



# HOLIDAY HABITS REPORT 2017



# INTRODUCTION

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**This report outlines the findings from ABTA's annual research among UK consumers to better understand their holiday habits: what they're booking, how they're booking, who they're travelling with and what they're thinking about for the year ahead.**

Last year I talked about the challenges of the threat of terrorism and the eventful and turbulent time in UK politics. Unfortunately the story of the past 12 months has been similar, although this time we have experienced even more terrible attacks on home soil, as well as a snap General Election and a continued assault on the value of the pound that was triggered following the EU referendum.

Despite these significant events, the findings from our research show a remarkably positive picture of holiday-taking by the British population. Britons have taken more holidays on average per person than at any time since 2011, a figure that is supported by wider industry research that shows a strong year for holidaying at home and abroad.

One of the industry trends we saw last year was people heading to destinations in the Western Mediterranean, in particular mainland Spain, the Balearics and Portugal, while the city break consolidated its position as the UK's

favourite type of holiday. Although 2017 has seen a similar picture, our research suggests that people are getting wise to the competition for popular destinations, as well as to the weaker pound, and are preparing to spend more on their holidays in 2018 to get the destination they want.

Of course, the great unknown is where the UK will be with Brexit negotiations as we head into 2018 and our research shows that people are confused about what the implications of Brexit are for their holidays. In spite of this confusion, nearly two-thirds of people intend to holiday in Europe in the next 12 months so it is clear that the British public still have a great desire to holiday in Europe, a clear message for politicians at home and abroad.



*Mark Tanzer*

**Mark Tanzer**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**



# 1. NUMBER OF HOLIDAYS TAKEN

The number of Britons taking a holiday remains high with 87% of respondents saying they took a holiday either at home or abroad in the 12 months to August 2017. This represents the largest proportion of Britons taking a holiday since 2011.

The average number of holidays per person has also grown reaching 3.8 per person, an increase of 0.4 on the previous year. This is the highest number of holidays per person in the last five years and almost equal to the numbers seen in 2011 (3.9). The increase is being driven by both domestic and foreign holidays.

Following a dip last year, the number of foreign holidays per person has risen in the last 12 months (from 1.4 to 1.7), returning to levels seen in previous years – this increase is seen across all lengths of

stay. The percentage of people holidaying abroad has also increased, from 55% to 57%. Holidays abroad are most popular with the over 65s who took 2.0 holidays abroad per person. They are also the most likely to go abroad for a week or more.

The average number of domestic holidays grew significantly last year so it is perhaps unsurprising that we have seen it stabilise, only increasing slightly from 2.0 to 2.1 holidays per person. 72% of people have taken a UK break in the last 12 months, a similar figure to last year (71%) following a significant growth on the previous year (64%). People aged 35-44 are the most likely to take a domestic holiday, going on 2.5 trips per person.

## BRITONS TAKING A HOLIDAY 2013-2017

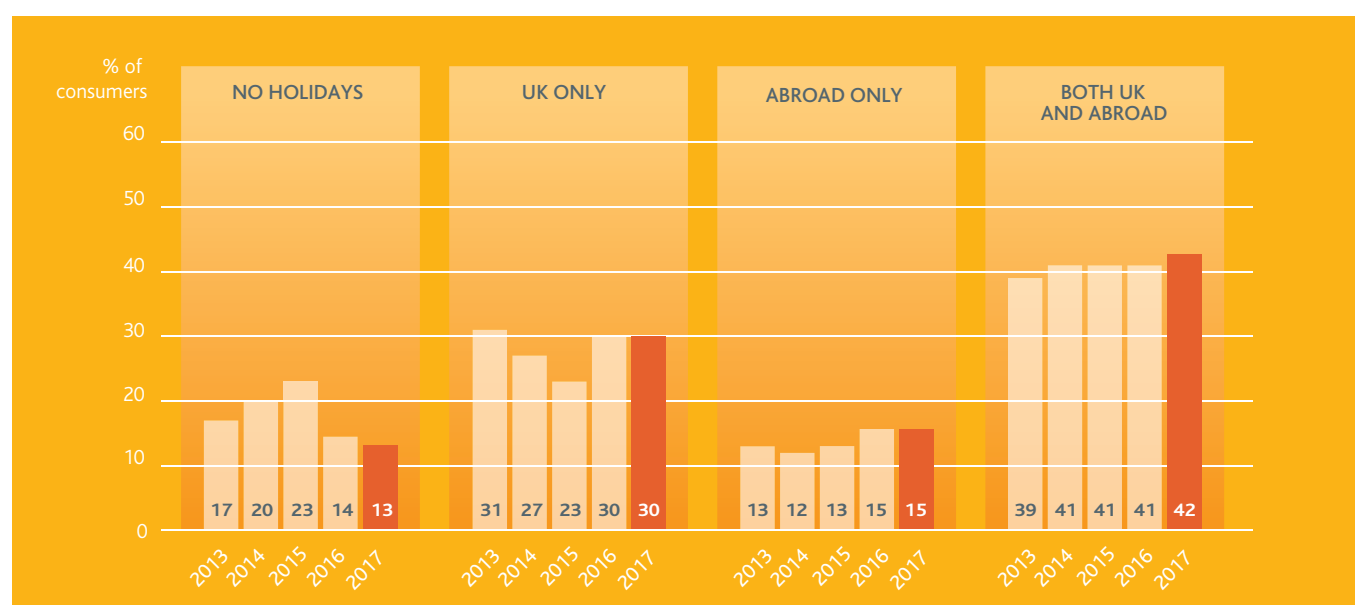


TABLE 1 Britons taking a holiday 2013-17

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOLIDAYS

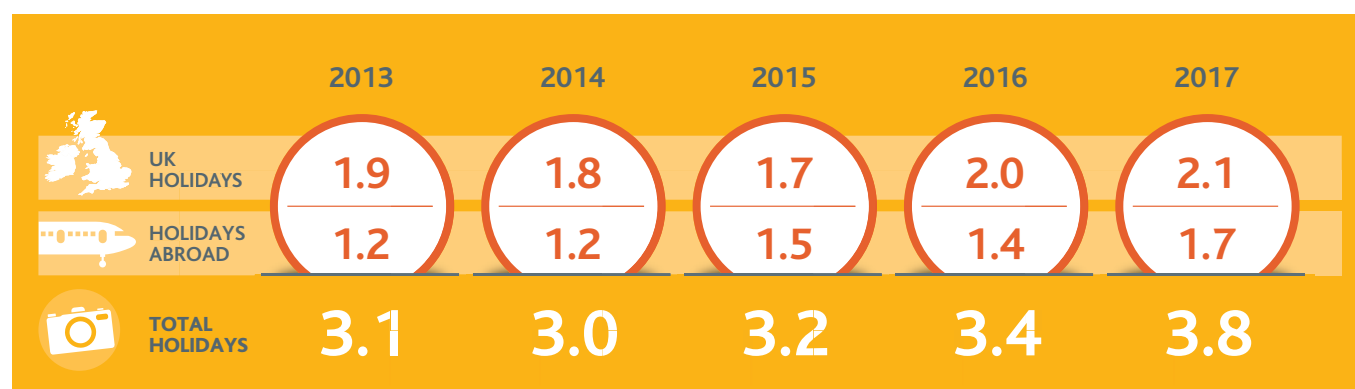


TABLE 2 Average number of holidays taken per person 2013-17  
(split by UK and abroad)

## 2. HOLIDAY VARIATIONS BY REGION AND LIFE STAGE

There are regional variations in the number of holidays taken per person. People in the North West took the most holidays per person (5.6) overall, while those in the West Midlands took the most domestic breaks (2.7).

The number of holidays taken also varies by life stage, and families typically take more holidays than other groups. Whilst the number of overseas holidays remains relatively consistent across the life stages, families, particularly those with older children, took significantly more domestic breaks.

People in the  
North West took  
**5.6**  
holidays per  
person



### AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOLIDAYS PER PERSON IN 2017 BY LIFE STAGE

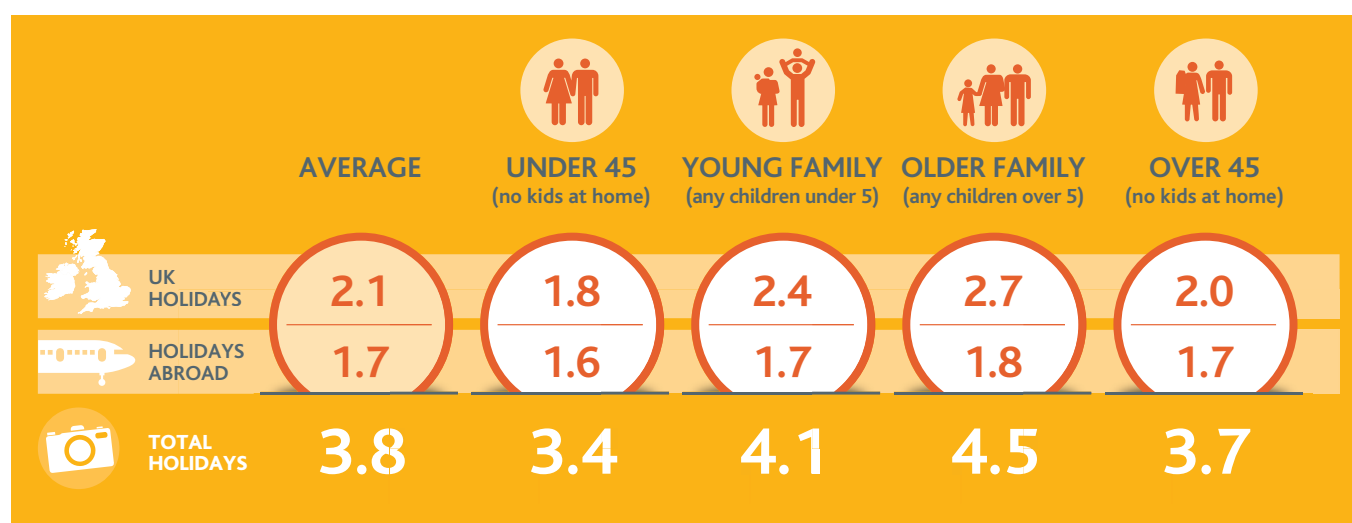


TABLE 3 Number of holidays by life stage

As in previous years, people are most likely to go on holiday with their partner (50%) or immediate family (40%). Group holidays are a relatively popular option, with extended family groups and adult only groups each being taken by around one in five people.

The number of people holidaying alone also remains steady. Solo travel is most popular with the over 65s, 18% of whom have travelled alone in the past 12 months; 81% stating they did so for the opportunity to be able to do what they want.

### WHO PEOPLE HOLIDAYED WITH IN 2017

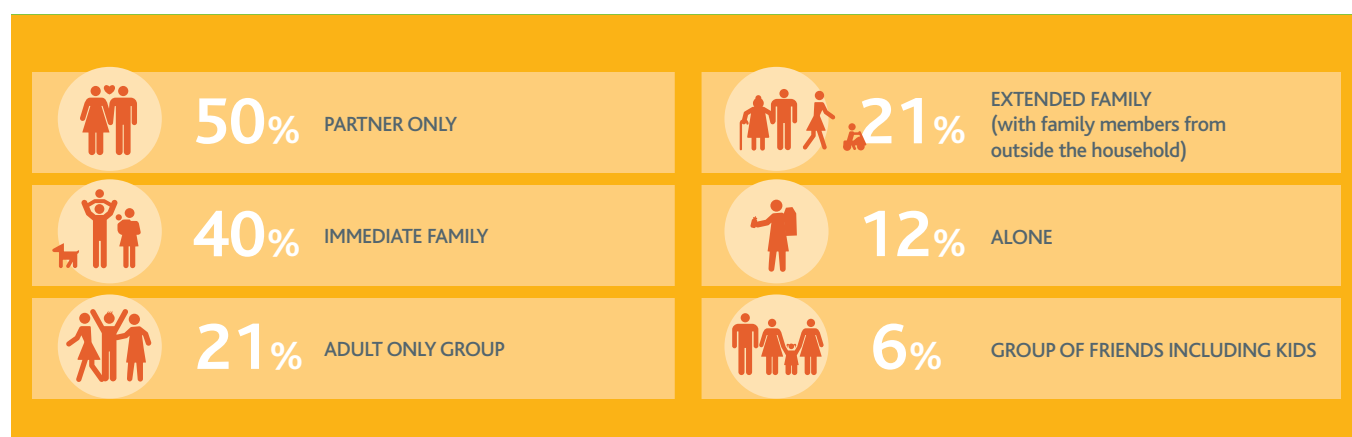


TABLE 4 Holiday companions



### 3. WHAT TYPE OF HOLIDAYS HAVE BEEN BOOKED?

City breaks overtook beach holidays to become the nation's favourite holiday type in 2014, a position they have held since then. Over half (53%) of people have taken one in the past 12 months, and similar numbers are planning to take one in the next 12 months. Beach holidays remain the second most popular type of holiday, and the number of people who have taken a beach holiday has increased to 41% following a dip last year to 38%.

There have been some changes in the top ten holiday types, with a trip to see a music event becoming the fifth most popular type of holiday, where it held eighth position in 2016, perhaps a testament to the number of overseas festivals now taking place. Coach holidays have also risen slightly in popularity and enter the top ten this year.

#### TOP TEN TYPES OF HOLIDAY TAKEN IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

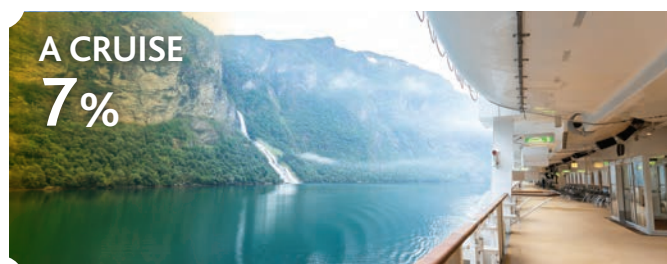
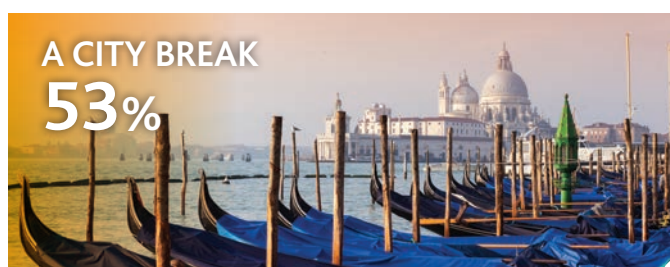


TABLE 5 Top ten types of holiday taken in the past 12 months

\*or sporting holiday (walking, cycling, sailing, trekking) \*\*or a home swap, home stay, couch surfing

## 4. HOW ARE PEOPLE BOOKING THEIR HOLIDAYS?

Online booking has seen a notable increase in the last 12 months with 83% of people using this method to book their holiday compared to 76% last year. Booking in person remains steady, at 17% compared to 19% in 2016, whilst phone bookings have dropped from 21% in 2016 to 16% this year.

People from the most affluent households are the most likely to book a holiday in-store, with 29% of those classified as social grade A booking a holiday in-store, in the last 12 months. A quarter (25%) of young families with children under five also booked in-store.

The over 65s are the group most likely to use the phone to book a holiday, with over a quarter (27%) doing so. 18-24 year-olds are the group most likely to let someone else book their holiday, this was true for 17% of this age group.

There are also some notable regional variations in the way people book their holidays, with the highest percentage of in-store bookings among people in the East Midlands (26%), Yorkshire (25%) and the North West (23%).

### BOOKING METHODS OVER PAST 12 MONTHS

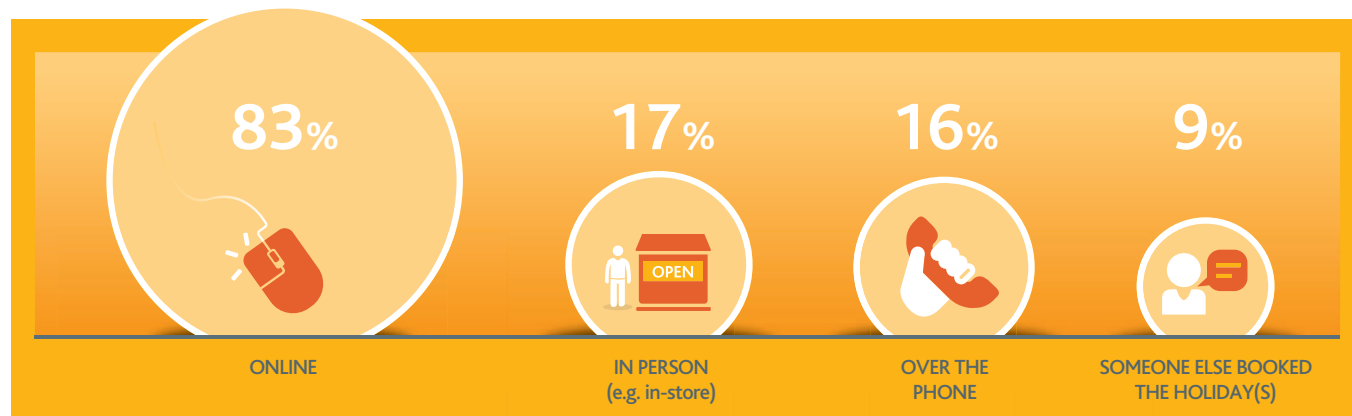


TABLE 6 How have you booked your holidays in the past 12 months?

### DEVICES FOR BOOKING HOLIDAYS

Whilst the PC remains the most popular online booking device, there has been a drop in the number of people using a PC to book a holiday from 92% to 85%. Tablet bookings have remained steady, being used by 23% of people. Mobile bookings however, have seen a significant jump from 13% to 20%.

PCs/laptops are still seen as the easiest device to use to make a booking, according to 84% of respondents. The majority of people

using tablets and mobiles are not finding them difficult either, with 70% stating they found a tablet easy to use and 60% saying the same for mobiles. This is a significant improvement on last year, when just 44% said they found it easy to use their mobile to book.

Mobile bookings have risen across all age groups. This is perhaps testament to the progress made by travel companies in improving the mobile booking experience for their customers, as well as growth in the use of smartphones; larger devices which make booking easier.

### ONLINE BOOKING DEVICES & MOBILE PHONE BOOKINGS BY AGE

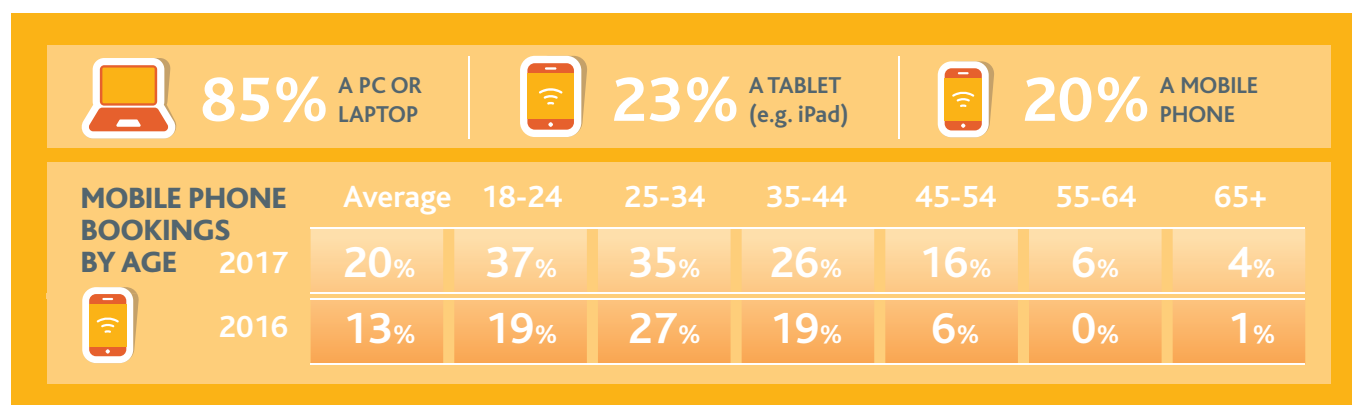


TABLE 7 Online booking devices for holidays by age

## 5. WHO DID PEOPLE BOOK THEIR HOLIDAYS WITH?

The research shows that people like to book holidays in a range of different ways. The preferred method for booking a holiday abroad remains a travel company or agent, with 45% of people booking a holiday overseas in this way. For domestic holidays, people prefer to book on a general holiday booking website (52%) or directly with the service providers, with almost half (48%) of people doing so.

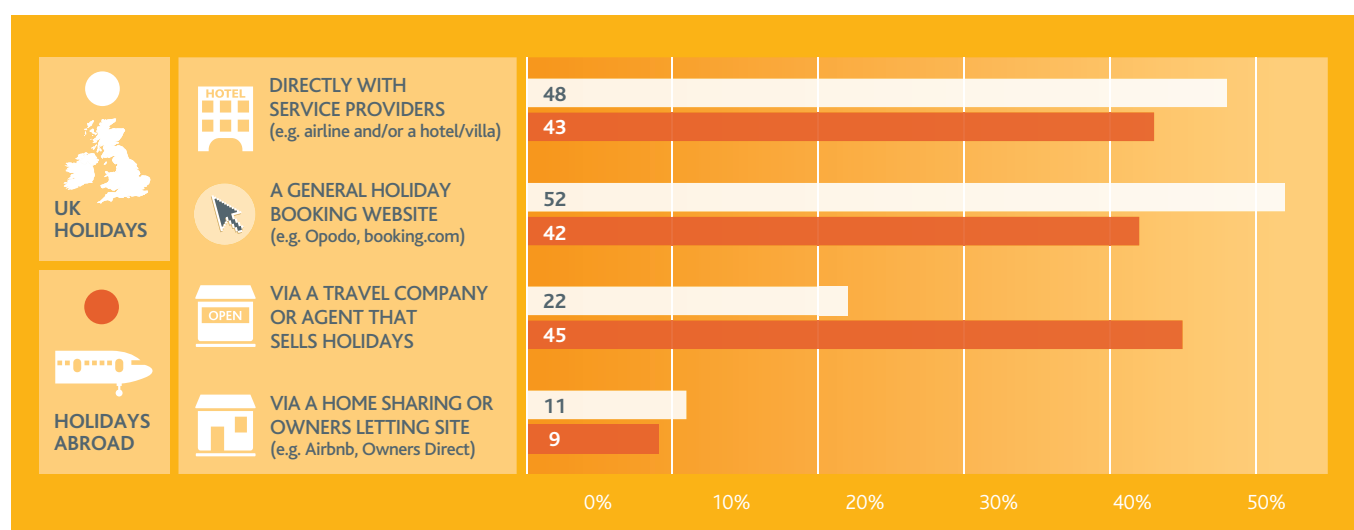
People aged 35-44 are the most likely to book a holiday abroad with a travel company or agent (51%), followed by the over 65s (48%).

Booking in this way is most popular in Yorkshire where almost six in ten people (59%) used this method.

Booking holidays abroad using a general booking website is most popular with people aged 25-34, with 57% of this age group booking this way. People aged 45-54 and over 65 are most likely to book directly with service providers (49%).

Booking via a home sharing or owners letting site has increased slightly from 7% last year to 9% this year.

### WHO DID YOU BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY WITH IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?



**TABLE 8**

*Who holidays have been booked with in 2017*

### WHY PEOPLE BOOK WITH TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS

The main reasons people use a travel professional to book are the ease of booking (60%), the fact that they feel more confident booking through them (52%) and because it saves them time (48%). Older people are the most likely to cite ease of booking, with three quarters (75%) of those aged 65+ and 68% of 55-64 year olds

stating this. By contrast, for younger people (18-24 year olds) the main reason for using a travel professional is because it makes them feel more confident (62%). For young families with children under five, time is at a premium and they are the group who tend to use a travel professional because it saves them time (60%).





# 6. THE PACKAGE HOLIDAY

Foreign package holidays have maintained their popularity over the last 12 months with over half (51%) of respondents booking one. Overseas package holidays are popular across all age groups and are slightly more likely to be booked by women (55%) than men (49%). They are most popular with young families, with 62% of this group choosing this type of holiday. Packages are popular with the most affluent households, 62% of those classified as social grade A taking a package holiday abroad, a significant increase from 23% in 2015 and a reflection of the range of package holidays now available.

'Having everything taken care of' is the main reason people book a package, with three quarters (75%) of people who booked a package

stating this. Packages are also booked because they are the 'best value option for price' (58%) and for 'convenience' (43%). All-inclusive continues to be a popular option with 41% of people who booked a package opting for all-inclusive.

For UK holidays, people are more likely to book travel or accommodation only, reflecting the fact that they are more likely to drive to UK holiday destinations and do not require travel.

The number of people booking travel and accommodation from different companies has increased slightly from previous years for both UK and overseas holidays.

## WHAT HAS BEEN BOOKED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

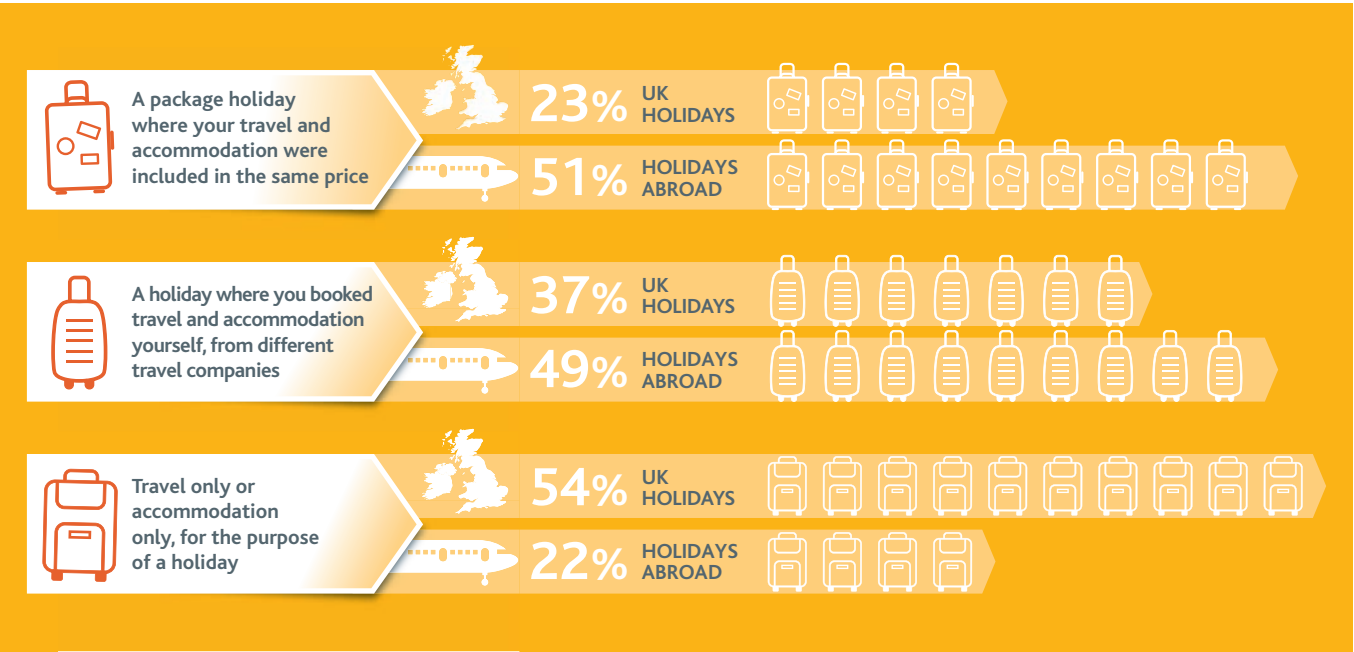


TABLE 9  
What has been booked in the past 12 months



75%

choose a package holiday because everything is taken care of



## 7. SPOTLIGHT ON CRUISE HOLIDAYS

Cruise holidays have been taken by 7% of respondents in the past 12 months, but twice as many (14%) are considering going on one in 2018. Three quarters (74%) of people are yet to go on a cruise holiday, with 42% of respondents saying they have not been on a cruise but are interested. Of people who have not yet been on a cruise, those aged 25-34 were most interested, followed by 18-24 year olds.

Among people who have been on a cruise, over three quarters (77%) would go again, people aged 45 and over were most likely to say this. People who have taken a cruise holiday most valued the 'chance to see multiple destinations' with 80% stating this. The quality of food and drink offering is also an important reason why people want to go on a cruise again (76%). This was the most popular reason cited by the youngest (18-24s) and oldest (65+) age groups.



### HAVE YOU BEEN ON A CRUISE HOLIDAY?

	NO, I HAVE NOT BEEN ON ONE BUT AM INTERESTED	42%
	NO, I HAVE NOT BEEN ON ONE AND HAVE NO INTENTION OF GOING	32%
	YES, I HAVE BEEN ON ONE AND WANT TO GO AGAIN	20%
	YES, I HAVE BEEN ON ONE BUT DON'T WANT TO GO AGAIN	6%

TABLE 10 Have you been on a cruise holiday?

### WHAT DO PEOPLE VALUE MOST ABOUT CRUISE HOLIDAYS?

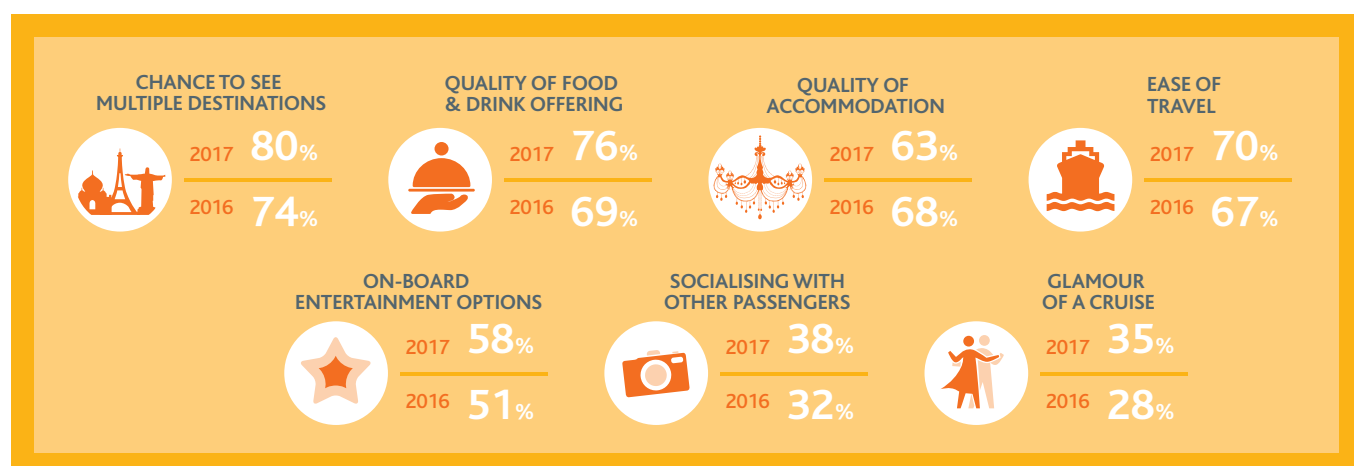


TABLE 11 What people who have been on a cruise most value about cruise holidays

# 8. OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Despite confusion around Brexit – only one in five people (19%) feel well informed about the implications for their holidays – British holidaymakers appear to be committed to Europe as a holiday destination. 63% of respondents are planning to travel to Europe in the next 12 months. Younger people feel most confused about what Brexit might mean: half of 25-34 year olds and 41% of 18-24 year olds agree that they are confused. Among those aged 55+ this figure is just 28%.

There has been a notable increase in people planning to spend more on their holidays in the next 12 months. Over three in ten (31%) people are planning to spend more, compared to 24% who stated this in 2016. 14% expect to spend less whilst nearly half (47%) think they will spend the same. Millennials are most likely to spend more – 39% of those aged 25-34 and 34% of 18-24 year olds say they expect to spend more on a holiday next year.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of people are planning to spend more to ensure they get the destination they want. Perhaps this is a reflection of greater competition for holidays to popular destinations.

When it comes to the types of holidays people are planning, city breaks, beach holidays and countryside breaks look set to top holidaymakers' lists in 2018. Over half of all holidaymakers (51%) are planning to take a city break and 47% expect to take a beach holiday, an increase on the numbers that did so in the past 12 months. All-inclusive holidays are also expected to be a popular choice for next year with 23% planning to take one.

## WHAT CONSUMERS ARE EXPECTING TO SPEND ON NEXT YEAR'S HOLIDAY

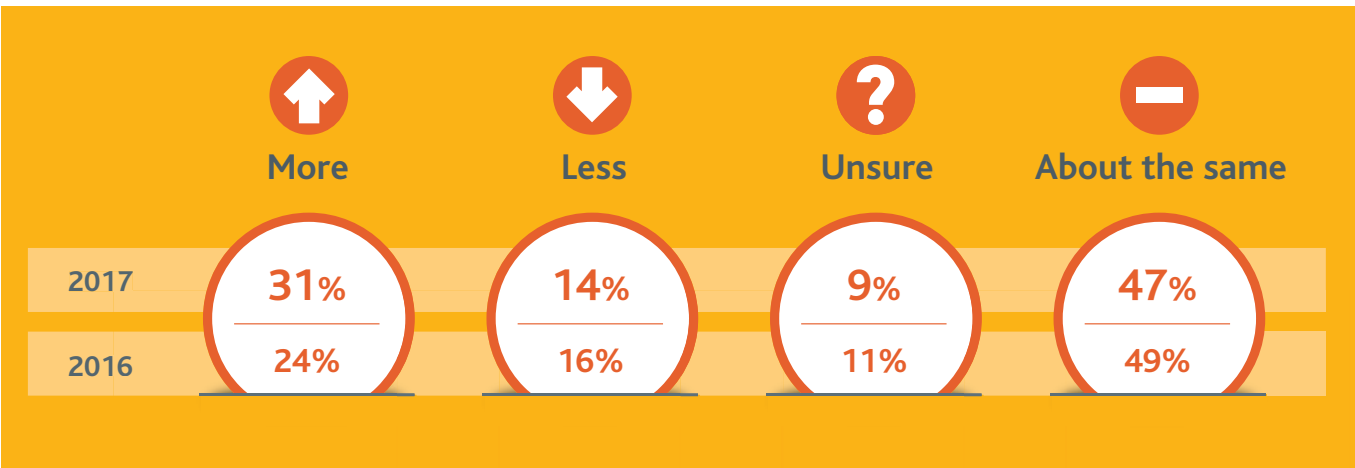


TABLE 12 What consumers are planning to spend on their holidays in 2018





## OUTLOOK FOR 2018 *CONTINUED*

The UK looks set to be the most popular destination overall for holidays next year with two thirds (66%) planning a UK break, suggesting that domestic holidays will continue their positive trend. Europe is the second most popular destination, followed by North America.

55-64 year olds are the age group most likely to visit Africa (7% compared to the 5% average) while 18-24 year olds are

most likely to travel to Asia, with 14% stating they are planning to go next year. This reflects the continuing trend for taking a gap year after A-levels or university.

British holidaymakers are keen to experience new things with over a quarter (27%) planning to visit a country they have never been to before and almost a third (32%) expecting to visit a new resort or city.

### POPULAR DESTINATIONS IN NEXT 12 MONTHS



TABLE 13 Where people are planning to travel in the next 12 months

## DID YOU KNOW...

75%

of people **expect** their holiday company to be a **Member of ABTA**

63%

of people feel **less positively** of companies that are **not ABTA Members**

76%

of people feel **more confident** booking a holiday with an **ABTA Member**

68%

of people feel that **ABTA's help and advice** in the event of a crisis is **essential**



ABTA was voted a Consumer Superbrand in 2017



## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Consumer research was conducted by Arkenford Ltd ([www.arkenford.co.uk](http://www.arkenford.co.uk)) who specialise in leisure and tourism market research. The ABTA Consumer Trends survey generated responses from a nationally

representative sample of 2,000 consumers using an online research methodology and related to holiday booking habits in the 12 months to August 2017. Fieldwork was conducted in August 2017.

## ABOUT ABTA

ABTA has been a trusted travel brand for over 65 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 currently has around 1,200 Members with a combined annual UK turnover of £37 billion. For more details about what we do, what being an ABTA Member means and how we help the British public travel with confidence, visit [abta.com](http://abta.com).

## CONTACT US

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