



# Guide to Instagram Creator Marketing for **Travel** Brands

How content creators are powering the marketing funnel to jet-set conversions

# Introduction

In 2022, as more vaccines were delivered and COVID-era restrictions began to ease, confidence in travel increased, and overall demand for the industry rebounded. Americans were eager to reconnect with friends and family, explore new destinations, and use credits from canceled pandemic trips. In 2023, travel has shown no signs of slowing down. Even with inflation and mass layoffs, a recent [Forbes survey](#) indicates that “87% of survey respondents expect to travel at least as much as they did in the prior year, with 49% selecting that they expect to travel more.”

Much of the travel industry’s growth can be seen in the hotel sector, where [Statista](#) projects a market volume of \$106.1B in 2023, while the number of users is forecasted to hit 160.60M by 2027. Overall, revenue in travel and tourism in the United States is expected to reach \$190.40B in 2023, showing an annual growth rate of 3.17%, and yielding a projected market volume of \$215.7B by 2027. In other words, the numbers indicate that the industry is entering a period of recalibration, expansion, and transformation.



A young man with a backpack is standing on a rock, looking out over a mountainous landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, and the mountains are silhouetted against the bright horizon. The man is wearing a dark t-shirt, denim shorts, and black shoes. He has a large black backpack on his back and is looking towards the left of the frame.

# Wanderlust Trends

The travel and hospitality industry is very different today than it was 10 years ago. The lockdowns, restrictions, and health risks of the pandemic have left a lasting impact, with new trends emerging from the crisis.



Wanderlust Trends

# Trends That Travel From Place to Place



## Personalization

Travelers increasingly seek personalized experiences tailored to their preferences. This includes customized itineraries, unique accommodations, and specific recommendations based on their interests and past travel history.



## Sustainable Travel

The focus on sustainable, responsible travel has been growing steadily. In a recent [Booking.com report](#), 80% of travelers confirmed that traveling sustainably is important to them. Consumers are more conscious of their environmental impact, and often look for eco-friendly accommodations, carbon offset programs, and activities that support local communities.



## Digital Transformation

The travel industry has been embracing digital technologies to enhance the customer experience. These developments include mobile apps for seamless bookings, virtual reality (VR) tours, chatbots for customer service, and AI-driven recommendations for personalized travel suggestions.



## Wellness and Health Tourism

Health and wellness tourism has been gaining popularity, with travelers seeking experiences that prioritize their well-being. This trend has led to a rise in spa retreats, yoga and meditation retreats, wellness-focused accommodations, and activities promoting mental and physical wellness.



## Bleisure Travel

The blending of business and leisure travel, known as “bleisure,” has been on the rise. More professionals are combining work trips with leisure activities, extending their stay to explore the destination, or bringing their families along for a vacation.



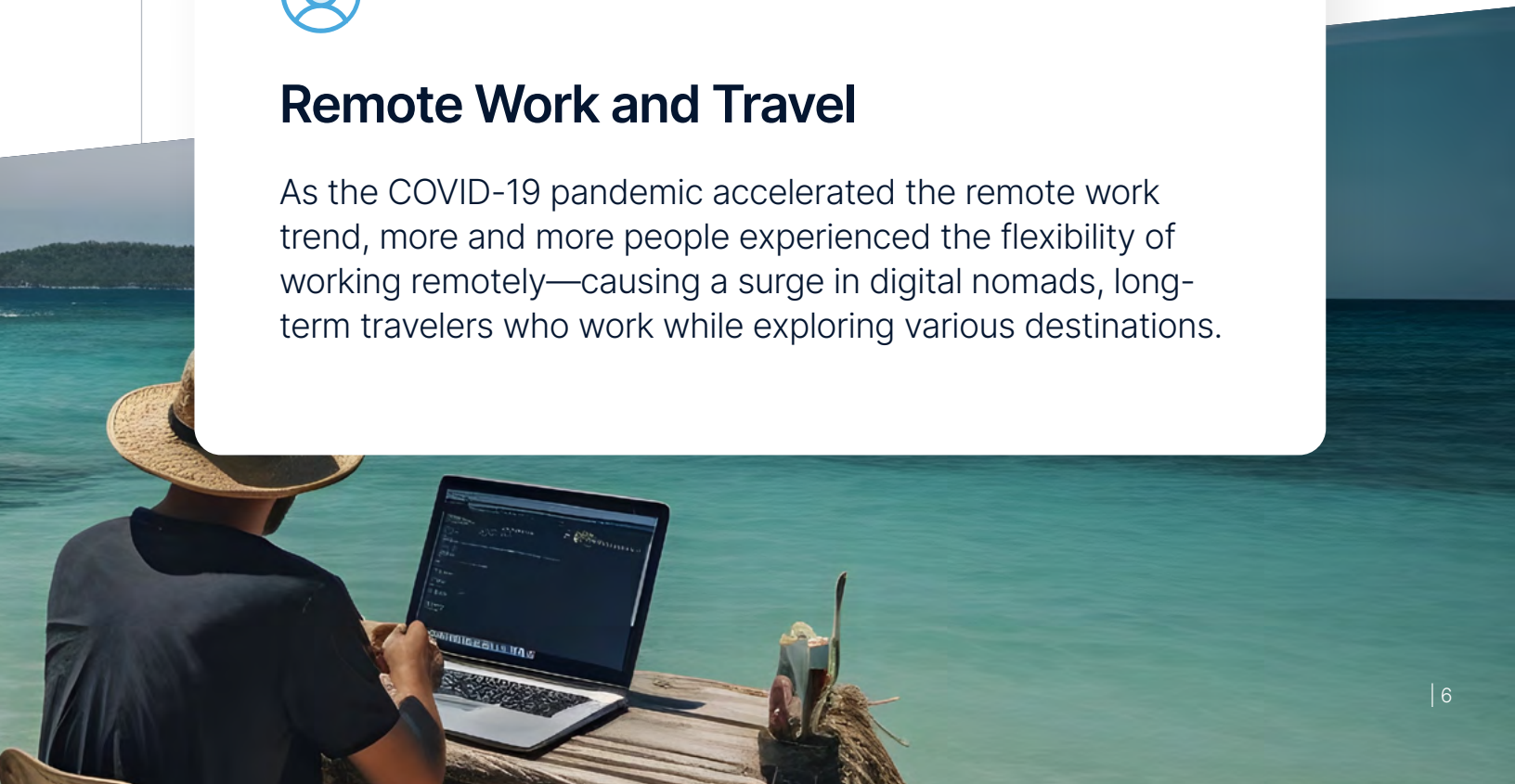
## Experiential Travel

Some travelers are increasingly seeking immersive and authentic experiences. These trendsetters want to engage with local cultures, learn new skills, participate in unique activities, and interact with communities to gain a deeper understanding of their destination.



## Remote Work and Travel

As the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the remote work trend, more and more people experienced the flexibility of working remotely—causing a surge in digital nomads, long-term travelers who work while exploring various destinations.





| Why Work  
With **Content**  
**Creators**

## Consumers Relate to Creators

Content creators are uniquely positioned to speak to travelers. Consumers no longer relate to unrealistic visuals of stock imagery with perfectly outfitted models smiling while carrying luggage out of a train. These graphics tend to be out of touch and unrelatable to audiences. More and more, consumers have shifted their behavior to seek guidance and recommendations from online communities—and particularly from content creators.

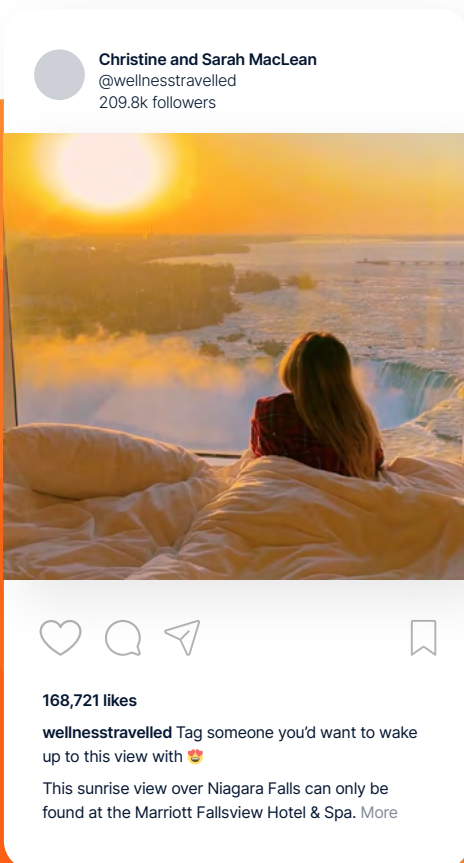
Sharing unique perspectives and experiences, creators produce content that spans different places, traveler types, and languages, touching niche demographics in a way that brands and traditional advertising can't.





## For example,

Megan Hamilton, also known as [@misswizardingworld](#) on Instagram, is a Harry Potter enthusiast who shares her passion for Universal Studios and Disney via park tips, studio tours, and merchandise guides. With a magical following of 202.0k fans, Megan's enchanting photos and videos provide an exclusive, inside look at the tourist experience at theme parks around the world.

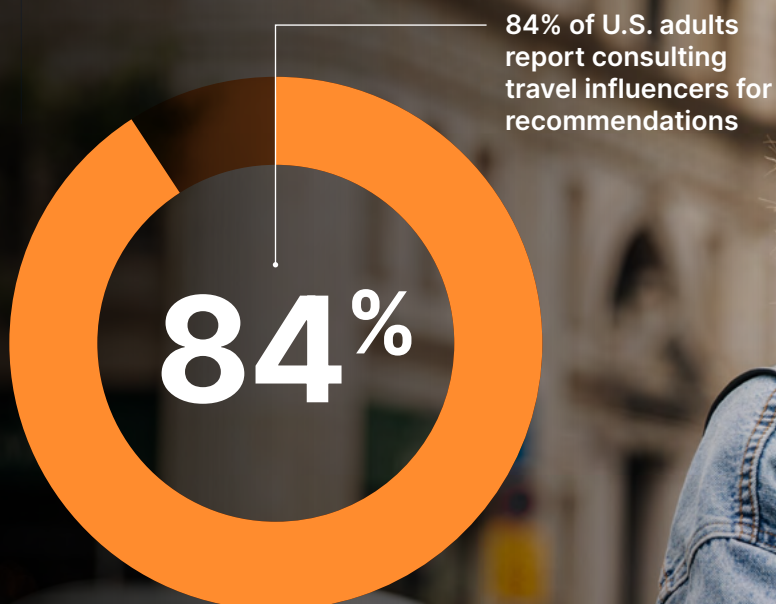


## Or consider,

Sisters Christine and Sarah MacLean ([@wellnesstravelled](#) on Instagram), who target audiences interested in well-being and sustainable travel. Their posts about hotel stays in tranquil destinations, like this Marriott view of Niagara Falls, create FOMO moments that inspire wellness retreat experiences among their 209.8k followers.

Because creators typically have a close relationship with their followers, who trust their opinions and recommendations, when these creators promote a destination and share the behind-the-scenes experience of their trip, audiences perceive it as a genuine endorsement, rather than a conventional sales pitch from a brand. This authenticity helps build trust in the brand and influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

Because so many consumers put their trust in creators—a massive **84% of U.S. adults report** consulting travel influencers for recommendations—brands can take collaboration with creators one step further by partnering with them to add an eCommerce element to their content. Selling special rates at hotels, curated travel guides, exclusive itineraries for attractions, and discounted flights allows creators to incorporate their expertise into a personalized booking experience that blends seamlessly into their channel's content. These personalized recommendations have the potential to inspire bookings and capture new customers from a creator's following.



Overall, collaborating with content creators should be part of a comprehensive marketing strategy that considers the target market, goals, and objectives of a given business. When brands carefully select creators whose values, audiences, and content align with their brand, they can achieve several key outcomes.

### Travel and hospitality content creators help brands:



**Boost awareness** of destinations and hospitality accommodations via exclusive, inside-look content



**Promote** new experiences



**Transform** consumer perception to view travel as attainable



**Target** niche audiences



**Remove** corporate look and feel from marketing materials, creating a human experience



# Creator-Led Marketing On Instagram

# Instagram: A Mirror to Consumers

To showcase the striking backdrops, bright colors, and high-quality aesthetic associated with travel promotion, creators on Instagram utilize a combination of static imagery and various attention-grabbing video formats. Instagram has become a go-to channel for helping consumers see themselves in a given destination. What's more, the channel is showing no signs of slowing down: a recent forecast estimates that Instagram will reach **1.44 billion** active monthly global users by 2025.

Travel brands can use a combination of strategies to create a cohesive Instagram marketing approach that effectively promotes their attractions and experiences while engaging with their target audience on the platform. Beginning with an **Instagram Business Profile**—which provides access to features like contact information, insights, and the ability to run ads—brands can establish a professional presence and allow users to easily engage with their content.



2023

2025

**1.44B**

Estimated Instagram monthly users by 2025

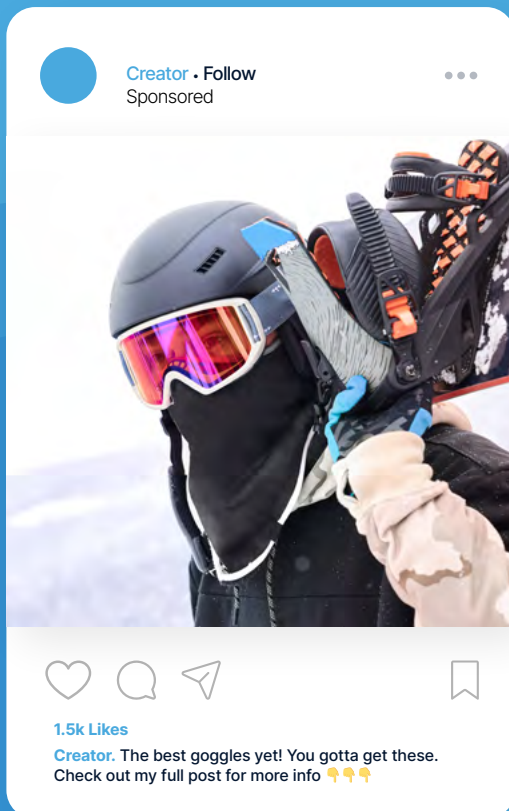
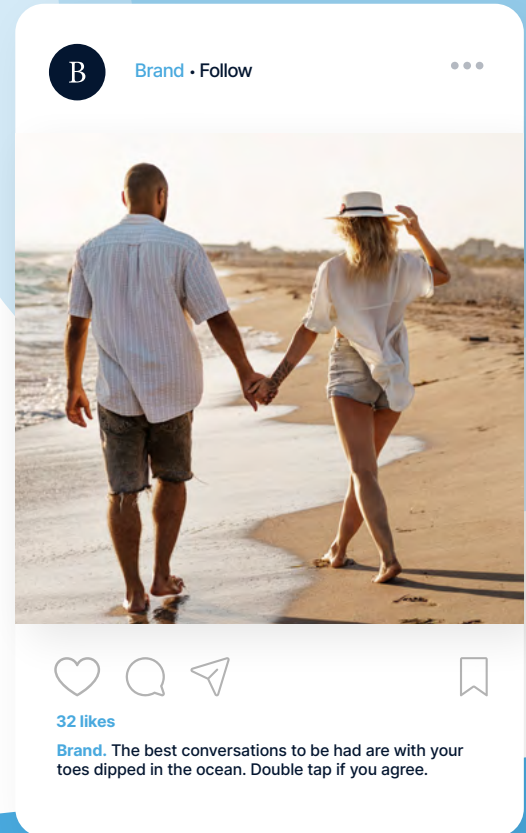
**From there, some common strategies and features that brands can leverage with Instagram content creators include:**

## **Compelling Visual Content**

Instagram is a highly visual platform, so brands typically focus on creating high-quality, visually appealing images and videos to showcase their products and services. They utilize professional photography, creative compositions, and editing techniques to make posts stand out and capture users' attention.

## Storytelling

Brands use Instagram captions, Stories, and Reels to tell stories about their products and brand values. They share narratives that resonate with their target audience, highlighting the benefits and unique aspects of their products. Storytelling helps create emotional connections with users, ultimately enhancing brand loyalty.

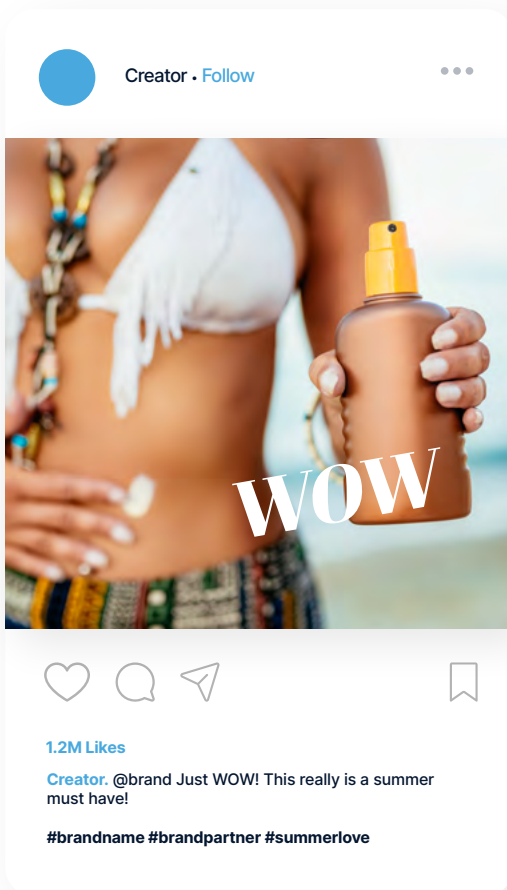
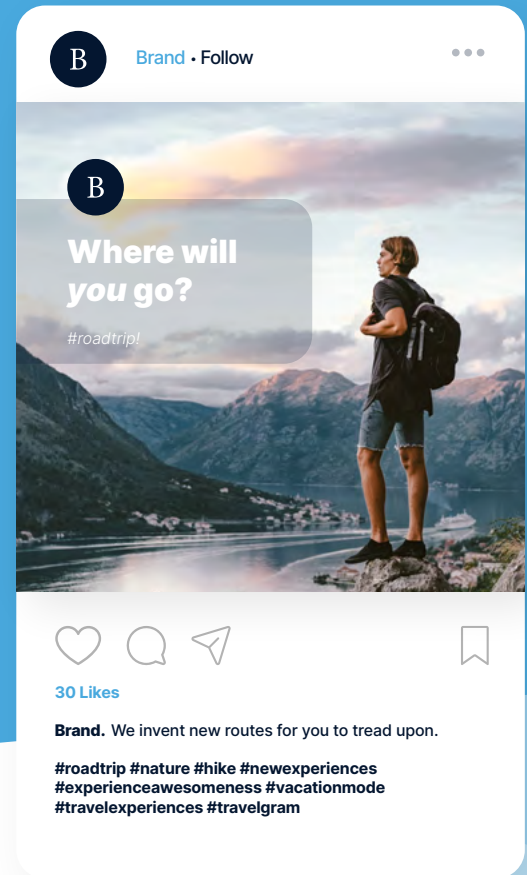


## Content Creator Partnerships

Collaborating with content creators who boast relevant followings can amplify a brand's reach and credibility. Creators promote products via sponsored posts, stories, or dedicated content, offering authentic recommendations and endorsements to their engaged audience. **Instagram's Creator Marketplace** provides a platform where thousands of brands and creators can discover each other, collaborate on campaigns, and foster long-term partnerships.

## Hashtags

Brands use hashtags strategically to increase the discoverability of their posts. They include relevant and trending hashtags in their captions, allowing users to find their content when searching, or while following specific hashtags related to their interests or industry.



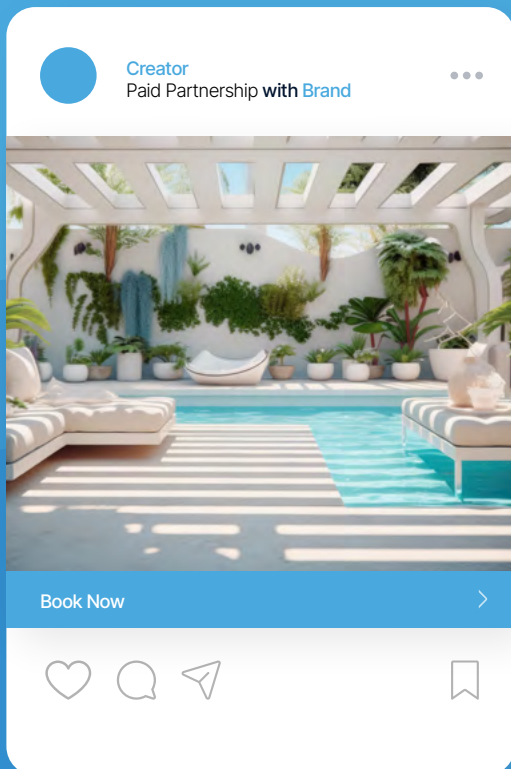
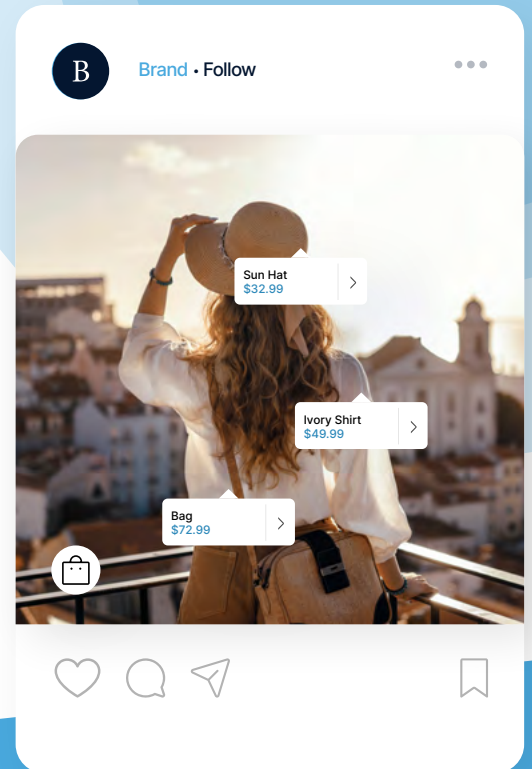
## User-Generated Content

Brands encourage users to create and share content featuring their products. They may run contests, giveaways, or branded campaigns to motivate users to generate content. User-generated content helps build social proof, fosters engagement, and provides authentic product endorsements from real customers.



## Shoppable Posts

Instagram offers the option for brands to create shoppable posts, which means that users can directly purchase products featured in a post. Brands tag their products with product information and prices, and users can click on the tags to view more details and make a purchase, streamlining the buying process.



## Instagram Ads

Brands can run targeted ads on Instagram using the **Ads Manager tool**. These ads can appear in users' Instagram feed, Stories, Shop, and Reels. Brands can take this strategy one step further by collaborating with creators via **Partnership Ads**, which boosts reach and ensures transparency with the paid partnership label.

A man wearing a grey patterned tank top, a dark cap, and a necklace is holding a selfie stick. He is standing in front of a waterfall in a lush, green forest. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the man and the waterfall. A large, semi-transparent brown circle is in the top left corner of the page.

# Telling Travel Stories Via Reels

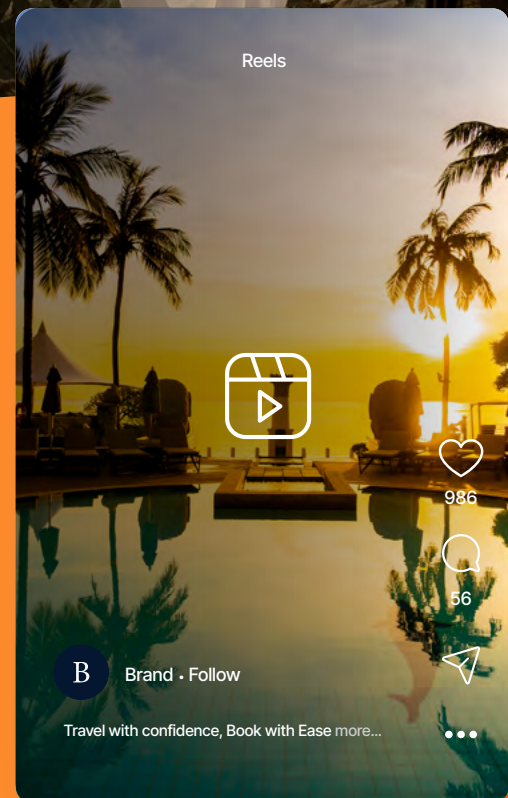
Unlike Instagram Stories, Reels don't disappear after 24 hours. They tend to be shorter than Instagram Live videos, and have gained widespread recognition within the travel industry. Audiences gravitate towards the Reel reviews of hotel rooms, packing tips for carry-on luggage, and navigating winding streets to find the perfect local cuisine. With more than **140 billion Reels** playing across Instagram and Facebook daily, Reels outnumbers other forms of content sharing.

## Telling Travel Stories Via Reels

Several key factors have contributed to its popularity, including:

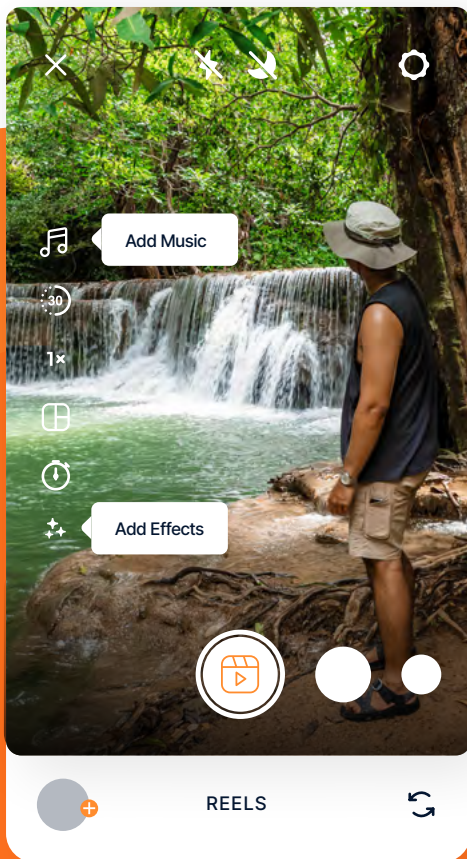
### Visual Appeal

Reels are short, engaging videos that allow businesses to showcase their destinations, properties, or experiences in a visually captivating way. Enticing potential customers in the travel and hospitality industry via Reels provides brands with a dynamic, eye-catching format to highlight their offerings.



## Bite-sized Content

Reels can be generated in several ways, including cutting long video posts into shorter Reels, and are typically limited to under 90 seconds, which fits well with users' quick scrolling habits on social media. This format allows travel and hospitality brands to deliver quick, impactful messages, showcasing the best features of their destinations and products in a concise manner.



## Storytelling Opportunities

Reels enable brands to tell stories via a combination of visuals, music, captions, and effects. Travel and hospitality businesses can leverage Reels to take viewers on virtual journeys, share behind-the-scenes footage, or showcase unique experiences, creating an emotional connection with their audience.



## Increased Visibility

Instagram has a vast user base, and the platform actively promotes Reels through dedicated tabs, explore pages, and algorithmic recommendations. This increased visibility allows travel and hospitality brands to reach a wider audience, including potential travelers who might not have been aware of these brands' offerings.



## Viral Potential

Thanks to this increased engagement, Reels have the potential to go viral, gaining significant traction and exposure. When users discover and engage with compelling travel-related Reels, they're likely to share them with their followers, leading to increased brand awareness and potential new customers.



## Engagement and Interactivity

Reels encourage user engagement through features such as likes, comments, saves, and shares. In the Insights tab of their Business Profiles, brands can also access additional engagement metrics, including accounts reached and plays. This allows travel and hospitality brands to gather feedback and reform strategies to actively involve their audience and create a sense of community around their offerings.

A large, illuminated, geometric lantern structure, possibly made of metal and glass, hangs from a tree in a dense forest. The lantern is composed of many triangular and quadrilateral facets, some of which are lit from within, creating a warm glow. The background is a lush green forest with tall trees and dense foliage.

# Travel Brands That Win With Instagram

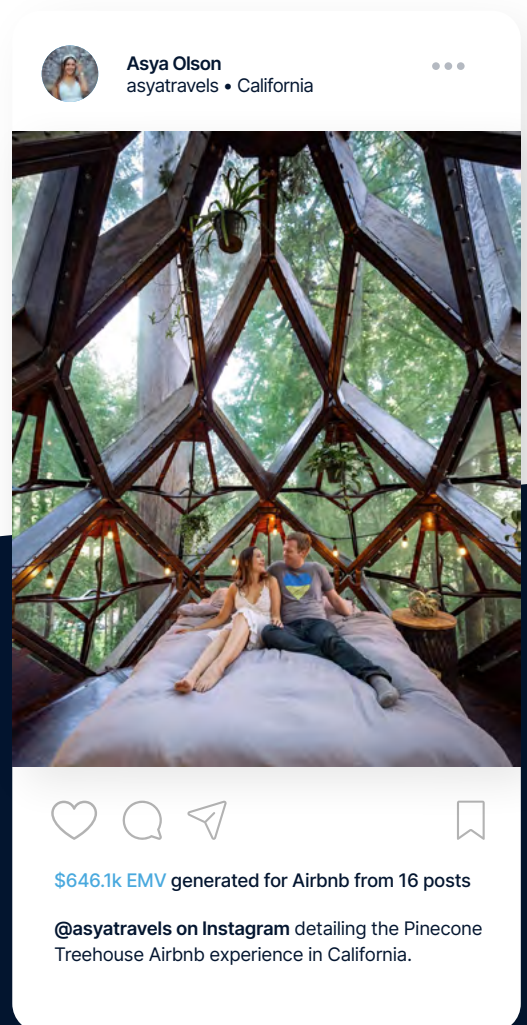
As of May 30, 2023, conversations mentioning #TravelGram have reached [172.1M posts](#) on Instagram. From lodging to luggage to tour advisory, the following brands dominated creator-led marketing in the travel industry. Data is included from one calendar year spanning May 1, 2022 to April 30, 2023.



# Airbnb

During the time period monitored, the online lodging platform focused its creator marketing efforts on customer segmentation, targeting its two primary audiences: hosts and guests. Through campaigns designed to start conversations around travel experiences and new destinations, #AirbnbHost prompted 253 ambassadors to share 837 posts across social channels, generating \$3.8M EMV. Meanwhile, #AirbnbExperience inspired 515 brand advocates to share 920 posts, resulting in \$2.8M EMV.

Travel creator Asya Olson (@asyatravels), for example, documented lodging and Airbnb experiences within remote forests and deserts in California. Her 16 posts spanning various social platforms resulted in an 18.1% engagement rate on Instagram. Collectively, her social media activity inspired \$646.1k EMV for the brand. In all, Airbnb increased its U.S. EMV by 15% year-over-year to collect \$134.7M, with \$66.1M of this total derived from Instagram.



**15%**

YoY EMV Growth in U.S.

**\$66.1M**

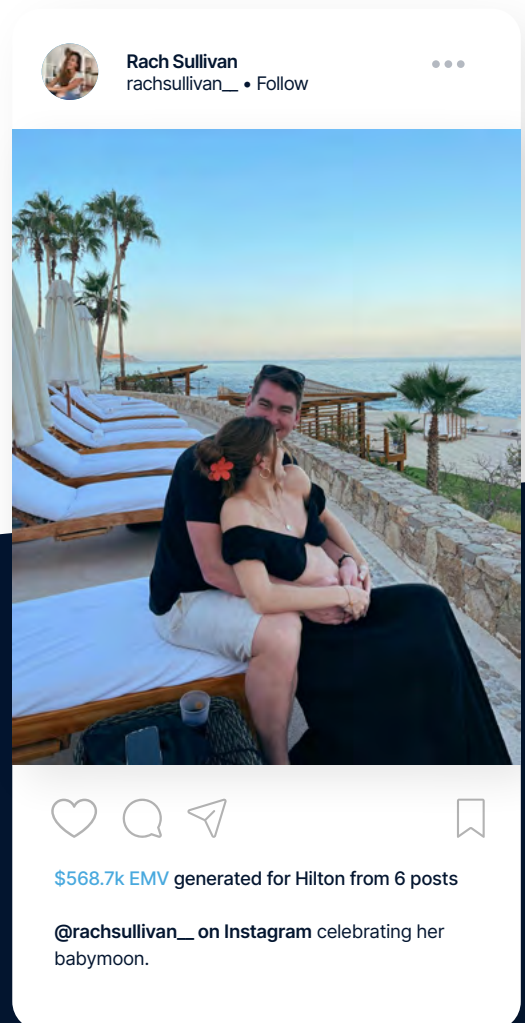
Instagram EMV



# Hilton

Hotel veteran Hilton demonstrated 83% YoY EMV growth, closing the time period monitored at \$56.2M. Contributing to the brand’s success were its 3.3k Instagram brand ambassadors (out of a 5.2k total), who generated 10.5k posts and 310M impressions. Honeymoon trips, anniversary festivities, and celebratory experiences were common themes amongst these creators.

For example, travel and fashion enthusiast Mandana Ansari (@mandy on Instagram) chronicled her destination [wedding](#) at Hilton Cancun, generating \$568.7k EMV. Author Rach Sullivan (@rachsullivan\_ on Instagram) celebrated her babymoon at the Hilton Los Cabos, sharing six posts showing off her baby bump in different locations at the hotel, resulting in \$293.2k EMV for the brand. Overall, creators produced content displaying their happiness, excitement, and relaxation while staying at Hilton venues.



**\$56.2M**

Hilton's Overall EMV

**3.3k**

Total Instagram creators for Hilton

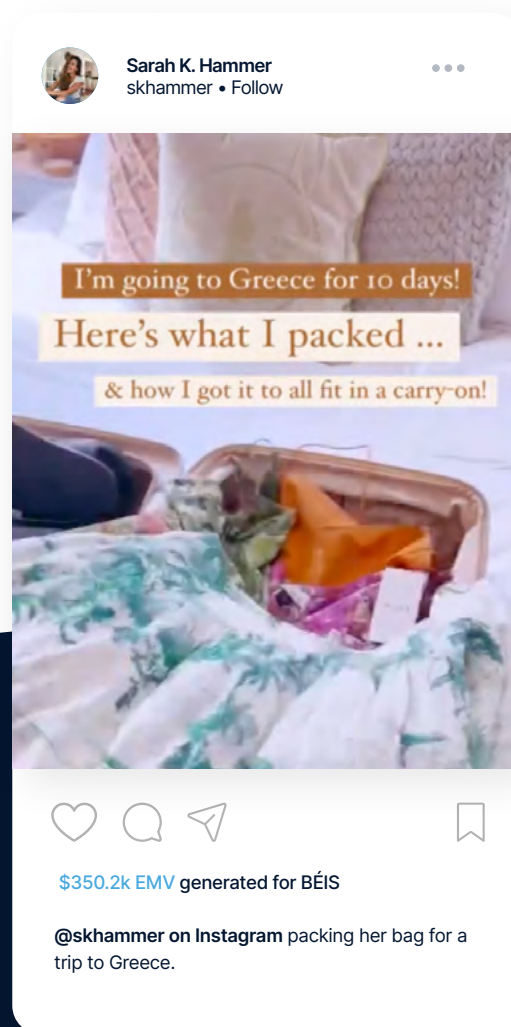




## BÉIS

Bag and travel accessory brand BÉIS closed the time period monitored at \$24.0M EMV, a 101% YoY boost. The catalyst for this growth was the brand’s creator community, which generated a total of 10.2k posts that bolstered BÉIS’ content volume by 63% from the previous year, leading to an estimated 225.4M impressions across social channels. The brand made waves in March 2023 when it posted its Weekender Bag in relation to a controversy surrounding reality TV show Vanderpump Rules (post now deleted). Following buzz on social media, mentions of #WeekenderBag jumped 48% from the previous month to reach \$109.0k EMV.

Instagram creators in particular drove the most overall activity for BÉIS, sharing 8.4k posts that inspired a 66% increase in estimated impressions. Micro-influencer Sarah K. Hammer (@skhammer on Instagram) shared various packing tips and luggage organization hacks in 45 posts spanning different social platforms, earning a 17% engagement rate on Instagram and fueling \$350.2k EMV for BÉIS. Overall, conversations including #PackWithMe and #BeisTravel dominated the hashtag leaderboard via a combined 631 shares from 399 brand advocates, resulting in \$4.9M EMV for the brand.



**66%**

Increase in estimated impressions on Instagram

**BÉIS**

**8.4k**

Posts on Instagram



# CreatorIQ + Instagram

Following Meta's API enhancement in 2022, CreatorIQ now fully supports Instagram Reels throughout our platform. To further assist businesses in planning and measuring their influencer marketing programs, our platform's users also receive access to Reach, Shares, Saves, and Video Views metrics within CreatorIQ Campaigns for authenticated businesses or creator accounts.

Announced in April 2023, Instagram selected CreatorIQ as an early adopter of its Creator Marketplace API program focusing on enhanced communication and collaboration methods. As an inaugural launch partner, CreatorIQ will be able to develop solutions for a seamless experience for brand-creator partnership, elevating communication and supporting opportunities that evolve into long-term relationships. The direct priority partnership inbox provides an opportunity for brands to reach a wide network of creators and scale partnership programs, while creators are empowered to build community and incremental monetization amid a booming creator economy.

# Grow With Creators. Scale With CreatorIQ

CreatorIQ is the industry's most trusted creator marketing software, powering advanced creator marketing insights and program management for the world's most innovative enterprise brands.

Supported by cutting-edge data science, our Intelligence Cloud enables creator discovery, streamlines marketing teams' workflow, ensures brand security, and provides customized performance metrics. Our intuitive, comprehensive features have helped make CreatorIQ the chosen creator marketing software solution for brands such as AB InBev, Airbnb, Calvin Klein, CVS, Disney, H&M, Sephora, Unilever, and more.

Founded in 2014, CreatorIQ is headquartered in Los Angeles, with offices in New York, Chicago, London, and Ukraine. In September 2021, CreatorIQ further bolstered our benchmarking and insights capabilities by acquiring Tribe Dynamics, a leading influencer marketing platform that helps passion-driven brands understand the value of their digital earned media.

[Learn More at creatoriq.com](https://creatoriq.com)