

Uptick in late-year air ticket sales, according to ForwardKeys

The travel analytics firm ForwardKeys has found that there has been a last-minute surge in flight bookings for the Christmas period. This year's pattern of a late rush in bookings during November is different from the usual pattern whereby bookings for Christmas grow progressively through the year.

Despite this surge, bookings are still a fraction of what they were in 2019, with air tickets issued for arrivals between 19th and 25th December at just 20.2% and tickets from 1st to 31st January at just 11.6% of 2019 levels.

Four of the top five destinations for Christmas are resort-oriented locations, mainly in the Caribbean. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, was the primary destination, followed by San Juan, Puerto Rico; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Cancun, Mexico; and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. These were down from 2019 figures by 21.2%, 39.6%, 40.3%, 45.5% and 47.3%, respectively.

Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys said: "In normal years, we see people taking international flights during the Christmas holiday period to gather with family members they have not seen for a while. But this year, such behaviour is being dampened as it poses a risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus; and it is being made more difficult by various travel restrictions. At the same time, many destinations which are heavily dependent on tourism have made strenuous efforts to stay open for business, implementing Covid-resistant protocols, to ensure their valuable leisure visitors can come and remain safe. This is particularly true of numerous places in the Caribbean and Mexico, which are entering their peak season. They are being relatively very successful, in comparison to other parts of the world, attracting visitors from their most important market, the USA, who are eager for a holiday outdoors in the sunshine. Right now, they look set to maintain tourist numbers at around 50% of normal levels, although that depends on governments not implementing any last-minute measures to avoid a third wave."

Magaly Toribio, Marketing Advisor for the Dominican Republic Ministry of Tourism, commented: "We are delighted that Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic has come out as the most resilient city for international travel this Christmas. Our free travel assistance plan, which we offer to all visitors, has ensured that the Dominican Republic is a safe destination. We are continuing to work with airlines, hotels and other in-destination stakeholders to ensure that we can welcome back more holidaymakers as quickly and safely as possible."