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Holiday Travelers Find

A Christmas Surprise By NANCY KEATES and RAFAEL GUZMAN

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Susan Lewis Solomont thought she'd have no problem booking her Christmas vacation back in July. But to her surprise, she was too late. Already her favorite resort in tony Turks and Caicos was booked up. Her second and third choices were gone, too. So come December, it'll be Christmas at a Hyatt in the Caymans -- and no ocean view.

On a company-wide basis, Four Seasons expects holiday bookings to be the same as last year, while the Wyndham International chain hasn't seen much of a change either. "It's some markets no, some markets yes," says a spokeswoman.

Still, at least one group finds itself suddenly popular among well-heeled vacationers again: travel agents with connections. And then there's Gary Mansour of Mansour Travel Co. in Beverly Hills, Calif., whose clients include Tom Cruise and Will Smith. He's been bugging hotels all month, calling up the reservations managers and urging them to dump people on the waiting list who haven't paid in full yet. Of course, "if they do that to me, I'd break their legs," he jokes.

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