

## WEX Travel Payments Insights

### Adventure Tourism Increases Demand for International Travel



When Jack White, a father of two, began planning a vacation for his family, he ruled out the traditional destinations like the Grand Canyon and Walt Disney World®, and focused on a more exotic locale: China. When we talked with Jack about the reasons behind this decision he said, “I wanted to expose my teen-aged kids to a totally different culture, and wanted to give them an experience they’d never forget. We walked a portion of the Great Wall, cruised down the Yangtze River, and had the chance to meet local people who taught us about Chinese culture.” Though the trip was costly, the family felt the uniqueness of the experience made it worth the expense.

#### Greater Demand for International Travel

The White family is not alone in seeking out adventures far from home. According to the [International Trade Administration](#), international travel from the US increased by 8% overall last year, with trips to Asia up 8.5%, trips to Oceania increasing by 11.5%, and trips to South America rising by 8.9%. These numbers represent travelers, like the Whites, who are looking for “the trip of a lifetime,” as well as those who more regularly seek out adventure, including millennials. Together, these types of travelers are part of a category called “adventure travel,” which has rapidly moved from a niche market into the mainstream.

#### Adventure Travel Takes Off

The [Adventure Travel Trade Association](#) (ATTA) defines adventure travel as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environments, and cultural immersion. While once dominated by so called “hard” activities, such as climbing Mount Everest or extreme rock climbing, which required specialized skills and could cost tens of thousands of dollars, the trend is turning toward softer activities that can be enjoyed by a much wider customer base.

The industry is meeting the demand by providing a wide range of adventure trips across the globe that incorporate authentic cultural experiences, activities like hiking or biking, and opportunities to enjoy the natural environment. Some examples include:

- [Backroads](#) offers a trip to Panama that includes a visit to an indigenous village, a trek through a monkey-filled forest, and a 2-day bicycle journey with stops to snorkel, kayak, and relax at an eco-retreat.
- [Gecko Adventures](#), which caters to 18-29 year-olds, hosts trips focused on “meeting the locals, embracing cultures, and learning stuff.” They offer a 13-day trip to Myanmar featuring archeological and cultural sites, as well as a visit with local hill tribes.
- [Acacia Africa](#) offers overland camping tours recommended for travelers aged 18-39 “who don’t mind roughing it.” They offer a trip to Kenya and Uganda that allows guests to participate in gorilla and chimp trekking, and a visit to the Maasai Mara reserve, home of the local Maasai tribes.

As these examples show, adventure travel can happen anywhere that offers tourists a chance to experience a cultural and natural environment different from their own. For US travelers, Asia, Africa, and South America are particularly popular.

#### Greater Need for Currency Capabilities

Adventure travel companies are typically smaller, independent operations that may be based in the local area where the travel is taking place. This is good for the local economies because more money is kept locally. For travel companies booking these services, it is important to find an efficient way to pay these suppliers.

Virtual payments or Virtual Card Numbers (VCNs), are a great option for these types of international transactions. VCNs help travel companies avoid foreign exchange rate mark ups and cross-currency fees by paying suppliers in their local currency. VCNs can be used in more than 210 countries worldwide and in over 150 currencies; with billing in 21 of those currencies, WEX helps travel companies avoid currency fluctuation risk at no cost.

In addition, VCNs offer a range of options that help make transactions more secure when paying suppliers in exotic locations, and can help travel businesses achieve efficiencies by automating reconciliation tasks.

For suppliers, payment is received quickly in local currency, which avoids fees for receiving out-of-currency payments. And since VCNs are globally accepted through the MasterCard® and Visa® networks, there is no set-up work required to accept payment.

[Learn more about WEX Virtual Payments](#)

#### The Future of Adventure Travel and International Tourism

According to the [Global Report on Adventure Tourism](#), over 1 billion tourists traveled internationally in 2013. Whether you look at adventure travel specifically, or international travel as a whole, the trend shows a continued increase in travel to previously less-traveled areas. Travel companies can expect to see increased demand for unique destinations and authentic experiences in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. In order to be successful, it’s more important than ever that travel companies establish relationships with international vendors and have the infrastructure to be able to book international travel experiences with smaller, owner-operated companies.



Posted July 31st, 2017 by [Kari Grubisch](#)

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[IFTM](#), 26-29 September, Porte De Versailles, Paris, France

[eTravel Europe](#), 3 October, Park Inn, Amsterdam, Netherlands

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