

Travel Trends for 2026



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About the research

This report features research from ABTA's annual Holiday Habits survey which asks how people travelled in the 12 months prior and what their travel plans are for the year ahead. The research is carried out each summer with a nationally representative sample of 2,001 UK adults by The Nursery Research and Planning (www.the-nursery.net) on behalf of ABTA. The 2025 survey was carried out from 21 July - 1 August 2024, so any references to 'the last year' or 'the past 12 months' refer to August 2024 to July 2025, with 'next year' referring to the 12 months from August 2025.

1. Super September

People clearly want a September to remember, as ABTA's data shows a growing trend for travelling abroad on holiday in that month, which is expected to continue in 2026.

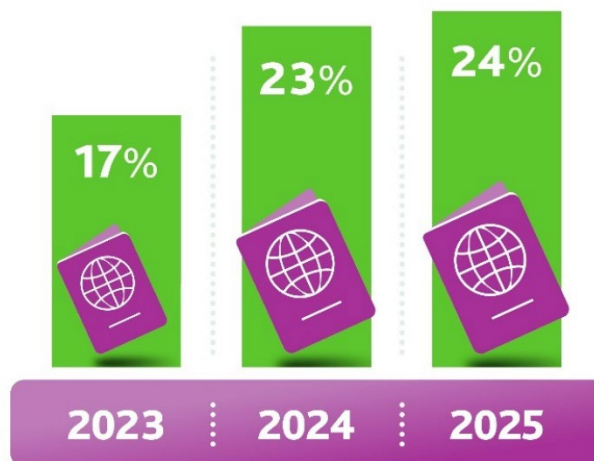
Offering enjoyable weather and good value breaks, one in four people (24%) said they planned to holiday in September 2025, making it an extremely popular month. This is a 7-percentage point increase over the last three years from 17% in 2023, when May was the most popular month.

While older people aged 55–64-years (29%), and 65+ year olds (35%), say they are most likely to go abroad on holiday in September, we're seeing an increase in intention to travel during this month across all ages. In particular, the biggest increases are for 18–24-year-olds from 11% to 17%, a 6-percentage point increase, 35-44-year-olds from 12% to 20%, an 8-percentage point increase, and those aged 65+ years old increasing the most from 22% to 35%, a 13-percentage point rise.

By life stage, perhaps unsurprisingly it is those without children who have identified September as an extremely popular time to travel abroad, with 25% of those under 45s with no children at home planning to holiday in September, rising to 37% of over 45s with no kids at home.



INTENTION TO HOLIDAY ABROAD IN SEPTEMBER IS ON THE RISE



Base: All those planning on taking a holiday abroad between September 2025 and December 2026.

Note: Given that our surveys were carried out in July-August each year, people are more likely to select the more immediate months, as they are more likely to have concrete plans for the near future. We see that in the data for September and, while the industry has reported that there has been an increase in demand across all age groups – and many people will have yet to finalise any plans for 2026 holidays, it is likely that September will once again be one of the favourite holiday months.

2. Travel Trendsetters

There is one group which, more than any other, appears to be shaping travel and what they want from the industry - those aged 25-34 years old, who may be settled into their careers and home life.

They cite holidays as the most important time of the year, more than any other age group, at 83% versus the average of 65%. They also place far more importance on what holidays can do for their mental health and wellbeing, with 90% saying they are important for this reason versus the average of 80%.

As well as taking more trips abroad – two – than any other group in the last 12 months, 49% of them are planning on spending more on their holidays in the next year – again, more than any other age group.

More than 8 in 10 (84%) of them are planning to travel overseas in the next 12 months, well above the average 70% for all consumers. So, this group is very much one which the travel industry will want to attract.

Of all those who have been on a holiday overseas in the last 12 months, they're also the most likely to have taken a beach or adventure holiday, and a cruise holiday.

These Travel Trendsetters are also committed to the organised travel sector, being the most likely to have booked with a travel professional at 44%, compared to an average of 34%. What's more, they particularly appreciate the value for money professionals provide (46% compared to 39% average).



3. Rail-ly Good

There’s a steady increase in younger holidaymakers taking alternative modes of transport as a way of holidaying, with more of them discovering the joy of rail and road.

Of all those who took a holiday in the previous 12 months, 18–24-year-olds have more than doubled their train and interrailing trips over the last three years, from 5% in 2023 to 12% this year, and this already looks set to continue with 12% already saying they would book this type of holiday over the next 12 months*, a number which may rise further. They are now the main age group who like to travel this way, and far above the average of 6% across all consumers in the last 12 months.

Trains and interrailing offer an easy way to take in multiple destinations and explore at a slower pace, particularly in Europe, the UK’s most popular overseas destination.



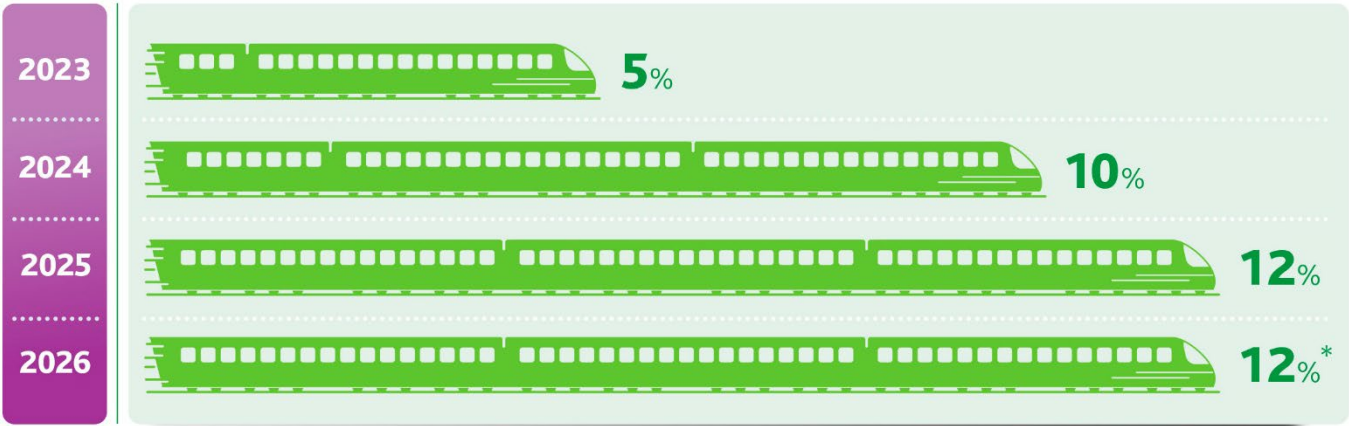
**Forecast intent in the next 12 months always tracks lower than those who travelled, due to plans for the year already not always being booked when surveyed.*

In the last 12 months, 9% of 18–24-year-olds said they took a coach holiday, which is on a par with the same proportion of those aged 65+ years old and more than any other age groups. This is up from 5% for 18–24-year-olds and 7% for 65+ year olds in the previous period.

2023-2025 – base: Respondents aged 18-24 who took a holiday in the past 12 months.

2026 – base: All those aged 18-24 planning on taking a holiday in the next 12 months.

RAIL-LY GOOD



4. The Longest Haul

With 48% of us wanting to visit places we've not been to before, the lure to explore destinations the furthest away from home, and The Longest Haul as possible, has been strong this last year and likely to be a continuing trend into 2026.

People are finding that there's a value for money trade-off in spending more on travelling further away but paying less in destination, where exchange rates and costs of living can often be different to back home.

Of all those who took a holiday abroad in the last 12 months, the region that showed the greatest increase was Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands*, up three percentage points from 7% to 10%. Intention to travel there in 2026 is already on a par with the intention given the previous year and – as more people finalise their 2026 plans – it seems likely that the figures may grow further still.



The popularity of this part of the world over the past few years has been driven by 25–34-year-olds, up 8 percentage points from 11% in 2023 to 19% in 2025 and 35–44-year-olds - up three percentage points from 7% to 10%. The number of over 65s heading to the region has quadrupled from 2% to 8%.

**Pacific Island countries include Fiji, French Polynesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to name a few.*

Base: Respondents who took a holiday in the past 12 months.

TREND IN TRAVELLING LONGEST HAUL to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands 2023-2025



5. Cruise Goes Long and Short

Cruises come in different lengths, from a weekend trip with only one port of call, to multiple destinations taking one week or two, and journeys taking months worldwide.

While the most popular length of cruise which people expressed an interest in taking remains mid-length at seven, 10 or 14 days (37%, 35% and 33% respectively), we are seeing a growing appetite for very short and much longer itineraries.

There's a growing interest in shorter cruises of up to 5 days in length which, between 2023 and 2025, rose by 17-percentage points from 19% to 36% of current or potential cruise goers. These are the most popular with those aged 18-34 years old, perhaps wanting to test the cruising experience. More than half (57%) of this group are interested in these shorter itineraries, increasing 21 percentage points from 36% in 2023. However, the biggest increase in interest in shorter trips in the same period has come from 35-54-year-olds, up 26-percentage points from 16% to 42%.

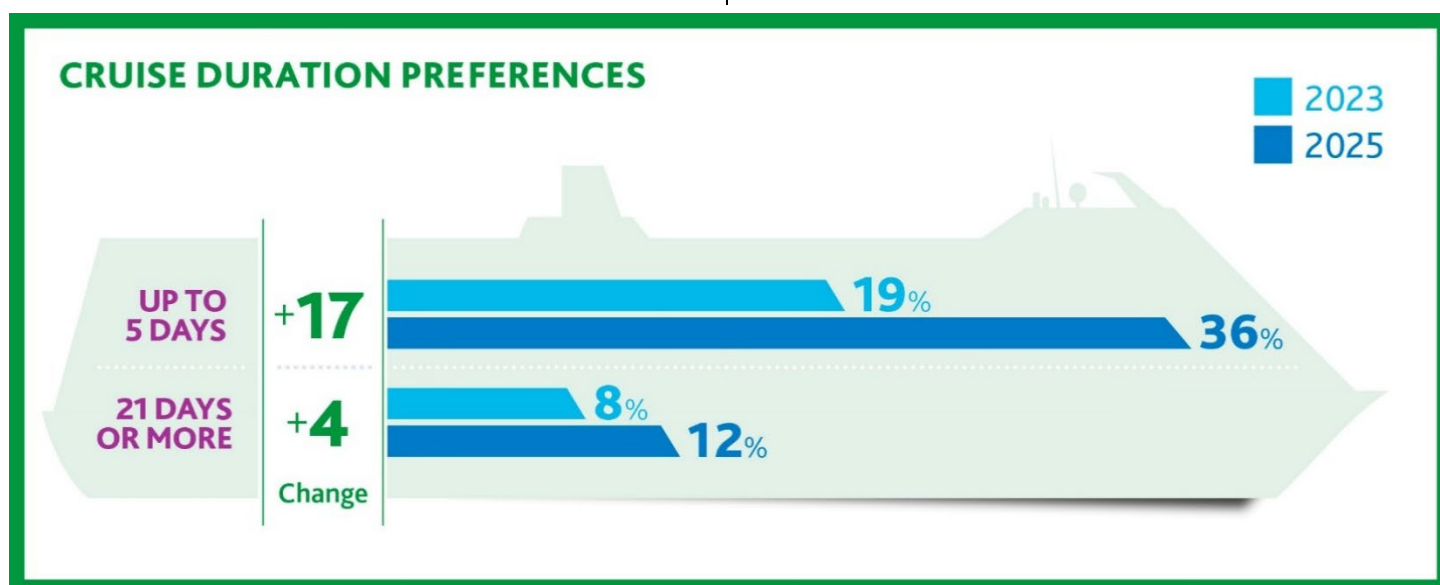
Longer 21+ day trips are also increasing in popularity, mainly with older age groups. Of those who had taken a cruise in the last 12 months or intended to do so in the next year, 12% expressed an interest in cruises of over 21 days compared with 8% in 2023.

While many of us dream of a longer voyage, it's the older generation who can devote the time to do so, with 22% of over 65s favouring this length of trip, up eight percentage

points from 14% in 2023. However, the popularity of 21+ day trips has more than doubled for 35-54-year-olds, up six percentage points to 10% from 4% in 2023.



Base: Respondents who took a cruise in the past 12 months and those who plan to take a cruise in the next 12 months.





About ABTA

ABTA is a trade association for UK travel agents, tour operators and the wider travel industry. We're the largest travel trade body, with over 4,600 travel brands in membership who have a combined pre-pandemic annual UK turnover of £40 billion. We work closely with our members to help raise and maintain standards and build a more sustainable travel industry, and provide travellers with advice, guidance and support.

Our members sign up to a code of conduct and commit to agreed service standards and fair trading. When you need clear travel information, and accurate and impartial advice relating to your trip, we're here for you. When you book with an ABTA member, reliable advice comes as standard. This means that booking with our members brings peace of mind.

ABTA also offers ABTA Travel Insurance to help you on your holiday.

All this together means we help you travel with confidence.

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