

Some Caribbean destinations benefit as deaths in Dominican Republic deter US tourists

25th June 2019

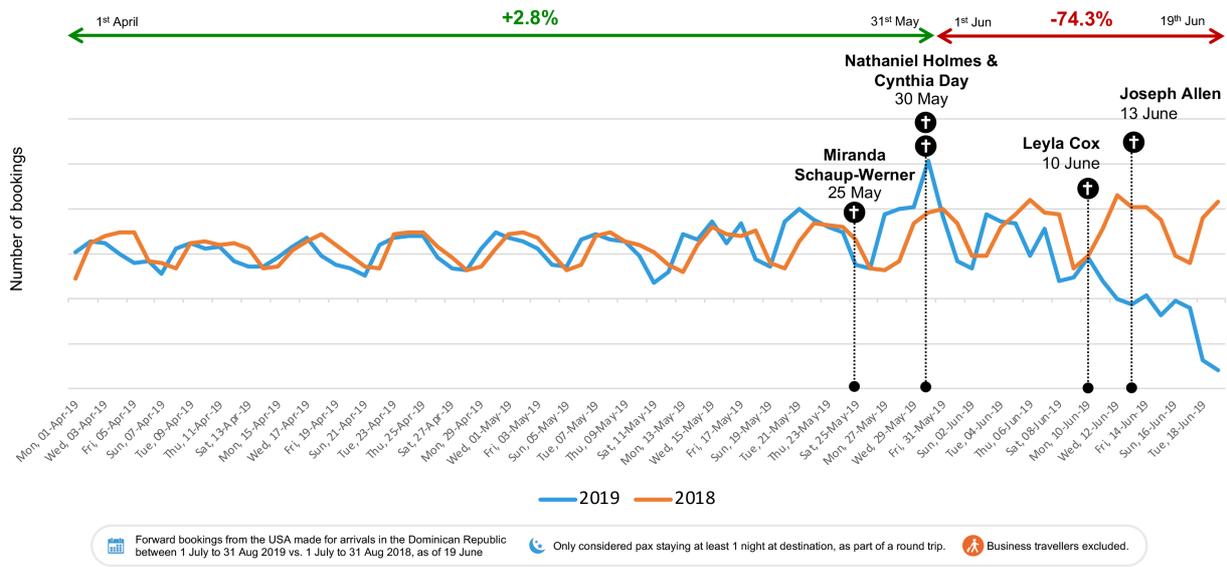
A spate of unexplained deaths of US tourists in the Dominican Republic, which have received extensive coverage in the media, and are now being investigated by the FBI, has caused tourist numbers to plummet. However, at the same time, tourism to other Caribbean islands has jumped.

A report by ForwardKeys, which analyses over 17 million flight bookings a day, reveals that from the 1st to the 19th June, bookings for July and August from the USA to the Dominican Republic have fallen by 74.3% compared to the same period in 2018. Previously, from the beginning of April to 31st May, bookings were up 2.8%.

Olivier Ponti, VP Insights, ForwardKeys, said: "My deepest sympathies go out to the families of the American tourists who have passed away. Their recent and tragic deaths appear to have had a dramatic impact on travel to the Dominican Republic. Our analysis of leisure travel shows a striking correlation."

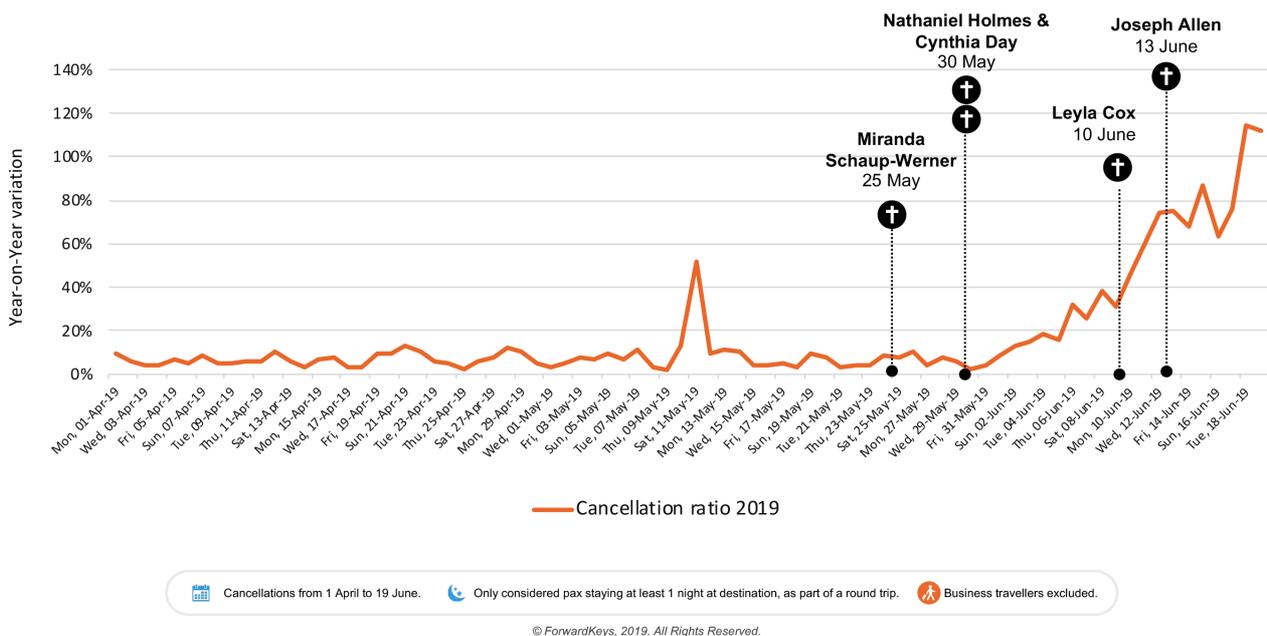
Three deaths at the end of May, Miranda Schaup-Werner on the 25th and Nathaniel Holmes and Cynthia Day on the 30th appear to have triggered the initial stall in bookings and the situation worsened with the death of Leyla Cox on June 10th and Joseph Allen on the 13th.

Bookings for trips from the USA to the Dominican Republic in July and August 2019, year-on-year variation



The deaths have not only caused a slowdown in new bookings; there has also been a spike in cancellations. During the period 1st – 19th June, cancellations of US bookings to the Dominican Republic, for travel at any future date, jumped by 51.2%. The day after Leyla Cox’s death on 11th June, cancellations exceeded 70%.

Cancellation ratio for trips from the USA to the Dominican Republic, 1 April to 19 June 2019



At the same time as bookings for the Dominican Republic were stalling, bookings for some other Caribbean islands surged. Jamaica, the Bahamas and Aruba exemplify the pattern; in the period from 1st April to 31st May, bookings were down 8.4%, up 7.0% and down 3.5% respectively. However, for the period 1st – 19th June, they were up 26.0%, 44.5% and 31.3% respectively.

Destination (Ranked by booking volume)	1 st April – 31 st May	1 st – 19 th June
Dominican Republic	+2.8%	-74.3%
Jamaica	-8.4%	+26.0%
Bahamas	+7.0%	+44.5%
Aruba	-3.5%	+31.3%

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Olivier concluded: “The recent deaths have sparked an extraordinary level of media interest in the USA, with many major news organisations reporting on the latest developments. It amounts to a dreadful image crisis for the Dominican Republic because the USA is the no.1 source market for tourism to the destination and its economy is highly dependent on foreign visitors – 17.2% of GDP and 39.1% of export revenue, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). Since the latest death on June 13th, we see a further erosion of bookings and no immediate sign of recovery, so I hope the authorities are successful in providing explanations that will convince the American public.”