

# Spring Break 2018: Sun, Sand and Deals in Mexico and the Caribbean

With air travel expected to be at an all-time high, a look at where we're flocking as a new season begins.

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**the getaway**



South Beach in Miami, among the classic and most popular spring break destinations.Scott McIntyre for The New York Times

A record number of people are expected to fly the nation's airlines this spring between March 1 and April 30, an all-time high of about 151 million



passengers. That's up four percent from last spring, according to [Airlines for America](#), the trade organization for the major United States airlines.

For many of those travelers, "spring break" means only one thing: a beach vacation. And as in years past, travelers looked to classics like Florida, the Caribbean and Mexico for their early spring getaways — even as the islands are recovering from hurricanes and the State Department has issued travel warnings about Mexico.

In North America, searches for January, February and March showed that Cancún, Guadalajara, and Mexico City were among the top five long-haul destinations, along with London and Paris, according to [Sojern](#), the travel research and marketing company. The most popular short-haul destinations were Miami, New York City, Orlando, Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Other industry groups have reported similar findings. [Allianz Global Assistance](#), a travel insurance provider, said its own analysis of travelers' plans showed Orlando and Cancún to be the most popular domestic and international destinations for spring break (which the company defined as Feb. 23 through April 16). Based on bookings through [AAA Travel](#), the most popular destinations in March for Florida travelers included Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale, Honolulu, Punta Cana and Cancún.

In January, the [World Tourism Organization reported](#) that tourism to Mexico was robust, and that the Caribbean was "showing clear signs of recovery in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria." That same month, the State Department began [ranking](#) every country in the world on a scale of 1 to 4 to help travelers make decisions about their safety. Mexico was given a Level 2, which simply calls for increased caution — the same ranking as destinations like France, Italy and Britain. Yet certain areas within Mexico — Colima, Guerrero, Michoacán, Sinaloa and Tamaulipas states — that experience violent crime from gangs and criminal organizations were given the highest ranking, Level 4.





Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City, a hotspot for early spring travel. Danielle Villasana for The New York Times

Quintana Roo — home to tourist areas like Cancún, Cozumel, Tulum, the Riviera Maya and Playa del Carmen — was given a Level 2, again the same as France and Italy. But on March 7, the United States Embassy in Mexico City prohibited government employees from traveling to Playa del Carmen, citing a security threat. The alert came after an [explosion on a tourist ferry](#) in February at a pier in Playa del Carmen that injured more than two dozen people.

On March 9, two days after the alert, the United States government [updated it](#) to say that personnel were prohibited from travel only to certain neighborhoods in Playa del Carmen: Centro, Calica, Gonzalo Guerrero, Quintas del Carmen, and Villas del Carmen. The alert advised United States citizens to avoid the neighborhoods as well.

The United States Embassy in Mexico City also said that government



personnel are prohibited from using ferry services between Playa del Carmen and Cozumel until further notice, and that United States citizens are also advised not to use those ferry services.

It remains to be seen if the alerts lead to vacation cancellations in the area, but it's clear that for the first quarter of 2018, Mexico, which has many cities that the State Department has essentially deemed safe to visit, was at the top of traveler's lists.

The day after the updated alert, [Southwest Airlines](#) began nonstop routes on Saturdays between a couple of cities in California and Cabo San Lucas/Los Cabos; and between Indianapolis and Cancún (seasonally). The airline also began offering nonstop daily flights between San Diego and Puerto Vallarta (seasonally).

The United States government recommends that travelers who decide to spend their spring vacation in Mexico buy travel insurance that specifically covers them in Mexico and includes medical evacuation insurance.

The Statue of Liberty as seen from a boat in New York City, a go-to destination for springtime visitors from abroad. Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

In previous months, Mexico was for some travelers a substitute for the Caribbean in the wake of hurricanes that devastated several islands. Yet now the rebuilding is underway, and most islands are open for business, creating more options for spring break getaways. Indeed, [TripAdvisor](#) announced that travelers won't have trouble finding low hotel prices and airfare to popular islands, and that April is the most affordable month for a Caribbean trip.

For instance, the travel planning and booking site found that, based on average accommodation rates and airfare from February to April, travelers departing from the United States could take a weeklong trip for less than \$2,000 a person in Curacao, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Puerto Rico. Hotel rooms were available for less than \$250 a night.

[Expedia](#)'s deals page is featuring spots in Punta Cana and San Juan, as well as Cancún, Orlando and Miami. And resorts are also offering deals, like the [Seven Stars Resort & Spa](#) in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos, where you can save 20 percent off all room types for travel now through April 16, and 30 percent off all room types for travel April 14 through Aug. 10 (if interested, book before March 31).

For those looking to visit the United States from other countries, New York City is a top springtime destination, according to Sojern's research. In Europe, search trends for the first three months of this year turned up leading European cities like Paris and London, as well as places in the Middle East and Asia such as Bangkok, Istanbul, Dubai, and Marrakesh. New York City was the only place in the United States to be among the top long-haul destinations, according to Sojern. In the Asia-Pacific, the top short-haul searches between January and March were Bangkok, Singapore, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul, while the long-haul searches were for London, Honolulu, Paris, Los Angeles and New York City. In Latin America, during the same time period, Sojern found that travelers were gravitating to Mexico and Brazil, and for long-haul trips, Madrid, Lisbon, New York City, Miami and Orlando, the East Coast home of Mickey Mouse.

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