



VIRTUOSO® REVEALS THE IMPACT OF AN UNPRECEDENTED HURRICANE SEASON AND SHARES EXPERT TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

NEW YORK (September 28, 2017) – As the travel industry continues to be challenged by a hurricane season like none other, coupled with consecutive earthquakes and domestic wildfires, a new survey by international luxury travel network [Virtuoso®](#) reveals insights on consumer reactions to show the wide-ranging impact on tourism. The network of top-tier travel agencies also tapped into the collective wisdom of its professional travel advisors to find the best advice for dealing with disrupted vacations.

Insights gleaned from Virtuoso’s travel advisors include:

- Sixty-two percent of advisors had clients impacted by Hurricane Irma. Of those, 54 percent rebooked their travel plans for the Caribbean and Florida. Advisors also helped clients who had to cut short their vacation to an affected area, and assisted clients who needed to evacuate from their homes.
- Eighty percent of respondents said that Hurricane Irma has had the greatest impact on bookings, spurring changes in both short- and long-term travel requests. Others named Hurricanes Maria and Harvey, ongoing terrorist attacks, and earthquakes in Mexico and Japan as events also factoring into bookings.
- Forty-six percent of advisors reported that clients are now seeking warm-weather destinations outside of the paths of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.
 - Twenty-eight percent reported an uptick in bookings to unaffected Caribbean islands such as St. Lucia, Aruba, Curacao, Jamaica, Barbados and Grand Cayman.
 - Twenty-two percent reported shifts to Mexico.
 - Others named Hawaii, Central America, South America, Europe, Southern California, and other U.S. southern states as requested destinations.
- Virtuoso also noted that the Turks and Caicos Islands as well as certain areas on Saint Barthelemy will be operational as early as October. Many of the resorts on these islands typically close during September and October for annual refurbishments, which lessened the tourism impact.
- Twenty-five percent of advisors reported that clients are not requesting Caribbean and Florida travel for the next one to six months, suggesting they are taking a wait-and-see approach to booking their trips.

“While the tourism loss caused by this year’s hurricane season will easily be hundreds of millions of dollars, it’s important to note that each day brings progress to areas affected by Hurricanes Irma and Maria,” says Albert Herrera, senior vice president of Global Product Partnerships for Virtuoso. “Some islands will require a longer rebuilding process, but others are on track to reopen their doors for the busy Festive season and provide guests with the full island experience, complete with restaurants, shops and activities. For anyone who wishes to support these areas, the best thing they can do is visit when doors reopen. Tourism is the lifeblood for so many of these islands and their residents.”

If travelers do find themselves impacted by hurricanes or other natural disasters, there are some ways to safeguard their vacation investment, said Virtuoso's experts.

- Seventy-one percent of Virtuoso advisors recommended purchasing "cancel for any reason" travel insurance, as other policies may not include weather-related issues or natural disasters.
- Another 57 percent suggested avoiding travel to hurricane-prone areas from late August to late September, which is when the season can see the most activity.
- Other advice from Virtuoso's experts included canceling plans to affected areas and rebooking elsewhere as early as possible. Purchasing refundable airline tickets will make that shift much easier.

Virtuoso also shared that using a travel advisor to book vacations, even to straightforward locations like the Caribbean or Florida, creates a built-in safety net. Herrera continued, "As these results show, travel advisors serve as advocates for their clients. Every day they draw upon their vast experience to ensure their clients can make informed decisions, and they tap into their long-established industry relationships and connections to redirect, rebook and rearrange travel plans for clients when they most need it."

For more information on Virtuoso, please visit www.virtuoso.com.

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About Virtuoso

Virtuoso® is the leading international travel agency network specializing in luxury and experiential travel. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 800 travel agency partners with more than 16,000 elite travel advisors in over 45 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing upon its preferred relationships with 1,700 of the world's best hotels and resorts, cruise lines, airlines, tour companies and premier destinations, the network provides its upscale clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. More than (U.S.) \$21.2 billion in annual travel sales makes Virtuoso a powerhouse in the luxury travel industry. For more information, visit www.virtuoso.com.

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