

Baby boomers transform vacation ownership travel

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17 Apr 2018

When the term "put out to pasture" means an opportunity to pack your bags and embark on a road-trip, you know you're embracing your recent retirement with the right attitude.



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This is one area where South Africans could learn a lot from their American counterparts who are in the autumn of their lives. The culture of road-tripping and travel has hit the Baby Boomer generation hard, with globetrotting boomers set to transform travel – this according to the World Economic Forum.

The sheer size of the boomer generation, which has the time and money to spend on travel, makes this generation a very attractive prospect for the vacation ownership industry. *Generation Reinvention* author Brent Green says boomers will be the main driving force in the travel industry for the next two decades.

We're all running around like headless 'spring chickens' to target the much-maligned millennials, when we have a generation that spends almost \$160bn on trips every year and has the time to take several holidays in one year. According to research firm AARP, American boomers actually take four to five leisure trips in one year.

Boomers - an opportunity for SA tourism

While it is true that mature travellers join their children and grandchildren on multi-generational holidays, the frequent nature of travel among boomers poses significant opportunities for South Africa's tourism sector, including vacation ownership. And as buyer preference turns to shorter getaways with varied holiday destinations, local breaks and especially vacation ownership, become an attractive option for travellers seeking to spend their golden years somewhere other than their backyard.

Vacation ownership has renewed appeal for the boomer generation, so here's why we should be focusing more of our attention on them:

Footloose and fancy-free. Unlike their parents, boomers are adventurous and have no responsibilities. They are healthier, have a longer lifespan and are active, seeking meaningful encounters from their holiday destinations, not simply a fly-and-flop break. Boomers want options that suit their active lifestyles and vacation ownership delivers this flexibility.

Family facilities. Through vacation ownership, boomers have access to home-like facilities in a variety of destinations so they can accommodate their whole family if they decide to travel together.

Whenever, wherever. Unlike their Gen X and Gen Y counterparts, boomers can travel whenever they want which means they qualify for off-peak discounts and vacation ownership rentals, making holidays much more cost-effective. What's more, the self-catering nature of vacation ownership ensures they can cook for themselves and save money instead of eating out. This is especially since boomers take the longest holidays out of all the generations.

Internet savvy. It's easier than ever before for these silver surfers to find travel options that suit their needs and hit the road. Ask any granny or grandpa how they're communicating with their grandkids in far-flung places and they'll point you to their Skype and Facebook profiles. Research by Expedia Media shows that this is the generation that values informative content and helpful reviews – far less likely than other generations to be influenced by advertising deals.

Flexibility, new experiences and a convenient hub from which to explore their surrounds – these are all factors that would tick the boxes of all generations, so focusing our efforts on the generation that's technically not "over the hill" will help the tourism industry meet the needs of what's to come.

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