

# Family Travel Trends for 2021 & Beyond



THE BEACHES OF FORT MYERS & SANIBEL

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fter this past year, this is no ordinary trends report—it's shaped by the pandemic that has impacted how families travel, why they travel, and what destinations they choose to travel to. As the vaccine rollout continues, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is almost within reach, but the question is, what will we find to have changed once we are on the other side of the tunnel? How will the pandemic have shaped travel, and for the purpose of this particular trends report, family travel in particular? What does a return to travel look like?

For this Family Travel Trends for 2021 & Beyond Report—a complement to the **Family Travel in this New Landscape Survey** conducted on **recommend.com**, as well as the **Learn How to Master Family Travel Webinar**—we reached out to experts in this travel segment to gain insight into what family travel will look like in 2021 and beyond, and we've compiled the survey data.



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Previous page: Family on Fort Myers Beach in Florida. Above and below: Families are dreaming of road trips and visits to national parks.

### What Does the Return to Travel Look Like?

Although families have spent hours and hours hovering over each other this past year, they've spent it, as Gary C. Sadler, v.p. of **Unique Vacations, Inc.**, notes, mostly "indoors, working from home, assisting with virtual school or hosting virtual reunions with grandparents and friends. Many families didn't get to share birthdays or anniversaries together and most families didn't get their summer and spring breaks."

In other words, we've been together, and we've all created some unique memories, but as travel advisors, you know better than most that there's nothing quite like traveling together as a family for creating those life-long, awe-inspiring memories.

Families are longing for those pre-COVID vacations, they're "daydreaming of collecting passport stamps, daydreaming of going on adventures..." says Sadler.

And where will those adventures take them? Rainer Jenss, founder, **Family Travel Association**, points to dude ranches, which, he notes, "are already seeing strong business and expect much more interest." He also says that "vacation rentals in nature and near the beaches" are increasingly popular.

A rise in the popularity of vacation rentals is an indicator of travelers' current desires for vacationing in more intimate settings and staying away from large groups, with Carolyn Weppler, v.p. of sales for **Goway Travel**, noting that, "Family travel will be more private and more independent. Families will create their own customized experiences using private vehicles and guides, spending more time in outdoor settings and slowing the trip down to explore lesser-visited sites. They will stay in villa accommodations or separate family units, which offer privacy and a chance to strengthen family bonds. They will also prioritize private transit options." Pilar Arizmendi-Stewart, ►







"I foresee families will continue opting for extended trips, taking advantage of the numerous 'workation' and 'schoolcation' opportunities being offered in destinations across the globe. Lastly, this year, families will most likely prefer nature-driven trips that allow for social distancing and connecting with nature, over city breaks and large crowds."

**-- Helen Montijano, Vice President of Sales & Marketing for Canada & USA, Bahia Principe**

v.p., sales & marketing of The Americas, **Palladium Hotel Group**, seconds that, saying that, "Family travel trends in 2021 into 2022 will be heavily influenced by personalized experiences." She adds, too, that flexibility in bookings will be top of mind. "Before committing to a trip, families want assurance that they can easily change or reschedule reservations without penalties or difficulties. We will also start to see more last-minute getaways due to the unpredictability caused by the pandemic. Family travelers are also interested in trips where they can easily meet all travel requirements by the

CDC travel guidelines." Says Jonathan Iriarte, general manager for **Planet Hollywood Beach Resort Cancun**, "Safety is at the forefront of everything now and cleanliness is of the utmost importance." In fact, says a spokesperson for **The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel**, "Families deserve to feel they can enjoy a vacation while staying healthy. The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel offer a variety of activities for families to enjoy while adjusting back into the act of traveling. With its beautiful beaches, preserves and lots of open space, there is no shortage of nature while being able to

safely socially distance and enjoy the clean air."

And yes, when they start traveling again, it's those wide-open spaces ideal for socially distancing that will continue to call their name. As Ronella Tjin Asjoe-Croes, CEO for **Aruba Tourism Authority**, notes, "families are looking to spend time outdoors, particularly at beaches and in national parks," with Sadler adding that, "[Families] are daydreaming of reconnecting in paradise."

But overall behavior of family clients hasn't changed dramatically. As Iriarte points out, "Families are still looking to discover new places, create new memories and share new experiences with their loved ones," with Glenn Jones, Interim CEO, **Bermuda Tourism Authority**, adding that "Many family gatherings were put on hold last year, so people are eager to bring together everyone in their extended family, from newborn kids to grandparents." ➤

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**"Travel advisors can help travelers figure out travel insurance and help them with getting the right information they need in case travel restrictions change. Advisors will be more valuable than ever! The pent-up demand is strong and will be even more so as the vaccines are more widespread. But travelers will have many questions that advisors can help them with. Now is the time for advisors to promote their knowledge and expertise."**

**-- Rainer Jenss, Founder, Family Travel Association**



# Survey Says...

We wanted to hear from you—are your clients ready to travel again; what destinations are they dreaming of; what destinations are they booking; are they ready to cruise? You gave us the 4-1-1 and here's what the survey says:

Even with the halt on travel this past year, a little over half of survey respondents—54 percent—said they are optimistic about travel in 2021, with many noting that they're looking at summer and fall 2021 bookings as the start of a return to travel. That said, when asked if their clients were ready to travel again, 51 percent said that the families they work with are on the fence, and 77 percent of those responding noted that their family clients did not plan a Spring Break vacation. But the good news is that 48 percent did say their family clients are eyeing a summer vacation, with almost half—41 percent—pointing out that families will feel more confident traveling this summer now that the vaccine is being rolled out. Look at fall/winter season, and that percentage takes a big leap—70 percent of those surveyed said their clients are planning to travel during that time.

What's causing the hesitation in those who are on the fence, or would rather wait a while? The biggest cause for worry is the travel restrictions, followed very closely by concern over being exposed to COVID. Families are thinking ahead, too, with those surveyed noting that their clients are focusing on flexibility when it comes to cancellations and rebookings, with more than half of those surveyed

saying this is top of mind among their family clients. Health and safety protocols comes in at number two.

And who will they be traveling with? The majority of survey respondents—58 percent—said that their clients are traveling with the core family, although a good chunk, 38 percent, did say multi-gen family trips are also being considered. And what type of vacations are families

daydreaming of? Seventy-eight percent of those travel advisors who responded to the survey point to beaches, with cruise next in line at 44 percent. Of course, we know domestic travel has become hugely popular among travelers, and family travelers in particular.

On that note, it's no surprise that 75 percent of respondents said their clients are dreaming of trips to national parks and taking ►

## Selling Family Travel

- ✿ Just like you shouldn't sell from your own wallet, you can't sell based on your own risk threshold. Clients might be much more willing to visit a theme park or go to a crowded beach than you are, so it is important to give them all of the information and then to let them decide for themselves what they feel comfortable doing.
- ✿ With all of the current restrictions, many hotels and resorts have reduced their amenities so it is important to know what will and won't be available. Clients may only choose a property because of the kids' club. You don't want them to arrive and find out that the kids' club isn't open.
- ✿ Keep up to date on travel restrictions—everything from the airlines to specific destinations to the CDC. There is so much information out there it can become cumbersome, but that knowledge and expertise is why clients are looking to us.
- ✿ While it is always important, it can't be said enough right now, travel protection, travel protection, travel protection! I am advising all of my clients to only book something if it is refundable or if they can add a cancel for any reason, cash back travel protection policy.

**-- Jen Cron, Dream Vacations Franchise Owner**

*Villas, which offer privacy for a family, are currently a top accommodation option.*





road trips; and 32 percent point to outdoor adventure as another bucket list entry for their clients. And when it comes to the type of family bookings currently being worked on for travel into the next few months/into 2022, 62 percent of those surveyed note that a beach destination in the Caribbean/Mexico is looking pretty good right about now to their clients, and specifically, all-inclusives are at the top of the list with 60 percent checking off that category. No surprise, too, that “suites with more seclusion” is the top choice for families when travel advisors were asked what is currently resonating the most with family clients in terms of accommodations.

When it comes to theme parks, most families seem to be undecided, with the needle not swaying dramatically any which way, so they’re not very comfortable nor very uncomfortable.

The cruise vacation has taken an extraordinarily huge hit this past year, but as we’ve already mentioned, family vacationers are certainly dreaming of the next time they can sail off into the sunset. That said, a little more than half of the survey respondents said their clients are looking at sailing in 2022, and nearly 30 percent say that their clients will sail within three to six months after restrictions are lifted. And once they can sail, they’ll be staying close to home opting for sailings to the Caribbean and Mexico, according to 81 percent of survey respondents.

“...because cruises will likely be capacity controlled in the beginning, it will be a fabulous opportunity for families to actually experience everything on board without crowds, waits and with extra attention from staff and crew. I also feel that this will be the perfect chance to explore cruise lines’ private islands for the same reasons. Imagine having a private island almost to yourself!”

**-- Thomas Carrero, Jr.,  
Dream Vacations Franchise  
Owner and Vacation Specialist**



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Do your family clients  
feel more confident  
traveling this summer  
now that the vaccine  
is being rolled out?

**41%** say **YES**



The Florida sun twinkling on the Gulf of Mexico. The laughter of loved ones. A relaxing breath of fresh air and a deep sigh of relief. We all long for positive feelings now more than ever, and The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel shares that spirit. When your clients are ready to travel again, show them how a trip here can take the entire family away.

It starts with surroundings that put minds at ease. Put space between your clients and the rest of the world on dozens of islands with wide-open beaches and plenty of outdoor activities. Each island has a unique personality, so explore over 50 miles of white-sand shores on a local boat tour and get to know a favorite local souvenir – seashells.

More than nature and islands, a day at the beach mixes smoothly with the vibrant energy of the Fort Myers River District. The spotlight shines on alfresco dining options and family-friendly, outdoor walking tours along the brick-lined streets. For the history buffs in your clientele, the Edison and Ford Winter Estates are a must-see. The lab, homes and gardens of these great American inventors are an inspiring change of pace even for young visitors.

When your clients feel like traveling again, it's worth taking the time to do things right. That starts with accommodations. Whether it's a hotel, resort or vacation rental, you'll find lodging options for every budget.

Start planning today at [FortMyers-Sanibel.com/Travel-Trade](http://FortMyers-Sanibel.com/Travel-Trade).

### *The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel*

From white-sand beaches to endless wildlife, discover your clients' next vacation on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel. You'll find commissionable rates, first-class accommodations and add value to your clients' getaway with the help of our Travel Agent Help Desk. Call 800-237-6444 or visit [FortMyers-Sanibel.com](http://FortMyers-Sanibel.com) for more information.

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