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U.S. Virgin Islands Among Leaders in Caribbean Tourism Surge, New Report Shows

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Cruz Bay, St. John U.S. Virgin Islands. By. GETTY IMAGES

Caribbean tourism is experiencing double-digit growth over pre-pandemic levels, according to a recent report from air ticketing analytics firm ForwardKeys. The U.S. Virgin Islands is among the top destinations contributing to this surge, with a projected 39% growth in international arrivals above 2019 levels in the fourth quarter of this year.

The report predicts "significant" growth in the Caribbean region for the remainder of the year, driven by destinations like the USVI, Dominican Republic, and Curacao. Specifically, the Dominican Republic is expected to see a 54% increase in international arrivals compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. Other noteworthy destinations include Curacao and Turks and Caicos,

which are projected to see increases of 31% and 29% above pre-pandemic totals. Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Puerto Rico, and St. Maarten also contribute to the region's robust performance.

In addition to growth in international arrivals, several destinations are witnessing increases in other areas. The U.S. Virgin Islands, Martinique, and Jamaica have seen the most significant growth in stays exceeding 14 nights, with the U.S. Virgin Islands leading at a 25% increase.

Group travel is also making a strong comeback, with a 39% rise compared to 2019 levels. The Dominican Republic is seeing the strongest rebound in group travel at 100%, followed by Sint Maarten at 41% and Aruba at 39%. This trend is primarily driven by travelers from the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom, according to Juan A. Gomez, Head of Market Intelligence at ForwardKeys.

Air bookings to the Caribbean are dominated by the U.S. and Canada, with Canada showing the most growth for premium-cabin travelers. Affluent travelers from Canada are primarily visiting the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica, seeing growth rates of 199%, 114%, and 73% respectively. Moreover, these high-end travelers from Canada are increasingly opting for stays of 14 nights or more when visiting the Caribbean, showing a 75% increase and opening the door to multi-destination trips, Gomez added.