



## GLOBAL HOTEL ALLIANCE RESEARCH REVEALS LOYALTY PROGRAMMES DRIVE HOTEL CHOICE AS DEMAND FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL RISES

- *87% of travellers prefer hotels with a global loyalty programme*
- *Generosity continues to be the most valued programme attribute*
- *71% value a loyalty programme's partner benefits outside of its core business*
- *Simplicity of DISCOVERY Dollars recognised as outstanding among reward options*
- *80% of surveyed travellers globally prioritise purpose-driven journeys*

**Dubai, UAE, 16th April 2026:** Latest global research from [Global Hotel Alliance \(GHA\)](#), supported by independent agency Bond Brand Loyalty, highlights evolving travel priorities and the continuous rising relevance of loyalty programmes. The annual research report - *What Travellers Want Most From Loyalty Programmes* - which evaluated the responses of over 9,000 [GHA DISCOVERY](#) members globally, uncovered valuable insights into traveller preferences. In 2026, travellers are more active in hotel loyalty programmes than ever before, and their expectations are influencing how hotels design and deliver benefits.

The study found that 87% of respondents would choose a hotel with a global loyalty programme over a similar hotel without one. This preference is particularly pronounced in India, where 93% of respondents indicated this view, as well as in Japan and Singapore, where 91% of members expressed the same.

“Loyalty programmes have evolved from a nice-to-have perk into a powerful driver of customer choice,” said Kristi Gole, EVP Strategy at Global Hotel Alliance. “They drive where customers stay and how they book, unlocking both incremental demand and more profitable distribution.”

### **Loyalty preferences**

Generosity continues to be the most valued programme attribute, cited by 48% of members - significantly ahead of novelty at just 7%. Simplicity and transparency follow at 16% each, highlighting the importance of clear and easy-to-understand benefits. In markets such as Japan and Singapore, the emphasis on generosity is even more evident, reaching as high as 60%, underscoring the appeal of tangible, high-value rewards among travellers who are more selective about programme participation.

Stay-related benefits, including room upgrades, complimentary breakfast, and late checkout continue to dominate member preferences, with upgrades ranking highest at 59%. Elite tier members place greater emphasis on upgrades, hotel quality, and ease of redeeming rewards, while entry-level members are more motivated by discounted rates. Across all markets, members consistently prioritise core benefits - delivered exceptionally well.

Beyond traditional hotel rewards, travellers increasingly expect loyalty programmes to deliver broader lifestyle value. The research found that 71% of respondents say a loyalty programme

becomes more appealing when it includes partner benefits outside its core business, such as status matches and other travel-related perks.

### **Behavioural Impact of Benefits**

Loyalty benefits play a powerful role in shaping booking behaviour. Complimentary breakfast, when offered, increases the likelihood of booking direct to 85%. Meanwhile, dedicated VIP customer service for Titanium tier influences 80% of members to choose GHA DISCOVERY over competitors. While scale and network size remain factors, loyalty decisions are increasingly shaped by targeted, high-impact benefits that members can clearly understand and use.

### **GHA DISCOVERY programme perception**

Specifically for GHA DISCOVERY, the quality of hotels stands out as the most appreciated aspect of the programme, cited by 60% of respondents. This is followed by the ease of earning and spending DISCOVERY Dollars (D\$), mentioned by 58% of members, representing a nine-point increase compared with last year and a 13-point advantage over the next-ranked programme in the study. Hotel benefits, such as upgrades or on-property privileges, were also highly valued, highlighted by 56% of respondents.

“Today’s travellers are very clear about what they value in a loyalty programme - it’s not complexity or novelty, but generosity, simplicity, and benefits they can immediately understand and use”, continues Gole. “At the same time, expectations are expanding beyond the stay, with travellers increasingly looking for programmes that deliver broader lifestyle value through meaningful partnerships.”

Against this backdrop of strong loyalty programme value, the research reveals that broader traveller expectations are also evolving.

### **Travel for personal growth**

Travellers are increasingly looking for experiences that go beyond the surface, with 80% seeking journeys that help them grow, change, or see the world differently - highlighting rising demand for more meaningful, transformative travel. This trend is especially pronounced in Japan (91%), China (90%), Italy (88%), India (86%), and the UAE (86%), underscoring travel’s growing role in shaping new perspectives.

With global demand for trending destinations making it increasingly difficult for travellers to enjoy truly authentic experiences, off-season travel is emerging as a defining choice. These quieter periods not only offer a more genuine connection to each destination but also help hotels balance occupancy more evenly throughout the year. Off-season travel is most appealing among members in Canada (45%), Australia (41%), the USA (41%), and Germany (39%).

### **Top motivations for travel**

Spending time with family and friends is the leading global motivator for travel (38%), followed by a desire to explore new cultures and destinations (30%). Bucket list trips rank third (18%), while solo travel (6%), spontaneous discovery trips (4%), and learning a new skill (3%) remain more niche drivers.

Preferences vary significantly by market. India places the greatest emphasis on time with family and friends (49%), Japan leads in cultural exploration (45%), and Spain stands out for bucket list travel (30%). These insights underscore the growing importance of offerings that enable shared experiences - such as larger room upgrades, family-friendly amenities, and curated local activities - alongside opportunities for deeper cultural engagement.

### **Bleisure travel here to stay**

The research also highlights the continued growth of “bleisure” travel, as 76% of business travellers say they are likely to extend work trips for leisure, with China (87%), India (81%) and Singapore (81%) leading, reflecting a growing trend among professionals to make the most of their time away from home. By combining business commitments with personal travel, guests are seeking to explore destinations, enjoy local experiences, and extend their stays beyond traditional work itineraries. This trend suggests loyalty programmes that offer benefits relevant to both business and leisure stays can capture a greater share of member engagement.

“Today’s travellers are seeking more than just a place to stay - they want meaningful, enriching experiences,” said Gole. “Our research shows that loyalty programmes are increasingly shaping both hotel choice and booking behaviour, making them a critical driver of commercial performance. The most effective programmes are those that are generous, simple, and transparent, recognising members in meaningful ways while unlocking access to exceptional hotels and experiences worldwide.”

**Read more in the full report:** <https://www.globalhotelalliance.com/customer-research>

**For more information visit** [Global Hotel Alliance](#) and [GHA DISCOVERY](#)

GHA DISCOVERY is complimentary to join, and travellers can [sign up online](#) or download the GHA DISCOVERY app and register on their mobile phones. Travellers can also connect with GHA DISCOVERY on Instagram, Facebook and WeChat.

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#### **About GHA and GHA DISCOVERY:**

Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) is the world’s largest alliance of independent hotel brands with over 50 brands and 1,000 hotels in 100 countries. Its award-winning loyalty programme – GHA DISCOVERY – provides more than 35 million members with recognition, D\$ rewards and exclusive experiences across its hotels and partners, both with and without a stay.

Through membership in GHA, brands expand their global reach, drive incremental revenue and reduce dependence on third-party channels, all while maintaining management independence and individual positioning. For more information, visit [globalhotelalliance.com](http://globalhotelalliance.com) or [ghadiscovery.com](http://ghadiscovery.com).