

ASK THE experts

'Workation' is the buzzword du jour, but how can agents tap into the trend? **Laura French** finds out



PICTURES: Winter Park Photography; Red Square Inc; Jonathan Cole Photography

1 "A longer stay can offer excellent value for money"

Elegant Hotels Group owns and operates six properties in Barbados. The group has introduced a Working from Waves programme at two of its hotels – Waves Hotel & Spa and Colony Club – encouraging guests to stay for up to a year using the country's Barbados Welcome Stamp.



Glynis Jeffery,
sales and marketing director for the UK
and Europe, Elegant Hotels Group

We know that many people are seeking a healthy work-life balance more than ever owing to the pandemic. We designed the Working from Waves package to allow guests to stay for a minimum of one month, with the option to extend for up to a year. We've found the average length of stay for workationers to be 30 nights at Waves, and 30 to 40 nights at Colony Club (pictured).

Guests choosing the long-stay package benefit from a 35% discount on the usual room rate and can extend on a monthly basis. They can also keep their room for as long as they like, so it feels like a home-from-home.

Workations are still a new concept for all of us so it is important for agents to understand what is out there and what each involves. It's also key to know what the customer wants – is it a work-life balance, to be near family and friends, or a place that inspires them in their profession?

While a long-stay trip might initially seem costly to a customer, it's important for agents to highlight the value for money in terms of what guests receive and the extras that are included. For example, a lot of people wouldn't realise that at Waves, daily exercise classes, watersports and all food and beverage are included. That makes it excellent value for money compared to paying for the same things back home.

2 "We're seeing a lot of interest from the 30 to 50 age group"

In October, Antigua and Barbuda launched a Nomad Digital Resident Visa Programme for remote workers, valid for up to two years. The country has also launched a Business on the Beach campaign encouraging Brits to come for a longer-stay 'workation'.



Colin James,
chief executive, Antigua and
Barbuda Tourism Authority

We've had a lot of interest from the UK in both our visa programme and in shorter remote-working stays. There are time differences to navigate, of course, but we've noticed how pleasantly surprised visitors have been with the ease of working from a beach or hotel while enjoying all the aspects of a Caribbean holiday.

For some, taking a full two weeks of annual leave isn't always an option, so we want to encourage those Brits to come to Antigua and merge their holidays with a few days working from the island in a restorative environment.

In terms of demographic, we're seeing a lot of interest from the 30 to 50 age group, with working professionals looking for a change of scenery and pace. They're choosing a mixture of hotels, private residences and villas.

Longer-stay rates and tailored stays can be organised with each property. Curtain Bluff, Hodges Bay and some of the Elite Island Resorts properties have been particularly helpful when working with guests on bespoke stays.

My top tip for agents would be to highlight how accessible Antigua and Barbuda (pictured) is from the UK. Beaches, hotels and restaurants are all equipped with fast internet access, and the islanders are very friendly.

3 "Hotels are keen to host longer-stay guests"

Caribtours has been tailor-making luxury holidays to the Caribbean since 1979 and has since expanded to the Indian Ocean, Arabia and Europe. The operator can work with hotels across the Caribbean on longer-stay requests.



Paul Cleary,
chief executive and owner,
Caribtours

We're seeing that people are open to much longer stays now because they're not tethered to the same work constraints. It's perfectly achievable – you can still do your job, but from the luxury of a Caribbean beach. Direct flights to many of the islands mean you're never far from home, and most hotels have excellent Wi-Fi.

Several of our clients have extended their stays by a month or so, and I know someone who went out to Barbados and has been there for nearly a year, running an events company remotely.

In terms of specific resorts catering to the long-stay trend, Sea Breeze Beach House (pictured) in Barbados has been very good and is offering savings of up to 60% – a 28-night stay costs £4,099 all-inclusive with Caribtours. I worked from there in December and met two people on extended stays.

But all the hotels are open to it. Before, they wouldn't have known what to do with long-stay requests, but now they have to think creatively.

So if you have a client interested in a long stay, speak to a specialist. Most of the properties we work with are small, one-off hotels, and they're really keen to maximise their revenue by hosting longer-stay guests.

I think remote working, whether from the Caribbean or elsewhere, is here to stay.