

MONTHLY REPORT CENTRAL EUROPE JANUARY 2024



**ST.PETE
CLEARWATER**

**KAUS
MEDIA
SERVICES**



Marketing
Communications
Consulting

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1. Current State of the Tourism Industry in Central Europe

European International Travel Trends Update

Travel agencies are confident about the 2024 travel year

The results of the Tourism Sales Climate Index show an overall positive trend at the start of the year. The majority of travel agencies are optimistic about the current situation. The demand and earnings situation is rated as stable to rising for the next two quarters.

In January, the travel agencies' assessment of the current situation improved significantly. While 50 percent still rated the situation as good in December, this figure rose to 60 percent at the beginning of the year. At the same time, only six percent rate their situation as poor (previous month: 9%). 34% consider the current situation to be satisfactory.

Half of the travel agencies surveyed rated the sale of travel services in the past two to three months as unchanged compared to the previous year, compared to 32.3% in the previous month. On the other hand, the proportion of those recognizing an increase fell from 45% in December to 38% in January. Only twelve percent stated that travel sales had fallen.

Travel agencies are slightly more optimistic about the next six months than in the previous month. 28% of respondents expect demand for travel services to increase in the next six months compared to the previous year. A constant demand is forecast by 58 percent, while 14 percent expect demand to decrease.

With regard to the earnings situation, 59% expect the situation to remain unchanged over the next six months. An improvement is expected by 24%, while the number of those expecting a deterioration fell to 17%.

92 travel agencies took part in the survey in January 2024.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

Travel agencies generate good sales at the end of the year

The invoiced values of the travel agencies recorded in the travel agency index of the back office service provider Tats rose again in December and are now 13% higher than in the previous year. The cumulative figures from January to December are 31% higher than in 2022.

The monthly value of tourism turnover has risen and is now up 17% in December and 19% cumulatively compared to the previous year. The same can be seen in the cruise sector, where the monthly figure was up 43% in December and 41% cumulatively. Sales in the flight sector increased slightly in December, remaining up 12% year-on-year and cumulatively up 40% compared to 2022.

Better figures than 2019

Compared to December 2019, the total turnover of travel agencies also increased by 24% in December 2023. Cumulative invoiced sales also show an increase of 20%. Compared to December 2019, tourism turnover in December 2023 was up 16% and cumulative turnover was up 9%. Compared to 2019, the cruise sector recorded a monthly increase of 40%, with cumulative turnover up 18%. In the flight sector, there was a further increase compared to December 2019, with the monthly figure up 32% and the cumulative figure up 23%.

Order backlog remains in positive territory

The tourism order backlog for travel from November 2023 to October 2024 shows a year-on-year increase of 22%. In the cruises sub-segment, the tourism order backlog shows an increase of 28% in the new tourism order year.

Tats is a back-office service provider to the tourism industry. The booking and accounting data of around 2,500 affiliated travel agencies are recorded for the monthly travel agency review.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

Holidaymakers book earlier again worldwide

Sabre has published a global travel study that identifies a significant change in travel behavior and travel preferences for the year 2024. Among other things, leisure travelers are booking their trips earlier again and many tourists are willing to spend more money on travel.

According to the IT service provider, there is a new confidence among travelers who are planning their trips much earlier than in previous years. Vacationers are now booking their flights at least three months in advance. For business trips, however, bookings are still made two to four weeks before the trip.

In financial terms, the survey found that travelers are cautiously optimistic. Almost 90 percent of respondents assume that they will spend a similar amount on travel as in 2023. 41 percent expect to increase their travel budget; this is particularly true for Generation Z.

"More personal and intimate travel experiences in demand"

This reflects a growing enthusiasm for travel in the post-pandemic world, coupled with a desire for richer experiences, Sabre analyzes. The study also shows a pronounced preference for couple travel. This is driven by the desire for more personal and intimate travel experiences, it says. However, this trend varies from region to region. In Europe and the Middle East, for example, traveling with children under the age of twelve is significantly more popular than in other parts of the world.

According to the Sabre study, all respondents are willing to pay up to five percent more for sustainable travel options. Furthermore, according to Sabre, a "significant proportion" of respondents are willing to pay up to 15 percent more to offset their environmental footprint. This reflects a growing awareness among travelers of the impact on the environment, Sabre explains, without specifying the exact number of those who would pay 15 percent more for more sustainability.

Business travelers want to sit up front

According to Sabre, leisure and business travelers have different priorities when it comes to additional services. The survey results show that business travelers prefer to travel light and therefore place less importance on checked baggage, while in-flight meals are obviously more important to leisure travelers.

The choice of seat was ranked as most important by respondents for both business and leisure travel, with comfort being a common preference for many. According to the survey, most respondents prefer aisle or window seats as they believe they have more space there than in the middle. Leisure travelers prefer to sit with family members, while business travelers often prefer to sit at the front of the plane so they can get off quickly.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

2. Overview of Regional Activities

Germany

- For our joint promotion with Brand USA and the German tour operator Canusa we assisted Brand USA with a large number of high-resolution photos, themed texts for St. Pete / Clearwater travel packages, several talking points about St. Pete / Clearwater, and a destination video in landscape and portrait formats. We also requested additional videos from VSPC and forwarded them to Brand USA.
- For our joint promotion with Visit Florida and the German tour operator TUI assisted the tour operator with requested high-resolution photos and texts and we also reviewed a template for the planned out-of-home advertising (OOH). We asked the tour operator to change the proposed texts and photo and provided alternatives. As part of their "Instore TV Communication" marketing activity, TUI still requires further support in February 2024. These materials are intended to be published in connection with St. Pete / Clearwater offers. To choose a most suitable photo and text, we requested the designated offer in advance. We will continue assisting the tour operator in order to ensure the highest possible return on investment for our destination.
- In cooperation with the tour operator America Unlimited, we started attending the travel consumer show ABF Hannover 2024. This show will take place from January 31 to February 4, 2024 – attracting more than 100,000 consumers. It is one of the largest consumer shows for leisure and tourism in Germany. The ABF showcases a wide range of exhibitors from various industries such as tourism, leisure, health, home and garden, automobiles, and more. It serves as a platform for companies to showcase their products and services and provides visitors with the opportunity to explore and discover various products.

To make our booth at the ABF appealing, we had two new roll-up banners produced in advance of the fair. In addition, we produced 10,000 new flyers that can also be used for future shows and promotions.

- We ordered brochures and giveaways for future promotions from Visit St. Pete/Clearwater since our warehouse in Germany was low on inventory. We also coordinated the warehouse that we have subcontracted on behalf of VSPC, proofread their inventory report for December 2023 and forwarded it to VSPC.
- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC, we distributed it to more than 3,700 travel agencies and tour operators in Germany.
- We distributed promotional materials and photos of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to interested travel agencies and tour operators in Germany.

- We continued contacting many tour operators offering the U.S. and Florida in Germany and we discussed potential co-op activities. These included tour operators specialized in cultural travels to promote the arts in our destination.
- We were in continuous contact with the Visit USA Committee regarding the required input for the travel consumer show f.re.e 2024, where we will promote Visit St. Pete/Clearwater from February 14-18, 2024.
- We filled the Visit St. Pete/Clearwater landing page on the Visit USA Committee Germany website with additional content.
- We were in contact with target tour operators and other industry partners to promote our destination and to request marketing proposals for potential marketing cooperations with them.
- Following our program with Brand USA supported promotions, we received and discussed a marketing proposal from the Radio Group, the second largest group of radio stations in the German-speaking countries. We will try to incorporate a promotion for the German airline Discover to support it with its increased number of flights from Frankfurt to our destination.
- Continually engaging various tour operators in Germany offering U.S. and Florida travel, we explored potential co-op activities, including those specializing in cultural travels to promote our destination's arts and cultural offers.
- We were discussing a potential collaboration with several German tour operators for the co-op proposal from Blu Media, the leading media company for the GLBTQ+ market in the German-speaking countries. We would like to incorporate a tour operator in the overall promotion for a measurable call to action and return on investment for our destination.
- We sent promotional materials from Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to travel agents interested in further information. Inquiries have also been received via the website of the Visit USA Committee Germany.
- We attended a monthly Brand USA conference call to discuss opportunities for co-op programs for FY 2024.
- We drafted and submitted our activity report for January 2024.

Austria

- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 800 travel agencies and tour operators in Austria.
- We distributed promotional materials and photos of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to interested travel agencies and tour operators in Austria.
- We continued contacting many tour operators offering the U.S. and Florida in Austria and we discussed potential co-op activities. These included tour operators specialized in cultural travels to promote the arts in our destination.

Switzerland

- On January 31, 2024, we promoted our destination at the one-day long “Island Hopping” event to approximately 250 travel agents. The event is considered to be the largest B2B education event for the U.S. in Switzerland where travel agents from all over Switzerland meet destination representative from the U.S.

In order to promote St. Pete / Clearwater we asked to participate with a booth near other Florida destinations. Throughout the day, agents moved from stand to stand for 40 minutes long presentations per region. Each region consisted of four partners, individually presenting their destination or services for ten minutes. VSPC was grouped with Visit Tampa Bay, the Florida Key and Key West and the car rental broker Sunny Cars.

During the rotations we met participants in small groups of 30-40 agents and each attendee received detailed information on our destination and the tourism opportunities found in St. Pete / Clearwater. It was obvious that many of them had a chance to visit our destination in the past and were keen to recommend St. Pete / Clearwater to interested travelers in the future. A few of them had specific questions – including but not limited to hotels and activities.

The interest in the U.S., especially for the Swiss market continues to remain high. Many of the attending travel trade are very interested in working with us to maximize interest in our area as a premier destination for leisure travel in Florida and in the U.S. We are currently busy with sending further information on St. Pete / Clearwater and the very diverse tourism opportunities found in our destination.

The interest in the USA, especially for the Swiss market continues to remain high. Many of the attending travel trade are very interested in working with us to maximize interest in our area as a premier destination for leisure travel in Florida and in the U.S. We are currently busy with sending further information on St. Pete / Clearwater and the very diverse tourism opportunities found in our destination.



- After the Swiss airline Edelweiss announced an increased seat capacity from Zurich to the Tampa Bay Airport (TPA) starting in 2024, we participated in another conference call with VSPC, and Visit Tampa to discuss Edelweiss' proposal as well as potential other co-op marketing opportunities that we found important to promote the flight. In cooperation with Visit Tampa Bay, we sent a revised proposal to the airline and are awaiting Edelweiss response.

- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 500 travel agencies and tour operators in Switzerland.
- We distributed promotional materials and photos of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to interested travel agencies and tour operators in Switzerland.
- We continued contacting many tour operators offering the U.S. and Florida in Switzerland and we discussed potential co-op activities. These included tour operators specialized in cultural travels to promote the arts in our destination.

The Netherlands

- We continued preparations for our promotion for St. Pete / Clearwater at the Dutch travel show Vakantiebeurs in Utrecht, The Netherlands in January 2024. We also arranged a time slot for a complimentary presentation of our destination to all travel trade participants.

On January 10-11, 2023, the show started with a trade only days for exhibitors to meet with travel agents and tour operators. The VUSA area was designed to include various partners from the U.S. as well as host a theater for partners to present their destination in a more in-depth way. We gave two 30 minutes long presentation about our destination in order to train the travel professionals about St. Pete / Clearwater.

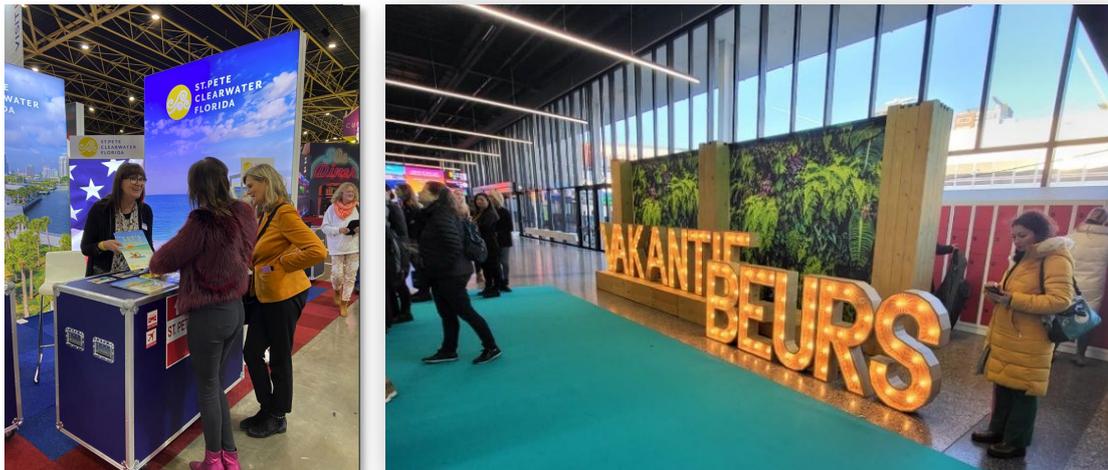


We were able to speak with the attendees after the presentation as we were given networking time between each presentation slot.

In addition, we also met with several of our key tour operator partners and had travel agents indicate that they had sold clients to the destination.

On January 10-11, 2023, we attended the consumer part of Vakantiebeurs, which is the largest leisure and tourism trade show in the Dutch market. It takes place at the Jaarbeurs fairground in Utrecht every year. The show targets experts from the travel and tourism industry and – as a consumer show – also interested consumers. The show is held annually in January.

The attendance at the show was very successful for St. Pete / Clearwater and we were able to promote our destination to many potential visitors, who are considering to travel to Florida in 2024 or 2025. The Dutch market is one of the top markets for leisure travel to St. Pete / Clearwater and the annual attendance at Vakantiebeurs is important to increase the number of travelers from the Netherlands to our destination.



- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 800 travel agencies and tour operators in the Netherlands.
- We distributed promotional materials and photos of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to interested travel agencies and tour operators in the Netherlands.

Belgium

- We registered Visit St. Pete Clearwater for the Brussel Holiday Fair (B2C) in cooperation with the Visit USA Committee Belgium. This fair will take place from February 1-4, 2024.

Before the event, we asked our warehouse to send packages with brochures and giveaways to the venue. The brochures and giveaways will be distributed to the participants during the event.

Furthermore, we were in intensive contact with the Visit USA Committee in Belgium before the event to discuss organizational matters to increase promotional opportunities for St. Pete / Clearwater at the event.

- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 500 travel agencies and tour operators in Belgium and Luxembourg.
- We continued contacting many tour operators offering the U.S. and Florida in Belgium and we discussed potential co-op activities. These included tour operators specialized in cultural travels to promote the arts in our destination.

Poland

- We were in continuous communication with a new contact person from the Visit USA Committee in Poland. They presented various marketing activities that they are planning in the Polish market.
- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 400 travel agencies and tour operators in Poland.
- We distributed promotional materials and photos of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to interested travel agencies and tour operators in Poland.

Czech Republic

- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to more than 400 travel agencies and tour operators in the Czech Republic.

Hungary

- After approval, we distributed a newsletter about fascinating festivals and unique music events in St. Petersburg/Clearwater. After approval from VSPC we distributed it to a large number of travel agencies and tour operators in Hungary.

3. Status of Sales Activities and Promotions

Consumer Promotion with Visit Florida and TUI Germany (starting in January 2024)

- In co-operation with Visit Florida and the German tour operator TUI we will carry out a consumer promotion.

Consumer Promotion with Canusa Touristik (starting in January 2024)

- In co-operation with the German tour operator Canusa Touristik and Brand USA, we will carry out a planned promotion targeting potential travelers to our destination.

ABF in Hannover, Germany (January 31-February 04, 2024)

- In cooperation with the tour operator *America Unlimited* we will attend the travel consumer show *ABF Hannover 2024*. More than 100,000 consumers will be expected to visit the show. *ABF Hannover* is a show for leisure travel, camping, caravanning, sports, outdoor activities and other travel related activities.

The show attracts both trade visitors and consumers, providing a platform for exchanging information, discovering new products, and planning leisure activities and travels. America Unlimited offered us a booth participation to promote St. Pete / Clearwater.

Brussels Holiday Show (February 1-4, 2024)

- We will promote St. Pete / Clearwater at the Brussels Holiday Fair in collaboration with the Visit USA Committee Belgium. The show is the leading travel consumer event in Belgium. It will take place from February 1-4, 2024.

Free Munich (February 14-18, 2024)

We will promote our destination at one of the most visited consumer shows for tourism and leisure. The free is a significant industry fair with over 160,000 visitors and approximately 900 exhibitors from over 60 countries. It provides numerous networking opportunities, business deals, and direct sales. Covering all aspects of leisure and travel market, the f.re.e offers exhibitors an excellent opportunity to showcase their offerings to a broad audience.

- The target group consists of consumers with a high demographic profile as Munich is an excellent economic location, home to companies such as Siemens and BMW and the largest German insurance companies, such as Allianz.

TravMedia's International Media Marketplace Germany (IMM) 2024, Berlin, Germany (March 04, 2024)

- We will promote our destination at IMM Germany, the leading travel media event in the German speaking countries. During the day-long event, approximately 120 leading travel brands meet with 200 top-tier media and influencers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. We will be able to meet leading media outlets in up to 24 pre-scheduled meetings as well as networking functions. The event takes place in Berlin, Germany on the day before ITB Berlin will start.

IPW Los Angeles, CA (May 03-07, 2024)

- Support of VSPC during IPW 2024 with pre-scheduling and coordinating meetings with travel trade professionals and media interviews as well as onsite representation.
- We started preparations for the show and supported the appointment scheduling with media from Central Europe.

Further sales activities and promotions will be added after approval.

4. Public Relations Activities

Please see our separate PR Activity Plan for an overview of all our public relations and media relations activities in January 2024.

5. Market Updates

Travel and Economic News

DRV expects more turnover and fewer guests in 2024

The German Travel Association (DRV) has published its first comprehensive market forecast for the overall travel market and is optimistic about the year 2024. Turnover will increase, but the number of guests will decrease. The forecast is based on a new methodology that takes into account historical and current booking data as well as economic factors.

After a successful 2023, high vacation demand and moderate revenue growth of four percent are expected for the new travel year, especially for the summer months. Overall, the DRV predicts that people will spend 78 billion euros on travel services booked before they go on vacation. This includes both package tours offered by tour operators and individually arranged vacations.

According to DRV estimates, the biggest growth drivers are long-haul trips. An increase in sales of 18 percent is expected here. "Many long-haul destinations such as the USA, Australia, Thailand and Indonesia have only gradually recovered after the coronavirus pandemic," says Fiebig. "Catch-up effects are therefore still expected in the long-haul travel segment." According to industry experts, the eastern medium-haul segment - with destinations such as Turkey and Greece - will remain one of the growth drivers in the German travel market for the year as a whole.

Decline in the number of travelers will not be halted in 2024 either

Despite the increase in sales, the DRV expects a slight decline in the number of travelers. Fewer people were already traveling with tour operators in 2023 than before the pandemic, but the expected decline this year will not be as sharp as in 2023, according to the experts. The reasons for the possible decline are the general price increases, particularly for fuel, heating and food.

The decline in the number of travelers could therefore have a somewhat greater impact on the individual travel market for destinations that are mainly traveled to by car.

The DRV's new market forecast is based on a consistent, mathematical method that uses historical and current booking data on the tour operator and individual travel market and takes economic factors into account. The travel study is produced in collaboration with the management consultancy Dr. Fried & Partner and with the support of market analysts from Travel Data + Analytics. The mathematical forecast results are adjusted and readjusted based on the assessment of proven industry experts. In future, the DRV intends to publish the new forecast for the entire travel market twice a year.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

Consumer climate: severe setback at the start of the year

The year 2024 is off to a very disappointing start for consumer sentiment in Germany: both economic and income expectations as well as the propensity to buy are showing noticeable losses. After rising in the previous month, consumer sentiment is falling again significantly. It fell to -29.7 points in the forecast for February 2024 - a decline of 4.3 points compared to the previous month (revised -25.4 points). These are the results of the GfK Consumer Climate powered by NIM for January 2024, which has been published jointly by GfK and the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM), founder of GfK, since October 2023.

The decline in consumer sentiment is also due to the fact that the propensity to save rose noticeably at the start of the year. The last time a worse consumer sentiment value was measured was in March 2023 with -30.6 points. "The improvement in the consumer climate in the previous month was apparently just a brief flare-up before Christmas. If there were any hopes of a sustained recovery in sentiment, these were dashed again in January.

The consumer climate suffered a severe setback at the start of the year," explains Rolf Bürkl, consumer expert at the NIM. "In addition to the decline in income expectations and the propensity to buy, consumers' propensity to save, which is currently soaring, is also a major contributing factor. It rose by 6.7 points to 14 points in January 2024, the highest value since August 2008."

These results mean that hopes of a sustainable recovery in the consumer climate must be postponed further into the future. Crises and wars as well as persistently high inflation are unsettling consumers and thus preventing an improvement in consumer sentiment.

Income expectations continue downward trend again

While income prospects rose noticeably in the previous month, they weakened significantly again in January: after falling by 13.1 points, the indicator plummeted to -20 points. This is the lowest value since March 2023, when -24.3 points were measured. The income outlook is thus continuing its downward trend.

One reason for the income pessimism is likely to be the fact that inflation has recently picked up again somewhat. According to the Federal Statistical Office, inflation rose to 3.7% in December. In November, the figure was 3.2 percent. And the return to the regular VAT rate of 19% in the hospitality industry at the start of 2024 and the increase in the CO2 tax for energy will presumably drive up prices and further weaken income expectations.

Propensity to buy in the wake of falling income prospects

The significant drop in income expectations is also dragging down consumers' propensity to buy again in January: the indicator is down 6 points, falling from -8.8 to -14.8 points and is thus almost back at the level of November 2023 (-15.0).

Inflation also plays a very important role in the propensity to buy. Concerns about continued high food and energy prices are reducing planning certainty, which is particularly important for larger purchases. And if more money has to be spent on everyday goods, many people lack the financial resources for other purchases, such as furnishings or electronic devices.

The importance of high prices for the weak propensity to consume is also demonstrated by a more in-depth analysis recently carried out by the NIM: Specifically, consumers were asked why they do not think it is a good time to make major purchases at the moment. In the open survey, around 60 percent responded that high and rising prices were causing them to make this negative judgment. This puts the issue of inflation far ahead of all other reasons mentioned, such as political and economic uncertainty and their own poor financial situation.

Economic outlook assessed more pessimistically

The economic outlook for the next 12 months was also assessed more pessimistically at the beginning of the year. The economic expectations indicator lost 6.2 points, falling to -6.6 points. A lower value was last measured in December 2022 at -10.3 points.

The German economy closed 2023 with a small decline in economic growth. According to initial calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, real gross domestic product (GDP) was 0.3% lower than in 2022. High prices in almost all areas and rising interest rates had a dampening effect on the economy last year. The growth prospects for this year are also rather subdued. For example, the German Economic Institute (IW) also expects a slight recession in its economic forecast for 2024 (GDP: -0.5%).

(Source: www.gfk.com)

Families shorten travel time by two days in summer

According to a Holidaycheck analysis, there are signs of a significant reduction in the length of summer vacations for families. Instead of twelve days as in the previous year, only ten days of vacation are now possible. Turkey is set to become the most popular destination for families in 2024.

According to the analysis of booking data, Turkey is by far the most popular destination for families in both the Easter and summer vacations in 2024. One reason: prices for package tours to the region have been stable since October and are generally the cheapest. Spain, Greece and Egypt are also popular destinations in March and April. In summer, Mallorca, Crete and Rhodes are at the top of the popularity rankings for families. Interest in Gran Canaria has also increased significantly.

By contrast, bookings for Egypt are well below expectations. "The classic vacation regions around Hurghada and Marsa Alam have been constantly lowering prices since October, but the strategy does not yet seem to be working. So far, bookings are down on the previous year," reports Christoph Heinzmann from Holidaycheck.

Travel times have become significantly shorter compared to the previous year. According to Holidaycheck, families are spending an average of ten days on vacation in summer - two days less than in 2023, presumably as a result of higher vacation prices. Across the most popular vacation regions, families now pay around 4,200 euros for ten days.

Car rental prices in Mallorca fall drastically in summer

Nevertheless, prices for rental cars have fallen significantly in many regions compared to 2023. For example, prices in Mallorca fell by up to 47 percent in July compared to the previous year. Italy is also consistently cheaper than in 2023. For example, a rental car in Sardinia costs an average of 280 euros for a week in July - that's 25 percent less than last year.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

November sales point to a strong early booking year

In November, German citizens booked almost 1.8 billion euros worth of organized vacation trips, according to figures from market researchers Travel Data + Analytics (TDA). More than half of the monthly turnover is already attributable to the summer season of the new year. This means that summer 2024 is off to an extremely early booking start.

Compared to the same month last year, travel sales in Germany were up by around 23% in November 2023. Early bookers are back in their old strength, according to the TDA market researchers, who analyze sales from travel agencies, travel portals and tour operator websites. Vacation bookings for the coming summer season already account for 54% of monthly sales.

Bookings for Turkey stronger than for Spain

Turkey is in particularly high demand - with a cumulative increase in sales of over 90% compared to summer 2019, the TDA data shows. At this early stage, booking sales for Turkey even exceed those for Spain as a whole. No other vacation destination is more popular with early bookers.

The growth drivers for the summer include the Eastern Mediterranean with an increase of 30 percent and long-haul travel with 10 percent growth. Overall, the 2024 summer season showed an increase in sales of three percent compared to 2019 as at the end of November.

However, the number of booked guests is still 18% below the pre-corona level - in contrast, the number of tour operator trips has risen significantly by 54% compared to the previous year. Inflation and impending price increases for fuel and heating seem to be less of an obstacle to vacation planning at the moment.

Sales growth for the new year will slow down

The high cumulative increase in sales of currently 59% compared to the previous year will decrease in the coming weeks and months. Last year's summer was heavily booked from the end of the year.

The current 2023/24 winter season is currently showing growth of 12% in sales compared to the pre-corona level, an improvement of five percentage points compared to the previous month. Compared to the previous year, sales are still up 37 percent. Winter vacations accounted for 42% of sales in the past booking month of November.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

Turkey: Record year in the German source market

Despite rising prices, Turkey set new tourism records in the German market last year: With almost six million arrivals, the 2019 figures of around five million arrivals from Germany were significantly exceeded.

This was also made possible by the weakening source markets of Russia and Ukraine, which provided tour operators with additional capacity in the resorts. In addition, Turkey still offers very good value for money despite the significant rise in prices.

Belek loses a little, Side and Alanya gain

One of the consequences of the price increases was a shift from west to east on the Riviera: especially in the family segment, Belek fans moved to Side, while some former Side guests switched to Alanya. The density of three-star hotels is higher there, and some hoteliers adjusted their all-inclusive offers and were therefore able to keep price increases in check.

Russia and Ukraine in the red

According to estimates, Turkey had a total of around 46 million tourist arrivals in 2023. In 2019, the figure was just under 52 million. The main reason for the decline was Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, which caused these source markets to shrink significantly: The number of arrivals from Russia fell from seven million in 2019 to around six million last year. Despite this, Russia was able to maintain its leading position ahead of Germany and the UK. The Ukrainian market fell from a good 800,000 arrivals in 2019 to just under 300,000 in 2023.

October strongest month for travel from Germany

Once again, the majority of tourists traveled to the country via Antalya Airport and spent their vacations on the beaches of the Turkish Riviera. While the airport counted just under 2.7 million German arrivals in 2019, the figure was almost 3.4 million in 2023.

The record month was October with a good 570,000 German arrivals in Antalya. Surprisingly, the second-busiest month for travelers was September with 485,000 arrivals from Germany, followed by August (470,000) and July (447,000).

Winter is also going well: In December, Antalya Airport recorded almost 78,000 arrivals from Germany. However, the airport does not differentiate between tourists and ethnic traffic.

Numerous sales events

Just how important the German market is for Turkish hoteliers from a strategic perspective was demonstrated by the many sales events last year - from the "Marvelous Moments" with LMX Touristik in April to the travel agency conferences organized by Schmetterling, Derpart and Best-Reisen to the Red Carpet Night by Anex Tour and the Comedy Night by Bentour Reisen.

Things will continue in a similar vein in 2024. The annual conference of Rita AG's mobile sales team in March at Aldiana Side and a top partner event by TUI Franchise in the fall at the brand new Anda Barut in Didim on the Aegean coast are among the events already planned.

(Source: www.reisevor9.de)

These long-haul destinations are popular with tour operators

Germans' interest in long-distance travel will increase slightly in 2024. This was also the conclusion of the travel analysis by the Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen (FUR), which was presented around a week and a half ago. In November, people between the ages of 14 and 75 were asked what kind of trip they are likely to take this year.

fwv|TravelTalk asked FTI, Schauinsland, Alltours, TUI and DER Touristik about the current booking situation for long-haul trips. "The long-haul segment is back on track to reach the guest numbers of 2019. We are already seeing good double-digit growth compared to the previous year," says Matthias Huwiler, Head of Building Blocks at tour operator FTI. Alltours is also talking about "double-digit year-on-year growth rates for both summer 2024 and the current winter season". Some destinations are proving to be particularly popular.

The top long-haul destinations in 2024

Maldives: The Maldives are popular with all five tour operators surveyed. For Alltours, the Maldives are among the top long-haul destinations both in the current winter season and in summer 2024. At DER Touristik, the Maldives and other island groups in the Indian Ocean such as Mauritius and the Seychelles are among the top long-haul destinations this summer.

Thailand: Thailand is also one of the top destinations in the world for all five tour operators. Other destinations in Asia are also popular this year, with TUI ranking Japan and Sri Lanka in particular among the rising destinations with the highest percentage growth.

Mexico: At DER Touristik, Mexico - together with the Caribbean destinations Dominican Republic and Cuba - is the third most popular vacation destination. First and second place at DER Touristik go to the island groups in the Indian Ocean and to the USA and Canada. Mexico also plays a major role for the other tour operators, with large increases recorded here compared to previous years.

These are the vacation travel trends for 2024

USA and Canada: North America, including the USA and Canada, is also in high demand. At FTI and TUI, North America is far ahead in terms of long-haul bookings. "For trips to Canada and the USA, we are currently seeing a double-digit percentage increase in guests compared to the previous year," says Matthias Huwiler from FTI.

Mauritius: After the Maldives, Mauritius is the second most popular destination in the Indian Ocean. While all five tour operators surveyed are increasingly selling trips to the Maldives, Mauritius plays a major role in long-haul bookings for TUI, FTI and DER Touristik.

Dominican Republic: Alongside Mexico, the Dominican Republic is a popular sun destination. Here, too, TUI, Alltours and DER Touristik are talking about a top long-haul destination in 2024.

United Arab Emirates: The United Arab Emirates with Dubai and Abu Dhabi also stand out according to some tour operators. TUI speaks of double-digit percentage growth. At DER Touristik, the Arab country is the fourth most popular destination.

There are also a few other destinations mentioned by individual tour operators. These include Cape Verde, Indonesia, the Seychelles, Cuba, Vietnam, Kenya and Costa Rica. Schauinsland highlights Kenya and the Seychelles, for example, which have only recently become part of the Duisburg-based tour operator's portfolio.

Holidaymakers can save here

According to the tour operators, some destinations have even become a little cheaper compared to the previous year: "Prices in the USA are stable and in some cases even cheaper than in 2023. Holidaymakers can also save on trips to the Maldives and the United Arab Emirates. And Oman and Cuba are also below last year's prices on average," says Steffen Boehnke, Head of TUI Product Management Sun and Beach.

However, some long-haul destinations have also become more expensive this year due to inflation, higher flight prices and higher hotel prices, among other things. Overall, however, the price increase is moderate, according to the tour operators. At most, there have been slight price increases compared to the previous year. "We are seeing this for Singapore and Thailand," says Steffen Boehnke.

FTI reports that Asia has generally become slightly more expensive because flight prices have risen, but hotel prices there are largely stable. "The situation is exactly different in North America. Here, among other things, strong domestic tourism has caused hotel costs to rise, while flight prices have only increased slightly," says FTI expert Huwiler.

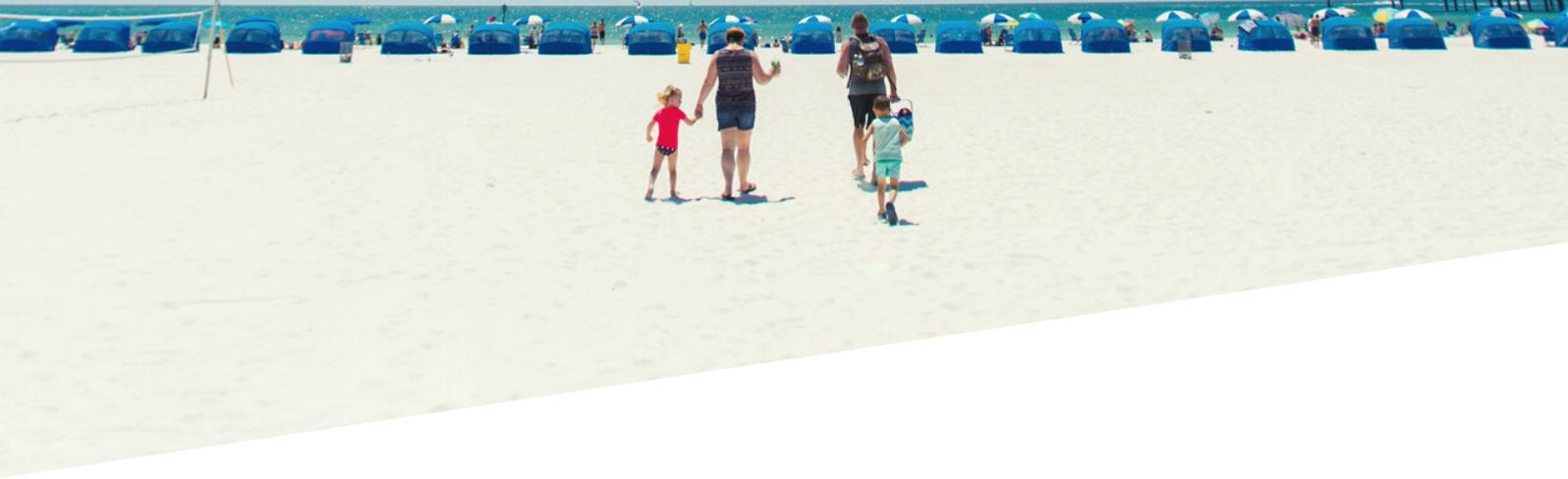
According to Alltours, Mexico and the Dominican Republic offer good value for money, while DER Touristik says that the United Arab Emirates and Thailand, "which used to be considered purely winter destinations, have now firmly established themselves as new summer destinations". In Thailand, Schauinsland has also observed that customers who want to save some money are increasingly only booking hotels with breakfast, so that they can go to the inexpensive restaurants there for additional meals.

Low demand for Cuba and Seychelles

In addition to the various top long-haul destinations, there are also a few countries that are not in such high demand among tour operators. While Cuba is the third most popular destination for DER Touristik together with Mexico, there is still "room for improvement" for the Caribbean island state according to Schauinsland. TUI also believes that Cuba - and the Seychelles - still have some catching up to do.

(Source: www.fvw.de)

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KAUS MEDIA SERVICES

SOPHIENSTRASSE 6
30159 HANNOVER
GERMANY

AXEL KAUS, M.A.
MANAGING DIRECTOR
E-MAIL: TEAMVSPC@KAUS.EU
PHONE: +49 511 899 89 00

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