Alison.Ai

The 3.5x Day.

Travel Tuesday is now the biggest booking day of the year. Here is the ten-week runway that decides who wins it.

Travel Tuesday 2026 falls on December 1, the Tuesday after Cyber Monday. Hopper's data puts it at 3.5x more bookings than an average day, and McKinsey has confirmed the spike is real across airlines, cruises, and hotels. The catch is upstream: the campaigns that win that Tuesday launch in late September, run through the most expensive auction weeks of the year, and have to arrive on December 1 with creative that is not already ten weeks old. This report maps the runway, the money, and the refresh math.

Alison.ai first-party creative data · McKinsey, Hopper, Sojern, Deloitte, eMarketer, Varos · September 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ten Weeks to Tuesday.

The biggest booking day of the year sits at the end of the most contested media stretch of the year. Between here and December 1 sit Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the steepest CPM climb on the calendar. Six figures frame this report.

Dec 1

Travel Tuesday 2026, the Tuesday after Cyber Monday. The planning runway opens the week of September 21.

10-WEEK RUNWAY

3.5x

More bookings on Travel Tuesday than an average day, per Hopper, the platform that coined the day in 2018.

PEAK DAY

+60%

Jump in airline bookings on Travel Tuesday versus the surrounding two-week periods, per McKinsey.

VERIFIED SPIKE

–18%

Drop in average holiday travel budgets to $2,334 per Deloitte, even as travel intent hits a five-year high. Deal hunger is the season's defining behavior.

DELOITTE

12 days

Median time to creative fatigue for travel campaigns across Alison's benchmark corpus.

ALISON DATA

5x

How many times a single creative wave launched on September 22 hits fatigue before December 1.

ALISON DATA

Sources: Hopper Travel Deal Tuesday data; McKinsey, Travel Tuesday is Real and Growing; Deloitte 2025 Holiday Travel Survey; Alison.ai first-party creative fatigue benchmark corpus. Full citations on the final page.

METHODOLOGY AND A NOTE ON DATA

What Is Measured, and What Is Forecast.

Scope	The ten-week runway to Travel Tuesday 2026, September 22 to December 1, set against the Q4 holiday media market including Black Friday, November 27, and Cyber Monday, November 30.
Alison data	First-party creative performance analysis across travel campaigns in Alison's cross-platform benchmark corpus, spanning flights, hotels and resorts, and cruise and package verticals, plus the corpus-wide fatigue benchmarks.
Third party	McKinsey Travel Tuesday analysis including Sojern search data; Hopper Travel Deal Tuesday booking data; Deloitte 2025 Holiday Travel Survey; eMarketer travel ad spend forecasts; Varos platform CPM data.
Forecast	Booking spikes and CPM patterns are drawn from prior cycles and read forward to 2026. Treat them as direction and magnitude, not precision. Alison creative benchmarks are medians and vary by account, vertical, and budget.

FINDING 00 · THE CALENDAR

Ten Weeks, One Tuesday.

Travel brands tend to plan for Travel Tuesday the way consumers do: the week it happens. But the campaigns competing for that Tuesday run through the entire Q4 auction, against retail money, at retail prices. The runway has five distinct phases, and the creative decisions sit at the front of it, not the end.

When	What happens	Why it matters to creative
Sep 22 to Oct 12	The quiet build. Auctions are still at pre-holiday prices and holiday planners begin researching	Your first creative wave launches here. The fatigue clock starts now, not in November
Oct 13 to Nov 1	Testing window. The last stretch where media is cheap enough to learn on	Test hooks, destinations, and offers now. What wins here is what runs on December 1
Nov 2 to Nov 25	Holiday auction inflation. Meta CPMs jumped 33.5 percent from October to November in the last comparable cycle, per Varos	Every impression costs more. Fatigued creative at inflated CPMs is the most expensive mistake of the quarter
Nov 26 to Nov 30	Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Cyber Monday. Retail demand peaks and travel competes in the same auctions	Tease rather than fight. Deal-drop-Tuesday creative rides the shopping mindset instead of outbidding it
Tue Dec 1	Travel Tuesday. Bookings run 3.5x an average day, per Hopper	The day belongs to fresh creative. A wave launched in September is on its fifth decay by now

THE DEADLINE NOBODY CIRCLES

Travel Tuesday is not a one-day campaign. It is a ten-week campaign with a one-day deadline, and the ten weeks run through the most expensive media stretch of the year.

Travel Tuesday date per the post-Cyber Monday calendar convention. Meta October to November CPM movement per Varos data for advertisers spending $10K+ monthly. Booking multiple per Hopper Travel Deal Tuesday data.

FINDING 01 · THE DAY

Bigger Than Cyber Monday.

Travel Tuesday started as a promotion Hopper coined in 2018. It is now a verified booking event. McKinsey's analysis, titled Travel Tuesday is Real and Growing, measured the day against the two-week periods on either side of it and found spikes across every travel category, with search interest growing more than 5x over two years. The most important line in the report: travel bookings made on Travel Tuesday have surpassed those made on Cyber Monday.

+60%
Airline bookings on Travel Tuesday versus the surrounding two weeks, per McKinsey

+50%
Cruise bookings on the day, the second-largest category spike, per McKinsey

+28%
Hotel bookings, narrowly eclipsed only by Cyber Monday itself, per McKinsey

The demand side is not just bigger, it is more findable. Sojern search data cited by McKinsey shows searches across the 15 most popular destinations were up 37 percent on Travel Tuesday versus average November and December Tuesdays, and the spike concentrated hardest in resort destinations like Nassau and Punta Cana. Travelers are not browsing on December 1. They are hunting packages.

Signal	Number	Read for travel marketers
Bookings vs an average day	3.5x, per Hopper	The single most concentrated booking moment on the travel calendar
Search interest growth	5x over two years, per McKinsey	The audience now knows the day exists and plans around it
Deal volume vs Cyber Monday	+78%, per Hopper	Supply follows demand. Sitting the day out means ceding it to competitors
Destination searches on the day	+37% at top-15 destinations, per Sojern	Destination-specific creative meets travelers who already know where they want to go
Resort destination searches	Spiked above the 37% average, per Sojern	Package and resort offers are the strongest converting format for the day

THE ALISON.AI VIEW

Retail brands would never treat Black Friday as a Thursday-night decision. Travel Tuesday has quietly become travel's Black Friday, and it still gets treated like a Thursday-night decision. The gap between those two behaviors is the opportunity.

McKinsey, Travel Tuesday is Real and Growing, measuring bookings against the two-week periods before and after the day. Hopper Travel Deal Tuesday booking and deal-volume data. Sojern destination search data as cited by McKinsey.

FINDING 02 · THE AUDIENCE

More Travelers, Tighter Wallets.

Deloitte's Holiday Travel Survey found something that looks like a contradiction and is actually a setup. More than half of Americans, 54 percent, intend to travel between Thanksgiving and mid-January, the highest holiday travel intent in at least five years. At the same time, average travel budgets dropped 18 percent to $2,334, and Gen Z budgets fell 31 percent. More people are going. Each of them is spending less. That combination has one behavioral output: deal hunting.

54%
Of Americans plan to travel between Thanksgiving and mid-January, a five-year high, per Deloitte

$2,334
Average holiday travel budget, down 18 percent year over year, per Deloitte

–31%
Gen Z budget cut, the sharpest of any group, just as Gen Z and millennials become half of all holiday travelers, per Deloitte

A deal-hungry audience concentrates around deal moments, which is exactly what the McKinsey booking spikes show. But reaching that audience is not getting cheaper. The travel category is bidding into the same November auctions as every retailer running Black Friday, and in the last comparable cycle Meta CPMs rose 33.5 percent from October to November, per Varos. Meanwhile the money keeps arriving: eMarketer forecasts US travel media network ad spend reaching $2.96 billion in 2026, and travel ad spending is in a cyclical upturn this year.

One more audience shift worth building for: Deloitte found 24 percent of holiday travelers now use generative AI for trip planning, triple the rate from two years ago. A meaningful share of Travel Tuesday demand will arrive having already asked a machine where to go. Creative with specific destinations, specific dates, and specific prices meets that traveler. Vague wanderlust does not.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DECEMBER 1

The 2026 holiday traveler is the most deal-motivated in years, and Travel Tuesday is the single most deal-concentrated moment on their calendar. The demand will be there. The question the rest of this report answers is whether your creative still will be.

Deloitte 2025 Holiday Travel Survey of 3,896 Americans, fielded September to October 2025. Varos Meta CPM data, October to November movement, advertisers spending $10K+ monthly. eMarketer US travel media network ad spend forecast and US travel industry ad spending outlook.

FINDING 03 · THE WINDOW

Seventy Days Is Five Fatigues.

The runway from September 22 to December 1 is 70 days. Median time to creative fatigue for travel campaigns in Alison's benchmark corpus is 12 days. Run the arithmetic: a single creative wave launched at the start of the runway hits fatigue five times before Travel Tuesday, with the fifth onset landing around November 21, right as Thanksgiving week opens. The brand that plans one big Travel Tuesday creative push is planning to spend the most expensive week of the year on its most exhausted assets.

12 days

Median time to fatigue for travel creative in the Alison corpus, slower than fashion at 10 but far shorter than the runway

−24%

Average CTR drop once fatigue onset begins, across the Alison corpus

$124K

Spend wasted per $1M by delaying a refresh by one week. In November, at inflated CPMs, the waste compounds

Platform fatigue, mapped onto the runway

Platform	Early surge	Decay window	Refresh cadence	Travel Tuesday read
Meta	+23% days 1 to 3	−19% days 8 to 14	Weekly	Plan roughly nine refresh cycles across the runway, with a fresh wave held for December 1
TikTok	+31% days 1 to 3	−26% days 8 to 14	Twice weekly	Fastest surge and collapse. The teaser channel for deal-drop-Tuesday creative in Cyber Week
YouTube	+15%	−11% days 15 to 21	Bi-weekly	The destination-storytelling layer. One wave can carry three weeks, so four builds cover the runway

CASE: THE WAVE THAT DIED ON THANKSGIVING

A resort brand launches its holiday wave on November 1, planning to ride it through Travel Tuesday. At the travel median of 12 days, fatigue onset lands around November 13. By Black Friday the wave is deep in its second decay, and on December 1, the biggest booking day of the year, it is serving at roughly a quarter less CTR at the year's highest CPMs. The creative did not fail. The calendar did.

What recovery is worth

+39%

CTR recovery from timely micro-iterations rather than full rebuilds

87%

Peak CTR recovery when a fatiguing asset is refreshed within 48 hours

−31%

Reduction in media waste when creative is tested before it ships

Alison.ai cross-platform fatigue benchmark corpus. Surge, decay, and recovery figures are medians and vary by account, spend level, and audience size.

FINDING 04 · THE PATTERNS

What Travel Creative Actually Wins.

Alison's analysis of travel creative points to one theme: on December 1, specificity beats atmosphere. Travelers arrive hunting a place, a price, and a deadline, and the patterns that name all three win. Lifts below are medians versus the travel vertical baseline, from Alison's benchmark corpus.

Pattern	CTR lift	Why it works for Travel Tuesday
Destination-specific hero, named place in the first frame	+26%	Meets the +37% destination search spike. "Punta Cana" converts a hunter, "paradise" does not
Route or map motion hook, under 0.5 seconds	+24%	The travel version of the punch-hook. Origin to destination in half a second stops the scroll
Traveler-POV UGC over polished brand film	+21%	First-person authenticity carries deal credibility that studio gloss undercuts
Price in the frame, eight words or fewer	+17%	Deal hunters filter on numbers. A frame without a price is a frame they scroll past
Package bundle framing, flight plus stay in one frame	+16%	Matches the resort and package spike Sojern measured on the day itself
Dated urgency, "Ends December 1" over "Limited time"	+12%	A real deadline reads as a real deal. Vague urgency reads as wallpaper

THE PLAYBOOK

Ten Weeks, Week by Week.

Week	Media move	Creative move
Week 1 **Sep 22 to 28**	Launch wave one at pre-holiday CPMs	Three concepts per platform, destination-specific from frame one. The fatigue clock starts now
Weeks 2 to 3 **Sep 29 to Oct 12**	Cheapest learning of the quarter. Spend to learn, not to scale	First fatigue checkpoint lands around October 4. Kill the bottom half of concepts by October 12
Weeks 4 to 5 **Oct 13 to 26**	Scale the winners while auctions are still sane	Refresh with micro-iterations rather than rebuilds, worth +39% CTR recovery
Weeks 6 to 7 **Oct 27 to Nov 9**	Last affordable window. Lock December 1 concepts now	Preflight-test the Travel Tuesday wave before it ships, worth −31% media waste
Weeks 8 to 9 **Nov 10 to 23**	CPM inflation opens. Run only proven creative	Refresh within 48 hours of a fatigue flag, recovering up to 87% of peak CTR
Cyber Week **Nov 26 to 30**	Do not outbid retail. Ride the shopping mindset instead	Teaser wave: "travel deals drop Tuesday." TikTok cadence, twice-weekly refresh
Travel Tuesday **Tue Dec 1**	The 3.5x day. Full budget behind the tested wave	Fresh creative only: price in frame, dated urgency, named destination. Retire everything launched before November 10

✓ DO THIS

A named destination in frame one, a price in the frame, "Ends December 1" on the urgency line, and a fresh tested wave held back for the day itself.

→ Meets a deal hunter with a deal

× NOT THIS

A generic wanderlust film launched November 1 and left running through the holiday, fighting retail CPMs with month-old creative and a vague "escape this winter" line.

→ Fifth decay by the day that matters

Alison.ai first-party creative analysis, travel vertical. Lifts are medians against the travel baseline and vary by account, budget, and placement mix. Destination search and package spikes per Sojern data as cited by McKinsey.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Five Numbers to Remember.

1 **3.5x is a Black Friday, not a Tuesday.**

Travel Tuesday runs 3.5x the bookings of an average day per Hopper, and McKinsey confirms the day's travel bookings have surpassed Cyber Monday's. Treat December 1 as a tentpole with its own creative plan, not a leftover slot after the retail weekend.

2 **54% are traveling. Their budgets fell 18%.**

Deloitte's numbers describe the most deal-motivated holiday travel audience in years. Deal moments concentrate that demand, and creative that leads with a specific price and date meets it. Mood films do not.

3 **70 days means five fatigues.**

At the travel median of 12 days to fatigue, one creative wave launched September 22 decays five times before December 1. Plan the runway as a sequence of waves, and hold a fresh one for the day itself.

4 **+33.5% is what November costs.**

That is the Meta CPM jump from October to November in the last comparable cycle, per Varos. Every point of CTR lost to fatigue is repurchased at inflated prices, at roughly $124K wasted per $1M for each week a refresh slips.

5 **October is the cheap classroom.**

The testing window before November 1 is the last stretch of affordable learning in 2026. What earns its place in October, refreshed within 48 hours of fatigue for up to 87 percent CTR recovery, is what should be spending on December 1.

THE ONE-LINE VERSION

Travel Tuesday is won in October. By the time the deals drop, the only brands still holding fresh, tested creative are the ones that planned ten weeks for a single Tuesday.