

Industry Report: The State of Holiday Bookings & Travel Patterns Amid COVID-19

A breakdown of global booking data covering the upcoming holiday season, shedding a light on travel patterns and personas property management companies can expect in order to plan accordingly.



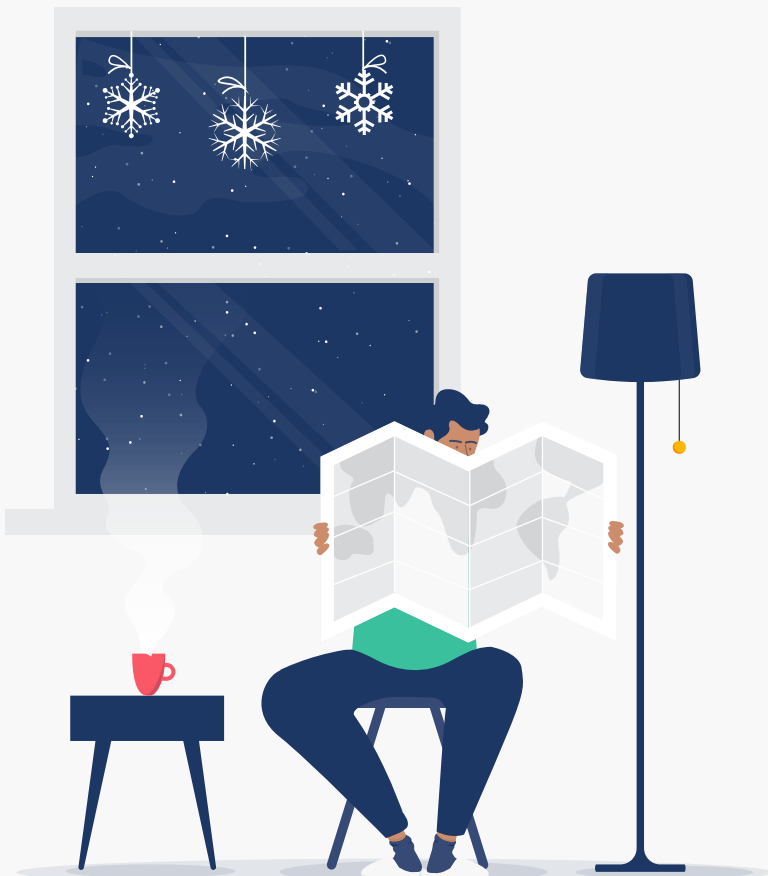
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Holiday Booking Patterns

The holidays are fast-approaching and with travelers keen to see their loved ones, or perhaps use their saved up vacation days, it's crucial property management companies ready their listings in order to meet new guest expectations and patterns that have emerged from COVID-19.

Though global reservation volume went up 5% in September 2020 compared to August of this year, when looking at booking numbers for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve, we are seeing significantly less reservations being booked across major online travel platforms in 2019 - Airbnb, Booking.com, Vrbo included. That said, it's crucial to point out that in September, over 40% of reservations across all short-term rental channels were made within 7 days of the reservation itself, 15% were made the same day and an additional 30% were made within a 30 day window of the reservation.

And though less people might have booked stays thus far, on average those who have are shelling out more cash when booking and are also reserving their accommodations for longer periods of time compared to last year.



Thanksgiving

USA Only



People are still traveling, but will have to pay more and will likely stay longer.

The average length of stay went **up 15% for Thanksgiving stays compared to last year**, now at 4.5 days on average.



Reservation volume in the US has decreased by 2% compared to this time last year for Thanksgiving weekend.



- 2019 Thanksgiving
- 2020 Thanksgiving

The average length of stay in the USA sits at 9 days - up 8% compared to last year.



- 2019 Thanksgiving
- 2020 Thanksgiving



The average nightly rate has increased by 9%.

+9%



Christmas



In the USA, Christmas reservations have decreased 26% compared to last year.

-26%



- 2019 Christmas
- 2020 Christmas

The average nightly rate has increased by 13% in the USA and worldwide.

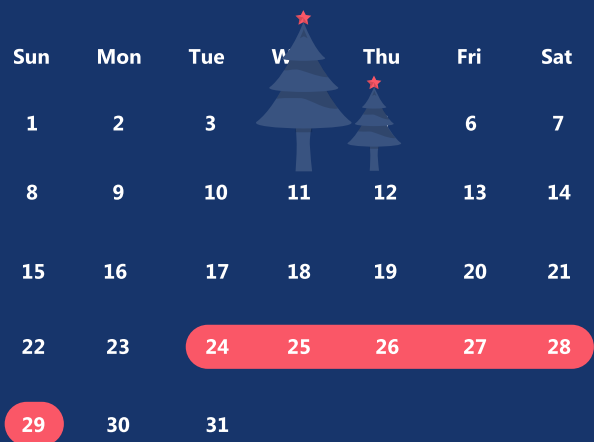
+13%



Globally, Christmas reservation volume decreased by a whopping 40% compared to last year.



Worldwide, folks are also planning longer Christmas vacations - the length of stay increased by 17% compared to last year and now sits at 6 days on average per trip.



New Year's Eve



Compared to last year, reservation volume decreased by 31% in the USA. Globally, reservation volume decreased by 47% compared to this same time last year.



- 2019 New Year's Eve
- 2020 New Year's Eve

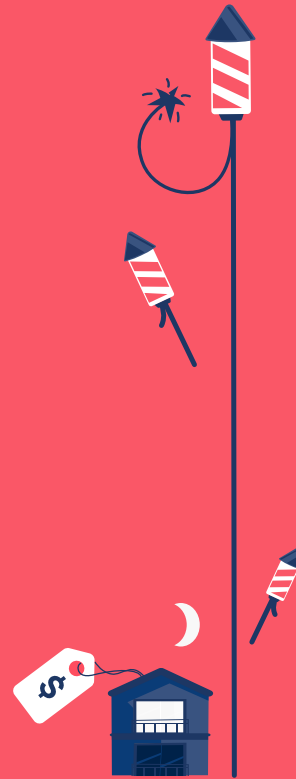
In the USA, the average nightly rate increased by

+17%

and globally, by

+8%

compared to last year.



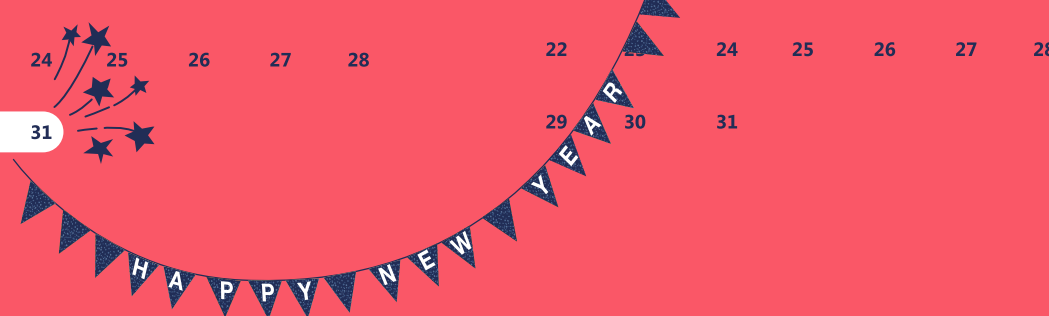
The average length of stay in the US sits at 9 days - up 8% compared to last year. Globally it sits at 7.5 days on average - a 28% increase from last year.

December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

January 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



Travel Personas To Cater To

Travelers have continued to redefine the new normal in travel as they book trips amid COVID-19. This holiday season will be no different. Here are 10 travel personas you should be prepared to cater to.



Families Who Seek Space

It's no secret families with kids are struggling to balance working from home and parenting. If you have a large backyard, dedicated playroom for kids and in general, a bigger property, expect families to book stays with you over the holiday season. Not to mention, larger properties enable family gatherings that can be social distanced (such as a Thanksgiving dinner) - a great sell when considering higher risk parties, such as grandparents.



Digital Nomads Craving Connectivity

Digital nomads are booking more and more in the great outdoors and in doing so, they're frequently inquiring about top-notch connectivity. A strong WiFi connection is crucial to cater to this group, who has increasingly shown interest in locations near [national parks](#) (think [rural tourism](#)) while being able to come home to an aesthetic work environment. Work-from-home is out and work-from-any-home is in.

Companies like [Fülhaus](#) provide comprehensive furniture rental solutions for your short-term rental properties.



Life Shoppers

The ability to work remotely has resulted in individuals giving up their apartments in major metropolitan cities and experimenting with living elsewhere, testing out new cities for short spurts of time, such as **1-3 month long [extended stays](#)**. The remainder of 2020 and through 2021 we will see a widespread allergy towards the concept of commitment and more and more individuals gravitating towards flexibility and work/life balance boundaries.



City-Scapers

A trend that we saw at the beginning of COVID-19, that will continue until things go back to normal, are city-scapers: individuals escaping cities and heading to drive-to destinations in more rural areas 1-4 hours away from their metropolitan cities. These travelers are seeking more space after being cooped up in an apartment, and driving the renaissance of the [road trip](#).



Hospitality brand [D. Alexander](#) recognized this trend early on, launching 'Destination Isolation' - properties for extended periods of time in beach, desert or mountain locations.

City-Goers

This Summer, for the first time since March, people began booking again in major metropolitan cities. This can be credited to a multitude of reasons: pent up demand for travel with people needing a change of scenery (even in their own cities with a staycation); those living on the outskirts of cities want to safely enjoy reopened restaurants and sites (long weekend stays); and travelers are keen to take advantage of low prices being offered on city stays.



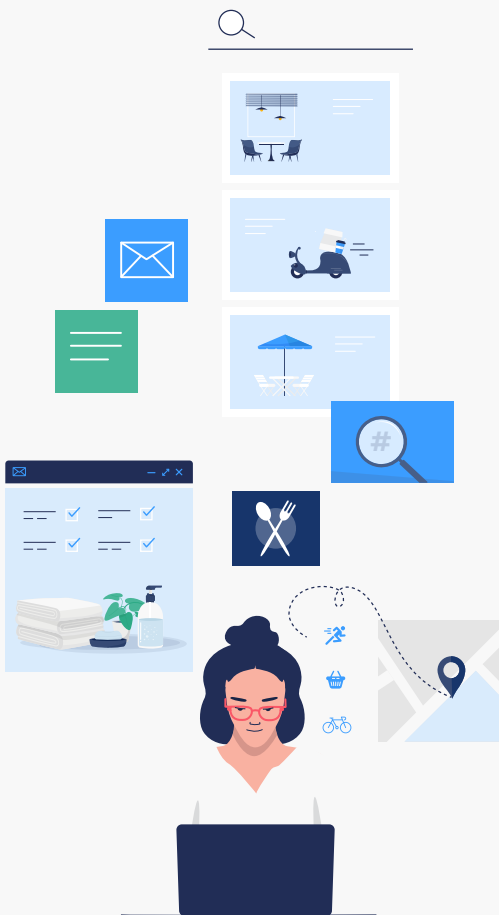
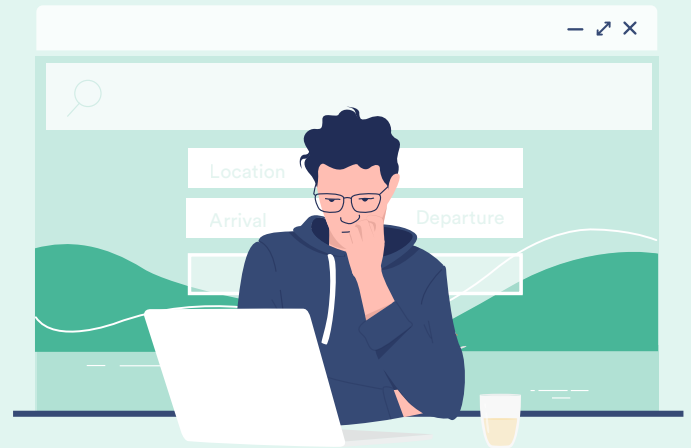
Short-Term Rental Converts

Folks who traditionally opted for hotel stays will now be considering short-term rentals as they boast less guest turnover and allow guests to avoid crowded common areas that often go hand-in-hand with hotel stays (such as lobbies, elevators and dining rooms). Short-term rentals are ideal for family gatherings - such as a Thanksgiving dinner - in which guests can cook their own meal and utilize private, outdoor space to mingle in a socially-distanced setting.



The Hesitant Traveler

With restrictions constantly fluctuating, travelers want to book short-term rental stays but also want the assurance that if they need to cancel their plans for circumstances outside of their control, they can do so with no penalty. In order to remain competitive, and cater to this persona, hosts should implement more flexible cancellation policies. In fact, we [surveyed](#) nearly 400 property management companies worldwide and 22% of respondents found a **flexible cancellation policy to be the most helpful strategy** for business stability during COVID-19.



Info Seekers

While this is currently most everyone navigating COVID-19, you will see an influx of travelers asking for local information on what activities are available, what dining options there are (outdoors, indoors and delivery) as well as what your stringent cleaning procedures consist of. Update your listing information to highlight your cleanliness protocols and implement an [automated messaging](#) flow prior to check-in that proactively sends those booking with you this information upfront to save you the hassle of manually sending it on request. Another note to add in: how you are making your properties [contact-free](#).

Panic Cancellers

This Summer we identified the trend of panic cancellations, with many nixing their bookings 24-72 hours in advance of the stay itself. That stopped in August and has continued to not be a trend in the Fall. However - this will likely change as winter approaches, especially in colder regions as many believe the cooler weather will result in a strong second or third wave of the virus. As it stands now, the **majority of cancellations are made about 2-3 weeks in advance of the reservation itself**, and the second most cancellations are made 30 days or more out of the reservation.



Spontaneity Seekers

The trend of travelers making reservations closer to check-in is continuing, especially with domestic travel increasingly on the rise across the globe. In September, **15% of reservations across all short-term rental channels were made on the same day. And over 40% of reservations were made within 7 days of the reservation itself.**

Global Rest Of Year Numbers



Globally

the average length of stay being booked for October through December 2020 sits at 5 days per reservation (up .5 days from the pre-COVID average of 4.5 days).



Prices across the board also increase in December 2020 - no surprise given the holidays. Notable is that the month of October saw dramatically more bookings than that of November and December, likely because individuals are increasingly booking last-minute stays as regulations per country, city and state continue to fluctuate.





In the USA

we see the same patterns as we do globally - a huge number of reservations booked in October (when we wrote this report) compared to November and December 2020. The highest average nightly rates are being charged in December and **the average length of stay is 4.7 days through the rest of the year.**



Europe

also boasted the most reservations in October 2020 when measuring the remainder of the year. In fact, October reservation volume in the EU at the time this report was written is more than double what we are seeing booked in November and December of this year combined in the EU. **The average length of stay sits at 5.7 days.** The 8 European cities with the most bookings for the rest of the year are:

- 1) Whitby, UK
- 2) London, UK
- 3) Santiago Do Cacem, Portugal
- 4) Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 5) Copenhagen, Denmark
- 6) Edinburgh, Scotland
- 7) Paris, France
- 8) Hungary, Budapest



An Ecosystem Poised For Growth

Opting for short-term rentals over traditional hotel stays this holiday season will be a trend we see among travelers, resulting in a larger community ultimately considering - and booking - alternative accommodations not only in the near-term, but also when the virus is a thing of the past.

Short-term rentals are ideal as the main concern for travelers this holiday season will be safety. This is why many will be booking separate accommodations versus staying with family, given that everyone has different anxiety and comfort levels surrounding the pandemic. While some travelers are extremely cautious and follow CDC guidelines strictly, others follow them loosely.



Guests booking short-term rentals over traditional hotel stays isn't surprising as they support:



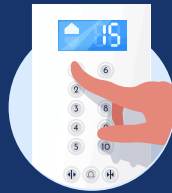
Contact-free stays



Low-risk dining



Less guest turnover



Fewer shared "high-touch" surfaces, such as door handles or elevator buttons



Private homes mean avoiding crowded hotels & common areas

Private rentals have lower guest turnover, which already reduces the risk of exposure between guests significantly; and, by nature, private homes have less “high-touch” surfaces in shared spaces, such as elevator buttons or door handles, than crowded hotels. This, coupled with accommodations that limit human interaction and enable larger, socially-distanced gatherings, will certainly be a deciding factor for holiday bookings as a private rental can be accompanied by outdoor space to host a holiday dinner, as well as a big kitchen to cook the actual meal in. Such accommodation is more suitable for high-risk dinner guests - such as the elderly who can enjoy at a distance.

Because of the aforementioned, we predict that many hotel-goers will become short-term rental converts during this time in order to enjoy safe stays in new destinations.

Companies like KeyNest and Operto enable automated check-in, eliminating the need for physical key drop offs. See more partners like these in Guesty's [Marketplace](#).

About Guesty

Guesty is the leading disruptor of property management software with a cutting-edge platform that automates, streamlines and simplifies the most time-consuming and growth-facilitating tasks involved in managing rentals.

With features built in-house providing a positive user experience, our platform serves as a strong, reliable and adaptable partner for property management companies to grow and optimize their businesses.

8 offices
worldwide

\$60M in funding

Serving thousands of
customers across

80 countries



www.guesty.com