

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Outlook 2022: Revenge travelers ready for departure once restrictions lift

December 21, 2021



*The travel recovery may be stumbling, but optimism remains. Image credit: Virtuoso*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Although the availability of effective COVID-19 vaccines has allowed consumers to feel safer returning to travel particularly international trips uncertainty continues to loom over the luxury hospitality industry.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 [Save \\$246 ▶](#)

As the new year approaches, the Omicron variant is accelerating a global surge in COVID-19 infections leading several countries to implement travel restrictions and other measures to mitigate the spread. Despite the changing situation, it remains a matter of when, not if, luxury travel will fully rebound.

"While the global pandemic continues to impact travel in multiple ways, medical advancements over the past year are allowing more people to travel close to home and abroad," said David Kolner, senior vice president of network products and strategy at [Virtuoso](#).

"The demand for international travel will continue into 2022, and cruising is showing continued momentum, with 2022 bookings already outpacing 2019," he said. "The anticipated strong demand for travel in 2022 may outstrip supply, so savvy travelers are booking with their advisors now to get the best rooms, cabins and itineraries, with flexible policies making it easier to navigate the unknown."

Here are some of the key trends for the luxury travel and hospitality sector heading into 2022:

### Omicron factor

With headlines resembling the early days of the pandemic, more countries are implementing some form of travel restrictions in the face of Omicron, which was first identified in late November 2021.



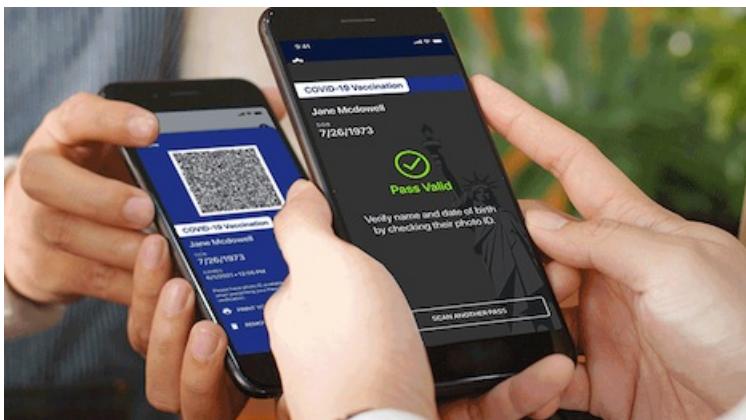
*Travel restrictions will continue into 2022. Image credit: International Luxury Travel Market*

Omicron appears to be highly transmissible, but it remains unclear if the variant causes more severe illness or reduces the effectiveness of existing vaccines and treatments ([see story](#)). Before Omicron was identified, COVID-19 cases were already climbing in Europe, China and the U.S. despite the availability of effective vaccines ([see story](#)).

Several popular tourist destinations are in the highest-risk travel category from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco and the United Kingdom. The Netherlands has implemented a strict lockdown, while France has paused nonessential travel to and from the U.K.

Meanwhile, Japan and Israel are among the countries closing their borders to all incoming international travelers, with Israel also banning outgoing travel to the U.S. and Canada over Omicron concerns.

These restrictions come during the typically busy holiday travel season and will likely linger into early 2022 at best. It was only months ago that countries including the U.S. had eased regulations in the hopes of accelerating the economic recoveries in the hospitality and retail industries ([see story](#)).



*Debate over vaccine passports will likely continue. Image credit: New York State*

The current state of the pandemic response may be impacting travel plans, but affluent travelers are more likely to postpone their trips rather than cancel entirely.

"People who used to think of these big trips as someday in the future, now have a heightened awareness that the opportunity to visit could be restricted or taken away and are now planning those someday trips' for as soon as they can reasonably visit," Mr. Kolner said.

#### Readyng for revenge travel

This year in luxury hospitality may be ending in a whimper instead of a bang, but the industry continues to prepare for a reinvigorated wave of travelers.

"During the pandemic, hotels have adapted their offerings, and even their infrastructure, to meet the needs of weary, too-stressed travelers," Mr. Kolner said.

According to Simon-Kucher & Partners, with more savings and collected travel miles, 45 percent of consumers are looking to travel more than they did pre-pandemic, implying a new era of "revenge traveling" ([see story](#)).



*While the U.S. luxury traveler's plans may have been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they remain eager and prepared to return to their getaways. Image credit: Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau*

Consumers are also seeking meaningful trips paired with top-quality service, in an acceleration of the pre-COVID desire for experiential travel. Hospitality brands are responding by emphasizing these values in their marketing campaigns and offerings.

"Requests for private and unique experiences tailored exactly to individual tastes are what's driving travel's return amongst Virtuoso's ultra-high-net-worth clientele," Mr. Kolner said.

For instance, hotel group Rosewood Hotels & Resorts introduced "PlaceMakers" this spring, a roster of tastemakers with backgrounds in art, style, food, family, sustainability and wellness.

Rosewood enlisted the help of these influential and authoritative community members as it positions itself as a "cultural concierge" offering unique, curated experiences so travelers can immerse themselves in local communities. The inaugural participants were also featured in a series of short films ([see story](#)).

"PlaceMakers" was also one of several collaborations between hospitality brands and creatives or influencers in 2021. Next year will likely bring more of these partnerships.

The city of Beverly Hills, CA is enlisting a group of creators to develop content featuring the destination in an appeal to younger travelers.

The Content Collective will create original videos and films that will offer a new perspective to the city and explore four themes: wellness, fashion, art and cuisines. It is an extension of the "Far From Ordinary" campaign launched by the Beverly Hills Conference & Visitors Bureau earlier this year ([see story](#)).

#### Purpose meets celebration

As the luxury hospitality industry continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, sustainability is becoming a greater priority.

"Travelers are more cognizant of their place and impact in the world, and this has led to what Virtuoso calls the conscious comeback," Mr. Kolner said.



*Fairmont has been an environmental leader in the hospitality space. Image credit: Fairmont*

A Virtuoso survey found that 82 percent of travelers believe that COVID-19 had made them want to travel more responsibly in the future. While overtourism has hurt environments and local communities, the pandemic has shown

the negative economic impacts of "undertourism" as well ([see story](#)).

Sustainable hospitality brand 1 Hotels is growing its footprint, having opened its first property in Canada. The brand also established a partnership with Audi of America.

Through 2023, the Audi e-tron will serve as the official electric vehicle of 1 Hotels properties in New York, Los Angeles and Miami. Hotel guests will be able to experience the Audi e-tron by through guest shuttles and chauffeured drives ([see story](#)).

In addition to traveling more responsibly, affluents are also ready to mark special occasions on their upcoming trips.

"Seventy-eight percent of Virtuoso advisors have seen an uptick in celebration travel, with anniversaries and big birthdays being the primary motivator," Mr. Kolner said. "Ninety-five percent of Virtuoso advisors also believe celebration travel will continue to be a top trend through next year."

Multi-generational trips are growing in popularity as well, especially as families look to celebrate multiple events at once.

Boutique hospitality group Charlestown Hotels has already introduced multiple packages targeted to grandparents, recognizing that they would want to reconnect with their grandchildren.

Illinois' Deer Path Inn relaunched its bespoke "Gramping Getaway" package, including a private afternoon tea, tickets to Chicago's Botanic Garden, an in-suite milkshake experience, a curation of children's books for bedtime stories and more. The HarbourView Inn in Charleston also created its own "grandcation," the "Skip-Gen Getaway" package complete with a historic walking tour and bike rentals ([see story](#)).

Private aviation firm VistaJet is helping clients create special moments with a new offering, The Surprise Reunion.



*The Surprise Reunion excursions for families are also customizable. Image credit: VistaJet*

VistaJet is collaborating with event planners Sharky & George in providing a series of adventures and surprises for passengers. Participants will receive mysterious packages in advance of their flights, including maps, cryptic messages and clues as to their final destinations where they will spend time with their loved ones ([see story](#)).

"Making up for the lost year, or two, travel and missed milestones have become a priority for those seeking to reconnect with loved ones," Mr. Kolner said.