

Hostfully + hometogo

# Spring Break

A guide to seasonality for vacation rental owners

Every year, at the same time in March, the hospitality industry sees a massive uptick in activity. Some universities call it ‘Reading Week,’ but for all of us in the vacation rental world, it’s known as Spring Break. It’s that time of the year when families leave cities for cottage country, or try and squeeze in one more week of skiing before Easter. In polar opposite directions, crowds of students race for the beaches for that quintessential week-long party experience.

According to [a 2019 survey](#), 2 in 5 Americans plan on taking Spring Break vacations, spending an average of \$1,818 on their trip.

While Spring Break represents something different for each type of traveler, it’s a universally important season for us professionals in the vacation rental industry. It’s when we increase profitability by taking advantage of high demand, but also look at our processes and marketing strategies to see how effective they are.

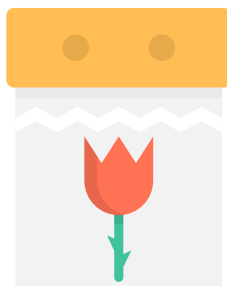
For this paper, [Hostfully](#) partnered up with [HomeToGo](#) to look at trends in seasonality in the vacation rental industry resulting from the Spring Break surge. In this report, we’ll look at:



The year-over-year search growth for top 10 Spring Break destinations



Top 20 searched destinations for Spring Break travel 2019 (and what we can learn from that data for 2020)



Interest in Spring Break travel over the months



Strategies to attract Spring Break travelers and retain them for future years

## Year-over-year search growth for the top 10 Spring Break destinations

Every year, interest in Spring Break seems to fluctuate from one hotspot to another. While classics like Daytona Beach will always retain that legendary status to Spring Break travelers, it's important to keep track of trends in interests. This passive monitoring can be valuable for vacation rental managers who may not operate in those areas, but who want to stay ahead of the curve and adjust nightly rates in anticipation of a potential rush.

To monitor interest in Spring Break destinations, HomeToGo compiled top and trending destination searches on their platform with a specified check-in between March 1st, 2020 and April 20th, 2020. This data was compared to the same time-frame from 2019 to see if any localities were seeing an uptick in search interest.

Here's what the data shows:

Ranking	City/Region	% Growth	State
1	Sanibel Island	461%	Florida
2	Kauai	339%	Hawaii
3	South Florida	310%	Florida
4	Miramar Beach	230%	Florida
5	Manasota Key	106%	Florida
6	Big Bear	100%	California
7	Lake Tahoe	91%	California / Nevada
8	Rockport	89%	Texas
9	Taos	80%	New Mexico
10	Imperial Beach	69%	California

Source: Visitor Search Data on HomeToGo





### 1. Sanibel Island 461% ↑

The small barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico is getting more popular each year, and for a good reason. Aside from pristine beaches, Sanibel is next to the Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge. And while other popular travel destinations in Florida like Daytona Beach, Miami, and Naples got on the real estate development wave and promoted development, Sanibel residents went in the opposite direction. They foresaw that their unique proximity to nature had to be protected. Travelers visiting Sanibel can enjoy the classic beach holiday, but also reconnect with nature.



### 2. Kauai 339% ↑

Also known as the Garden Island, Kauai is another great example of a beach vacation that meets pristine nature. Prior to the vacation rental industry boom, Kauai was an expensive vacation for most families as accommodations were limited to large resorts or chain hotels. However, the recent growth of the vacation rental industry on the Island is making it accessible for families hoping for a quiet beach vacation.



### 3. South Florida 310% ↑

The area that incorporates some of the classic Spring Break destinations for students like West Palm Beach, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale. Every year, the popularity of these destinations ebbs and flows, but a 310% spike in interest is noticeable. To explain this increase, we have to look at how students travel for Spring Break: in groups of 4 or more. While booking a block of rooms in a hotel is easier than ever, renting an entire house at a fraction of the cost is a great value proposition for students on a budget.



**4/5. Miramar Beach and Manasota Key 230% ↑**

While Spring Break is a time when students run to the beaches for parties, it's important to remember that families with children also want to escape the cities or the cold. These quieter Florida beach destinations appeal to a different segment of Spring Break travelers. Also, note that vacation rentals cater well to the demands of traveling families with young children.



**6/7. Big Bear and Lake Tahoe 100% ↑**

A great example of trending destinations that mix nature and beaches. Both destinations strongly appeal to young professionals and families looking to stay away from large Spring Break student parties.



**8. Rockport 89% ↑**

Over the years, Rockport's gained a reputation as the go-to destination in Texas for great family beach vacations far from the buzz and energy of South Padre Island, TX. A booming vacation rental industry in the area caters to families and groups of all sizes, making it an increasingly popular destination.



**9. Taos 80% ↑**

Surrounded by nature and an important cultural site (one of the oldest continuously inhabited areas in North America), Taos is the quintessential rest and relax vacation, perfect for families. In recent years, the area's gained in popularity due to a proliferation of vacation rentals that make it possible to stay in the area without breaking the bank.



**10. Imperial Beach 69% ↑**

For those seeking a Spring Break beach vacation but with a more muted party scene. Imperial Beach is slowly gaining in popularity as a balanced beach destination (in contrast to its loud counterparts like Miami and South Padre Island).

**The takeaway**

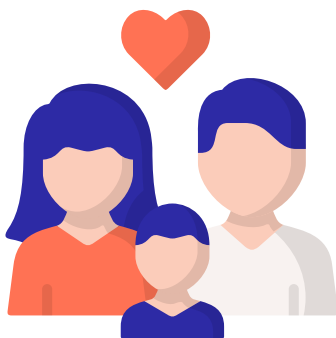
Vacation rental managers that operate properties near natural attractions should take note of the growing trend of Spring Break travelers seeking peace and quiet with their families. To capitalize on this trend, managers can tweak their social media campaigns and marketing copy. Themes that can attract this clientele include:



**Tranquility, rejuvenation and relaxing**



**Nature and wildlife**



**Time spent with family, relatives, or friends**



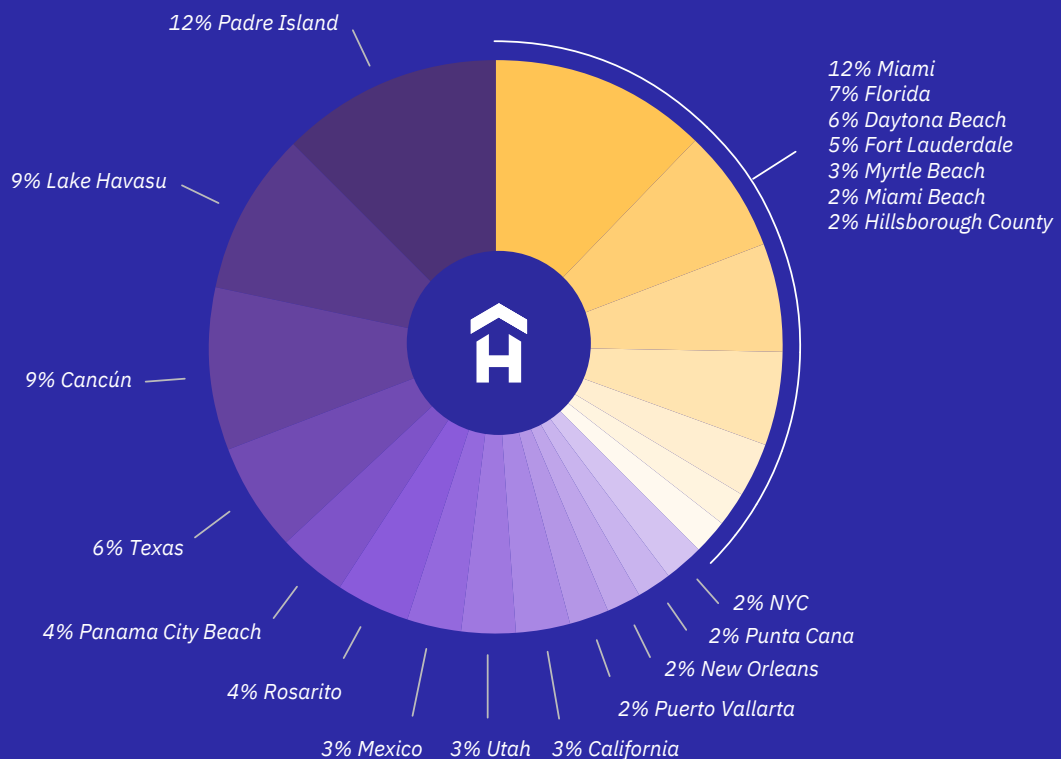
**Escape the city**

When designing their Spring Break marketing strategies, vacation rental managers should also remember to contrast the attributes of their properties (i.e., close to nature, family-friendly) against the crowds and buzz of ‘party Spring Break.’

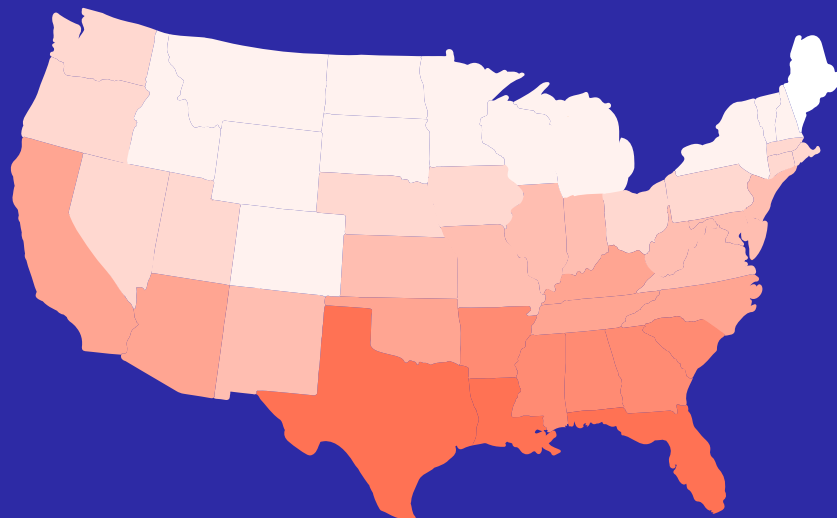
### Top 20 searched destinations for Spring Break travel 2019

While looking at trending vacation rental destinations is a good way to stay ahead of the curve and make data-driven predictions for your business, it's also essential to look at what was popular in previous years. Along with HomeToGo, we compiled the top 20 searched Spring Break destinations in Google.

Florida destinations summed together are 35% ●



Note: each section represents the % of searches amongst the top 20 destinations



## Top 20 searched destinations for Spring Break travel 2019 (continued)



Unsurprisingly, the classic 'party' Spring Break Florida destinations take up the majority of search interest with a whopping total of 35% of all Google searches that include the term 'Spring Break.' This shows that Florida still takes up an impressive place in American seasonal travel culture.

Next up are the non-Florida destinations like South Padre Island (12%) and Lake Havasu (9%). Both destinations offer similar experiences to Florida but in different parts of the US (Texas and Arizona), showing that there's a strong interest in the student population to explore different options.

### Outliers

Standing out from the herd of beach vacations, we have the two outliers: New Orleans and Utah. Neither are your typical student Spring Break vacations, but both represent interesting concepts for those operating vacation rental properties far from the beaches.



## Top 20 searched destinations for Spring Break travel 2019 (continued)

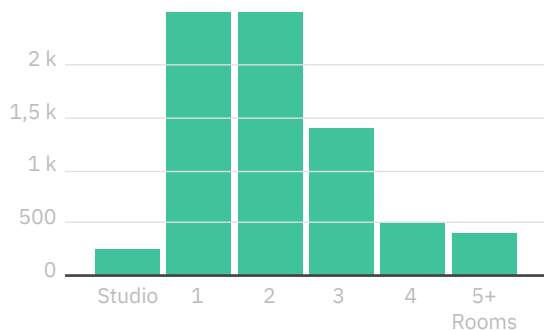
### Notable Non-Beach Spring Break Destinations: New Orleans and Utah

As we previously saw from search intentions, the Spring Break spike tends to favor beach and 'party' destinations. However, the outliers (New Orleans and Utah) show that Spring Break travelers may be seeking for something different. Vacation rental managers can take note of New Orleans and Utah, and slowly implement marketing strategies for their portfolio over coming years to attract current non-beach travelers, but also position themselves should a shift towards nature and cities ever take place.

#### New Orleans

Bourbon Street, the French Quarter, beads, and piano bars. For those seeking a party experience, New Orleans won't disappoint. But what makes it so popular?

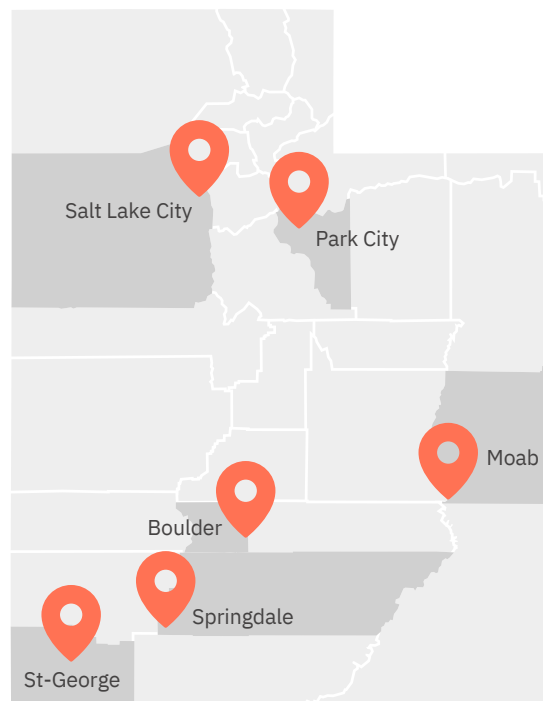
Rental Size 2.1 Bedrooms / 5.3 Guests on average



New Orleans has a large inventory of 2, 3, and 4 bedrooms, which caters well to a group of travelers looking for a party. It goes to show that short-term rentals don't have to be off the beach to take advantage of seasonality.

#### Utah

Utah's majestic outdoors and high peaks offer the perfect getaway for families or those seeking a break from city life.

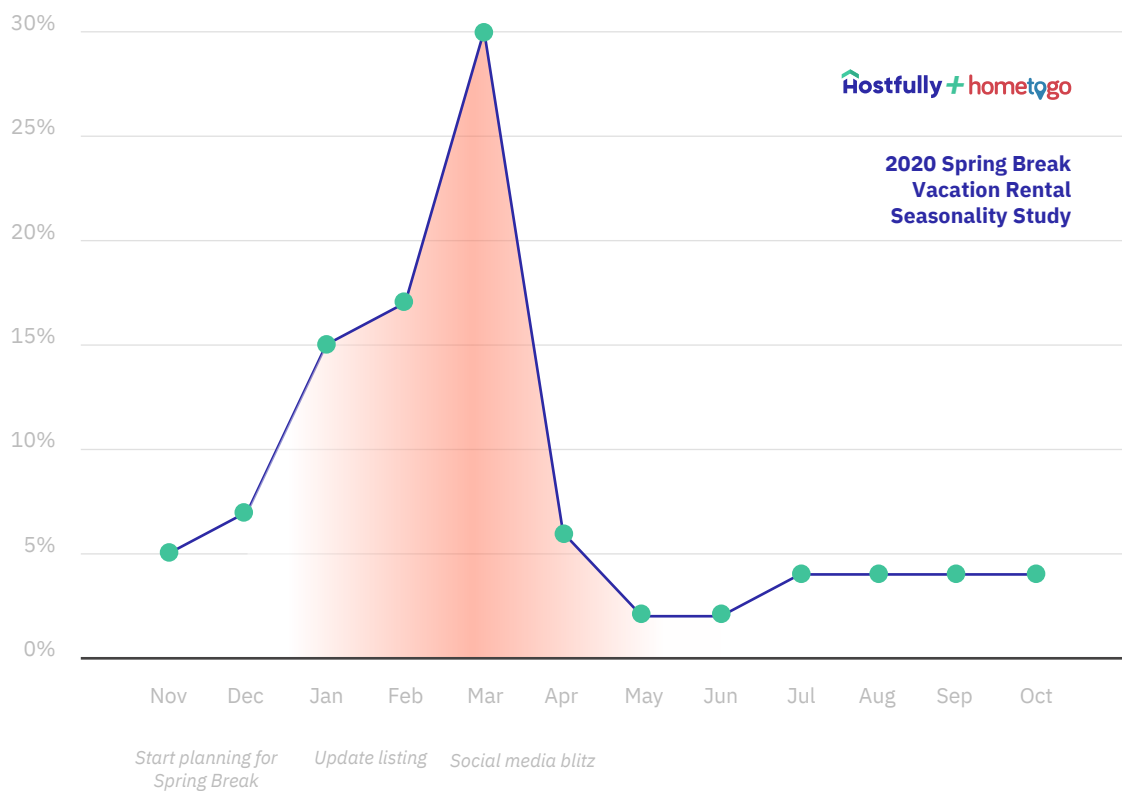


The vacation rental market is spread out across the state. There's a concentration of short-term rentals near major destinations - be it hiking trails, National Parks, or ski resorts. This supports indications of a growing trend of Spring Break travelers seeking to reconnect with nature.

### Interest in Spring Break travel over the months

Seeing that interest in Spring Break isn't solely focused on beach destinations, vacation rental managers in almost any area can take advantage of this seasonal trend. That said, reshifting your company's entire marketing and social media strategy sounds like a risky proposition just to target one specific month of the year. As we'll see below, all what's necessary is a slight tweak in the strategy for a short period of time.

If we look at the interest in searches for the term 'Spring Break' throughout the year, we notice an interesting trend:



Search values clearly indicate a ramping up between January and February, with a sudden spike in March.

#### The takeaway

Vacation rental managers can tweak their marketing and social strategy campaigns in January and February in anticipation of Spring Break. That said, March is peak booking season so don't lose sight of these travelers as that month comes to an end. When that surge is over, it's time to return to normal marketing strategies, and focus on retargeting for next year.

## Strategies to attract Spring Break travelers and retain them for future years

So far, we've seen that Florida and beach destinations seem to get all the attention when it comes to the seasonal spike of Spring Break. Is there something that can be done for vacation rental management companies that operate outside those areas? Here are a few strategies you can implement to attempt to attract Spring Break travelers in secondary markets:

### Booking Website Year-long

Create a subpage on your direct booking site  
*(i.e., companysite.com/springbreak*

Page includes pictures and content promoting the property's appeal for Spring Break.

Search Engine - Optimization tips:

- Images include Alt Text featuring search terms
- Spring Break and March Break at a frequency of at least 7 times per 1,000 words but no more than 12 times
- Include 'Spring Break' + your area or city in at least one Header.

Focus entirely on your strengths. If properties are in cottage country, target family values, quiet and rejuvenation. If properties are near nature or parks, clearly list proximity to these attractions.

Don't forget to include the keywords from your booking listing that make your property unique  
*(i.e., family-friendly, pets allowed)*

### Booking Platforms January through March

Modify your listing to include the search terms 'Spring Break' and 'March Break.'

If in a beach destination, promote your property's appeal to a student demographic. Focus on proximity and convenience.

If in a non-beach destination, promote your property's other strong points such as proximity to natural attractions, away from the parties, etc.

Include pictures of nearby beaches or natural landmarks and attractions.

In late-March, revert back to your regular listing.

### Social Media and Email March through April

Focus on obtaining last-minute bookings. March is the peak booking season, and you can market promotions and sales to those who wait to book.

During Spring Break, monitor social media trends and tag along with any hashtags or popular post styles.

Ask guests to make reference to your property in their own social media posts.

Increase social media post frequency. Remember that during this phase, you're promoting to next year's guests.

Assuming you wish for your guests to return, contact them the following January via email or direct message in social media.

You should also add a reminder in your calendar to adjust your prices for seasonality. This is where a dynamic price application can take the guesswork out of figuring out the nightly rate sweetspot.

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 Hostfully

Hostfully helps vacation rental managers run their business, increase revenue, and provide 5-star hospitality. Hostfully's award-winning Property Management Platform and digital Guidebooks are directly integrated with Airbnb, Booking.com, Vrbo, and TripAdvisor. With automated guest communications, bookings pipeline management, and mobile-first guest experience tools, Hostfully services 20,000+ properties around the world in 80 countries.

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Reach out to our Account Manager for a demo call:

**Cara Thibodeaux**  
cara.thibodeaux@hometogo.com

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