

PORTFOLIO



How luxury travel is changing in 2019

Bespoke tour operator Black Tomato co-founder Tom Marchant on wellness, sustainability and transformative travel

Tom Marchant, co-founder of bespoke luxury tour operator Black Tomato, on what today's switched-on travellers are really looking for:

Self-actualisation

While interest in “wellness” has been in vogue for a while now, the idea of travel as sparking a personal journey that continues on your return home is relatively new.

The lasting personal fulfilment of travel comes from what you learn when you're away and how it informs your life when you return.

One of the keys to our approach is that we see travel as part of a hierarchy of personal need, with self-actualisation - that is, being the best person you can be - at the top. It's about going to a place and having an experience that changes you, that you hold onto in some way after returning home.



Or if the client is looking for inspiration to achieve a better work-life balance, we might suggest an itinerary based in Copenhagen, famous for its healthy working culture.

There, we could arrange a day as the guest of a Danish journalist known for his promotion of work-life balance, to share his insights into this challenging subject.

People want more from their holiday

On a basic level, people are using travel as a way of reacting to the increasing stress and mundane repetition of daily life – often in a city, working 9-5 in a job that is as confining as it is mind numbing.

They want to experience something not only different, but also transformative.

That's why we always ask clients what we can do to help them bring back what they've learned while on a trip with us, rather than just sending them off to lie on a beach - although there's a place for that too.

In practice, that might mean reinvigorating your creativity by spending time embedded with artisans in Marrakech's design district, or transforming your approach to healthy eating with macrobiotic cooking classes in Ibiza.



It's no longer something to whisper about

The consumer has never been more self-aware and open about their desire for personal growth through travel.

Even five years ago, it wasn't as talked about, but now it's far more acknowledged, and even celebrated. Nowadays, our clients are asking specifically for wellness and self-improvement that goes beyond your basic yoga retreat.

At Black Tomato, we've recognised this trend towards personal enrichment as a reason in itself to travel with a new service called [Bring It Back](#), which offers highly-tailored itineraries focussing on themes like creativity, entrepreneurialism, family, sustainability and wellness.

Each itinerary is designed to give clients' a truly life-changing experience, with the help of known authorities and true experts in their fields.

For instance, on our sustainability-focussed Peru experience, clients visit organic farms and learn from people like "The Potato Whisperer" Manuel Choque, who supplies world-class chefs. And, of course, there will be plenty of opportunities to feast on traditional dishes.



The industry is listening and delivering

Luxury fitness club chain Equinox has responded to this growing thirst for meaning by expanding into hotels and bespoke travel experiences which take a holistic approach to fitness. This could mean starting the day with a personalised training session and ending it meditating on a mountaintop.

Elsewhere, immersive tour specialist Journeys Within meets this search for meaning with tailored travel itineraries which go beyond sightseeing, offering clients a chance to meet local people and get involved in projects which give back to the community.

In 2019, more and more destinations, hotels and experience providers are realising that they have the power to connect with their customers on a deeper level and offer a truly enriching experience.