

The UK's love affair with a foreign holiday remains strong. Despite the pandemic, the desire for overseas travel has not dimmed with 61% of people saying they plan to go abroad within the next year, up 4% on 2020<sup>1</sup>. Consumer confidence is on the rise.

If people do book and travel in these numbers, it will mean a significant increase in foreign travel. ABTA's data show that from February 2020 to July 2021 only around 16% of people went on a foreign holiday, down from 64% who went abroad in 2019<sup>2</sup>.

It has been the simplification and relaxation of requirements for fully vaccinated travellers that has helped people feel more positive about travel. The shift from a traffic light system to a single red list, and reduced testing requirements for fully-vaccinated travellers in October led 38%<sup>3</sup> of people to say they are much more likely to book a holiday than before these changes were brought in.

Members are reporting these plans are turning into reality with increased enquiries and bookings for departures before the end of this year. Winter sun and winter sports breaks are both selling well, as holidaymakers jump at their chance to enjoy a well-deserved break. Members are also taking bookings for 2022 and into 2023, as stability returns to the sector.

We're not out of the woods yet, and we still need the Government to continue working towards making travelling abroad simpler. But, after a turbulent couple of years, and assuming there are no unexpected developments to come with Coronavirus, the signs are that an increasing number of people will be taking a long overdue overseas holiday next year. If so, we seem to be at the first stage of a meaningful recovery for the sector.



*Mark Tanzer*

**Mark Tanzer**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



1) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

2) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021, 2020 and 2019

3) ABTA consumer sentiment research, October 2021

## TREND ONE

# THE CATCH-UP CONSUMER

In 2022, the 'catch-up consumer' will emerge – making up for the trips and experiences they've missed out on during the pandemic.

Almost half (49%) of people say that limited opportunities to travel due to the pandemic have made their holidays more important to them than before, rising to almost two-thirds (65%) among families with children over five<sup>4</sup>. And almost half (46%) expect to spend more money on their holidays next year, up from 29% in 2020, with 71% saying the main reason is travelling less this year due to Coronavirus<sup>5</sup>.

Booking trends from ABTA Members such as Jet2holidays, TUI, Travelbag and Barrhead

Travel also point to holidaymakers 'catching up' by treating themselves on their next break, whether that's upgrading from a three to a four-star hotel, extending their stay from 10 to 14 nights or opting for a more expensive destination altogether.

While people are keen to catch up by heading to holiday favourites like Spain, the US, France, Italy and Greece in the next 12 months, a sense of adventure is also starting to return, with 37% saying they're likely to visit a country they've never been

to before, up from 32% in 2020<sup>6</sup>. Bucket list destinations like the Caribbean and the Maldives are also selling well for many ABTA Members, including Kuoni, as holidaymakers look to indulge their pent-up wanderlust with a trip to remember. Once in a lifetime trips, such as expedition experiences to the Arctic and visiting the Galapagos, are among the most popular trips next year for G Adventures.



# 49%

*Almost half of people say that limited opportunities to travel due to the pandemic have made their holidays more important to them than before*

4) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021

5) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

6) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

## TREND TWO

# THE NEW AGE OF THE EXPERT

2022 is set to cement the value consumers place on travel agents and travel experts, as they increasingly turn to them for expert help and advice.

People are 30% more likely to book with a travel professional now than before the pandemic – up from 20% more likely this time last year. Nearly half (47%) cite their guidance with Coronavirus travel requirements as the main reason, followed by the security of a package holiday (46%)<sup>7</sup>.

The increasing likelihood to book with a travel professional is even higher among young people – with two-thirds (66%) of 18-24 year olds saying they're more likely to book with a travel professional now than before the pandemic<sup>8</sup>. A third (34%) also said they have a better holiday when

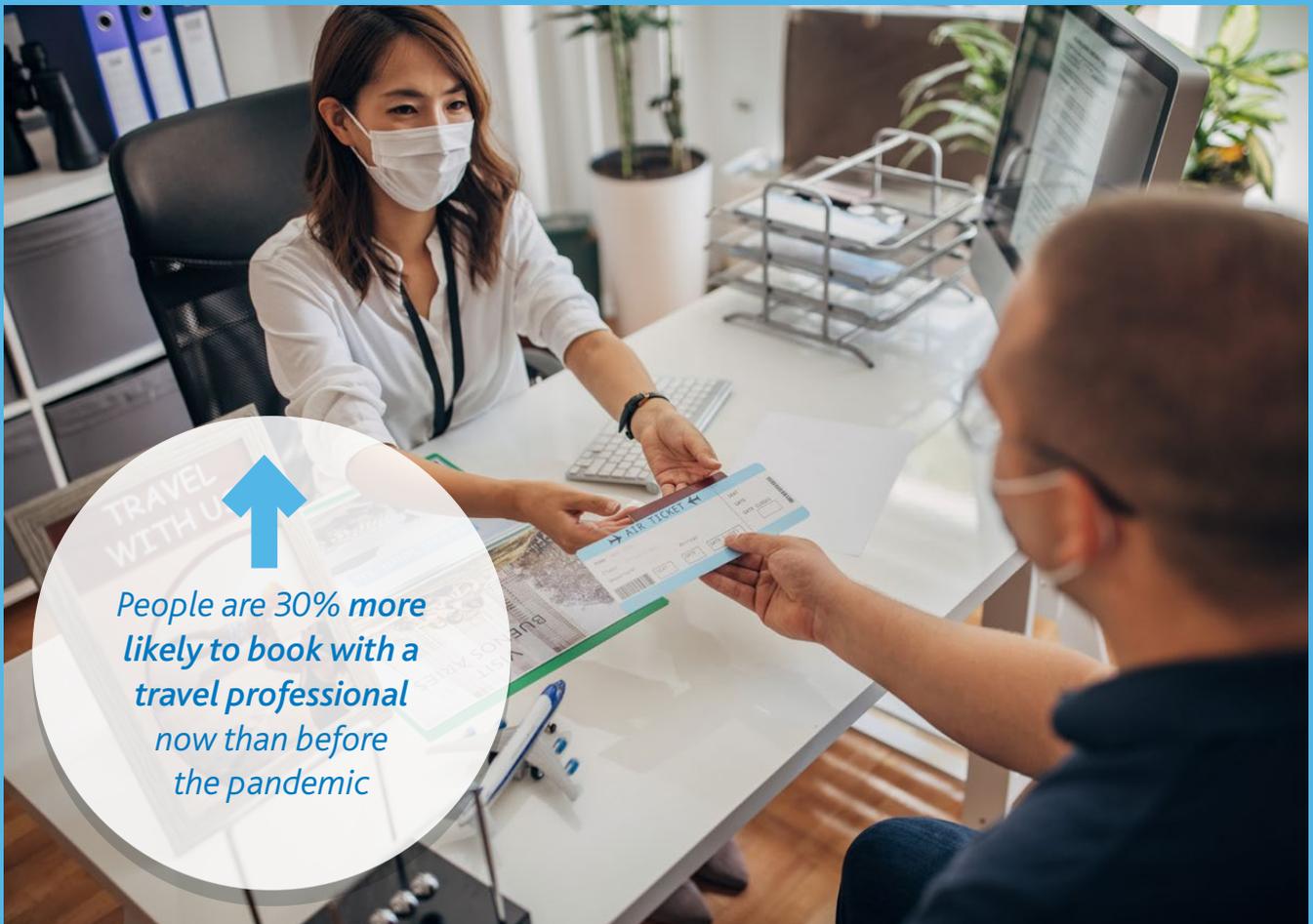
they book through them (up from 20% in 2019)<sup>9</sup>.

Travel agents and operators have been working tirelessly to help their customers navigate the changing travel requirements at home and overseas – and meet the increasing demand for expert insight. 30% of people said that getting additional information about Coronavirus restrictions and safety measures was an advantage of booking with a travel professional, up from 14% who said the same in 2020<sup>10</sup>.

All of this hard work hasn't gone unrewarded. Many ABTA Members are seeing enquiries

and bookings from a high percentage of new customers who want an expert to guide them through the extra steps they need to take to prepare for their trip, with Hays Travel reporting that more than half of its business has come from new customers since April 2021<sup>11</sup>, and more than 60% of Inghams' customers are booking with them for the first time<sup>12</sup>.

With the pandemic leading to increased demand for trusted travel advice, customers can't get enough of travel expertise.



↑  
**People are 30% more likely to book with a travel professional now than before the pandemic**

7) ABTA consumer sentiment research, October 2021 and November 2020 8) ABTA consumer sentiment research, October 2021

9) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020 10) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

11) [www.ttgmedia.com/news/news/itt-2021-hays-travel-hopeful-of-retaining-clients-gained-during-covid-crisis-30410](http://www.ttgmedia.com/news/news/itt-2021-hays-travel-hopeful-of-retaining-clients-gained-during-covid-crisis-30410)

12) [www.ttgmedia.com/news/new-customers-fuelling-spike-in-winter-bookings-for-ingham-31021](http://www.ttgmedia.com/news/new-customers-fuelling-spike-in-winter-bookings-for-ingham-31021)

## TREND THREE

# SEACATIONS SPARK A 'NEW-TO-CRUISE' CRAZE

Cruises are set to reach new heights of popularity in 2022, thanks to a significant boost to the new-to-cruise market from this summer's 'seacations'.

Offering a great value, highly convenient way to explore the best of the UK, these hugely successful domestic sailings welcomed vast numbers of new-to-cruise passengers (nearly half of MSC Virtuosa's guests over the summer<sup>13</sup>) and gave cruise lines the chance to demonstrate their enhanced health and safety protocols.

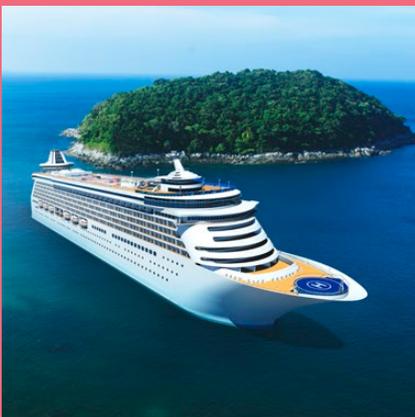
As a result, ABTA figures show that more than a third (36%) of people have now been on a cruise – the highest percentage ever from our research and up from 32% in 2020 – which rises to almost half (48%) of

families. These new passengers have embraced this style of travel, as those saying they've been on a cruise and want to go again is also up by four percentage points, to 25% this year from 21% in 2020<sup>14</sup>.

Booking data from MSC Cruises also suggest these new enthusiasts are keen to set sail again, this time combining a sense of familiarity with some added wanderlust. Popular itineraries include trips round the Emirates this winter on board MSC Virtuosa, the ship that introduced them to cruise, as well as sailings departing from the UK for

Northern Europe with MSC Magnifica.

A number of exciting developments are set to entice both new and longstanding customers back to the waters next year. This includes the launch of ten new river cruise ships and 16 new ocean cruise ships, including the world's biggest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean's Wonder of the Seas. At 1,188-foot-long and 210-foot-wide, she will fit almost 7,000 guests and offer eight different neighbourhoods, each with their own distinct amenities and entertainment options.



# 36%

*More than a third of people have now been on a cruise – the highest percentage ever*

13) <https://travelweekly.co.uk/news/cruise/nearly-half-of-mscs-ex-uk-passengers-new-to-cruise>

14) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

## TREND FOUR

# THE PACKAGE IS KING

Holidaymakers are expected to book more package holidays in 2022 – with ABTA's data pointing to a strong appreciation for the added protection and peace of mind that comes with this type of booking.

When asked how important different elements of the booking process were, almost eight in ten (78%) people said that knowing the holiday is a regulated package holiday was either essential or important to them<sup>15</sup>.

And the pandemic has certainly strengthened that importance, with

holidaymakers 27% more likely to book a package holiday now than before the pandemic, mainly for the financial protection they see them providing (39%) and a feeling that everything will be taken care of for them (37%)<sup>16</sup>.

Holidaymakers are also increasingly realising that they can enjoy all the benefits

of a package holiday, to any destination, with lots of customised elements too – with 29% of people opting for a personalised package over the past 12 months, up from 22% in 2020<sup>17</sup>.



# 78%

*Almost eight in ten people said that knowing the holiday is a regulated package holiday was either essential or important to them*



15) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021

16) ABTA consumer sentiment research, October 2021

17) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020

## TREND FIVE

# TRAVEL FOR RECONNECTION

Holidays that allow us to reconnect with the important people in our lives are expected to be popular in 2022 – both by jetting off with loved ones to make more memories together and reuniting with family and friends who live abroad.

The desire to be together and reconnect is leading to a rise in larger group bookings, particularly multigenerational travel<sup>18</sup>. According to easyJet holidays, 25% of UK customers will be prioritising going away with their extended family to make up for lost time<sup>19</sup>. Henbury Travel has also seen an influx of grandparents booking breaks with their children and grandchildren, mostly to the Mediterranean for summer 2022. As

well as wanting to make up for missed opportunities to spend time together, they're also enjoying the added confidence of travelling with more tech-savvy generations who can help them with the additional documents needed.

Of the 16% of people who travelled abroad in the last 12 months, 61% went to see family and friends<sup>20</sup>. This is a much higher proportion than in a normal year, with

2019 ONS figures showing 25% of overseas trips were to visit friends or relatives<sup>21</sup>. The reopening of borders has driven bookings to travel companies, with Barrhead Travel reporting a big spike in enquiries from people who wanted to see their families in the US as soon as possible. We expect to see people prioritising these important reunions in the next 12 months.



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18) I.e., more than two generations holidaying together

19) Taking the Temperature: easyJet holidays' annual report on consumer holidaymaking trends 2021

20) ABTA's Holiday Habits research 2021

21) [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/leisureandtourism/articles/traveltrends/2019](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/leisureandtourism/articles/traveltrends/2019)

The importance to consumers that their holiday is sustainable has grown sharply over the past ten years.

In 2011, just 20% of people said that the green/environmental/sustainability credentials of their holiday provider were important to them. That has now nearly tripled to more than half (54%) in 2021. Those saying they are prepared to pay more for a holiday with a company that has a better environmental and social record has doubled from 19% in 2011 to 38% in 2021<sup>22</sup>.

Attitudes towards climate change are also changing in the short term, with 55% agreeing that the travel industry should operate in a greener way than it did before the pandemic, up on the 52% of people who agreed with this last year<sup>23</sup>.

Making travel more sustainable is not just a priority for customers – it is also an increasing priority for industry and an integral part of companies' business plans and activities. As we set out in ABTA's **Tourism for Good report**, our roadmap for embedding sustainability into the recovery, ABTA is working with Members and the wider industry on decarbonisation, cutting waste and water consumption, ensuring that local people benefit from tourism, respecting human rights and managing animal welfare, as well as helping businesses to thread sustainable practices through all aspects of the supply chain.

The global threat of climate change and the urgent need to decarbonise across all elements of travel and tourism is a huge focus for the industry and features prominently in a range of travel companies' sustainability strategies and activities. Early pioneers of sustainability in mainstream holidays, TUI, has delivered over 43 million "greener and fairer" holidays since 2015 and is due to lay out its most ambitious strategy yet. easyJet holidays has made a commitment for all its holidays to directly support sustainable practices by the end of 2025 – and Jet2holidays' new sustainability strategy sets out the company's decarbonisation plans en route to net zero by 2050. New initiatives also contributing to real reductions across the industry include Intrepid Travel's commitment to science-based targets and their Carbon Measurement Blueprint to help other tour operators decarbonise their operations, and The Travel Corporation, through its TreadRight Foundation, investing in new technologies and nature-based solutions to remove carbon dioxide from the environment.

The importance of reducing carbon emissions hasn't eclipsed other urgent priorities, however, with companies like G Adventures using its Planeterra Impact Fund to provide much-needed support to communities that haven't been able to rely on income from tourism due to the pandemic.



*Making travel more sustainable is not just a priority for customers – it is also an increasing priority for industry and an integral part of companies' business plans and activities*

22) ABTA's *Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2011*

23) ABTA's *Holiday Habits research 2021 and 2020*

## SUSTAINABLE ACCOMMODATION GOES MAINSTREAM

Customers booking a holiday in 2022 can expect to have the option to choose their holiday in relation to how sustainable their accommodation is. Tour operators Travel Republic, Travelbag, Emirates Holidays and easyJet holidays have joined TUI, and many other companies, in signing up to ABTA's Travelife for Accommodation scheme. This is a sustainability certification programme that independently verifies hotels against an internationally-recognised sustainability standard and offers practical ways for them to improve their environmental and social impacts – such as reducing food waste, sourcing electrical energy from renewables and investing in electric vehicles.

For customers, this means they can look for the Travelife Gold certification mark to identify accommodation of all shapes and sizes, and in all parts of the world, that is operating responsibly.

## NURTURING NATURE

Customers will see more work from travel companies giving back to nature. New initiatives include Responsible Travel's goal to make every trip 'nature positive' by 2030. This means working closely with destinations, accommodation and transport providers to make sure all their holidays actively support the protection of habitats and wildlife and leave the lightest carbon footprint possible. Exodus Travels is also aiming to become 'nature net positive' by 2024 which includes a goal to rewild 100 square metres of land per passenger.



## Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office travel advice

When planning your holiday and before you travel overseas, it's important to check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) travel advice for the country you're visiting at [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice). The advice includes local rules relating to Coronavirus and details of any entry requirements, such as if you need to present proof of vaccination or a negative test result, as well as other advice on health, safety and security and local laws and customs. Travel is constantly reviewed and you can also keep up to date with the latest FCDO travel advice for the country you're visiting by signing up for individual country email alerts.

## About ABTA

ABTA has been a trusted travel brand for over 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 around 4,000 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 UK public travel with confidence and to search for an ABTA Member visit [www.abta.com](https://www.abta.com).