

Surprise! These Travel Companies Keep Your Trip A Secret (Until The Last Minute)

Ever had a hard time deciding where to go on vacation? Now, you don't need to worry. A new breed of travel companies is revolutionizing vacation planning with secret trips. The concept: They do all the planning and booking for you and add an element of excitement by keeping the destination a secret until the last minute.

According to a recent Booking.com survey of 27,000 travelers across 33 countries, this is a huge trend for 2024. Over half of the respondents expressed enthusiasm for surprise trips where every detail—including the destination—remains unknown until arrival. Booking.com called this new group of modern travelers the “surrender seekers.”

Lilian Rafson was ahead of the curve. When she was 23, she launched Pack Up + Go, which specializes in surprise vacations in the U.S. and has sent surrender seekers to more than 300 destinations around the country. Travelers don't know where they're going until they arrive at the airport. “I thought it would do really well to encourage Americans to travel and was even thinking about the economic benefits and how much money could go to small businesses and restaurants and shops through tourism,” Rafson told me in an interview. “A lot of American cities are being robbed of that because we're so quick to travel overseas.”

Katie Truesdell was also ahead of the curve with her company, Magical Mystery Tours, which was based on a family tradition. One year when she was a kid, her dad planned a surprise Christmas getaway for the family. Weeks in advance, mysterious red envelopes began arriving in the mail with clues about packing, activities and more. The family set off that morning for an unknown locale and arrived that night in Nashville. The family loved the experience so much that they started doing surprise trips every year—and now Truesdell plans similar getaways for her clients.

As more travelers embrace the allure of the unknown, a host of innovative companies have emerged, each offering unique twists on the concept of surprise travel.