



## **ABTA TRAVEL TRENDS REPORT 2011**

For more information contact ABTA Press Office 020 7117 0596

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ABTA and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office work together throughout the year on issues affecting British travellers overseas. It is important to both organisations that they understand emerging travel trends as it informs planning. This is the third year that the FCO has collaborated with ABTA on the Travel Trends report and they have provided destination specific information throughout.

## **1. Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) dealt with about 1.9 million consular enquiries from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, and supported some 47,111 Brits in difficulty abroad, from visiting those who had been hospitalised or arrested, to rescuing citizens from forced marriages.

The FCO has a simple message to travellers - have a great time while you're away, but make the necessary preparations before you go. Before Britons travel abroad, the FCO advises the following preparation steps:

- Take out comprehensive travel insurance and read the small print – for example, you may need to extend your cover for certain activities such as riding mopeds or jet-skiing
- If travelling within the EEA, get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for free or reduced emergency care – you still need full travel insurance though! Also remember, you can call 112 to contact the emergency services in any EU country
- Research the country you are visiting before you go. Visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) or call 0845 850 2829 for the latest information, or to sign up for regularly updated alerts
- Take enough money with you, in a mix of payment types, and arrange access to emergency funds – don't keep all your money in the same place either
- Visit your GP well in advance to ask about any vaccinations or medication – if you take prescription medication, pack enough for your whole trip plus a few days in case you are delayed returning home
- Check your passport is valid and has next of kin details filled in – have all necessary visas
- Make copies of important travel documents and keep separately from the originals
- Make sure your mobile phone will work abroad and that you pack the charger
- Familiarise yourself with local driving laws – and make sure your licence is current and valid

- Find out where your nearest British Embassy or Consulate will be and take their numbers

### **What FCO can and cannot do to help British nationals abroad**

FCO's priority is protecting the welfare of British nationals abroad and they will do their best to assist people when they suffer serious problems abroad.

<b>The FCO can:</b>	<b>The FCO can't:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help issue you with a replacement passport or an emergency travel document</li> <li>• Give you a list of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors or funeral directors</li> <li>• Contact friends and family back home for you</li> <li>• Provide information about transferring funds</li> <li>• Visit you in hospital or if you have been arrested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help you enter a country if you don't have a valid passport</li> <li>• Give you legal advice</li> <li>• Search for missing people</li> <li>• Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people</li> <li>• Pay any bills or give you money</li> <li>• Make travel arrangements for you</li> </ul>

### **Britons in Difficulty**

As an indication of the types of cases the FCO deals with, over the period April 09 – March 10, 5,283 Britons<sup>1</sup> needed consular assistance in Spain. There were 1,367 British arrests in the USA, 980 passports were lost or stolen in Australia and 471 Britons were hospitalised in Greece. In addition to assistance cases, FCO staff around the world dealt with 1.9m consular enquiries last year<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lost/stolen passports are not included in the figures because in the vast majority of cases, the work done by consular staff is mainly data entry with no additional assistance required

<sup>2</sup> An enquiry is a request for information that doesn't require any further action from the FCO staff concerned. A case requires action to assist the individual in dealing with whatever situation they face.

### **Arrests and drug offences**

2,012 Britons were arrested in Spain last year, significantly more than any other country. Globally, arrests for drugs offences formed a significant percentage of the total, and contributed to almost a quarter of the total arrests in Thailand.

There were 994 total arrests for drug offences worldwide which accounted for around a seventh of all arrestable offences. Topless sunbathing, swearing and public displays of affection can also lead to arrest in some countries, highlighting the need for Britons to ensure they carefully research the area to which they are travelling. Local laws and customs can vary from the UK significantly and ignorance of these laws can lead to more severe punishments than in the UK.

### **Hospitalisations and deaths**

The highest number of hospitalisations occurred in Spain (831), followed by Greece (471), Egypt (235), France (217) and Thailand (199). Many of these hospitalisations were due to moped and motorbike accidents as well as drink-related incidents such as balcony falls. All of these incidents escalate over the summer months with the increase in consumption of alcohol and drugs. There were 5,930 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths and murders.

### **Passports**

Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists with 27,272 reported incidents worldwide. 6,618 passports were lost or stolen in Spain, 3,268 in the USA, 2,400 in France, 1,017 in Germany, 980 in Australia and 832 in South Africa. The FCO recommends photocopying important documents such as your passport and storing them separately from the originals to speed up the replacement processes. Various countries also reported an increase in scams and thefts of British passports so travellers are advised to stay vigilant.

This report contains facts and travel advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. For comprehensive and up-to-date travel advice visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) to find the latest information for the country you are visiting.

## **2. Overview for 2010 and 2011**

2010 was predicted to be a difficult year for the travel industry, and it was. The impact of the global economic crisis was compounded by volcanic ash – which shut down UK airspace for 6 days. Industrial action, particularly the cabin crew strikes and bad weather took their toll, while failed travel companies included Goldtrail, Sun4U and Kiss Flights. Indications at this stage also suggest that the number of holidays taken in 2010 have dropped from the previous year for both domestic and overseas holidays.

However, the UK travel industry looks remarkably resilient going into 2011, as from July, drops in passenger numbers slowed, and business travel has seen positive growth. (Between July and October 2010, business visits both to the UK and abroad by UK residents were 6 per cent higher than a year earlier).

Many travel companies – airlines, hotel groups and tour operators – are also reporting profits at the end of the year, while the predicted continued consolidation within the leisure industry will help to ensure companies remain successful.

Doug McWilliams from the Centre for Economics and Business Research, who spoke at ABTA's Convention in October, predicted that while public spending and job cuts will undoubtedly land a blow to consumer confidence and suppress disposable incomes in the immediate future, the current austerity will force consumers to spend smart in order that they can continue to have money for 'new' essential items such as travel. This sentiment is backed up in a survey conducted by Carnival UK for the 2010 Cruise Report, which found that more than one in four frequent cruisers said that they would reduce other expenditure to ensure they still took their main cruise holiday. McWilliams continued to say that spending on travel will remain strong over the coming years and as a sector will continue to play a role in job creation.

### **3. UK Market Context with Top Destinations for UK travellers**

The UK's Top Visited Overseas Countries in 2009 (according to the Office of National Statistics by visits).

1. Spain – 11.6 million
2. France – 9.8 million
3. Irish Republic – 3.5 million
4. USA - 3.1 million
5. Italy – 2.6 million
6. Germany – 2.1 million
7. Greece – 1.9 million
8. Netherlands – 1.84 million
9. Portugal – 1.8 million
10. Turkey – 1.6 million

UK residents' holiday trips in 2009

1. Spain – 10.2 million
2. France – 7.1 million
3. USA – 2.1 million
4. Italy – 1.8 million
5. Greece – 1.7 million
6. Portugal - 1.6 million
7. Turkey – 1.4 million
8. Republic of Ireland – 1.2 million
9. Netherlands – 853,000
10. Cyprus – 816,000

UK residents package holidays:

1. Spain – 4.1 million
2. France – 1.6 million
3. Greece 1.2 million

4. Turkey – 843,000
5. USA - 664,000
6. Egypt – 592,000
7. Italy – 563,000
8. Caribbean – 528,000
9. Portugal – 428,000
10. Cyprus – 387,000

According to ABTA research, over three-quarters of UK consumers holidayed in the 12 month period to September 2010. In this period, UK residents took an average of 3.2 holidays; 2 in the UK and 1.2 abroad. When enjoying a domestic holiday, the most common length of stay is between 1 and 3 nights; however, for holidays abroad, the length of stay is most commonly 7 nights or more.

Those most likely to have young families - 35-44 year olds and over 65's were the age groups most inclined to holiday domestically.

Conversely, 45-54 year olds were the least likely to holiday in the UK, while 35-44 year olds are the group least likely to go abroad.

15 to 24 year olds are the most travelled of all the age groups surveyed, with 24% of them enjoying four or more domestic holidays and 12% of them enjoying four or more holidays abroad, the largest figures measured for any of the age groups. Residents of the West Midlands are most likely to go without a holiday while Londoners are least likely to go without. Residents of Anglia are most likely to have only domestic holidays, while Londoners are most likely to only holiday abroad.

#### **4. Customer Satisfaction**

Generally, consumers have proved remarkably positive about their holiday experience, with 85% not having had any problems to report in the previous five years. Customer experience and service will really prove a company's value for money credentials in 2011.

#### **5. Travel Insurance Purchasing Trends**

When asked whether they deemed holiday insurance to be of greater importance for an overseas or a domestic holiday, 70% of consumers agreed that it was more important to protect an overseas holiday. This is generally in line with insurance booking patterns as those holidaying abroad are more than twice as likely to always buy insurance than those travelling domestically (76% compared to 32%). For those going abroad, 13% rely on an annual insurance policy.

A majority (55%) of domestic holidays are uninsured; though this figure for trips abroad is proportionally lower. A rather worrying picture emerges when the figures for the outbound and domestic markets are aggregated: 37% of all trips are uninsured. This means that nearly two in every five trips taken by Britons are uninsured.

Alarming, those least likely to buy insurance include precisely those groupings that would be disproportionately affected should something go wrong: those in the oldest age group (65+) and those within lower social classification groups. A lack of awareness about the benefits involved in taking out holiday insurance as well as the financial burden that it might entail tend to prevent people from purchasing an insurance package.

Though most insurance purchases are made online (47% for foreign holidays and 33% for domestic holidays), consumers are as likely to use a travel agent to purchase insurance as they are to go direct to an insurance broker; travel agents thus still have an important part to play in this sphere.

## Awareness of Travel Insurance Packages

Of those consumers who do take out an insurance package, the majority believe that they have a good understanding of what they are covered for (62%). While the youngest age group (15-24) take least notice of what they are covered for (only 46%), 82% of the over 65's are fully aware of their coverage. Women have a higher propensity to familiarise themselves with their coverage than do men (66% compared to 58%), though families are less likely to know what they are covered for than are adults travelling without children.

## **Key Elements of Travel Insurance Coverage – What do consumers deem essential?**

The most essential element of travel insurance for consumers is medical cover (71%) and repatriation cover following a medical treatment (61%).

Supplier collapse also ranks at the forefront of consumer concerns, placing second only to medical coverage. 50% of respondents deemed insurance coverage in the case of a company collapsing while on holiday as essential, with 42% deeming protection of monies in the case that a company were to collapse in advance of travel as essential. The older age groups and women, tend to place concerns surrounding supplier collapse as a higher priority than do younger age groups and men.

## **6. The Eurozone**

Given the deepening financial crisis of countries within Europe, economists predict that the Euro may well weaken further against currencies including sterling.

## **7. Key Sentiment for 2011 - Value for Money**

'Value for money' has become the rallying cry of travellers, and the travel industry – particularly ABTA members realize that providing good customer service and experience can clinch bookings.

An ABTA survey in September found that when booking a holiday 74% of consumers believe that the greatest value for money, but not necessarily the lowest prices, is an essential or important booking element. 2011 will see a further rise in the importance of customer experience and service as a key decider in customer choice. 2011 will continue to see an increase in customers choosing shorter duration and all-inclusive holidays to help manage budgets.

Clearly value for money and good prices will continue to be important in 2011, but holidaymakers also want to be able to trust the companies they book with as ABTA's survey found that when consumers were asked to consider the importance of different elements when booking a holiday, ABTA membership was considered to be essential or important by 71% of consumers, while a similar proportion believed that financial protection were identified as essential.

In 2011, ABTA and its Members will continue to strive for high professional standards, value and quality. ABTA will also be lobbying the UK government and Brussels to improve the legislative framework governing financial protection system governing holidays. A decision on reform is expected in January 2011.

## **8. Industry Issues**

### **Unfair Taxation**

While the industry is happy to pay its fair share of tax, 2011 will see the industry continue the fight against unfair taxation – and particularly the increases imposed on travellers flying out of the UK. Air Passenger Duty (APD) has risen exponentially in recent years, most recently in November 2009, and again in November 2010.

The Coalition Programme for Government estimates project a doubling in revenues from APD over the next five years, from the current £1.9 billion to the expected level of £3.8 billion by 2015/16. This state of affairs will remain one of the biggest challenges facing the travel industry in the next few years.

According to a survey conducted by World Travel Market in 2010, more than a third (37%) of UK holidaymakers say they will reduce their flying due to the APD increase with a further 8% planning to stop flying altogether.

Further, APD increases have already had a detrimental effect on countries and destinations reliant on tourism – such as the Caribbean. UK visitors to the Caribbean have fallen by as much as 25% following the increase in APD in 2009.

Although Caribbean tourism officials realise that APD is not the only reason why visitor numbers have fallen, the decrease has been larger from the UK than anywhere else.

## **9. Social Travel Trends**

Social media platforms, such as facebook, has revolutionized global relationships – and reconnected long-lost friends and family, this is set to cement a popular travel trend of visiting friends and relatives abroad in 2011.

Since 1984, approximately 20% of overseas travel has been taken to visit friends and relatives. In real numbers, this sector has grown faster than holiday and business visits – an average of 6.0% a year.

From 2008 to 2009 business and holiday visits fell sharply, while visits to friends and relatives fell less so. In addition, business visits abroad were at their lowest level in 2009 since 1996 and holiday visits slipped to their lowest level since 2000, however, those to visit friends or relatives were still higher in 2009 than the figure recorded as recently as 2005.

## **10. Domestic and Inbound Tourism**

### **The UK**

The domestic market is set to have a high energy boost during 2011 and 2012 – firstly from with the Wills and Kate phenomenum, and secondly from the 2012 Olympics – which hopefully will sweep away the ‘staycation’ phrase for good!

Hotels in London are selling out fast for the Royal wedding weekend – and availability is now limited to premium prices. However, the interest in the royal couple has extended to key areas pertinent to them – such as Anglesey where their first home together will be – the beautiful island off north Wales which boasts spectacular coasts and award winning beaches as well as the historical city of St Andrews, where they met and studied.

### **London**

Travel companies are already boasting triple figure percentage growth in travel enquiries to London for the royal wedding from the Dutch, American, Danish, German and Croatian markets.

London is the focus of Olympics 2012, but will by no means be the only venue for the games. However, in preparation, we will see some exciting new developments in 2011.

The much-loved Savoy has now completed its renovations and is open for business; the luxury hotel Brand ‘W’ will open its doors in a prime location - Leicester Square on Valentine’s Day, while the Shard, already dominating London’s skyline will be Europe’s highest building and due to be completed early in 2012.

At the other end of the market, Tune Hotels – the no-frills hotel brand, Travelodge and Premier Inn are all expanding their networks.

For those living outside the capital, Thomas Cook is Official Provider of Short Breaks to the London 2012 Games and London 2012 Games Breaks will go on

sale in spring 2011 and will include accommodation, transport and tickets to a full range of events from The Opening Ceremony and 100m final to regional football heats, sailing and swimming starting from £99 per person.

## **Northern Ireland**

In early 2011, Belfast will promote its music product offering, highlighting its musical heritage from Van Morrison and Ruby Murray through to modern bands like Snow Patrol and up and coming acts like Two Door Cinema Club. Key highlights include the impressive festival programme, the Belfast Music Tour and the Belfast Music smart phone app.

Later in the year, attentions turn to the building of Titanic as the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ship in 2012 approaches.

Meanwhile Londonderry will continue to showcase its cultural and arts offerings in the lead up to it being the City of Culture in 2013.

## **Ireland**

Tourism Ireland will unveil a major new advertising campaign in March. The concept will bring to life the characters of Ireland and have a whole of Ireland focus.

St Patrick's Day will be as important a calendar hook as ever to drive tourists to visit Ireland and considerable support will be put behind this.

Dublin will continue to promote its literary and cultural products off the back of its recent UNESCO City of Literature accolade.

## **Inbound**

The inbound tourism industry is incredibly important to the UK economy, and has held its own in 2010. The rate of sterling and low interest rates have given the UK a competitive edge as a place to do business and holiday. During the 12 months to October 2010 the number of inbound visitors to the UK remained broadly the same compared to the year before and between July and October both holiday and business visits to the UK have increased by 6 per cent.

While falls have been experienced from North America, visits increased by 2% from 'other' long haul countries. These 'other' countries are from what has been termed the BRIC Economies – Brazil, Russia, India and China – and according to VisitBritain - they are poised to become the fastest growing source countries for tourists to the UK. The predicted number of travellers from China is set to soar by 89% by 2014, which equates to an extra 100,000 extra Chinese visitors to the UK, the fastest increase in tourism to the UK from any country.

Tourism from India is expected to grow by 29%, with more than 100,000 extra visitors. Russian visitors to the UK are expected to jump by almost a quarter (24%) with 50,000 more people visiting. Brazil is expected to send 18% more tourists – around 35,000 people – to the UK over the same period.

Despite this positive picture, Government spending cuts, increases in Air Passenger Duty and the VAT rise provide serious challenges to the inbound tourism and British leisure travel.

## **11. Destinations – Hot spots for 2011**

Western Europe will still provide be the top destinations for Brits in 2011, but it has also been hardest hit by the impact of the recession and weak pound against the Euro.

### **Short Haul**

In the UK, 2010 has been bookended by icy cold blasts, leaving Brits yearning for sunny escapes. However, two of the ‘hot’ destinations in 2011 – Sweden and Estonia – are arguably in colder climes.

### **Sweden**

Thanks to increased airlift, the honour of being host to the European city of culture, and the overwhelming popularity of Scandinavian crime fiction, Sweden, and Estonia are set to see an increase in visitor numbers from Britain in 2011.

The global success of Swedish crime writers over the past few years has not only sparked the interest of Hollywood, but has exploded the clean Swedish stereotypes of ABBA, Ikea and Saab, with an altogether darker socio-political backdrop.

Strangely this has created a tourism niche. ‘Salander’ and ‘Wallander’ tours have now popped up in Stockholm and Ystad. Salander – Lisbeth Salander - or the unorthodox ‘Girl with the Dragon Tattoo’ is author Stieg Larrsson’s heroine across his Millennium crime trilogy, while we know Wallander best for being brought to life by Kenneth Branagh in the Wallander series, penned by Henning Mankell.

Despite the exposure of some of the seamier aspects of Sweden, the Millenium trilogy films, which will be remade by Hollywood, have also highlighted the country’s stunning landscapes. The two-hour tours of Stockholm take in key

settings for the novels, while it is also possible to visit the beautiful surrounding archipelago.

Meanwhile there are several guided and culinary tours of the medieval streets of Ystad – Sweden’s southern most town, and home of Wallander.

Coinciding with this rise of interest is the launch of two new flights in late 2010 to Gothenburg on Sweden’s west coast. British Airways from Heathrow and easyJet from Gatwick have highlighted Sweden’s second city as “chic and cosmopolitan” as well as its culinary credentials, which boasts five Michelin-starred restaurants. As well as providing a good choice of cheaper accommodation than Stockholm, there’s easy access to the rugged west coast – including the ‘frighteningly beautiful’ fishing community of Fjällbacka, north of Gothenburg, which is also a backdrop for a series of crime fighting novels by best-selling author Camilla Läckberg. This town dates back to the 1600s, has long been popular with Swedes with its cobbled streets, red boathouses and wonderful view of the nearby archipelago of islands.

Indeed, Sweden can boast clean air, pretty fishing villages, surprisingly warm summers and extraordinarily great design, and it is not quite as expensive as it used to be.

Further reading can be found at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/boyd-tonkin-a-view-into-the-hornets-nest-2137743.html>

<http://www.vastsverige.com/en/West-Sweden/Articles/Activities/Holiday-ideas---Crime-writers---good-enough-to-die-for/>

<http://bookblog.scandinavianbooks.com/camilla-lackbergs-10-favorite-swedish-crime-novels/>

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- If you are travelling with children other than your own you should be in possession of a letter of consent from the child's parent/guardian.
- From 1 December - 31 March (irrespective of weather conditions) Swedish registered cars are required by law to have either studded tyres or unstudded friction tyres bearing the following mark: M+S, M-s, M.S, M&S, MS or Mud and Snow.
- Tick-borne encephalitis is common to Sweden, especially in the summer months around coastal areas, especially the Stockholm Archipelago.

*For up to date travel information for Sweden visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

### **Estonia**

Capital city Tallin is set to assume the mantle of European Capital Culture for 2011, a move which should cement its reputation as one of the brightest stars of the Baltic. Events are planned for every day of the year, but beyond the city, the nearby countryside and islands will transport you to an altogether more traditional and rural existence. The expected surge in visitors will follow a recent trend — figures show that Estonia attracted well in excess of 1.2 million international tourists in the first half of 2010, an increase of more than 13% on the previous year. As a result, Ryanair has just announced its first routes into the country, serving Stansted and Edinburgh; Easyjet is beginning a three-times weekly service from Liverpool in April, complementing its existing flights from Stansted, and, not to be outdone, national carrier Estonian Air is doubling its capacity to Gatwick from March. [www.visitestonia.com](http://www.visitestonia.com).

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- Be aware that the substance known as Khat (Kat, or Quat), which is not a controlled substance in the UK, is classed as an illegal drug in Estonia and carries the same penalties as other illegal drugs.
- You can drive in Estonia on a UK driving licence. If you intend to drive your own vehicle in Estonia you must also have the original V5 C (Vehicle Registration Document). The Estonian Border Guards will impound your vehicle if you do not have this.
- By law, headlights of vehicles must be on at all times, including daylight hours.

*For up to date travel information for Estonia visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## **Spain**

Our favourite destination will also be a hot one for 2011. In the wars over price, certain accommodation and local service providers have lowered their costs to try and draw some of the business being won by non-euro spots like Turkey and Egypt.

There's also been a rise in awareness of the product on offer away from the coast, with discerning travellers in particular now being presented with more options to explore the world-class attributes of the interior, both urban and rural, while this spring, a new Carmen Thyssen Museum is set to open in Malaga which will house 180 works from Andalusian artists.

Meanwhile, getting around has become even easier with the relatively recent introduction of the AVE high-speed rail links between Barcelona and Madrid, and Madrid and Valencia (due 19 December 2010).

2011 can also look forward to some increased flight capacity from the UK to Spain. The much needed extra flights from Scotland will be provided by jet2.com from Glasgow and Edinburgh, while many Spanish destinations including Mallorca, which suffered badly from route cuts last year, will see some capacity put back on during the winter.

Perhaps thanks to the 'slow break' concept in Ibiza, which merges two concepts together – the 'short break' and the 'slow movement' lifestyle, which targets the fast paced lifestyle and encourages visitors to make the most of their stay and enjoy some well earned respite with an invitation to connect with nature, the environment and our surroundings - BA will start to fly from Ibiza two months earlier than normal from London City Airport - in March, while Ryanair is operating to the island on a year round basis and further new routes from East Midlands airport are scheduled.

And while certain parts of the travel industry are in flux, Spain's main draws — its weather, its beaches, its culture and its food — remain as constant as ever.

[www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info)

**Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- British nationals make around 13 million visits to Spain each year (source: Instituto de Estudios Turísticos), making it one of the most-visited countries by Britons anywhere in the world.
- There are some smoking restrictions in bars, restaurants and workplaces. There are also strict controls on drinking and sexual activity in public places, including beaches, where regulations have increased significantly. Fines range from €30-1,500.
- If driving, you must carry two red warning triangles, a reflective jacket for every occupant of the car, a spare wheel, spare bulbs, tools and a spare set of glasses if you need glasses to drive.

*For up to date travel information for Spain visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## **Greece**

Greece has been in the press in 2010 for all the wrong reasons, but its problems have largely affected the capital, and not the surrounding tourist destinations or islands.

Still, it comes as some surprise that the Peloponnese can boast some fabulous new high-end offerings. On the outskirts of the medieval town of Monemvasia, the Kinsterna Hotel & Spa – is a restored Byzantine-era mansion, while a new sustainable resort - the Costa Navarino - situated within the Messina region is set to redefine the Greek holiday experience in 2011. Appealing to the well-healed holidaymaker, this beautiful area will see an array of hotels, residences, golf courses, shops, bars and restaurants, and extensive family facilities, although the building footprint will only make up 10 per cent of the area. The Westin and The Romanos are already open there while others from the Four Seasons and Banyan Tree are yet to come – the latter is scheduled to be Europe’s first all-pool villa resort. [www.costanavarino.com](http://www.costanavarino.com).

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- In order to comply with Greek law, you should ensure that you obtain a receipt for goods purchased. If you purchase pirate CDs or DVDs in Greece you could be imprisoned.
- Indecent behaviour, including mooning, is not tolerated. The police will not hesitate to arrest those who do it. Be aware that the courts impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently. Some fancy dress costumes may offend the local Greek authorities and be considered as contravening decency laws.
- Certain areas near the Greek borders are militarily sensitive. Although these areas can be visited without any problems, do not take photographs or make notes near military or official installations. In addition, travellers should seek permission before photographing individuals.

*For up to date travel information for Greece visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Mid Haul

### Abu Dhabi

As part of a vision for 2030 to create Abu Dhabi as a centre of culture, sport and tourism, 2010 saw the Emirate open Ferrari World, with the world's fastest rollercoaster, which reaches speeds 240 km/h – 149 mph, and hosts the nail-biting final race of the Formula 1 season. These developments – which have already taken up millions of dollars of investment are just parts in a jigsaw which will eventually see Guggenheim and Louvre museums open here. Alongside these attractions, are stunning five star hotel such as the Yas Hotel, which is situated on Yas Marina and overlooks the Formula One Circuit. The aim is to attract high rolling, luxury customers from around the world.

All these developments are creating serious competition to Dubai, which itself has its own impressive openings in 2011. Palazzo Versace, the Jumeriah Zabeel Saray and Royal Amwaj Resort and Spa, are all luxurious **beachside resorts** located on **Palm Jumeirah**.

#### Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice

- In Abu Dhabi avoid the gold, green and white street taxis, which can be badly maintained and erratically driven.
- British nationals who are in the UAE on a visit visa can drive a rental car using their British driving licence. British nationals living in the UAE with a residence permit must obtain a UAE driving licence.
- Possession of even the smallest amount of illegal drugs can lead to a minimum four year jail sentence. Care should also be taken about the import of prescription drugs and some over-the-counter drugs. Passengers in transit under the influence of drink or drugs may also be arrested and can face four years in jail.

*For up to date travel information for Abu Dhabi visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Turkey

Turkey has enjoyed another powerful year, with UK visitor numbers up by 12% in the first nine months of 2010 — this is on the back of a similar rise in 2009.

Awareness of what the country has to offer has increased greatly in the past few years, and the fact it provides both high-quality beach holidays and sense-assaulting cultural breaks has worked very much in its favour. The issue of cost is also a major factor, of course, and even with sterling starting to look stronger against the euro, it's likely the Turkish lira will again be the holiday currency of choice for a large section of British sun-seekers. The province of Mugla — home to Bodrum, Olu Deniz, Marmaris and Fethiye — remains the most popular spot for travellers from the UK. [www.gototurkey.co.uk](http://www.gototurkey.co.uk)

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- Dress modestly if visiting a mosque or a religious shrine.
- It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag or to deface or tear up currency.
- The use of metal detectors is against the law.

*For up to date travel information for Turkey visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Egypt

The pull of the Red Sea resorts is expected to again be strong. Good weather, value for money and the very high spec of the mostly newly built hotels are all assured. Many choose the all-inclusive option to help balance holiday budgets. Growth is again likely to continue in 2011.

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- If you are the victim of any crime you must report it to the Tourist Police immediately. Failure to report crimes before you leave Egypt will make it impossible to seek a prosecution at a later date.
- If you are considering diving or snorkelling in any of the Red Sea resorts be aware that safety standards of diving operators can vary considerably.
- Drinking in the street and anywhere other than a licensed restaurant or bar is not allowed and can lead to arrest.

*For up to date travel information for Egypt visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Syria

As a political destination, it is controversial, but as a cultural one, Syria is a gem and is home to two of the oldest cities on the planet, but it is only recently that influential operators such as Kuoni has sold it. Overall visitor numbers in the first nine months of 2010 rose by a whopping 46% on 2009, and are set to advance even further with the news that more than 600 tourism projects (worth an estimated £3.8 billion) are currently being undertaken. The destination itself gives visitors a spellbinding taste of the Middle East: Damascus and Aleppo both couple a heady exoticism with a safe, welcoming atmosphere, while the magnificent Palmyra — a deserted Silk Road city complete with stunning remains — provides an example of Syria's extraordinary heritage sites.

[www.syriatourism.org](http://www.syriatourism.org)

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- Driving at night outside main cities is unsafe and should be avoided when possible.
- The punishment for possession of drugs is life imprisonment. For drug trafficking, the death penalty applies.
- Whether or not you have a visa you should be aware that if your passport contains an Israeli stamp or stamps from other countries' border crossing points with Israel, you will be refused entry to Syria.

*For up to date travel information for Syria visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## **Morocco**

As the closest non-euro destination, Morocco has become increasingly popular over recent times, but in 2011 it will get an extra boost with a new direct British Airways service to Marrakech and a wealth of new luxury hotels, including the all-private riad Royal Mansour, and Amanjena, the first Amanresorts property in Africa.

Despite its proximity, Morocco still maintains a very exotic appeal with its soukhs, beaches and ancient cities, and as Brits become more adventurous in their holiday choices, Morocco ticks all the boxes.

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- If offered the services of a guide, you should ensure that the guide is authorised by or operating with the agreement of the local tourist authorities, and displays an official badge. Harassment of tourists by men posing as official tourist guides is common. There have also been reports of tourists being harassed on Moroccan trains.
- Women, especially when travelling alone, will attract attention. To minimise hassle, you should dress inconspicuously and avoid wearing clothes that could be regarded as provocative
- When entering the country, particularly during the busy summer months, you should ensure that your passports are stamped. You will then be able to stay in Morocco for up to three months. Some tourists have experienced difficulties leaving the country because their passports bear no entry stamp

*For up to date travel information for Morocco visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Tunisia

As a non-euro destination, Tunisia started to get serious appeal a few years ago and since then it has upgraded many of its hotels. 2010 saw a year-on-year increase of 31.2% in visitor numbers from the UK.

It is well set to attract even greater attention in 2011. While it is able to offer year-round sunshine, a non-euro currency, a vibrant local culture and new and improved hotels, there is now also a greater range of options for British visitors. Both TUI and Thomas Cook are introducing flights to the Tunisian island of Djerba for the first time in April 2011, while Jet2.com has announced a direct service from Glasgow to the coastal city of Monastir, to commence at the same time. The national carrier, Tunisair, will be running flights from Manchester to Enfidha on the north-east coast. These announcements come at a time when the country has reported an increase in British visitors of more than 30%, with almost 320,000 arrivals in the first 10 months of 2010. [www.tourismtunisia.com](http://www.tourismtunisia.com)

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- Tourists have to obtain permission from the Tunisian authorities to enter certain desert areas on the borders with Algeria and the southern military zones and must travel with licensed guides and/or military escorts – you should seek advice from a reputable agent.
- Be aware that it is not permitted to remove antiquities from Tunisia without first obtaining permission from Customs authorities. Failure to do so could result in lengthy delays on departure, fines and/or imprisonment.
- Tunisian family law is very different from UK law and particular caution is needed when, for example, child custody becomes an issue.

*For up to date travel information for Tunisia visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Iraq

The country attended World Travel Market for the first time in 2009 and exhibited for the first time in 2010. British visitors are still scarce, and unlikely to hit very high numbers in 2011, but withdrawal of troops has meant that there are billions of dollars worth of investment and construction projects are underway, and this could well be a 'slow-burn' destination.

Religious tourism from Iran and international business visitors make up the majority of the visitors so far, to destinations such as Najaf, but investment in infrastructure, the availability of direct flights from most western European countries and the fact that Iraq was the cradle of civilisation and home to the oldest archaeological sites on the planet, means that there is scope for wider appeal. There is even a suggestion of opening up Basra as a cruise stop, while Kurdistan is pouring investment into tourism and promoting the northern region of Iraq for shopping and adventure tourism in mountain resorts.

### **FCO travel advice**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office *advises against all travel to specific parts of Iraq, including Baghdad. The FCO also advises against all but essential travel to other specific parts of Iraq.*

*For up to date travel information for Iraq visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Long Haul

### New Zealand

The Rugby World Cup will take place in New Zealand in September and October 2011. Rugby fans from the UK, who will take the trip are likely to use the opportunity to see both the games and the country, which boast spectacular landscapes – from mountain ranges, to sub-tropical rainforests, extreme adventure activities, worldclass vineyards, and fabulous nature watching.

Packages can be arranged through the official UK travel companies including ABTA Members Thomas Cook Sport and Gullivers.

#### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- If you are visiting remote areas, ensure that your journey details are made known to local authorities or friends/relatives before setting out. Weather conditions can quickly become treacherous, especially in winter.
- Whilst road conditions are generally good in New Zealand, it takes a little while to get used to local driving conditions. Even the main highways can be narrow, windy and hilly.
- New Zealand has very strict bio-security regulations. It is illegal to import most foodstuffs (meat and meat products, honey, fruit, dairy produce etc) and strict penalties are handed out to those breaking these rules.

*For up to date travel information for New Zealand visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

### Sri Lanka

The peace dividend in Sri Lanka has been considerable. The ceasefire to the conflict in the north of Sri Lanka was finally called in April 2009, and month-by-month UK visitor figures for the first 10 months of 2010 are, on average, almost 30% higher than those in 2009, with overall international arrivals showing an increase of nearly 45%. But Sri Lanka has it all. Good value for money – even compared to India. Stunning palm-tree fringed beaches, verdant national parks, wildlife including elephants - and an evocative Buddhist culture, replete with saffron robed monks.

Adventurous travellers have long eyed up the out of bounds east coast, but now the area is opening up, and will be keen to welcome visitors. The area around Trincomalee has seas and beaches of the same quality found in the Maldives, and is near to the heritage sites of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya, while the climate is different - and best visited during the summer, while the better-known south and west are exactly the opposite. A further spike in UK arrivals is expected when the Cricket World Cup takes place from late February to early April. [www.srilankatourism.org](http://www.srilankatourism.org).

**Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- Credit card fraud is the most common type of crime affecting visitors. It is advisable to use cash wherever possible and to use ATMs attached to banks or major hotels. Do not let your credit card leave your sight when you use it.
- You can be fined if you ignore instructions not to smoke or drink in certain public areas.
- Many beaches in Sri Lanka have dangerous surf or rip tides at certain times of the year, always take local advice before entering the sea. There are dangerous undercurrents and strong riptides in many coastal areas of Sri Lanka. A number of cases of drowning of foreign nationals have occurred in recent months. You should follow local advice, e.g. from your hotel, before bathing in the sea.

*For up to date travel information for Sri Lanka visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## The USA

For the traveller, sterling has recently fared well against the US dollar, making it a very good value for money destination once again. New York, Florida and Los Angeles are the top destinations for Brits, and Orlando is set to be high in the popularity stakes again thanks to the opening of Harry Potter's Wizarding World last summer and the high interest which will inevitably surround the final Potter film due out in July 2011.

### Laws and customs – 'Did You Know' facts & FCO advice

- Do not make flippant remarks about bombs or terrorism, especially when passing through US airports.
- Laws vary from state to state, including speed limits and the age of consent.
- Medical treatment can be very expensive; there are no special arrangements for British visitors. The British Embassy and Consulates-General cannot assist you with medical expenses. You should ensure that you have comprehensive medical insurance, which includes hospital treatment and medical evacuation to the UK.

*For up to date travel information for the USA visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Puerto Rico

The Puerto Rican Government and tourism bureau have launched simultaneous campaigns sparking tourism and private investment, while BA is launching a new route to the Caribbean country in 2011.

### Laws and customs – 'Did You Know' facts & FCO advice

- Driving conditions can be hazardous, due to steep and narrow mountain roads, and poor driving standards.
- Recreational or commercial fishing without the correct permit carries steep penalties.
- There is only one hospital in the British Virgin Islands and medical facilities are limited. Complex medical problems are frequently referred to hospitals in the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, or the mainland USA. The US visa waiver scheme does not apply to one-off charter flights. Special arrangements have to be made for any non-US visa holder who is medically evacuated by charter flight.

*For up to date travel information for the Puerto Rico visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Peru

2011 marks 100 years since the rediscovery of Machu Picchu by Hiram Bingham.

### Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice

- You should be particularly careful when arriving at Lima’s Jorge Chavez International Airport. Unwary passengers are often approached by thieves masquerading as tour operators, people who pretend to know them or by bogus taxi drivers.
- You can drive for up to six months in Peru on a UK driving licence and up to one year on an international driving licence. In either case, you should carry your passport with you to prove how long you have been in the country.
- You are **not** allowed to take any archaeological artefacts from the country without the proper authority.

For up to date travel information for Peru visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

## Nepal

2011 is ‘Nepal Tourism Year’ and new trekking trails have been opened.

### Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice

- Bars and restaurants are now required to close at midnight as part of a Government crackdown on illegal activities. This means that after this time the streets around the city are poorly lit and relatively few people are about.
- Trekking in Nepal often involves travelling to very remote areas. Treks often take longer than expected, which can worry family and friends. The availability of phone (including mobile phone reception) and Internet services is extremely limited. It is likely that during a trek you will be unable to contact family and friends for a long period of time.
- Ensure that you, your trekking guide or company has registered your trek with the Trekkers Information Management System (TIMS). Rules state that foreign trekkers will not be allowed access to National Parks without a valid TIMS card.

For up to date travel information for Nepal visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

## **Mexico**

British Airways is increasing flights to Cancun – the most popular area for Brits - in 2011. It launched the route in November and is set to increase to three flights per week from 26th March 2011. Mexico's interior is also being promoted to the British traveller, particularly with new hotels such as Rosewood in San Miguel de Allende - the oldest town in the northern mountains of Mexico.

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- The police sometimes ask foreigners to show some form of identification. You may wish to carry photocopies of the relevant pages of your passport and important documents and leave the originals in a safe place.
- The hurricane season in Mexico normally runs from June to November and can affect both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.
- Be wary of strangers approaching you in person or contacting you by telephone, requesting personal information or financial help. They may be part of a scam operation. In particular, be wary of persons presenting themselves as police officers attempting to fine or arrest you for no apparent reason.

*For up to date travel information for the Mexico visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## **Brazil**

Brazil has been tipped as a travel trend on many occasions, but with the country set to host the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016 there will be huge government investment in the tourist infrastructure, which should take the country to another level.

Fashionable and fun, Brazil isn't cheap compared with other South American destinations, and its huge scale means visitors invariably require internal flights, but there is a wealth of choice in holiday experiences when it comes to Brazil, whether it is the sun-kissed beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, the panoramic views of Rio de Janeiro from Sugar Loaf Mountain, the immense power of the Amazon river, rainforests and beauty of Iguazu Falls, Brazil can't fail to impress.

### **Laws and customs – ‘Did You Know’ facts & FCO advice**

- The North of Brazil has reported a number of cases of dengue type 4. These cases have been reported in the state of Roraima which is located in the Amazon region. According to the Ministry of Health the most affected municipalities in Roraima are Boa Vista, Cantá and Normandia. If you are travelling to Roraima state please monitor local media reports.
- You should be particularly vigilant before and during the festive and Carnival periods, as there is often a seasonal upsurge in robberies around this time.
- Foreign nationals are entitled to unforeseen emergency medical treatment in Brazilian public hospitals. However, they are not obliged to offer treatment for existing illnesses or care after you have been stabilised. Public hospitals in Brazil, especially in major cities, tend to be crowded. Private hospitals will not accept you unless you can present evidence of sufficient funds or insurance.

*For up to date travel information for the Brazil visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)*

## Cruise

Cruise is a sector still in growth. Headline launches of the Queen Elizabeth, Norwegian Epic and the Allure of the Seas in 2010 along with 12 other ships, will help to ensure an 8% growth that will see 1.77 million Britons cruise in 2011. The Cruise industry is also rightly proud of its ability to offer value for money, great customer service, innovation and recession-busting prices.

Although the number of new ships in 2011 for the British market has halved, there will still be seven new ships launched. There will be no shortage of choice, and capacity will be available for both new and experienced cruisers and for both those who want to fly and cruise or to depart directly from the UK.

The new ships will be:

1. The Marina from Oceania Cruises will sail the US West coast and Caribbean until March 2011 and then the Mediterranean and northern Europe in the summer.
2. Disney Dream from Disney Cruise Line. The ship will have the first water-coaster at sea – Aqua Duck - which will travel 233 metres around the ship and has a four deck drop. Inside cabins will have virtual portholes to give a sea view. Disney Dream will sail three, four and five night cruises year round from Port Canaveral, calling a Nassau and Castaway Cay, Disney's private island.
3. L'Austral from Compagnie Du Ponant - a French cruise line. A mega-yacht with 132 cabins. The ambience is chic but casual to make you feel that you are on your own private yacht. Itineraries range from the Adriatic, Medierranean and Antarctica.

4. Carnival Magic from Carnival Cruise Line. A floating resort and 'fun ship' with Carnival's first pub at sea, water slides and a ropes course with nets 150 feet above the sea. Mediterranean itineraries during the summer and Caribbean cruises from Texas in the winter.
5. Seabourn Quest from Yachts of Seabourn. From the company that prides itself on a personal service. This ship has just 225 suites and offers casual cruising, luxury- style. A maiden 109-day cruise from Fort Lauderdale to Venice will kick off the itineraries.
6. Costa Favolosa, Costa Cruises. This Italian cruise company always dazzles with outlandish décor and this time the ship promises to resemble a contemporary enchanted castle. (Favolosa means 'like a fairytale' – or 'fabulous' in Italian). A new aqua park will join the signature favourites of a Grand Prix simulator, 4D cinema and spa. Itineraries go from Venice to the Greek islands, Turkey and Croatia.
7. Celebrity Silhouette, Celebrity Cruises. This ship will offer 12 night cruises to Greece, Israel and Egypt from Civitavecchia in summer and 12 night Caribbean cruises from Fort Lauderdale in winter.

Sensible cruisers will also choose to buy their cruise as part of a package. Some, who booked flights independent of their cruise trips for April lost their holidays as a result of the ash cloud crisis, whereas those who bought a package got refunds or had their holidays rearranged.

Brits increasingly like cruising from a UK port rather than flying to join a ship, and Carnival UK's survey of frequent cruisers showed that 50% of respondents preferred to cruise from a UK port. There is now a greater choice of UK cruise ports to choose to sail from. In 2011, a new cruise terminal will open in Portsmouth, and the All Leisure Group will use it as their new base too.

The hot cruise itineraries for 2011 are set to be the Far East, Middle East and rivers including the Mekong Delta, the Yangtze and the Russian waterways.

#### **FCO advice for cruise holidays**

Cruising is statistically the safest form of transport in the travel industry and takes place under strict security conditions. But there are a few things you should be aware of. Visit [www.fco.gov.uk/cruising](http://www.fco.gov.uk/cruising) before taking a cruise holiday.

## **12. Weddings and Honeymoons**

The announcement of the Royal Wedding of the Year in 2011 has sent the media into a Wills & Kate frenzy.

Destinations that the couple have already visited, such as the Seychelles and the very romantic Kenyan proposal, have already piqued travellers' interest, while London as the backdrop for the big day itself has already seen hotel prices rocket.

Speculation is rife about where the honeymoon will be – as it too could set a somewhat pricey trend. Despite the recession, the luxury market is doing well with many destinations set to launch new high end hotels in 2011, from Dubai, the Peloponnese in Greece, to Sri Lanka and Peru.

The Royal Yacht Britannia has been ruled out as it was taken out of service in 1997 (and is its own fascinating tourist destination in Edinburgh), but a round the world tour could also be possible.

While no normal mortal will be spending what Wills and Kate are due to spend on their wedding, research company Mintel have discovered that marrying in the UK will set a couple back as much as £20,000, whereas the average cost of a

wedding abroad is about £6,500. This is why an estimated 51,300 ceremonies take place overseas, and the Halifax claims that 1.4 million Brits will attend at least one wedding abroad this year while more than 4 million have been to one the past three years.

Top Honeymoon destinations:

The UK

The US

The Caribbean

The Maldives

Mauritius

**Foreign Office advice for overseas weddings and civil partnerships:**

**Planning your wedding**

- Do some research on marriage in the country you are planning to hold your wedding in
- Find out what specific documents the local authorities require - these may take some months to prepare
- Check if you need visas to enter the country or if you need to provide proof of residency in the country
- If you are planning to marry in a tropical country visit your GP well in advance of travel to check what vaccinations and medication you'll need
- Buy adequate travel insurance - you may also want to buy specialist insurance which will cover the ceremony (and your wedding dress!)
- Get written quotes from wedding planners, venues or other services before you sign contracts
- Remember any guests you invite will need to obtain visas, get relevant vaccinations and purchase travel insurance too!

*Visit [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) for more advice on preparing for a wedding abroad*

### **13. Technology and Social Media**

Smartphones with geo-localisation services based on GPS technology have already revolutionised the travel industry in a very short space of time.

Business travellers were the first consumer group to adopt mobile travel technology due to the need to make last minute reservations, and now thanks to the success of smartphones and particularly devices such as the iPhone and iPad, leisure consumers are quickly catching up.

Smartphone penetration is expected to reach 92% in Europe by 2014 according to Ovum, with mobile phones set to overtake PCs as the most common web access device. Euromonitor International forecast that 50% of European travellers will use a smartphone to find travel information and/or make reservations by 2015.

Now only the high cost of international roaming provides any major obstacles to further high-speed growth.

Mobile applications or 'apps' offer various services from flight booking and check-in, to guidebooks, tourist information, building an itinerary, and providing useful information on where you are currently situated. There's high expectation that the first bookable package holiday app will appear in 2011.

It is believed that these GPS-based applications will impact booking behaviour, and lead to even shorter booking windows. Booking excursions and attractions will be possible when travellers are at the destination and so again will favour last-minute bookings.

The industry is making the leap to this new stage in the evolutionary scale, and has embraced other new technology and social media platforms with enthusiasm. Social network applications such as Facebook for iPhone have become important developments for travel and tourism reservations and many travel companies have started offering Twitter followers last minute deals, or discounts through Facebook.

However, this year's WTM survey of holidaymakers, found that almost two-thirds of those polled said that they did not use any form of social media while researching their holiday. And less than a quarter plan to use it for a 2011 holiday. However, those that have used it for travel have found it to be a positive experience, and ABTA Members are reporting that increasing numbers of holidaymakers are checking customer review sites before they book.

A World Travel Market survey also found that 65% of tourism industry senior executives believed that the biggest consumer trend over the next five years would be booking holidays using new technologies.

**To get up to date travel advice on the go sign up to the British Abroad Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/fcotraveladvice](http://www.facebook.com/fcotraveladvice) or keep up to date via Twitter: <http://twitter.com/britishabroad>**

#### **14. Sustainability – Travel For the Future**

During the past five years, all the major players within the UK travel industry have realized that sustainability is the key to their future. Many iconic tourist destinations such as destinations such as the Great Barrier Reef, ski resorts and the Maldives – have fragile ecosystems that are under threat. The industry is well aware that if those environments are damaged and their biodiversity depleted, holidaymakers will no longer visit them. Similarly, communities where tourism is popular don't always benefit from visitors, and sometimes their livelihoods can be harmed by insensitive development.

Sustainable travel means making sure local people benefit economically from the tourism to their home, as well as protecting and preserving the environments we holiday in.

Now in 2010, it is possible for ordinary holidaymakers to buy an 'ordinary' holiday for no higher a price tag and for it to be sensitive to the environment, biodiversity and local communities.

Initiatives such as ABTA's Travelife Sustainability System, can help travellers make sustainable choices through their favourite tour operators. This scheme audits hotels and ranks them according to their sustainable practices. The top performers are accredited with a Gold, Silver or Bronze Travelife award. Tour operators supporting the scheme promote these achievements through brochures and websites, which give consumers more choices when it comes to choosing ethical holidays.

A World Travel Market Survey also found that 33% of tourism industry senior executives believed that there would be a surge in environmentally aware holidays over the next five years. With global travel due to increase by 2 billion people travelling in the next 30 years, the tourism industry is a key driver of the world economy, and has the potential to alleviate poverty, but it is crucial that growth is managed in a sustainable way. In 2011, Tourism Concern will concentrate their campaigns on human rights for tourism workers and destination communities adversely affected by tourism and water conservation, while the Travel Foundation provides funds raised through mainstream holiday companies for development projects in destinations.

## **15. Snowsports**

Despite a slow start to the 2010/11 season, the bad weather at the end of November has inspired snow lovers, and bookings have picked up dramatically, as resorts opened early. Sterling's performance against the pound will also bring living costs back to an affordable level.

According to the 2010 Crystal report, there was an 11% decrease in the UK snowsports market during the 2009/10 season with skiers numbers dipping to under a million compared to more than 1.06m during the previous winter.

The difficult financial climate and weak pound were amongst the factors attributed to the decrease whilst extreme weather conditions in the UK, airline strikes and the ash-cloud crisis also affected the industry.

The most popular ski destinations are:

1. France
2. Austria.
3. Italy
4. Andorra.
5. Switzerland
6. North America.
7. Bulgaria

Other destinations such as Serbia and Slovenia will continue to see a rise in interest as British tourists become more aware that they offer a range of high quality holidays but at lower prices.

As Christmas and New Year fall on a Saturday, tour operators have shifted departure days, and a late Easter will see family breaks taken at snow sure resorts. Tour operators have continued to take the lion share of the market in the ski and snowboard sector as they continue offer good value, convenience, service and security, which, with such an action packed holiday, can make the experience a great deal more enjoyable. This year, Crystal is launching mobile information packs for customers, which will join a range of apps available for skiers on the mountain.

#### **FCO winter sports advice**

- Make sure you have the right insurance to cover winter sports activities as these are generally not included under standard travel insurance policies
- Check your policy covers all the activities you want to do (skiing/snowboarding/off-piste)
- Take your EHIC if visiting countries in the European Economic Area, but make sure you know where EHIC isn't valid (e.g. Andorra). You can apply for an EHIC online at [www.ehic.org.uk](http://www.ehic.org.uk) or by phone on 0845 605 0707. For full cover you need to pack your EHIC and take out travel insurance
- Be aware that alcohol can affect you more quickly at high altitudes and most insurers won't pay out if you injure yourself or others if you've been drinking alcohol
- Make sure you use good quality equipment and protect yourself against injury. Know your own ability – it might not be a good idea to attempt a black run after two days on the beginner slopes!

*Visit [www.fco.gov.uk/wintersports](http://www.fco.gov.uk/wintersports) for more advice on preparing for a winter sports holiday*