

RESEARCH

## Virtuoso notes Latin American, South East Asian travel as 2016 trend

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*St. Regis Mumbai*

By STAFF REPORTS

High-end hospitality network Virtuoso has uncovered where its affluent members plan to travel this winter and spring.

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Exotic destinations and escaping the winter blues continue to be drivers in affluent travel trends, but more so Virtuoso's clients are yearning to explore far and wide. Virtuoso mined more than \$35 billion in bookings data to compare which destinations have the most year-over-year appeal, insights that may help hospitality brands in the featured locales establish packages and on-site programming for guests.

### Stamps in your passport

The top 10 most popular destinations for January through March 2016 vacations are expected with Mexico, Canada and Australia claiming the first three spots. Also included is New Zealand, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Argentina, India, Chile and China.

The mix of "fashionable places and more unusual choices" are becoming the norm among travelers. As for Mexico and Canada making the list, the close proximity to the United States is likely the cause. Besides Canada's chilly winter climate, the UK was the only destination within the Northern Hemisphere.

While New Zealand and Australia have always been popular, affluent travelers looking for novel destinations are booking trips to Asia and South America.

During the first quarter of 2016, Virtuoso saw the most significant growth in year-on-year bookings in countries such as Panama and Thailand. Panama saw a bookings increase of 107 percent while Thailand saw 92 percent.



*Four Seasons Kohsamui, Thailand*

Additionally, Switzerland, South Africa, Kenya, India, Jamaica, Vietnam, Colombia and Spain have seen increased bookings.

The hospitality industry has responded accordingly to the interest in these destinations.

For example, Starwood Hotels & Resorts is expanding its presence in Asian markets to capitalize on emerging regions and expand its services.

In 2015, Starwood added nine hotels to its South Asian portfolio and has plans for 16 more, particularly in India. South Asian countries are developing rapidly, meaning both business and pleasure tourism from the West and within the region will likely increase with income and purchasing power ([see story](#)).

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