

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Middle East destinations seeing uptick in luxury travel

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Israel is one of the destinations seeing an upswing in luxury U.S. travelers. Image credit: Virtuoso

By STAFF REPORTS

While Italy and France are the most popular planned vacation spots for affluent Americans through the end of the year, locations in the Middle East and North Africa are seeing a surge in interest from tourists.

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Based on data from its own bookings, high-end hospitality network Virtuoso shared the top travel destinations from September through the holiday season. Turkey, Egypt and Morocco are among the tourism spots that are seeing triple-digit growth in travel from Americans this year.

Bouncing back

Virtuoso ranked the top 10 destinations as well as the locations with the strongest growth for the end of the year.

Following Italy and France, South Africa, Israel and Germany round out the top five. Germany holds appeal for river cruises.

Israel in particular has seen a significant growth in interest, with bookings rising 88 percent year-over-year. Along with Israel, Greece similarly made both top 10 lists, with the seventh-greatest bookings, rising 74 percent from last year.



Greece is gaining attention from affluent U.S. travelers. Image credit: Virtuoso

Virtuoso also found that the United States was the eighth most popular destination in the end of the year, as Americans opt to stay closer to home for the holidays.

The countries with the greatest growth in bookings are led by Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, India and the Cayman Islands, all of which saw more than double the interest from 2017.

This embrace of the Middle East and North Africa shows a returned interest from U.S. consumers.

Last year, Virtuoso conducted a flash poll among discerning United States-based members that found travelers actively avoiding certain international destinations.

According to Virtuoso's poll, U.S. members' clients are avoiding destinations, specific countries and regions due to perceived global threats. Virtuoso has captured this sentiment through the use of the term VUCA, standing for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, to describe travel disruptors related to geopolitical situations.

Forty percent of those polled said clients were avoiding certain locations due to terrorism concerns. This included destinations in the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Turkey and Egypt topped the list ([see story](#)).