

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

International travelers looking ahead to late 2021

February 16, 2021



Consumers are optimistic about resuming international travel. Image credit: Marriott International

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Affluents are anxious to travel, but hospitality brands may have to wait until the latter half of 2021 to see bookings rebound significantly.

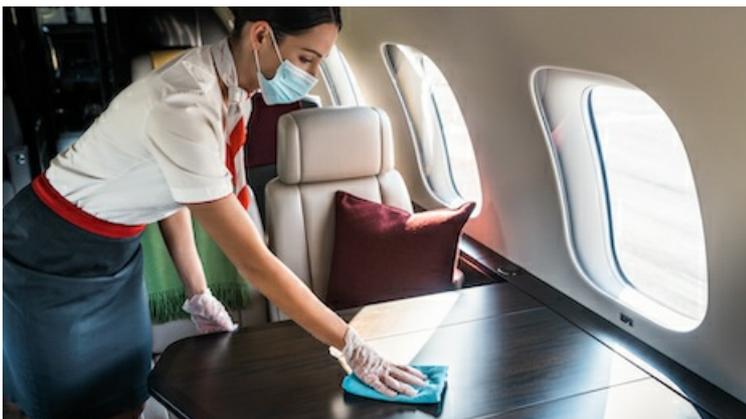
Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

As the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved and fluctuated, travelers have shifted from staying home to opting for extended stays or spontaneous trips. With consumer confidence improving, however, travelers are becoming more comfortable booking trips months ahead of time.

Traveler attitudes

After a turbulent 2020, consumer confidence in the United States is edging up. According to January's Consumer Confidence Survey, consumers are becoming more optimistic about short-term outlooks even amid a difficult month.

The U.S. recorded more than 95,000 COVID-19 deaths in January 2021, making it the deadliest month of the pandemic. By the end of the month, however, new cases and hospitalizations had started falling.



Travel has been one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic. Image credit: VistaJet

While cases, hospitalizations and deaths remain higher than spring and summer peaks, the sustained declines are causes for optimism.

The vaccination rollout, which has been criticized in the U.S. and elsewhere for being inefficient and complicated, seems to be improving. It will take months for COVID-19 vaccines to become more widely available due to limited supplies, but vaccinations have now become a matter of when, not if.

Taking these factors into account, travelers are becoming more enthusiastic about booking travel.

According to a recent [report](#) from online travel platform Tripadvisor, 77 percent of global travelers report they will be more likely to travel internationally if they receive the vaccine, including 69 percent of U.S. travelers.

Tripadvisor also found that 11 percent of respondents, including 14 percent of U.S. travelers, have already booked an international trip for 2021. The report also noted that interest in international trips overtakes domestic travel for vacations scheduled for May, with demand building in the spring.

Travelers also appear to be more deliberate when planning their vacations. Almost three-quarters of Tripadvisor's respondents say they will spend more time choosing a destination, and most travelers also plan to spend more time reading reviews and selecting their accommodations.

The findings are based on a Tripadvisor survey of more than 2,000 consumers across six countries: the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Singapore and Japan.

Some hospitality brands are already seeing this pent-up demand translate into reservations, particularly among the wealthiest travelers.



Luxury cruises are in demand. Image credit: Oceania Cruises

Oceania Cruises' 2023 180-day world cruise sold out within the one day of booking becoming available to the general public despite the fact that it will not set sail until Jan. 15, 2023. The cruise line is expected to resume voyages later this year, as are other luxury cruise lines such as Cunard and Silversea.

Private aviation is not just showing resilience during the pandemic, but showing growth. According to a new survey from online platform Private Jet Card Comparisons, 41 percent of new private aviation clients plan to continue flying privately "regularly" after the pandemic ([see story](#)).

The surge in private air travel played a role in tour operator TCS World Travel's recent launch of Private Homes Plus. The new all-inclusive residential stays service allows clients to book vacation rentals, activities and transportation including air and on-the-ground travel in a single booking ([see story](#)).

Encouraging travelers

While many consumers are looking forward to traveling later in 2021, they are also embracing spontaneity and booking more last-minute local trips as they wait to feel safer on international trips.

According to a recent report from Hotels.com, more than a third of consumers, 35 percent, are planning to prioritize traveling whenever possible in 2021.

More than a quarter, 28 percent, are receptive to last-minute vacations booked within three days of the trip. Twenty-nine percent also report being willing to leave the same day as a trip if the chance materializes.

Consumers will even be flexible with the location or timing of their vacations, with 24 percent interested in booking

a luxury hotel for a "staycation" weekend and 23 percent willing to take a midweek vacation for a more affordable stay at an upscale hotel ([see story](#)).

As hospitality brands wait for reservations to rebound, leveraging technology is one way to ease consumers' concerns and increase their confidence about traveling, according to a recent Amadeus survey.

More than four in 10 travelers, 43 percent, are concerned about the increased risk of catching or transmitting the virus while traveling. Between 30 and 40 percent of respondents also cited other concerns such as government-imposed quarantines, being stranded, mixing with crowds and reduced enjoyment due to restrictions or closures.

Travelers want technology advancements and offerings that can help reduce congestion, minimize face-to-face contact, relay information about delays and ensure the accuracy of testing and tracing programs ([see story](#)).

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.