

ABTA has identified six key trends that are shaping people’s travel plans for 2021, based on expert insight and research, as well as booking data from our Members.

We identify two distinct types of traveller – those who are eager to return to destinations they know and love and those who want to take a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ trip. We also explore a strong commitment to cruise holidays, a rise in breaks that embrace the great outdoors, the ever-increasing importance of responsible tourism, and holidaymakers seeking the reassurances that come with booking a package holiday and the expertise of a travel professional.

1 EMBRACING OLD FAVOURITES

2021 will see people return to old favourites and familiar destinations. With overseas travel being off limits for much of 2020, people are keen to get back to the destinations they know and love.

Booking trends from ABTA Members such as Barrhead Travel, easyJet holidays, Jet2holidays, TUI and Henbury Travel all point to holidaymakers heading to tried and tested destinations. Turkey, the Balearics, the Canary Islands, Greece and the Algarve are among the most popular spots next summer, with Florida high up the list for those looking to go further afield.

ABTA’s own research also supports this desire to return to old favourites, as just 32% of people said they would be likely to visit a country they had never been to before (down from 45% last year) and 41% said they’re likely to visit a resort or city they had never been to before (54% in 2019)¹.

This tendency to book a holiday to a place they know they will enjoy is also clear from the list of the top ten overseas destinations for next year, with people keen to visit familiar favourites including Spain, France, the USA, Italy and Greece².



TOP 10 overseas destinations people plan to visit in 2021

- 1 **SPAIN** (33%)
- 2 **FRANCE** (19%)
- 3 **USA** (17%)
- 4 **ITALY** (16%)
- 5 **GREECE** (14%)
- 6 **PORTUGAL** (9%)
- 7 **GERMANY** (8%)
- 8 **CROATIA** (5%)
- 9 **NETHERLANDS** (4%)
- 10 **AUSTRALIA** (4%)

2 TICKING OFF THE BUCKET LIST

While many are keen to go to tried and tested destinations next year, others are planning to indulge their pent-up wanderlust with a bucket list trip in 2021. Having had plenty of time to research and dream big about their next chance to travel, we expect to see these holidaymakers booking adventures of a lifetime and big-ticket luxury escapes.

Recent trends certainly point to a rise in popularity for trips that deliver unforgettable experiences and a sense of

achievement for the traveller. Jet2holidays has just announced a new winter 2021/22 programme of once-in-a-lifetime trips to Iceland for travellers hoping to catch a glimpse of the spectacular Northern Lights, and since March, G Adventures has seen increased interest in its active travel style, with trips to Everest Base Camp, climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and trekking the Inca Trail consistently ranking amongst the most searched for tours. Many people are also opting to book trips to luxury destinations

and Barrhead Travel reports people booking extra special trips for 2022.

It is the younger generation in particular who are keen to start making their way through their bucket list. 18-24-year-olds are the most likely to spend as much or more on their holidays next year, with 62% saying they will. Of those looking to spend more, over one in five (22%) of those aged 18-24 said this was to take the trip of a lifetime, compared with just 12% on average³.



3 AN INCREASING DESIRE FOR COUNTRY ESCAPES

Trips that enable holidaymakers to embrace the great outdoors are expected to prove popular in 2021.

While city breaks and beach holidays still take the top two spots as the favoured types of holiday, countryside breaks are catching up. Just over a third of people (35%) plan to take a city or beach break in the next 12 months, down from 42% and 40% respectively, whereas 25% of people plan to take a countryside break, up 2% from the previous year. Lakes and mountains (14%), off the beaten track trips (9%) and camping (slightly up to 9% from 8% in 2019) continue to be as popular as before⁴.

This interest in getting back to nature is even more pronounced when it comes to taking a domestic holiday. Of those who travelled in the UK this past year, a third (33%) are planning to take a countryside

break in the next 12 months, up from 28% in 2019⁵.

Many UK tourism venues have been exploring ways to move their existing indoor offerings into outdoor spaces in order to appeal to visitors looking for COVID-safe experiences⁶, while tour operators have been launching domestic breaks to satisfy this renewed appreciation for nature and green spaces. Kuoni's new collection of UK & Ireland holidays is designed to take holidaymakers off the tourist trail to discover hidden gems across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, while Riviera Travel will launch its first range of UK tours, including 'Walk and Discover' holidays in spring 2021.



3,4,5 ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2020

6 www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/oct/28/uk-tourism-venues-embrace-the-great-outdoors-to-survive-the-pandemic

4 COMMITTED CRUISERS

Although the Foreign Office has been advising against all sea-going cruise ship travel since March, the ongoing restrictions do not appear to have dented the enthusiasm for cruise amongst those who know and love this style of travel. 21% of those who have taken a cruise holiday before say they would do so again, in line with last year (22%), and rising to 31% of those over 65, up slightly on last year⁷.

The popularity of ocean and river cruises is also in line with 2019 levels, with 58% of people saying they would be interested in an ocean cruise and 31% saying they would like to go on a river cruise⁸.

ABTA Members report that people are booking ahead for cruises, with it proving a particularly popular holiday choice for 2022 as those who weren't able to travel in 2020 are keen for something to look forward to. Royal Caribbean is currently taking bookings for ex-UK sailings around favourite destinations in Europe, while interest is also coming through for far-flung destinations such as the Caribbean and Alaska.

In the year ahead new developments, including the opening of a fifth cruise terminal in Southampton, as well as the launch of the world's first gin distillery at sea on P&O Cruises' new ship, Iona, will no doubt feed the appetite of the committed cruiser.

To facilitate a healthy return to service, the cruise industry is investing in new protocols, technology and enhanced health and safety measures to protect the health and wellbeing of guests and crew, guided by a set of Framework documents from the UK Chamber of Shipping, in collaboration with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

Royal Caribbean is now taking guests through the mandatory safety briefing via its app and cabin TV, rather than gathering guests together in large groups, Viking has installed a full-scale PCR laboratory on board Viking Star, which allows for daily testing of every crew member and guest, while MSC Cruises is set to install a next generation air sanitation system to further enhance air cleanliness on board MSC Seashore, which is set to be delivered in July 2021.



5 THE PEACE OF MIND OF A PACKAGE AND EXPERTISE

The extra protection and expert advice that comes with booking a package holiday is expected to be more important to holidaymakers as travel restarts, and, according to easyJet holidays, packages are anticipated to lead the way in the recovery of overseas travel⁹.

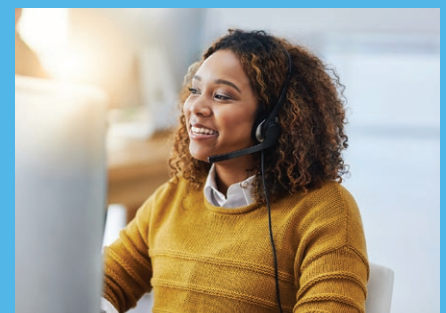
People are 20% more likely to use a travel professional to book their holidays now than before the pandemic, with two in five citing the security of a package holiday (41%) and the travel professional's up-to-date advice (40%) as the main reasons¹⁰.

ABTA's research also shows that the reassurances afforded by a package holiday are becoming increasingly important to customers, with almost a quarter (23%) saying they booked for the financial protection, up from 19%, and almost one in five (19%) saying they wanted to be looked after in case something goes wrong, up from 16%¹¹. Recent research from Which? also demonstrates that package holidays continue to offer better value for money than DIY bookings¹² which is likely to drive their popularity next year.

Many ABTA Members – including Jet2holidays, TUI, easyJet holidays, Thomas Cook, Hays Travel and Kuoni – are going beyond the existing protections that come with a package holiday, offering additional benefits or flexibility. The importance of the package holiday will be backed by a growing appreciation of the role of travel experts, as an increasing number of holidaymakers are saying they feel more confident booking through a travel professional, up to 41% this year from 34% in 2019, which rises to 57% of over 65s¹³. This is testament to the many agents and operators who went the extra mile to help customers this year, including getting them back home when borders started to shut due to the spread of coronavirus.

There has also been a notable increase in holidaymakers turning to travel professionals for new ideas and destinations up to 27% this year from 20% in 2019, rising to 37% among families with children over five¹⁴. This could be due to travel restrictions preventing people from

being able to holiday in their destination of choice – and will certainly be of value to holidaymakers in 2021 as countries continue to come on and off the travel corridor list.



7,8,11,13,14 ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2020 9 www.travelweekly.co.uk/articles/392916/easyjet-predicts-quicker-recovery-in-package-holidays-than-flight-only

10 ABTA consumer sentiment research, November 2020, conducted by The Nursery Research and Planning (www.the-nursery.net)

12 <https://press.which.co.uk/whichpressreleases/the-whole-package-package-holidays-often-work-out-cheaper-than-diy-bookings-while-offering-greater-protections-which-finds/>

6 REBUILDING WITH SUSTAINABILITY AT THE HEART

As holidaymakers have become increasingly conscious of the impact their holiday has on the places they visit and the people who live there, consumer demand for responsible tourism has been steadily rising over the past decade, and has been consolidated during the pandemic.

In 2011, only a fifth (19%) of people said they were more likely to choose one company over another based on a better environmental record, compared to twice that (38%) in 2020. And those agreeing that travel companies should ensure that their holidays help the local people and economy has risen from just over half (51%) to almost two-thirds (62%)¹⁵.

This thinking has been further crystallised by this year's unexpected standstill in international travel, which has highlighted both the challenges the sector faces and the benefits it brings. As much as early

commentary focused on the immediate environmental impact including improved air quality, cleaner beaches, and less environmental noise, the pandemic has also shown how devastating tourism's absence has been for destinations and communities around the world that rely on it heavily for jobs and livelihoods.

By identifying the benefits of tourism as well as the challenges it faces, ABTA's Tourism for Good report sets out how the industry can embed sustainability into its recovery, through focusing on decarbonisation, cutting waste and water consumption, ensuring that local people benefit from tourism, and respecting human rights and managing animal welfare.

Indeed, many destinations and travel businesses have been using this pause to progress existing thinking on sustainability or introduce new strategies to rebuild more

resiliently. Examples from ABTA Members include The Travel Corporation's new e-assessment tool which measures the impact of Make Travel Matter (MTM) experiences on its trips against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, while Intrepid Travel has launched a new range of 'closer to home' trips which support local communities recovering from the economic impact of COVID-19.

Addressing the post-pandemic recovery phase, Travelife for Accommodation, the ABTA-led sustainability certification scheme, has been supporting accommodation providers to rebuild sustainably with its COVID-19 Operational Guidance Kit, while the National Tourism Board of Portugal has cited the pandemic as a catalyst for its new three-year sustainable tourism plan, launching in January 2021, as part of its long-term goal to become one of the most sustainable destinations worldwide by 2027.



15 ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2020

FCDO General Travel Advice

Travel continues to be affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. To prepare for any upcoming travel overseas, you should ensure you have the latest information on any country restrictions before travelling. The FCDO's travel advice pages are the best place to start. For more information visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice for the latest guidance and keep up-to-date with the latest FCDO travel advice for the country you're travelling to by signing up for individual country email alerts.

About ABTA

ABTA has been a trusted travel brand for 70 years. Our purpose is to help our Members to grow their businesses successfully and sustainably, and to help their customers travel with confidence.

The ABTA brand stands for support, protection and expertise. This means consumers have confidence in ABTA and a strong trust in ABTA Members. These qualities are core to us as they ensure that holidaymakers remain confident in the holiday products that they buy from our Members.

We help our Members and their customers navigate through today's changing travel landscape by raising standards in the industry; offering schemes of financial protection; providing an independent complaints resolution service should something go wrong; giving guidance on issues from sustainability to health and safety and by presenting a united voice to government to ensure the industry and the public get a fair deal.

ABTA has more than 4,300 travel brands in Membership, providing a wide range of leisure and business travel services, with a combined annual UK turnover of £39 billion. For more details about what we do, what being an ABTA Member means, how we help the British public travel with confidence and to search for an ABTA Member visit www.abta.com.

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