

TRAVEL TRENDS 2016

ABTA Travel Trends Report 2016 - contents

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Research referenced throughout the report is taken from the ABTA Holiday Habits 2015 unless otherwise specified. Consumer research was conducted by Arkenford Ltd (www.Arkenford.co.uk) who specialise in tourism and leisure market research. The ABTA Consumer Trends survey generated response from a nationally representative sample of 2001 consumers using an online research methodology and related to holiday booking habits in the 12 months to July 2014. Fieldwork was conducted in July 2014.

2015 was an unprecedented extraordinary year for the travel industry. It saw positive signs of growth and a strong summer season but was also dominated by global events, many of which had a direct impact on the travel industry, with a number of the UK's favourite holiday destinations affected by terrorist incidents and economic unrest.

The holiday market was up overall in 2015, as the travel industry continued a steady return to growth following the credit crunch and worldwide economic crisis. The combined turnover of ABTA's Membership increased to £32.07 billion for the 2014/15 financial year which ended on 30 June 2015.

The 2015 summer season was robust and overseas holidays in particular performed well, with a strong pound benefiting British holidaymakers in the Eurozone and United States. The ONS reported that during the period July 2015 to September 2015, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 9% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 9% more during this period¹. The most popular overseas destinations in 2015 for British holidaymakers were: Spain, France, The USA, Italy, Portugal, Greece, The Netherlands, Turkey, Ireland and Belgium.

Growth in the market appears to be being driven by more affluent consumers taking more holidays, with the average number of holidays taken per person increasing slightly from 3.0 holidays last year to 3.2 holidays this year. However, the number of people cutting back on holidays, or not taking a holiday at all also increased: the total number of people taking a holiday fell slightly from 80% last year to 77% in 2015.

Long haul destinations and families felt the benefits of changes to Air Passenger Duty (APD) with the abolition of APD bands C and D in April for long haul destinations and the abolition of APD on economy flights for children under 12 from 1 May 2015.

Global political uncertainty and a heightened terror threat were never far from the headlines in a year which began with the Charlie Hebdo shootings in Paris and later in the year saw a night of horrific terrorist attacks across the city. In Tunisia, we saw the worst terrorist attack on British tourists overseas for a generation in Sousse in June. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) now advises against all but essential travel to the country, a destination which played host to over 400,000 British tourists in 2014. Following the downing of a Russian airliner in October, the FCO advised against all travel by air to and from Sharm el Sheikh Airport, effectively restricting the number of British visitors to this popular Egyptian resort. Other incidents included a bomb in Bangkok in August 2015 and a state of emergency in the Maldives and in Brussels.

The migrant situation remained in the news throughout the year, raising questions around the impact of the situation on holiday destinations, with the Greek Islands particularly affected. Also in Greece, economic instability and the threat of a Greek exit from the Euro caused concern during the summer of 2015, as people were advised to take enough cash on holiday to cover all their expenses. Despite this, there was no disruption to holidaymakers and Greece remained a popular choice for British tourists with the number of visits 2% up on summer 2014².

"2015 was an unprecedented extraordinary year for the travel industry"

"The combined turnover of ABTA's Membership increased"

"Greece remained a popular choice for British tourists"



1. ONS - Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for September 2015
2. GfK's Leisure Travel Monitor

Currently the outlook for 2016 is cautiously positive; economic recovery seems set to continue and almost a quarter (23%) of the population are expecting to spend more on their holidays in 2016, up slightly from 20% who said the same this time last year, according to ABTA research. Early indications from industry figures³ also show the number of overseas holidays booked to date are up 9% year-on-year.

The threat of terrorism has impacted public mood in the second half of 2015 and this may affect holiday decisions for 2016. According to GfK Ascent's Leisure Travel Monitor, booking patterns changed following the Tunisian incident towards the end of June, with a switch away from Tunisia towards perceived safer destinations. The attack on the Russian plane at the end of October and subsequent terrorist attack in Paris may also affect consumer confidence.

British holidaymakers have traditionally proven to be resilient travellers and it is likely that this will continue in 2016. Almost one in five people (18%) say they will travel to a country they have never been to before in 2016, compared to 9% who said this last year. Furthermore, nearly a quarter (23%) say they will try a new resort or city (even if they have visited the country before) compared to 10% who said this last year.

Tried and trusted destinations look set to benefit from geopolitical uncertainty and it is likely that Spain will be 2016's top destination: bookings are already tracking well ahead of 2015. Likewise, other European destinations like Portugal and Italy are seeing healthy numbers and are also benefiting from a strong pound bringing down the cost of day to day expenses for British holidaymakers.

Away from Europe, ABTA Members have reported that bookings to Cuba, Cape Verde, Kenya and Thailand have been very healthy for 2015 and are looking positive for 2016. Demand for Jamaica, Barbados and the UAE is also strong for 2016.

City breaks and beach holidays are set to go head-to-head once again as the top holiday choices, all-inclusives also look to cement a strong position, with one in five people (20%) saying they may take an all-inclusive holiday in 2016. There is good news for the cruise industry with 13% saying they are intending to take a cruise in 2016, up slightly from the 10% who actually did so in 2015.

Younger people are the most positive about 2016. A third (33%) of people aged 16-24 and 28% of people aged 25-34 are planning to spend more on holidays next year. Families will also play a key role in the market in 2016 as the staple family holiday remains a firm favourite. ABTA research shows a particular increase in the number of overseas holidays of 7+ nights from 1.2 in 2014 to 1.5 in 2015 and data from GfK reveals a 5% increase in family bookings. Key destinations for growth in the family market in 2016 include the Canary Islands, the Caribbean, Cyprus, Cape Verde and the UAE.

“Currently the outlook for 2016 is cautiously positive;”

“Younger people are the most positive about 2016”

“City breaks and beach holidays are set to go head-to-head”
once again”



The past year has been positive for domestic tourism. According to VisitEngland, 58.1 million trips were recorded in England between January and July 2015, a 13% increase in the same period in 2014⁴. ABTA research also shows 64% of people taking at least one UK break and this looks set to continue into next year, with a range of anniversaries, festivals and events making domestic tourism an exciting option for holidaymakers. This is likely to be aided by the additional tourism investment announced in the Autumn Statement in November 2015, including a £40 million Discover England Fund to boost visitor numbers from within and outside the UK.

According to ABTA research, families were key to the domestic market, taking an average of 2.2 UK holidays. For just over a quarter of families (26%) this was their only trip. Spending whilst away increased: 31% of people spent between £101 and £200 whilst on a short break (up from 19% last year), while 25% of people on a longer UK break spent £201 - £300.

Just over one in five (22%) people opted for a UK package holiday. Though this was down slightly from 24% the year before, it is still almost double the number in 2011 when only 12% of consumers said they had taken a domestic package holiday. Domestic packages were most popular with 16 – 24 year olds (36%) and families with children under 5 (33%). There was good news for high street travel agents, as the number of people booking their UK trips with them increased to 13%, up from 10% the year before.

2016 will be an exciting year for British theatre, and there are opportunities for the tourism industry to take advantage of a range of events across the country. The Royal Shakespeare Company commemorates 400 years since Shakespeare's death with their Spring/Summer Season in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Bristol Old Vic, the oldest working theatre in the country, is marking 250 years by continuing their award winning redevelopment. Several musical hits are heading to London with Broadway record-breaker Aladdin arriving in June and Glenn Close returning in Sunset Boulevard.

2016 will also highlight some of the UK's literary icons, with the births of Charlotte Bronte (250th), Beatrix Potter (150th) and Roald Dahl (100th) being remembered. These are likely to draw tourists to Yorkshire, the Lake District and Buckinghamshire across the year.

Country houses with gardens designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, such as Blenheim Palace, have seen increased visitor numbers over the past few years⁵ and this trend is set to get a boost in 2016 with the 200th anniversary of his birth. Known as 'England's greatest gardener', Brown's designs will be celebrated with a programme of events around the country, including access to sites normally closed to the public.

The Channel Islands hosted a tourism-boosting programme of events in 2015, including the 70th Anniversary of the Islands' liberation and Guernsey's first annual International Food Festival. ABTA Members have reported an increase in interest in the islands, and this is likely to be repeated in 2016, with the opportunity to build on the momentum of 2015's strong cruise market to the islands⁶, the return of the Guernsey International Food Festival, the Channel Island Heritage Festival and the Barclays Jersey Boat Show (which last year attracted 30,000 visitors).

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"Domestic packages were most popular with 16 – 24 year olds"

"31% of people spent between £101 and £200 whilst on a short break"



4. <https://www.visitengland.com/biz/media-centre/press-releases/2015/october-2015/new-figures-highlight-year-date-increases-domestic-tourism-trips-and-spend>

5. <http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=605>

6. <http://www.guernseytrademedia.com/content/bumper-year-cruises-guernsey>

Cruises were once again a popular choice in 2015 and 2016 should continue this positive trend, with 13% of people planning a cruise in the next 12 months. Cruise holidays were particularly popular with holidaymakers aged 65+ with 13% of those who took a holiday in 2015 taking a cruise. They were followed by people aged 25-34, with 12% of holidaymakers in this age group taking a cruise in the last year.

Part of the growth of cruise holidays can be attributed to returning passengers; 80% of people who have been on a cruise stated that they would like to go again, and research for CLIA UK & Ireland shows that 53% of passengers booked two or more cruises in the last year.

River cruising remains one of the fastest growing segments in travel and continues to play an important part in the continued growth of the cruise market. Younger passengers are expected to support this in 2016 with the launch of nine itineraries targeting younger travellers by G Adventures.

Europe remains by far the most popular region for UK travellers to take a river cruise accounting for 86% of all passengers, according to CLIA UK & Ireland. This reflects trends seen elsewhere in the market with city breaks remaining the top holiday choice for UK holidaymakers and European destinations enjoying strong sales. Long haul, Cambodia, Vietnam, India and Peru are all expected to be popular river cruise destinations in 2016.

Elsewhere, the Mediterranean continued to be the most popular cruise destination for UK holidaymakers in 2015, followed by Northern Europe and the Caribbean⁷. New cruise destinations announced for 2016, include Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Vietnam, many of these aided by the recent relaxing of visa requirements.

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7. http://www.cruiseexperts.org/media/2133/clia_uk___ireland_cruise_review_published_march_2015.pdf

1. West is best – a return to the western Mediterranean



Western Mediterranean destinations, in particular Spain, are set for a bumper year with bookings for summer 2016 tracking ahead of previous years as 2015 comes to a close. These destinations have been the main beneficiary of a shift towards tried and trusted destinations, with the combination of geopolitical uncertainty and a favourable exchange rate with the Euro prompting British holidaymakers to visit their old favourites in even greater numbers.

Whilst the western Mediterranean has never fallen out of style and has consistently high visitor numbers, it enjoyed an especially strong summer during 2015, perhaps in part due to extra capacity being put on by tour operators following changes in trade advice to destinations. This capacity remains in place for 2016.

2. The 'holiday-haves' splash the cash



Almost four in ten (39%) people in social grade A⁸ say they are planning to spend more on holidays in 2016, compared to an average of 23%. People in social grade B are also more likely than average to spend more next year with 27% stating that they plan to do this. Last year, the 'holiday-haves', those classified as social grade A, took an average of 8.0 holidays per person, up from 7.4 holidays per person in 2011 and this group looks set to continue to drive growth in the holiday market in 2016.

3. Destination transformation and gentrification



Perhaps inspired by past successful transformations of Miami's South Beach and Barcelona, destinations are repositioning in order to attract specific markets and this is expected to be a key trend for 2016.

A high profile example of this trend is Magaluf. In 2015 it introduced new laws and worked with hotel groups to open hotels aimed at a more affluent and more family oriented market. Nearby Ibiza has also seen a raft of new openings aimed at these markets, perhaps unsurprisingly given the spending habits and number of holidays taken by people in social grade A.

Some may also look to extend their tourist season with cultural or leisure events or by targeting specific markets with activity (see below) or wellness holidays. An example is the Costa Cálida resort of Águilas which is working with Saga Holidays to bring British holidaymakers to the region outside the main season in 2016.

8. Based on NRS social grades <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>

4. Love for long haul



Long haul holidays are no longer the preserve of the intrepid traveller. According to TUI UK, Thomson and First Choice holidays have seen a 350% increase in long haul customers over the last ten years with an 800% increase in families taking long haul holidays.

Destinations involving a longer flight such as Cancun and Dubai are now well established for holidaymakers and some will be looking further afield for their next trip; destinations highlighted later in this report including Australia, Sri Lanka and China are popular options for long haul travel.

Wider availability of new aircraft, such as Boeing's Dreamliner and the Airbus A380 is also making long haul travel more attractive, as is the abolition of Air Passenger Duty (APD) bands C and D in April 2015, which is expected to save British holidaymakers £200m a year.

5. Intrepid over 55s



According to ABTA Members, older holidaymakers are travelling further and are seeking more active or adventurous holidays. Saga Holidays has added new adventure holidays for 2016 to meet demand from customers who 'grew up in the 1960s and have seen it all'.

ABTA research shows that in 2015 6% of over 55s took a sporting holiday and the same number are planning one for 2016. Additionally, 14% of 55-64 year olds headed to the lakes and mountains in 2015.

6. Bespoke tours



Holidaymakers are getting off the beaten track whilst enjoying the reassurance and protection provided by a package holiday. ABTA Members have reported an increase in people seeking bespoke or tailor made holidays and 6% of people are planning to take a tailor made tour or holiday in 2016. This type of holiday is most popular with people aged 25-34 and over 65.

Many of these holidaymakers are also choosing to combine this type of travel with a few days on the beach and a key trend is to travel with a car and driver to allow ultimate flexibility over the trip. Popular destinations for this trend include Cuba, Mexico, the USA and Sri Lanka.

7. Active holidays



Although older holidaymakers are seeking more active and adventurous trips, it is the younger generation that is driving a trend towards more active holidays. 16% of 16-24 year olds and 13% of 25-34 year olds plan to take an activity or sporting holiday in 2016.

Additionally, 9% of 16-24 year olds and 12% of 25-34 year olds plan to take an adventure or challenge holiday break. Both long and short haul destinations can benefit from this trend: in 2015, holidays to the lakes and mountains were most popular with people aged 25-34, with 14% taking this type of holiday.

8. Summer of sports



Summer 2016 will see television schedules dominated by major sports events with Euro 2016 taking place in France and the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Many British travellers will be heading overseas to enjoy these, with 6% of people planning a trip to see a major sports event in 2016.

This trend is being driven by people aged 25-34. Over one in ten (11%) people aged 25-34 state that they plan to take a trip to see a major sports event in 2016. Across all age groups, it is very much a male dominated trend with 9% of men planning this type of trip compared to just 3% of women.

21st century luxury meets timeless desert beauty



The iconic skyline at sunset

2016 should see the unveiling of a new landmark art gallery, the Louvre Abu Dhabi. It will join a host of iconic 21st century landmark buildings such as the Etihad Towers, the Emirates Palace and Hazza Bin Zayed stadium, which make Abu Dhabi a byword for luxury and architectural standards.

The 5 star Yas Viceroy hotel, which is incorporated into the Yas Marina Formula One circuit, will host the UK's travel industry in 2016 as the ABTA Travel Convention heads to Abu Dhabi in October. Abu Dhabi's past is still in evidence in the form of the Al Ain UNESCO world heritage site, with ancient adobe buildings, palm trees and wells.

Abu Dhabi is also a paradise for shoppers with luxurious air conditioned malls offering an escape from the heat. Activity lovers are also well served with a wide range of water sports and world class golf courses.

Although Abu Dhabi has an incredible range of international restaurants visitors should also try the local food which features cinnamon, saffron and turmeric together with limes, nuts and dried fruit to complement slow cooked delicious meat dishes.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- The UAE is a Muslim country. Laws and customs are very different to those in the UK. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times. There may be serious penalties for doing something that might not be illegal in the UK.
- Alcoholic drinks are served in licensed hotels and clubs, but it is a punishable offence to drink, or to be under the influence of alcohol, in public. The legal age for drinking alcohol is 18 in Abu Dhabi (although a Ministry of Tourism by-law allows hotels to serve alcohol only to those over 21), and 21 in Dubai and the Northern Emirates (except Sharjah, where drinking alcohol is illegal).
- You should take sensible precautions to protect yourself and your belongings. Don't accept lifts from strangers. Use only licensed taxis or other recognized forms of public transport.
- If you're visiting the UAE, you can drive a rental car using your UK driving licence. If you have an accident you should follow the rules of the Emirate in which you are travelling. In Abu Dhabi, if no one has been hurt and vehicle damage is minor, drivers should move vehicles to the side of the road to avoid blocking traffic; otherwise, the vehicles should not be moved.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/united-arab-emirates> for more information.



Bears, immense forests and some of the world's best cities



Holidaymakers in 2016 can take advantage of extra flight capacity into Canada as Canadian airline Westjet introduces services to and from the UK. Canada is a vast and truly amazing country which requires repeat visits and, while Canadian friendliness is renowned, UK visitors are guaranteed an extra warm welcome thanks to our close ties to the country.

The cities of Toronto and Calgary regularly feature in lists of the world's most liveable cities, and both are well worth a visit. Toronto is Canada's capital of cool – a cosmopolitan city with an unparalleled offer of trendy restaurants, nightlife, and enticing shops and galleries.

Montreal is the beating heart of French culture in Canada, with unique food and architecture. But if you're looking to experience some of Canada's most spectacular natural landscapes, Vancouver in British Columbia (BC) is the place to start your journey. With its beautiful coastal location, awe-inspiring mountains, and the wilderness of Vancouver Island only a short boat ride away, BC offers opportunities for whale watching and some of the best skiing in North America in the resort of Whistler.

But probably Canada's greatest attractions are the trackless square miles of unspoilt forest, interspersed with thousands of lakes, where bears, caribou and beavers live in abundance. Seeing them at first hand with a guide, on foot, bike or kayaking is a great experience, but perhaps try a more relaxed option, from the viewing platform of the luxury train, the Rocky Mountaineer.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- From 15 March 2016 any visitor travelling to Canada – including those who do not currently need a visa to visit – will have to get an electronic travel authorisation (eTA) to enter Canada. For more information see the [official Canadian government website](#). UK Emergency Travel Document holders can also apply and obtain an eTA.
- Severe snow storms are a regular occurrence during winter. Monitor local news and weather reports and visit [Environment Canada](#).
- Local laws can vary depending on the province or territory you are visiting.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/canada> for more information.



Follow in the steps of Marco Polo along the exotic and dramatic Silk Route



Mingsha Shan, Dunhuang, China

China is a fascinating and enormous country which demands repeated visits. With closer links to UK trade and new routes from Birmingham launched in 2015 and from Manchester in 2016, it is even easier to get there.

In 2016 savvy travellers who have already ticked off Beijing, Shanghai, the Great Wall, Terracotta Army and the pandas of Chengdu, will be following in the steps of Marco Polo along the fabled Silk Road.

The cities of Kashgar and Urumqi are incredibly vibrant, ethnically diverse and characterised by fascinating, bustling markets, which reflect the rich trading history of the Silk Road. Near to the city of Dunhuang is one of the most important Buddhist sites in China, the monastery of the Mogao Caves in the Gobi desert.

The countryside along the Silk Road is spectacular and dramatic, especially the stunning Heavenly Lake in the Tian Shan mountains. The route to Karakul Lake is particularly impressive and Qinghai Lake, which is a stopping off point for thousands of migrating birds, is a paradise for birdwatchers.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- British nationals must get a visa prior to arrival to enter mainland China, including for Hainan Island.
- You must register your place of residence with the local Public Security Bureau within 24 hours of arrival. If you are staying in a hotel, registration is done on your behalf as part of the [check-in process](#).
- Foreign nationals over the age of 16 must carry their passport at all times.
- The security situation in Xinjiang remains fragile, and conditions locally can deteriorate rapidly at short notice. While outbreaks of ethnic violence remain sporadic, and foreigners are not normally targeted, you should be alert to the possibility of being caught up in any unexpected demonstrations or outbreaks of violence.
- Tourists should pay particular attention to signs indicating closed military zones, closed cities and international borders when travelling the Silk Road. You should not try to not enter these areas.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china> for more information.



Join the footie fans on tour at Euro 2016



Lyon, France

France is always a firm favourite for British holidaymakers with only Spain beating it to the top spot. In 2016 tens of thousands of football fans will be joining holidaymakers heading over the channel to watch England, Northern Ireland and Wales fight it out with Europe's finest at Euro 2016.

Of course the final will be played in Paris, but other parts of the country will also be in the spotlight and Euro 2016 will give an excellent whistle stop tour of the country. North of Paris the city of Lille, easily accessible on the Eurostar, is well worth a visit. In the centre of the country, Lyon is both a UNESCO world heritage site and the gastronomic capital of France.

Not too far from Lyon, the attractive city of St Etienne will also be hosting matches. However, the South is king for Euro 2016, starting with beautifully restored Bordeaux, the capital of France's leading wine region and Toulouse, with its lovely terracotta buildings and lively student quarter.

The tournament will also head to the coast where the buzzy, chaotic port of Marseille has seen a renaissance in recent years and visitors can enjoy the world renowned sophistication of ultra-chic Nice.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- There is a high threat from [terrorism](#). Attacks could be indiscriminate. Due to ongoing threats to France by Islamist terrorist groups, and recent French military intervention against ISIL, the French government has warned the public to be extra vigilant and reinforced its own domestic and overseas security measures.
- Take sensible precautions against street and car crime. Don't keep your passport, credit cards and other valuables in the same place; use the inside compartments in bags where possible.
- You must be able to [prove your identity](#) either by providing documents when asked or within 4 hours at a police station. Identity documents can be a passport, a photo driving licence or other documentation provided by a government body.
- Concealing the face in public places in France is illegal. This includes balaclavas, full veils or any other garment or mask that is used to conceal the face.
- If you plan a skiing or hiking trip, check weather conditions and follow local advice before going.
- France will host the Euro 2016 football tournament in June and July 2016 which will place a high demand on travel and accommodation resources. Fans should plan their trip carefully, using the advice provided by the 'Be On The Ball' campaign. Security measures for the tournament have been reinforced which may lead to delays at the entrance to host city stadia and fanzones.
- The Emergency phone number is 112.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france> for more information.



Possibly the closest thing to heaven on earth



2016 marks the 75th anniversary of the attacks on Pearl Harbour which led to the USA entering WW2. It was a momentous event in world history so any visit to Hawaii should include a visit to the USS Arizona memorial on Oahu.

The islands of Hawaii are renowned as amongst the most beautiful on the planet with a climate that rarely varies from 20°C. The USA's National Parks Service turns 100 in August 2016 with celebrations running throughout the year, so it's a great time to visit some of Hawaii's exceptional National Parks, the most visited attraction being the Hawaii Volcanoes national park on the Big Island.

The Haleakala national park showcases some amazing lush forests, waterfalls and the unique flora and fauna of the islands. No trip to Hawaii would be complete without surfing, either trying or watching, and the cuisine of the islands is becoming increasingly sophisticated with an emphasis on the freshest seafood and fruit and vegetables.

Polynesian culture is essential to the identity of the islands and visitors must see the Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historic Park, once home to Hawaiian royalty.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- The US Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) allows most British Citizen passport holders to visit the US for up to 90 days without a visa, but you may need to get authorisation from the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) before you travel.
- Take sensible precautions to protect yourself and your property against petty crime. Don't leave passports in rental cars, especially in the boot.
- Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Puerto Rico, and Washington state are prone to earthquakes. To learn more about what to do before, during and after an earthquake, visit the [Federal Emergency Management](https://www.fema.gov/) website.
- There are occasional outbreaks of mosquito-borne diseases, including West Nile virus, eastern equine encephalitis, dengue fever and [Chikungunya virus](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chikungunya-virus/). You should take suitable steps to [avoid being bitten by mosquitoes](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chikungunya-virus/). For more details about the Chikungunya outbreak, see the website of the [National Health Network and Centre](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chikungunya-virus/).
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/usa> for more information.



Fire, ice, geysers and the Northern Lights



The country has many national parks and nature reserves

Iceland has long been a favourite for adventurous British holidaymakers and it will be a little easier to visit in 2016 with new direct British Airways flights.

A favourable exchange rate has made Iceland more affordable and the capital Reykjavik's bars and nightclubs are as fun and welcoming as ever.

The main draw for visitors has to be Iceland's dramatic and spectacular landscape, dominated by glaciers and volcanoes: truly it is a land of fire and ice.

The country has many national parks and nature reserves, including Skaftafell with its black sands and glacial rivers.

Thingvellir national park is only a 45 minute drive from the capital and is a perfect spot to catch the Northern lights in the winter months.

Finally soak your bones in the other worldly Blue Lagoon, rich in minerals which will leave you inspired and with your skin in perfect condition.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Iceland is volcanically and seismically active.
- The volcanic eruption in the area around Bárðarbunga volcano on Vatnajökull glacier in the east of Iceland, which began in August 2014, has ended. However, high levels of sulphur dioxide continue to be detected and the immediate area surrounding the eruption site remains closed to the public.
- There have also been reports of higher than normal concentrations of sulphur dioxide in other parts of Iceland. If you have an existing respiratory condition you should take particular care and monitor reports from the [Icelandic Met Office](#).
- You should monitor Iceland's [Safe Travel Website](#), the [Icelandic Road and Coastal Administration website](#) and [Icelandic Met Office reports](#), keep mobile phones switched on and follow the advice of the [local authorities](#).
- Smoking in restaurants, bars, public transport and public buildings is prohibited.
- The Emergency phone number is 112.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iceland> for more information.



Ancient Persia meets Muslim marvels



After years of being in the travel and tourism wilderness, recently relaxed Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice means 2016 will see Iran feature in the travel plans of intrepid and adventurous culture seekers.

Iran has an unparalleled history: better known in ancient times as Persia, it became one of the greatest cultures the world has ever seen, and its impressive remains can still be seen in the ancient capital of Persepolis, home of Darius and Xerxes, and in the site at Abarqu.

Iran was the birthplace of one of the world's great religions and the curious should see the beautiful and moving Zoroastrian complex of Amir Chakmak.

Iranian cuisine is truly delicious with pomegranates, vegetarian dishes and lamb featuring strongly, reflecting its rich and varied history.

The Iranian people are incredibly hospitable and welcoming but visitors must respect local customs and dress codes and due to political considerations, the country is best visited as part of an organised tour.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to: within 100km of the entire Iran/Afghanistan border; within 10km of the entire Iran/Iraq border; the province of Sistan-Baluchistan; and the area east of the line running from Bam to Jask, including Bam
- At the time of this report's publication the British Embassy can only offer a limited consular service. If you need routine consular assistance in Iran you should contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on +44 20 7008 1500. If you need emergency consular assistance, including an emergency travel document, you should contact the Swedish Embassy in Tehran.
- You should consider carefully the risks of travelling to Iran. If you choose to travel, keep a low profile.
- Iran does not legally recognise dual nationality. The Iranian authorities will deny that the British government has any legitimate responsibility for British Iranians. If you are regarded as an Iranian national under Iranian law, you will be required to enter and leave Iran using Iranian travel documents. This may apply if your father is Iranian, or if you are married to an Iranian man, even if you don't consider yourself Iranian.
- British nationals – including dual British/Iranian nationals – face greater risks than nationals of many other countries. The security forces may be suspicious of people with British connections. The risks are likely to be higher for independent travellers or students than for members of tour parties or business people invited by the Iranian authorities or companies.
- Iran is a Muslim country in which Islamic law is strictly enforced. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they do not offend, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas. It is forbidden to eat, drink or smoke in public during daylight hours during the month of Ramadan.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/iran> for more information.



Blazing sunshine, yummy food, stunning architecture and Italy's liveliest



Following significant investment in the city and its infrastructure, 2016 is the year to visit this amazingly vibrant city. Set on a spectacular bay with views of the imposing volcano Vesuvius, Naples is also home to some beautiful historic buildings and its Centro Storico is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Naples' opulent past is also represented by recently restored, grand, 19th century shopping arcades as impressive as anything in Milan. Naples is also an ideal jumping off point for the idyllic resorts along the Amalfi coast and the archaeological sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Only 20 minutes away by train is the port of Salerno which has invested heavily in a beautiful tree-lined promenade and a new ferry terminal designed by leading architect Zaha Hadid and it's also the gateway to the Greek temples at nearby Paestum. A little further south, the region of Apulia is fast gaining a reputation as a foodie destination and its capital Lecce is a baroque gem.

The Tolkienesque, conical stone trulli houses of Alberobello and the whitewashed hillside town of Ostuni are also attracting growing numbers of discerning holidaymakers looking for somewhere a little different. The coastline in Apulia also has some of the best beaches in Italy.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Crime levels are generally low but there are higher levels of petty crime (particularly bag snatching and pick-pocketing) in the big city centres.
- By law you must be able to show some form of identification at all times. In most cases a photocopy of the data page of your passport should suffice, but you may be asked to accompany the police to collect the original document, or to produce it within 12 hours. The police will normally ask for your full passport if you are stopped while driving.
- Many major cities in Italy now impose a small tax on tourists. The tax is levied by hotels and is usually not included in any pre-paid arrangements or package deal. The rate of tax varies from city to city, and can depend on the star rating of the hotel. Hotels often ask for payment of this tax in cash. Make sure you get a receipt. For more information check with the local tourist information office.
- Cars, at rest stops and motorway service stations are targets for robbers. Be wary of offers of help for flat tyres, particularly on the motorway from Naples to Salerno. Tyres have sometimes been punctured deliberately. Always lock your vehicle, never leave valuables on show and avoid leaving luggage in cars for any length of time.
- The British Embassy in Rome has provided [information and advice](#) if you're planning to visit Rome for the Holy Year of Mercy (8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016).
- The Emergency phone number is 112.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/italy> for more information.



Ancient cultures, chocolate stews and white water rafting



Peru has always been a firm favourite for backpackers but the introduction of direct flights from London to Lima in summer 2016 will make the journey to this vibrant and varied country that bit easier.

2016 will also see foodies heading south as Peruvian cuisine is increasingly recognised as both delicious and extremely original. The capital Lima is the place to sample the freshest ceviche and slow cooked stews with chocolate. If you're on a budget the street food is great too, especially the anticuchos, skewers of beef.

The Inca citadel of Machu Picchu is probably South America's most famous attraction, but Peru has many others, including the ancient city of Chan Chan and the fortress of Kuelap.

The museums of Lima also have some of the most impressive collections of ceramics, clothing, jewellery and other artworks, showcasing the amazing artistic achievements of the indigenous people of Peru.

Peru is paradise for activity lovers with rafting, paragliding and biking all on offer in spectacular locations. Nature lovers should not miss a trip to the Amazon with its riot of giant trees and flowers and home to an amazing range of wildlife.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Travellers entering Peru without an entry stamp will be required by law to apply for an 'Expulsion Order' at the Central Immigration Office in Lima, before being able to leave the country. This process can take days and the resulting Expulsion Order will ban you from returning to Peru again in the future.
- Demonstrations are common in Peru and can turn violent quickly.
- Drug trafficking is a serious crime and drug smugglers face long terms of imprisonment.
- There may be a higher risk to your safety in areas where there is organised crime and terrorism linked to the production of drugs.
- There are serious risks involved in flying over the Nazca Lines. There have been a number of fatal accidents and emergencies, particularly involving planes operating from the Maria Reiche airport.
- There is risk of robbery by bogus taxi drivers, especially to and from airports and at bus terminals.
- Driving standards are poor. Crashes resulting in death and injury occur frequently.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/peru> for more information.



Unspoilt beauty, medieval marvels and charming people



In 2015 for the first time Poland entered the top 10 of most visited destinations from the UK. The influx of Polish citizens to the UK has led to a big increase in the number of airline routes between the two countries and now more and more holidaymakers are looking to travel the other way.

In 2016 the city of Wroclaw will be taking its turn as a European Capital of Culture and will be joining the medieval jewel of Krakow, the historic Baltic port of Gdansk and the capital Warsaw as a sophisticated city break destination.

The Polish countryside is also well worth a visit with a number of national parks. The unspoilt forests and diverse fauna of Bialoweski are unique in Europe, to the extent that it is a UNESCO world heritage site and the wetlands of the Narwianski Park are well worth a visit.

Skiers looking for good quality pistes and facilities at very good value prices, are strongly recommended to head to the Tatra Mountains, with the added benefit of bragging rights over your less original friends.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Public transport tickets must be validated at the start of a journey. You will be fined on the spot if you are travelling with an invalid or no ticket. If you think you may qualify for a discounted fare (e.g. student or older person) always double-check the rules as some cheaper fares may only be available to Polish nationals. You will be fined if you travel with a reduced fare ticket that you are not entitled to.
- Polish police take a strict approach to public drunkenness. You are not allowed to consume alcohol in public places and fines may be imposed.
- Jay-walking is an offence. You should cross only at recognised crossing points. If caught by the police you will be fined.
- Driving in Poland can be hazardous. Seat belts must be used in both front and back seats, and using a mobile phone while driving (unless 'hands free') is banned.
- If you hold dual Polish and British nationality, the British Embassy may only be able to offer limited consular assistance.
- The Emergency phone number is 112.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/poland> for more information.



David Attenborough, the Great Barrier Reef and tree kangaroos



Australia regularly tops polls for people's dream holiday destination and this enormous country deserves repeated visits. In 2016 UK holidaymakers are expected to take advantage of an improving exchange rate.

One of the parts of the country less visited by foreign tourists, Queensland, will hit the headlines in 2016 as Sir David Attenborough's three part documentary about the Great Barrier Reef airs around the world. The reef stretches for over 2,300 km along the Queensland coast with stunning corals and multi-coloured, plentiful marine life; it's a once in a lifetime experience. Dotted along the reef are the 74 Whitsunday Islands, offering a mix of unspoiled beaches and high end, boutique accommodation.

Queensland is a firm favourite for Australian holidaymakers, in particular the Gold Coast, but if you're looking to top up your tan or try a bit of kayaking in a slightly less developed environment, the Sunshine Coast offers miles of pristine beaches and coves.

Nature lovers should head off to the north to Cairns where they can snorkel alongside minke whales and sea turtles. On land the adventurous can zip line through the world heritage site of the Daintree Rainforest, and then relax checking out impossibly cute tree kangaroos and the forest's spectacular flightless bird, the cassowary.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- You will need to get a visa before you travel.
- Australia is a vast country. Plan journeys carefully, particularly if travelling to remote areas, bushwalking or going swimming.
- Australia is prone to seasonal natural disasters including tropical cyclones, flash flooding, dust storms and bushfires (forest fires). Tropical Cyclones occur, mainly in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia between November and April. Monitor the progress of approaching storms and follow the advice of the local authorities.
- Take simple precautions when swimming, such as following safety signs and swimming only in supervised locations. Rip currents are the main surf hazard for beach users.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/australia> for more information.



Buddhism, beaches and buzzy cities



The idyllic island of Sri Lanka will be even easier to visit in 2016 with the introduction of direct flights by TUI. Sri Lanka combines lush countryside and sparkling beaches, with delicious food and awe inspiring religious sites.

The bustling city of Colombo will be most people's introduction to the island and after a few days sampling its restaurants and nightlife, visit the ruins of Anuradhapura with its soaring brick towers, ancient pools and temples.

Sri Lanka's most important religious site for the majority Buddhist population is the golden roofed Temple of the Sacred Tooth in the hill town of Kandy, a must visit, as is the 12 metre high Aukana Buddha.

In the south of the island see the beautiful city of Galle with its colonial Dutch buildings. The island is also ringed on all sides by beautiful palm fringed beaches which offer the freshest of sea food.

Animal lovers should head to Uda Walawe national park, for elephant, wild buffalo, sambar deer and leopard.

Laws and customs - 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- You need a visa to enter Sri Lanka.
- Most visits to Sri Lanka are trouble-free. However, you should be aware of the risk of sexual assault, spiked drinks, road accidents, drowning due to dangerous tides and credit card fraud.
- There is a risk from Dengue fever. Visit your health professional at least 4 to 6 weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures.
- You must carry a form of official photographic identification with you at all times otherwise you may be detained.
- Sri Lanka can be affected by severe weather like tropical cyclones and monsoon rains. Check local advice before setting out.
- Visit <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/sri-lanka> for more information, including for specific information on local travel to regions within Sri Lanka.



Taking a few simple steps of preparation before and during your travel overseas can help to ensure a trouble-free trip. These include:

- Fully research the destination you intend to visit before travelling. It is a good idea to find out the local laws and customs of the relevant country – there may be serious penalties for breaking a law that might seem trivial at home. For more information visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.
- Whatever your age or fitness level, take out comprehensive travel insurance and ensure you are covered for all of the activities you intend to do, such as moped or quad bike hire. Remember that most insurers won't pay out if you injure yourself or others when under the influence of alcohol.
- If travelling within the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, get a free [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#) to give you free or reduced cost emergency care. You still need full travel insurance though as the EHIC doesn't cover other costs such as returning you to the UK. You can call 112 to contact the emergency services in any EU country.
- Research the health risks of the country you are visiting as soon as possible before travelling, so you can get the right vaccinations and take other preventative measures if required (e.g. malaria tablets). Visit <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/travelhealth/> for more information.
- Check your passport is valid for your full trip (some countries require 6 months validity from the end of your visit) and has emergency contact details filled in. Be sure you have all necessary visas.
- Don't take risks with the law abroad – or you could end up throwing years of your life away in a foreign prison. Many countries have a zero-tolerance approach to offences involving drugs and sentences can be long.
- Take enough money with you, and make sure you have access to emergency funds. Don't keep all your money in the same place.
- Value your passport and keep it safe. Make photocopies of your passport – leave one with friends or family and take another with you, or store it online using a secure data storage site.
- Tell family or friends in the UK where you are going, and leave emergency contact details with them.
- If you plan to drive overseas, familiarise yourself with local driving laws and make sure your licence is current and valid where you are going.
- Find out where the nearest British Embassy or Consulate will be and note the contact details. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/embassies>.
- For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo>. If you have any enquiries for FCO consular staff before you go or while abroad you can ask questions via the FCO's Twitter service [@FCOtravel](#). This service adds to the ways that British people travelling or living overseas can already get in touch with the FCO: by emailing the [travel advice team](#) or contacting [local consular staff](#).



The FCO travel advice provided in this report is up-to-date at the time of writing and is subject to change.

What the FCO can and cannot do to help British nationals abroad

The FCO’s priority is protecting the welfare of British nationals abroad, and consular staff overseas will do their best to assist people when they suffer serious problems. However, it is important to know what the FCO can and cannot do to help.

The FCO can:	The FCO cannot:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issue you with an emergency travel document• Provide information about transferring money• Provide help if you have suffered rape or serious sexual or physical assault, are a victim of crime, are ill or in hospital• Give you a list of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors or funeral directors• Contact you if you are detained abroad• Contact friends and family back home for you if you wish• Provide help in cases of forced marriage• Assist people affected by parental child abduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help you enter a country if you do not have a valid passport or necessary visas• Give you legal advice or translate documents• Investigate crimes or get you out of prison• Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people, but we will raise concerns if treatment falls below internationally recognised standards• Pay any bills or give you money• Make travel arrangements for you



FCO: Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Introduction

In 2014/15 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) supported over 17,000 British nationals who needed serious assistance abroad and issued more than 37,000 emergency travel documents to help British people travel back to the UK. The FCO also led the UK government response to 15 major crises from April 2014 to March 2015, and played a critical role in supporting British nationals in crisis situations since then – including the tragic events in Tunisia.

It has been a very busy year for consular staff across the world, but prevention work through the 'Know Before You Go' campaign has remained a focus. The FCO and ABTA have continued to work together effectively to provide British nationals with information on how to stay safe and healthy abroad. In 2015 ABTA actively supported campaigns on a range of issues, including travel insurance, safety on winter sports holidays and a new campaign, 'Take your pic', delivered in partnership with industry to encourage positive behaviours among young British nationals travelling to popular holiday resorts in southern Europe.



Supporting British nationals abroad

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015 FCO staff handled 17,058 consular assistance cases around the world. This represents a slight reduction on the year before and comes at a time when British nationals are travelling abroad more often, but it continues to underline the importance of travelling aware and understanding how the FCO can help those who get into difficulty overseas. In 2014 British nationals made over 60 million trips overseas, according to the Office for National Statistics.



FCO: Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Among the 17,058 cases FCO staff handled were 3,670 deaths, 3,250 hospitalisations and 4,770 arrests. While there was a drop in some types of case such as deaths and arrests, other areas showed an increase, such as hospitalisations and cases involving British nationals with mental health needs, which rose to 499 cases. The highest number of assistance cases were reported in Spain, the USA, Thailand and France, all of which are countries with high volumes of British visitors.

Passports and travel documents

FCO staff issued 37,890 emergency travel documents in 2014/15, with 20,663 British nationals reporting their passport as lost or stolen. Spain, the USA and Australia were the highest volume countries. Taking care of your passport and other travel documents remains a core message of the 'Know Before You Go' campaign, and it was central to the 'Passport Hustle' campaign the FCO launched in June 2015 alongside stealth crime expert James Freedman.



Arrests and detentions

Arrest cases handled by FCO staff globally saw a significant fall in the last year, from 5,418 cases in 2013/14 to 4,770 in 2014/15. This included a 4% decrease in drug arrests, with significant falls in some countries such as Australia and Canada. Overall, arrest cases have dropped by 26% globally since 2009/10.

Hospitalisations and deaths

Spain remained the country with the highest number of British nationals hospitalised, accounting for 629 of the 3,250 cases reported to FCO staff. Globally, the FCO received 2,872 enquiries about hospitalisations, 835 from British tourists, 1,769 from people living abroad and 268 from British people in the UK, foreign nationals and/or local authorities.

The country with the highest number of deaths of British nationals recorded was also Spain, with 721 cases, followed by Thailand with 348 cases.

Mental health

The countries with the highest volume of assistance cases involving British nationals with mental health needs were Spain with 67, France with 50, the USA with 33 and Thailand with 27. With the number of cases now standing at 499 globally, this represents a 48% increase since 2009/10.

This trend is in line with a general increase in demand for mental health services in the UK in recent years. But the FCO has also introduced specific training for consular staff so they have greater awareness of the issues involved.

FCO: Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office



To help respond to this trend the FCO launched a 'Know Before You Go' campaign with the Mental Health Foundation on World Mental Health Day in October 2015, highlighting new guidance to travellers.