

Spanish tourists remain loyal to Latin America

Mexico and traditional South American destinations have benefited most from independent Spanish tourists taking a holiday break, according to ForwardKeys, which predicts future travel patterns by analyzing 17 million booking transactions a day.

But the Caribbean is seeing a slowdown in visitors. Its share of regional arrivals from Spain last year stood at 19%, down two percentage points on 2017, and first-half forward bookings are currently 13.2% behind.

Some 30% of independent Spanish travel outside Europe last year was to Latin America and the Caribbean, with overall arrivals up 3.6%. Forward bookings for the first half of 2019 are 2.7% ahead, holding up against the rest of the world at 2.6%.

Panama, which is celebrating the 500th anniversary of its capital city with numerous events, has joined the fastest-growing destinations. Mexico, with a 22% share of regional arrivals, is seeing forward bookings surge by 26.9% against last year.

ForwardKeys' research shows increased seat capacity from Spain to Latin America is helping to sustain growth, along with new scheduled routes this year. On flights to Latin America, capacity for the first half of 2019 is up 10.4%, although for the Caribbean it is down 9.8%.

New routes are Level (Iberia) Barcelona to Santiago from April; and Air Europa's Madrid to Iguazu (Argentina), and Madrid to Panama, both starting in June.

ForwardKeys CEO and co-founder, Olivier Jager, said: "Our latest findings show that Spanish independent travelers still favor Latin America, for obvious reasons. The connections, historical and familial, are strong. And our research shows there's an untapped appetite outside Madrid. However, the Caribbean downward trend is concerning."