

Research

How COVID-19 has changed travelers' priorities

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STR's Tourism Consumer Insights data shows travelers are more interested in smaller hotels and short-term rentals as preferred accommodations to still make trips happen despite COVID-19.

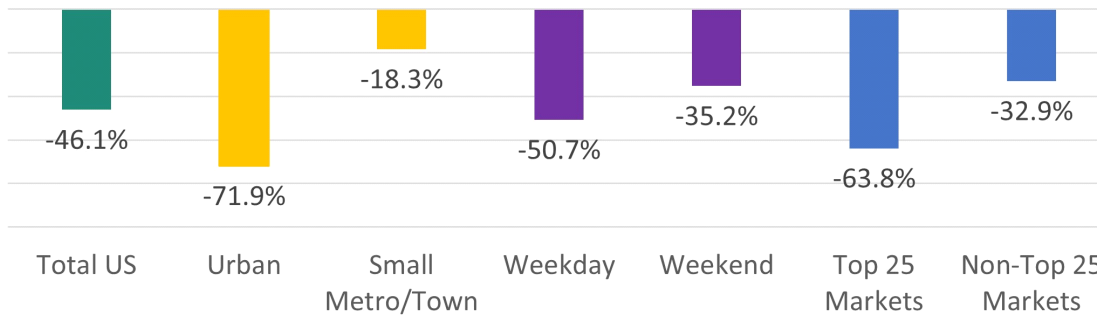
SURVEY:

Travelers' Desired Property Types,
Locations Amid COVID-19

By [Chris Klauda](#) and [Rhona Lawson](#)

HENDERSONVILLE, Tennessee and EDINBURGH, Scotland—Travelers are slowly starting to resume travel in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. STR hotel performance data shows segments such as small town (non-urban) locations, weekends and markets outside the U.S. top 25 (often markets with wide-open spaces such as beaches and mountains) are reporting the “least bad” year-over-year change in revenue per available room.

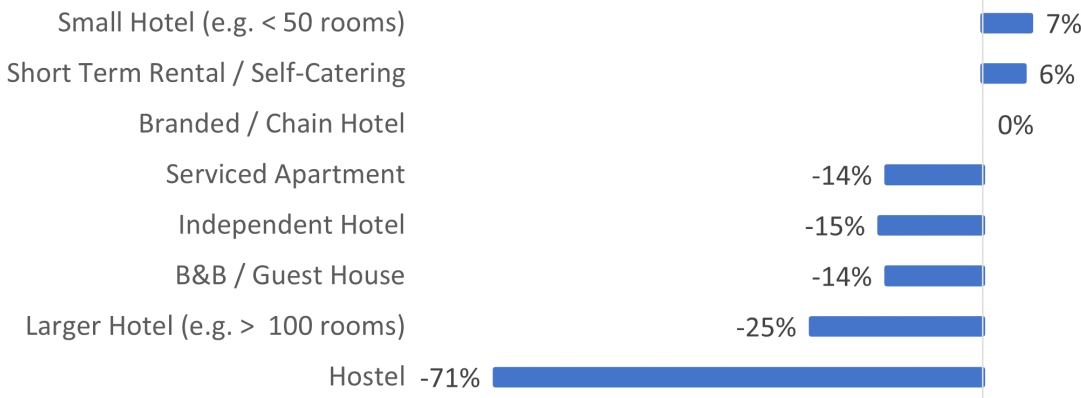
September 2020 Year-Over-Year RevPAR % Change



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Travelers' priorities have shifted toward accommodation cleanliness and safety. One of the first questions for many travelers when selecting a place to stay is "Where will I feel safe?" With choices from hotels to short-term rentals to hostels, STR's Tourism Consumer Insights team asked more than 500 North American travelers in late August/early September to compare their feelings about various accommodations before COVID-19 to now.

Thinking about your attitudes before COVID-19 to how you feel now, how interested are you in the following types of accommodation?



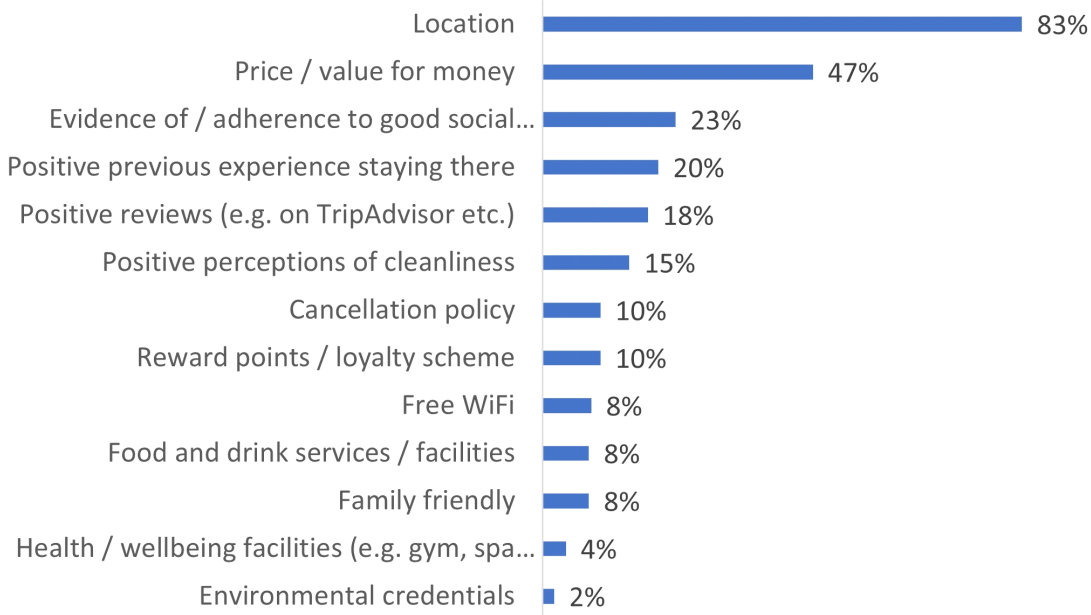
■ Net interest = the difference between 'More interested' and 'Less interested'.

Source: STR, © 2020 CoStar Realty Information, Inc.

Small hotels and short-term rentals/self-catering accommodations rated highest in terms of accommodation interest. This type of accommodation is attractive for its relatively contact-free experience. Hostels rated the lowest, which is perhaps unsurprising given the communal nature of this type of accommodation and is unlikely to be considered desirable in today's world. Larger hotels also rated lower, reflecting a theme that consumers are now seeking to minimize interactions with others and smaller hotels and short-term rentals provide this better than larger hotels.

Ultimately, however, the fundamental factors of location and price/value continue to reign supreme even during COVID-19, where adherence to social distancing, cleanliness and flexible cancellations are critical.

What were the main factors that influenced your decision to book this accommodation?



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Understanding the balance in travel messaging to communicate safety and cleanliness while also highlighting the fundamental factors that are most important, location and price, is challenging for hoteliers and the tourism industry in general. Gone are the days when free Wi-Fi played a major role in hotel choice. Noticeably missing from the list is free breakfast. The cost and operational challenges of any food service have become almost untenable given COVID-19 concerns.

For tourism after lockdown, many things will change and at least a few things will stay the same.

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This article represents an interpretation of data collected by STR, parent company of HNN. Please feel free to comment or contact an editor with any questions or concerns.