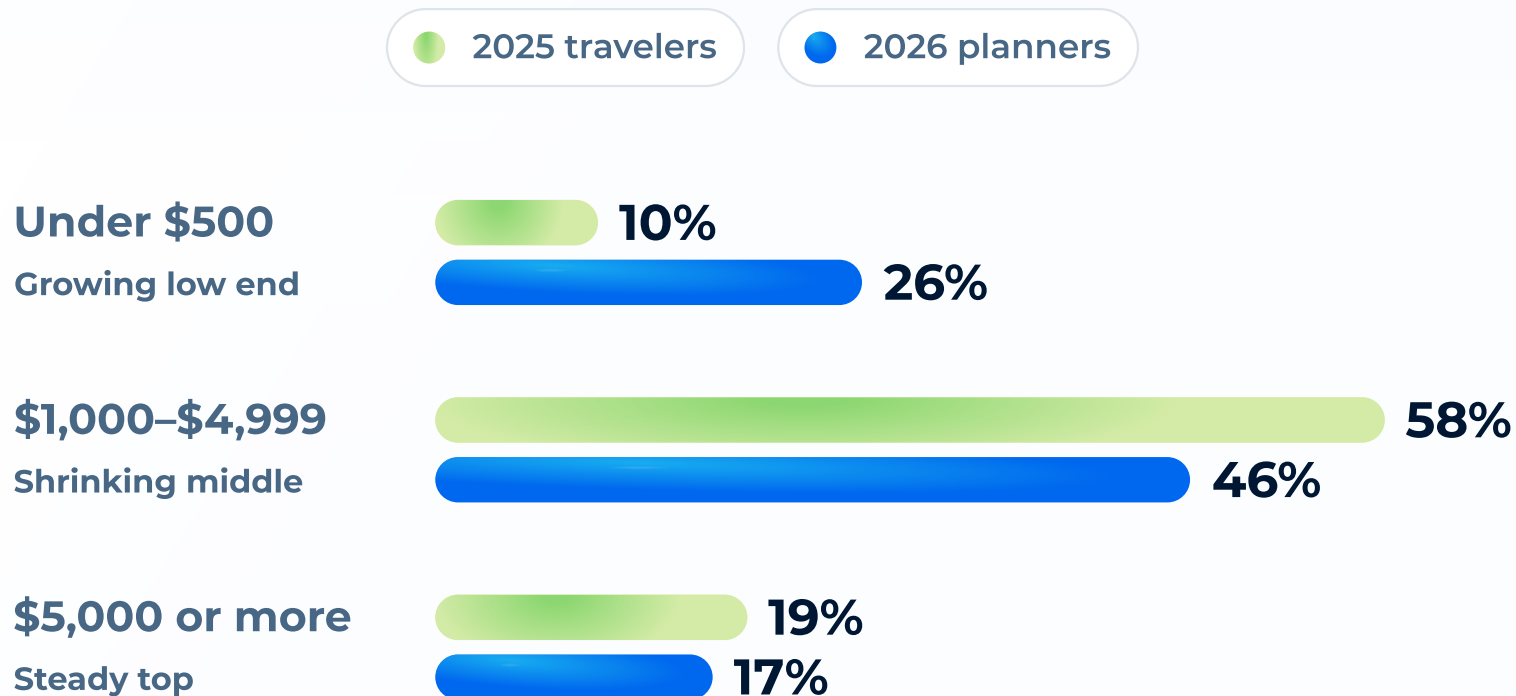
Despite the financial pressure, the planning fatigue, and the lessons learned the hard way, Americans are planning to spend more time on vacation this summer than they did last year. The number planning zero days of summer travel dropped 10 points compared to 2025, from 31% to 21%, and every longer travel bracket grew. The median numbers of summer travel days held steady at four days year-over-year.



A K-shaped travel economy

The summer travel market is splitting in two. Travelers at the low end are spending less than they used to, and travelers at the high end are largely holding their ground. The middle, where most Americans have historically planned their summer vacations, is thinning out.

Summer travel spend brackets



2025 summer travel spend reflects actual spend reported among the 69% of Americans who traveled for leisure in summer 2025. 2026 figures reflect planned spend among all 2,500 survey respondents. Figures are not directly comparable on a per-person basis.

The pattern shows up clearly in the spend brackets. Among those who traveled in summer 2025, only 10% spent under \$500. In 2026, 26% of Americans plan to spend at that level, a sharp rise in the budget-conscious population. The middle tier of spend, \$1,000 to \$4,999, captured 58% of 2025 travelers but only 46% of 2026 planners. At the top of the market, spending of \$5,000 or more is holding roughly flat, at 19% of 2025 travelers and 17% of 2026 planners.

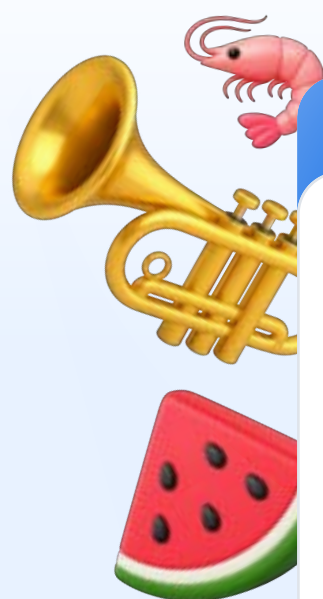
This is the K-shape travel economy: a growing low end, a shrinking middle, and a steady top. For most American travelers, the question this summer is not whether to take a trip. It is which tier they will be in when they do.

Where Americans are going this summer

Priceline’s trending destination data shows that Americans are not chasing one version of summer. They are gravitating toward familiar summer formats: boardwalk beaches, coastal towns, outdoor gateways and city-adjacent escapes.

For travelers focused on affordability, the biggest value may come from building a trip around a city escape or established tourism hub. More hotel and flight options can mean more price points to compare, making it easier to keep the overall trip within reach.

Top 10 most affordable destinations



Hotel

1. Las Vegas, NV (\$132)
2. Orlando, FL (\$187)
3. San Francisco, CA (\$205)
4. Charlotte, NC (\$210)
5. New Orleans, LA (\$210)
6. Denver, CO (\$211)
7. Fort Lauderdale, FL (\$229)
8. Indianapolis, IN (\$231)
9. Atlanta, GA (\$235)
10. Atlantic City, NJ (\$236)

Flight

1. Atlanta, GA (\$266)
2. Tampa, FL (\$312)
3. Miami, FL (\$330)
4. Chicago, IL (\$344)
5. Orlando, FL (\$346)
6. Dallas, TX (\$350)
7. New York, NY (\$353)
8. Denver, CO (\$353)
9. Houston, TX (\$356)
10. Minneapolis, MN (\$361)



*Based on average nightly hotel prices and domestic roundtrip airfares July-August 2026

Top 10 trending destinations



Hotel

1. Charlotte, NC (+62%)
2. Miramar Beach, FL (+27%)
3. Pensacola Beach, FL (+27%)
4. Newport, RI (+24%)
5. Brooklyn, NY (+22%)
6. Long Beach, CA (+19%)
7. Baltimore, MD (+10%)
8. Anchorage, AK (+8%)
9. Ocean City, MD (+6%)
10. Los Angeles, CA (+6%)

Flight

1. Destin, FL (+43%)
2. Sarasota, FL (+33%)
3. Spokane, WA (+31%)
4. Wilmington, NC (+28%)
5. Portland, ME (+26%)
6. Reno, NV (+21%)
7. Bozeman, MT (+21%)
8. Bangor, ME (+18%)
9. Traverse City, MI (+18%)
10. Atlantic City, NJ (+16%)



*Based on biggest y/y increases in domestic hotel and roundtrip flight searches July-August 2026

Looking ahead

Across every finding in this report, one pattern holds: Americans are determined to take a summer vacation, and they are working harder than ever to make it possible by cutting back in other parts of their lives and rethinking how they plan. The tools they are using to get there are changing fast, and the travelers with the most at stake are leading that shift.

Ahead of this summer, Priceline introduced the next generation of Penny, its fully agentic AI travel assistant. Built to address the friction points travelers describe most, including deal hunting, trade-offs, and comparison fatigue, Penny helps travelers uncover savings opportunities and move from trip planning to booking in a single conversation. Find a deal on your summer vacation at [Priceline](#) or download the [Priceline App](#).

Methodology

The 2026 State of Summer Travel Report was conducted by Wakefield Research among 2,500 nationally representative U.S. adults ages 18 and older, between March 17 and March 23, 2026, using an email invitation and online survey. Results are weighted to ensure an accurate representation of the U.S. adult population. The margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

About Priceline

Priceline, part of Booking Holdings Inc. (NASDAQ: BKNG), has been helping travelers get better deals for more than 25 years. Using proprietary technology to analyze billions of data points, Priceline unlocks savings across hotels, flights, rental cars, cruises, vacation packages, and more. With inventory from trusted travel brands in more than 110 countries, 24/7 customer service, Priceline VIP, and Penny, its AI-powered travel assistant, Priceline helps travelers save smarter and book with confidence. No one deals more deals than Priceline.