



# **ABTA Travel Trends Report 2014**

The Travel Association

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## **2013 Market Overview**

Challenging market conditions continued in 2013, with increases to the cost of living in the UK, economic uncertainty in the Eurozone and political unrest in some popular holiday destinations. Despite this 80% of British consumers continued to holiday<sup>1</sup>, which is on a par with 2012.

ABTA Members reported a very strong start to 2013, with bookings perhaps being driven by the cold winter of 2012/13. The impact of the weather was certainly felt later in the year with a significant fall in the lates market in July and August when the UK experienced a heatwave.

The most popular overseas holiday destinations in 2013 for Brits were: Spain, Greece, USA, France, Cyprus, Italy, Turkey and Tunisia. Longer haul, Burma and Vietnam saw notable increases in the number of British visitors. Bolstered by excellent summer weather and a feel good factor created by 2012's Olympic year, domestic tourism also enjoyed a positive year with traditional seaside resorts and cities popular with holidaymakers.

A number of popular holiday destinations were affected by political, social and economic unrest in 2013. The most prominent of these was Egypt which started the year with high visitor numbers but suffered a significant drop off due to political unrest leading to changes to Foreign Office advice for UK citizens. Bookings to Cyprus were also hit in the spring by concerns over its economic situation; however, the country has now recovered. On a smaller scale protests in Istanbul brought Turkey into the media in June. Towards the end of the year, the US Government Shutdown created tourist confusion as many attractions were closed to the public and in November a devastating typhoon hit The Philippines, which will impact their plans to grow tourism.

Continuing the trend from recent years, package holidays were the most popular type of booking for those taking an overseas holiday during 2013. Analysis of people who took an overseas holiday in the 12 months to August 2013 shows that 46%, around 16.5 m, of holidaymakers booked a package; a similar number to the 48% who took an overseas holiday package in 2012 and up from 37% in 2010. Care, convenience and the best value option for the price were the primary reasons for taking a package. All-inclusive packages were also in demand; 35% of those who took a package said that wanting to go all-inclusive was a key reason for booking it.

ABTA saw its Members' turnover reach £31.5 billion for the 2012-13 financial year, which ended on 30th June 2013. This increase from £30.2 billion for 2011-12 and £29.3 billion in 2010-11 indicates growing consumer confidence and the continuing central role played by travel agents and tour operators in the UK holiday market.

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<sup>1</sup> Research referenced throughout the report is taken from the ABTA Consumer Trends survey 2013 unless otherwise specified. Consumer research was conducted by Arkenford Ltd ([www.arkenford.co.uk](http://www.arkenford.co.uk)) who specialise in tourism and leisure market research. The ABTA Consumer Trends survey generated response from a nationally representative sample of 2008 consumers using an online research methodology and related to holiday booking habits in the 12 months to August 2013. Fieldwork was conducted in August 2013.



## **2014 Market Outlook**

Broader economic indicators show that the UK economy and consumer confidence improved towards the end of 2013 and even though the squeeze on household incomes is expected to continue into 2014, the outlook for the holiday market is cautiously optimistic.

The findings of ABTA's Consumer Survey 2013 indicate that consumers intend to spend more on their holidays in 2014 than they did in 2013; nearly one in five (19%) consumers anticipate they will spend more on holidays next year compared to 16% who anticipate they will spend less. Value for money is expected to remain a key consideration for holidaymakers in 2014 although ABTA research shows that consumers are expected to place less emphasis on getting the lowest price.

Younger people (aged 16-24) are the most positive about 2014 with 29% saying they will spend more on holidays than in 2013. At the other end of the market, the baby boomers (those aged 55-64) look to be driving growth in 2014, following the number of breaks taken by this age group increasing in 2013.

With a number of major sporting events occurring throughout 2014, including the FIFA World Cup in Brazil, sports tourism should see a strong year. The hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War One will also see thousands heading off to the battlefields of northern France and Belgium to pay their respects.

Beach holidays and city breaks are expected to remain the most popular holiday choices for 2014 and cruises and all-inclusives are also set to be in demand; with 10% of consumers considering a cruise, double the number who took a cruise in the 12 months to August 2013 and one in five (21%) saying they may take an all-inclusive in 2014 compared to 15% who took one in the past 12 months.

While consumer confidence is slowly increasing, many consumers are still feeling cautious about their finances and it is likely that tried and tested destinations close to home will continue to do well in 2014. Short-haul favourites that British tourists return to year after year including Spain, Greece, Italy, Turkey and France are likely to benefit from this trend. However some consumers are expected to choose a different resort or destination in these countries they know well and also look for different, more authentic experiences.

Popular long haul destinations including Mexico, Florida and the Caribbean will continue to attract Brits in 2014 with expansion from UK operators in Mexico, new attractions in Florida and renewed interest in Caribbean resorts. Holidaymakers heading east are just as likely to travel to the increasingly popular destinations of Burma, Vietnam and Sri Lanka as they are to traditional favourites like Thailand. For good weather a little closer to home, Dubai continues to attract British holidaymakers and is particularly well regarded by families. More details of emerging destinations and the ones to watch for 2014 can be found in this report.

## **2014 Domestic Outlook**

Domestic tourism in 2013 was boosted by the summer heat wave in particular. The Great Britain Tourism Survey<sup>2</sup> revealed an increase of nine per cent in domestic overnight holidays in Great Britain during July compared to 2012. ABTA's own research revealed seven in ten (70%) consumers took at least one UK holiday in 2013 with 16% taking four or more. The outlook for 2014 is also optimistic with many visitor attractions and accommodation providers reporting positive levels of forward bookings.

Destinations that look set to be big in 2014 include London, Manchester, York, Blackpool and Edinburgh for city breaks and the South West, Lake District and the Highlands for longer holidays. In terms of holiday accommodation, we can expect to see consumers choosing more up-market and sophisticated options. In recent years the term "glamping" has been used to describe the growth in popularity of camping holidays with added creature comforts. In 2014 the buzzword looks set to be "Poshtel", hostels that have been refurbished to provide a more luxurious and contemporary experience for their guests. The accommodation appeals to both single travellers looking for a more upmarket experience as well as couples and families looking for good value.

Building on the success of the London 2012 Olympics, sport is expected to feature strongly in domestic holidays. Cycling is particularly big for the UK in 2014; Yorkshire hosts the start of the Tour de France in July, before the peloton heads to Cambridge and London. Northern Ireland will host the start of the Giro d'Italia in May with pre-race celebrations in Belfast, and then racing from Armagh to Dublin. Scotland is welcoming the world with Glasgow hosting the Commonwealth Games in late July and keen golfers can head to Wales and Scotland with the Senior Open Championship hosted in Royal Porthcawl, Wales, in July for the first time, while in September the 40th Ryder Cup will travel to Gleneagles, Scotland.

Arts and cultural events are also expected to influence travel plans. The centenary of the birth of the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas will be celebrated across Wales, while in England it's 450 years since the birth of Shakespeare. Film and TV shows continue to influence consumer travel choices and in 2014 we can expect to see strong demand for tours in Northern Ireland to visit locations used in the popular Game of Thrones TV series, where visitors can explore the beautiful Causeway coast and Glens. The continuing popularity of Downton Abbey will inspire many to visit stately homes across the UK, where visitors can often find many more attractions such as flower shows, dog shows and car rallies to name a few. 2014 also marks the centenary of the start of World War One with commemoration events across the country.

The countryside will continue to inspire and attract holidaymakers. The National Forest Way, a 75 mile pathway will open between Staffordshire and Leicestershire. The Wales Coast Path which opened in 2013 has been a great success and is expected to continue to attract visitors. For the adventurous, English Heritage are creating underwater diving trails marking shipwrecks off the coast.

<sup>2</sup> Great Britain Tourism Survey – July results [http://www.visitengland.org/Images/July%202013%20-%20Commentary%20of%20results\\_tcm30-39180.pdf](http://www.visitengland.org/Images/July%202013%20-%20Commentary%20of%20results_tcm30-39180.pdf)

## **Key Trends 2014**

### ***1. Cautious optimism***

While consumer confidence showed signs of improvement in 2013, consumers are still feeling the squeeze with increases in the cost of living. However, there are signs that consumers are feeling more optimistic about the year ahead and the findings of ABTA's Consumer Trends survey 2013 point to consumers starting to feel more confident about their holiday spending. Nearly one in five (19%) consumers anticipate they will spend more on holidays in 2014 compared to 16% who anticipate they will spend less. The younger market (16-24 year olds) appears to be particularly positive about in 2014 with 29% saying they will spend more on holidays and just 13% saying they will spend less.

### ***2. Playing it safe***

While confidence might be returning we expect the majority of consumers will still be playing it safe with their holiday choices and how they book. Research shows safe and secure accommodation, financial protection and ABTA membership are at the top of people's booking essentials. Typically, consumers are more risk averse during a recession and this may continue to influence their choice of holiday or destination in 2014.

### ***3. Same country, different destination***

Tying into the above, rather than exploring a new destination, many consumers are opting to return to their tried and tested favourites but exploring a different part of the destination. Many tourists are attracted by the better value on offer in less well known resorts and the comfort factor of visiting a country they know and like. Some examples include: Sicily instead of Tuscany, Languedoc-Rousillon instead of the Cote D'Azur and Valencia instead of Barcelona.

### ***4. Package popularity***

The resurgence in popularity over the last few years of package holiday bookings is expected to continue into 2014. In 2013 46% of holidaymakers who took a foreign holiday booked a package and we'd expect the package to remain popular in 2014. The growth has been fuelled by consumers valuing having everything taken care of and the value offered by packages. At the same time the package holiday market has also evolved to offer greater choice and sophistication to holidaymakers as well as more tailor made tours and bespoke itineraries.

Packages are particularly popular with families with young children under the age of 5 and those aged 65+.

All-inclusives are also expected to see continued strong demand in 2014. The all-inclusive market has been a major beneficiary of the downturn and 2014 looks set to see further increases in demand for all-inclusives both at home and abroad, with 15% of respondents to ABTA's consumer survey saying they took an all-inclusive break in 2013 and 21% saying they'll consider taking one in 2014.

### ***5. Affluent consumers seeking simplicity***

The high end of the holiday market has been relatively unaffected by the downturn. While five star luxury is unlikely to ever go out of style, increasing numbers of affluent consumers are looking for less conspicuous holiday choices and seeking out simpler, more ethical and authentic experiences that are far removed from their hectic daily lives. Treehouses and farm stays plus volunteering opportunities are all new forms of luxury tourism.

### ***6. Train, coach and cruise***

Cruises are expected to continue to perform well in 2014 with many of the large cruise companies forecasting a strong year. ABTA is also seeing particular interest from 16-24 year olds for cruises with 19% saying they are considering a cruise in 2014, which is more than double the 7% that took one in 2013.

ABTA is also seeing strong interest in train and coach holidays, with 6% of consumers considering a coach holiday in 2014 and 7% considering a train holiday. The increase can be attributed to people seeking alternative options to flying, the growth of high speed rail, particularly across Europe, and consumers looking for good value holidays close to home.

### ***7. Age group trends***

In 2013 the baby boomers (those aged 55-64) were the only age group to experience growth in the average number of holidays taken per person. We expect holiday bookings to continue to be steady among this age group.

While younger consumers cut back on the number of holidays they took in 2013, they look set to bounce back in 2014 with 29% saying they will spend more on holidays and just 13% saying they will spend less.

## **Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

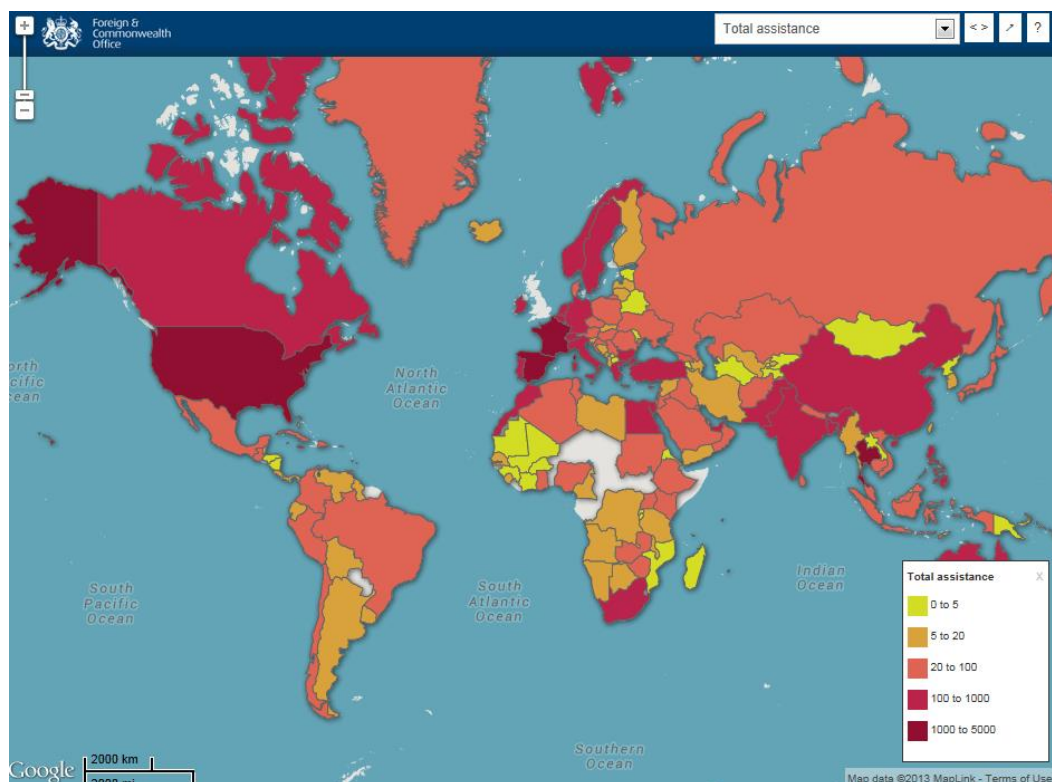
This year the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) supported more than 48,000 British nationals abroad, ranging from helping Britons who suffered injury and hospitalisation abroad to assisting individuals involved in international parental child abduction. More than 28,000 consular cases involved issuing emergency travel documents for lost, stolen or invalid passports.

ABTA and the FCO have collaborated for the sixth consecutive year on the Travel Trends report and continue to work together on travel safety campaigns. One example of this was a joint campaign launched in June 2013 to encourage people to ensure that their travel insurance policy covers them for whatever activities they might undertake while overseas; research showed that many Britons are more likely to undertake adventurous pursuits while on holiday, a number of which are not included in many basic travel insurance policies.

### ***Supporting British nationals abroad***

Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 FCO staff handled 19,244 consular assistance cases around the world. France greeted the highest number of British visitors – over 17 million in total. In line with previous years, the highest number of consular cases was recorded in Spain, the USA and France. Most consular assistance was provided for British nationals in Spain, which again saw nearly 5,000 cases relating to arrests, deaths, hospitalisations, rape and sexual assault.

To see how consular support around the world differed country-by-country, please click on the map below.





## Arrests

The overall number of arrests overseas decreased by 10%. The largest number of cases were handled in Spain (1,599) followed by the USA (1,120) and the United Arab Emirates (244). Although the overall number of arrests has decreased some countries saw an increase in cases, including the United Arab Emirates, Italy and the Netherlands. Drug arrests involving Brits abroad dropped to their lowest (669) since the report first launched in 2009 with a decrease of 32% compared to the number of cases in 2009/10, when figures were at their highest. Most drug arrest cases were handled in the USA (159) followed by Spain (103).

## Hospitalisations and deaths

The FCO handled 3,599 hospitalisation cases worldwide. Spain continues to be the country which sees the highest number of Britons hospitalised (899 cases). The number of hospitalisations is lower than last year as is the case for a number of other popular holiday hotspots on the Mediterranean. Consular staff have been working more closely with local hospitals and have strengthened ties with charities who support British nationals.

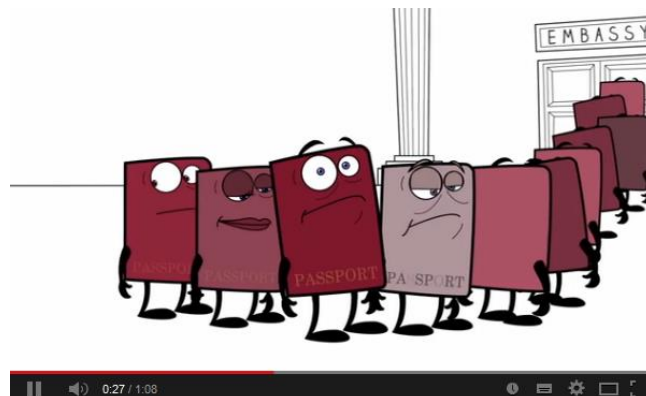
The number of hospitalisation cases handled in Thailand increased by around a third (31%) to 285 cases. Many of these are linked to a higher than average number of older expatriate Britons in the country and a high number of road traffic accidents.

6,193 British nationals died abroad between April 2012 and March 2013. 1,492 British nationals died in Spain, followed by France (820) and Germany (516).

## Passports

As in previous years, lost, stolen or invalid passports formed the majority of cases dealt with by FCO consular staff, with 28,783 reported incidents worldwide. Consular staff in Australia observed that they were being asked to issue emergency travel documents due to expired passports, while elsewhere in the world there were incidents of passport misuse or damage. This, alongside the increase in cases, prompted the FCO's Know Before You Go team to raise awareness of the issue.

The FCO recommends copying important documents such as your passport and storing them separately from the originals – if appropriate, on a secure data storage site online – to speed up the replacement process. You should also make sure that your passport is valid before travelling and be aware that some countries require a passport to be valid for six months after you travel.





Gillian Edwards, Senior Public Relations Manager, ABTA discusses ABTA's 2014 Travel Trends Report.

## **Destinations to Watch 2014**

What makes a destination stand out from others? It could be that it is hosting a major sporting event, celebrating a significant milestone, featuring in a Hollywood blockbuster or simply that its time has arrived. Here ABTA tips the destinations to watch in 2014. Our choices are based on the best insider knowledge and are designed to inspire holidaymakers to try out new experiences or destinations and see old favourites through new eyes.

## Brazil

No travel trends report for 2014 could ignore Brazil as this football mad country gears up to host the World Cup. Rio de Janeiro, the party capital of South America, will be hosting many matches including the final in the Maracana stadium and lucky fans will be greeted by the iconic sights of Sugar Loaf Mountain, the monumental statue of Christ the Redeemer and the beautiful people on Copacabana beach. For a look at the other side of Brazil try a visit on an organised tour to the favelas, or shanty towns. These tours offer a safe opportunity to contribute financially to these communities. Those with more time should head off to the rainforests of the Amazon River basin which cover almost half of Brazil; the awe inspiring Iguaçu falls on the border with Argentina and the vast tropical wetlands of the Pantanal. Lastly, join the beautiful people in the sophisticated resort of Buzios, a classier and more original version of St Tropez.

### Laws and customs – ‘Did you know’ facts and FCO Advice

- Brazil will host the World Cup in 2014. British nationals travelling to the World Cup should plan their journeys well in advance and bear in mind long distances between host cities.
- Protests and demonstrations are possible in many cities around Brazil and these can sometimes turn violent; you should avoid all demonstrations.
- Levels of crime and violence are high, particularly in major cities. You should be particularly vigilant before and during the festive and carnival periods and in large crowds around football stadiums.
- Brazil has a high road accident rate. In many rural areas the quality of roads away from the main highways is poor, and standards of driving, especially trucks and buses, is low.
- Bank card fraud is common and there has been an increase in robberies at ATMs. Some ATMs have been fitted with an anti-theft device that applies pink coloured ink to the notes of an ATM that has been damaged or tampered with. If you withdraw cash at an ATM and it has any sort of pink marks, speak to the bank straight away to get it changed. If outside bank hours or not in a bank branch you should get a bank statement from the ATM showing the withdrawal and take it with the marked note to a police station to get a police report.



## The Caribbean

For many the Caribbean is the epitome of an ideal holiday destination and in 2014 lucky holidaymakers will be following the example of the England cricket team who after a four year break, will be touring the West Indies and visiting Antigua and Barbados in February and March. People living in the North of England will find it much easier to get to Antigua in 2014 as Thomas Cook launches new weekly flights from Manchester.

On arrival in Antigua, visitors will be greeted by a plush new air terminal opening in the autumn, before heading off to one of the islands' 365 beaches including one that is 17 miles long with pink sand. The islands are an ideal place to tie the knot with a wedding package coming in at an average price of £4,000 with a perfect honeymoon thrown in! Barbados now proudly boasts its capital Georgetown as a UNESCO world heritage site and while the island is perfect for those who just want to relax on the beach, it also offers world class surfing at the Soup Bowl and Bathsheba and Miami Beaches. The south of the island is also excellent for kite and windsurfing, sailing kayaking and snorkelling. After all that exercise you will have earned your sizzling, fresh swordfish steak and deceptively strong rum punch.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- There are high levels of crime and violence in Jamaica. Antigua has seen an increase in crime, including gun crime, in recent years.
- There are severe penalties for all drug offences. Contrary to popular belief, it is illegal to smoke marijuana ('ganja') in Jamaica.
- In Antigua and Barbuda it is an offence for anyone, including children, to dress in camouflage clothing.





## Costa Rica



The growing market for activity holidays and interest in biodiversity come together ideally in the Central American country of Costa Rica, which packs an awful lot into a small amount of land as well as being surrounded by the incredibly diverse and fertile waters of both the Caribbean and the Pacific. Costa Rica is a nature lover's paradise with half a million plant and animal species and a greater density of biodiversity than Brazil. Tortugero National park is the best place to responsibly view green turtles and manatees and is also home to more species of bird than the whole of Europe. Thrill seekers should head inland to view the Arenal volcano. There are zip lines nearby that offer spectacular views of the volcano and lake. Arenal is also surrounded by thermal springs. Costa Rica is home to lush rain forest with La Amistad International Park being the largest as well as coffee plantations. Costa Rica's Cocos Islands, which are around 500 kms off the Pacific Coast, are regarded as one of the top five best spots for diving in the world, as well as being a world heritage site. Costa Ricans are also amongst the longest lived people in the world and its inhabitants are regularly found to be amongst the happiest in the world. Maybe Shangri La can be found in Central America rather than the Himalayas

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Medical care in Costa Rica is of a high standard. Only emergency medical treatment is available without charge for visitors. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.
- Don't get involved with drugs of any kind. The Costa Rican authorities treat drug trafficking severely. The minimum sentence is 8 years imprisonment.
- If you're visiting jungle areas you should go with an experienced local guide. If you visit a volcano pay strict attention to restrictions on entry to dangerous areas
- Take special care when swimming from all beaches in Costa Rica. Rip tides are very common. There are normally no lifeguards. You should seek reliable local advice.

## Greece

Greece is once again very firmly on the tourist map with an 11% increase in UK visitor numbers in 2013. The economic problems in the country have led to a decrease in prices in many bars and restaurants, making the country much more affordable. At the same time more luxury accommodation options have sprung up recently as the high end of the market has continued to perform well. The most popular Greek islands remain Crete, Corfu, Rhodes and Zante, but enterprising tour operators are offering off the beaten track, boutique options, giving a taste of authentic Greece. Areas to look for include the northern Aegean and the green and thickly wooded islands of Thassos and Ikaria and for those looking to truly relax and recharge their batteries, the islands of Alonissos and Skopelos in the Sporades further south. But for truly spectacular views and five star luxury, the volcanic island of Santorini, viewed as the most likely site of the historical source of the mythical Atlantis, is unbeatable.

### Laws and customs – ‘Did you know’ facts and FCO Advice

- The emergency services number in Greece is 112. Calling 999 from a UK mobile in Greece will automatically transfer you to the Greek emergency services.
- There have been regular strikes in recent years. These are sometimes called at short notice and can cause disruption to public transport in and out of Greece (including air travel and ports).
- Demonstrations take place regularly in central Athens, and have also taken place in other towns and cities. You should avoid all demonstrations and follow the advice given by local security authorities.
- Make sure you get a receipt for any goods or services you buy. If you buy pirate CDs or DVDs in Greece you could be imprisoned.
- The Greek police will not accept rowdy or indecent behaviour, especially where excessive drinking is involved. Greek courts impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently. Your travel insurance may not cover you after drinking.
- If you're visiting Greece you should get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC isn't a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip.



## Malaysia



South East Asia is a perennial favourite for UK holidaymakers and in 2014 ABTA is tipping Malaysia to take its place in the sun following the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in 2013. Visitors' first sight will be the capital Kuala Lumpur, an intriguing mix of Moorish and colonial architecture, 21<sup>st</sup> century skyscrapers, shopping malls and restaurants featuring Malaysia's spicy and delicious cuisine. The archipelago of Langawi off the west coast is the ideal place to relax with its 99 islands featuring authentic, working fishing villages as well as luxurious, good value hotels. Its white sandy beaches and clear waters are amongst the best in South East Asia. Once you've recharged your batteries head to Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysian Borneo to see orang-utans in their natural rain forest habitat before climbing to the summit of majestic Mount Kinabalu. The surrounding seas are also perfect for snorkelling.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Malaysia is a multicultural but mainly Islamic country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they don't offend.
- You should dress modestly, particularly in conservative and rural areas and when visiting places of worship.
- Government and private hospitals charge for all services; private care is expensive. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment.
- There are severe penalties for all drug offences. Trafficking incurs a mandatory death penalty. Possession incurs a custodial sentence and possible whipping.
- You can drive using a UK licence for up to 3 months. If you intend to stay in Malaysia for longer than 3 months you should get a Malaysian driving licence or an International Driving Permit.

## Mauritius

The Indian Ocean island of Mauritius would be most people's idea of a perfect paradise island and this is why so many people choose it for one of the most important days in their lives, their wedding. The island is a melting pot of African, Indian, European and Oriental influences which is reflected in its cuisine and people. The island is surrounded by a reef creating shallow lagoons washing against white, palm fringed beaches. But there is more to Mauritius than the beach, inland you will find lush forests of ebony and eucalyptus trees, interspersed with waterfalls and warm natural pools ideal for a romantic dip. The Tamarin falls is probably the most spectacular site and for lovers of wildlife a visit to the Black River Gorges national park is well worth a visit. The island has a wide selection of good quality hotels and with more affordable options. Thomson will fly direct to Mauritius from Gatwick starting in May and will offer holidays in the relaxing resorts of Belle Mare and Trou d'eau Douce. Attitude Resorts opens a brand new 4 star Zilwa resort in 2014 offering a truly authentic Mauritian experience with features including locally sourced and crafted furnishings.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Petty crime is common. Take care of bags and valuables in popular tourist areas including Port Louis, Grand Baie and Flic en Flac.
- You can bring common medicines for your own personal use but you must carry a copy of the prescription and the drugs must have been obtained legally from a pharmacy.
- Good private healthcare is available, but can be costly if you are not insured. More complex cases could require evacuation to Reunion or South Africa. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.





## Mexico – The Pacific Coast and Baja

The Pacific coast and Baja peninsula are relatively undiscovered by British holidaymakers with the lack of direct flights meaning visitors to Mexico have concentrated on the Yucatan on the east coast of the country. This is set to change in 2014 with Thomson and First Choice launching a new exclusive route into Puerto Vallarta on the Pacific coast for summer 2014, with stays on the island of Holbox. Puerto Vallarta has an idyllic mountain backed location with lush countryside and rivers where fresh water dolphins can be spotted. The Baja peninsula is one of the world's great beauty spots, sparsely populated and dramatic inland, its coastline is dotted with stunning white sanded bays with whale watching available between January and March. At the southern tip of Baja lies the resort of Los Cabos with a mild, sunny climate and average year-round temperature of 26C. Fishing, diving, surfing, kayaking and many other water sports make this the perfect activity centre and after all that effort, unwind on one of its perfect coves and beaches.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- The police sometimes ask foreigners to show some form of identification. You should carry a photocopy of the relevant pages of your passport and leave the original in a safe place.
- Most victims of crime and violence are Mexicans involved in criminal activity, but the security situation also poses risks for foreigners. Be alert to the existence of street crime as well as more serious violent crime like robbery, assault and vehicle hijacking.
- The local currency is the Mexican Peso. It's easier to exchange US dollar travellers' cheques and notes into local currency than Sterling. It's not possible to exchange cash at hotel receptions - this can only be done at banks and bureaux de change.
- The hurricane season in Mexico normally runs from June to November and affects both the Pacific and Atlantic coasts.



## Oman



The Sultanate of Oman is a largely undiscovered jewel on the Arabian Gulf, but with the completion in 2014 of new airport terminals in the capital Muscat with a capacity of 12,000,000 passengers a year and in Salalah with a capacity 1,000,000, it is set for big things in 2014. Oman is an activity lover's paradise with a 1,600 km coast line stretching from the Gulf of Oman to the Arabian Sea and a rugged interior combining mountains and desert. The sea offers spectacular diving options as well as dolphin and whale watching and sail boats for hire, ranging from traditional dhows to racing catamarans. Oman is also home to a number of nesting sites for marine turtles with the beaches of Ras al Had, Ras Al Junayz and Masirah Island three key areas, all are protected by law and only be visited with an official permit. Inland, mountains of up to 3,000 metres and wadis, cliffs and deep canyons are ideal for rock climbers of all skill levels. The mountains are also considerably cooler than other parts of the country making it perfect for trekking. Oman can be surprisingly green and in the south, Salalah benefits from rainfall in early June to mid- September, filling the countryside with waterfalls and streams. After all this activity holidaymakers can relax in the old world charm and first class hotels of the capital Muscat.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- Driving can be dangerous outside Muscat; there is a risk of hitting wandering camels and goats on the road. Rainfall can cause sudden and severe flooding in dry riverbeds and on roads that cross them.
- Local laws reflect the fact that Oman is an Islamic country. Women should dress modestly in public areas. The use of bad language, rude gestures or public displays of affection may get you into trouble with the police.
- It is an offence to drink, or be drunk, in public. The legal age for drinking alcohol is 21.

## Portugal

British holidaymakers have always loved Portugal and in 2013 with visitor numbers were up by over 8%. With new direct flights in 2014 to the main cities Lisbon and Oporto, savvy holidaymakers will be heading off to these two beautiful and historic towns for a city break with a difference. The Algarve has a year round good climate and remains the main draw for UK holidaymakers, with surfers and more adventurous holidaymakers heading for the big waves and dramatic coves of Europe's most south westerly point Sagres. In 2014 discerning holidaymakers will be heading to the "Alentejo" an area of outstanding natural beauty with Eucalyptus forests criss-crossed by rivers, cork and olive groves as well as the UNESCO World Heritage site university town of Coimbra and the mysterious Templar town, Tomar. Food lovers are also in for a treat. Portuguese food is amongst the best and most underrated in Europe, with marinated meats and fresh grilled fish washed down with delicious young white wine, vinho verde, followed by pasteis de nata, a delicious, light, custard tart.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- If you're visiting Portugal you should get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC isn't a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip.
- Crime rates are low but pickpocketing, handbag snatching and theft from cars and holiday properties are common in major tourist areas. Be alert, keep sight of your belongings at all times and beware of thieves using distraction techniques.
- Gambling is only legal in establishments properly licenced by the government, like official casinos. Games of chance, including bingo, are illegal if they're held on unlicensed premises.



## Slovenia

Slovenia is a compact but extremely diverse country, with stunning, unspoilt countryside and a spectacular coastline. The capital, Ljubljana is a picture box pretty city and in 2014 it celebrates the 2,000th anniversary of the foundation of Emona the Roman city that stood on the site of the present Ljubljana, hosting Roman food, drink and events. One of Slovenia's most beautiful areas, Lake Bled is only a short 55km drive from the capital city and the surrounding thickly wooded countryside is also home to wildlife including the brown bear. Slovenia has a proud winter sports tradition and the Julian Alps offer world class, good value facilities. The introduction of the new 'ESSV AS' ski pass this year gives access to the majority of Slovenian ski resorts, and makes booking that much easier. Between May and September Adria Airways has two new weekly flights scheduled between Ljubljana and Manchester and Gatwick. In September it will also play host to the ABTA Travel Convention.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- All foreign nationals visiting Slovenia must register with the police within 3 days of arrival or risk paying a fine. If you are staying at a registered hotel or guest house, they will register you when processing your arrival.
- Slovenia has heavy on-the-spot fines for jaywalking.
- Vignettes for motorway travel are available for weekly, monthly or yearly periods, and can be purchased at petrol stations and DARS (the Slovenian Motorway Company) offices. The Vignette is compulsory for all vehicles under 3.5 tonnes in weight.
- Ljubljana is a small capital city and an increasingly popular destination. You should arrange accommodation before travelling.
- If you're visiting Slovenia you should get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC isn't a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip.





## Sicily, Italy

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and with more and more direct air routes to the main cities now operating from the UK, the discerning traveller will be heading South in 2014. Sicily has some of the most beautiful, historic cities in Italy with Baroque architecture combining with Greek, Roman and Norman influences. The cities of Siracusa, Catania, Noto and Ragusa are all within close proximity to each other with spectacular, icing cake Baroque styling. Lovers of Greek classical architecture should head to Agrigento and Segesta in the east of the island for amazingly well preserved temples. The capital Palermo will often be visitors first port of call and a visit to the Norman monastery of Monreale on the outskirts of the town is a must with some of the most perfect and beautiful mosaics in the Mediterranean. Sicilians are also a very warm, hospitable people who are rightly proud of their island and their cuisine, which is dominated by seafood and Arab influences. Sicilian wine is also gaining itself a worldwide reputation for its quality. Lastly, Sicily has a great climate but probably the best time to visit is the spring when the whole island is in bloom.

### Laws and customs – ‘Did you know’ facts and FCO Advice

- If you're visiting Italy you should get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before leaving the UK. The EHIC isn't a substitute for medical and travel insurance, but it entitles you to state provided medical treatment that may become necessary during your trip.
- Many major cities in Italy now impose a small tax on tourists. The tax is levied by hotels and is usually not included in any pre-paid arrangements or package deal.
- By law you must be able to show some form of identification at all times.



## USA (Texas/New Mexico/Alaska)

ABTA is tipping 2014 as the year in which Brits will branch out into the broader USA. We tip Texas for its wide open vistas, cowboy experiences and America's hipster capital Austin, which combines a buzzy nightlife with almost non-stop music festivals. The hipster vibe continues in New Mexico, home to arguably one of the most popular TV series ever, Breaking Bad. The desert state is a spectacular place to act out your TV fantasies and it also has a vibrant Latino and Native American heritage making it a fascinating holiday destination. For a total contrast and the ultimate reflection of the diversity available in the USA, holidaymakers should head north to the dramatic, spectacular wilderness of Alaska best seen from the deck of a cruise ship for your first taste of this amazing state. It is home to caribou, eagles and one of the most iconic of all American animals the gigantic Grizzly bear and the surrounding seas to killer whales, seals and walruses.

### Laws and customs – 'Did you know' facts and FCO Advice

- You must carry a passport at all times that shows you have leave to enter. Some States (Arizona, Utah, Indiana, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama) have introduced legislation allowing police officers to detain individuals they suspect of being in the United States illegally. It is particularly important that you carry your passport with you in these States.
- In some States you can drive using a UK driving licence in other States you may need to get an International Driving Permit. Check with your rental car provider before you travel.
- Learn US traffic laws before going to the country. Both the speed and drink driving limits are lower than in the UK.
- Don't make flippant remarks about bombs or terrorism, especially when passing through US airports.



## **FCO General Advice**

The FCO has a simple message for travellers: in order to have a great time while you're away, make the necessary preparations before you go.

Before Britons travel abroad, the FCO advises some key preparation steps:

- Do a little research on your destination. This is key to helping you get the most out of your trip and avoid unnecessary trouble. Get a good guide book, and make sure you know about the local laws and customs. Check out the FCO travel advice on [www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo](http://www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo) for the latest information, including country specific travel advice and top tips for safe travel. You can sign up for updates on the go on [www.facebook.com/fcotravel](https://www.facebook.com/fcotravel) or [www.twitter.com/fcotravel](https://www.twitter.com/fcotravel)
- Take out comprehensive travel insurance and read the small print so you know you are covered for everything you want to do on holiday – for example, you may need to extend your cover for certain activities such as riding mopeds or jet-skiing
- If travelling within the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to give you free or reduced cost emergency care. You still need full travel insurance though! Also remember, you can call 112 to contact the emergency services in any EU country
- Take enough money with you, and make sure you have access to emergency funds. Don't keep all your money in the same place
- Check out the medical requirements for your destination well in advance. If you take prescription medication, make sure it is legal where you are going, and pack enough for your whole trip plus a few days in case you are delayed returning home.
- Check your passport is valid for your full trip (some countries require 6 months validity from the end of your visit), and has next of kin details filled in. You can renew it up to nine months before it expires, and the remaining time will be added to the new one. Be sure you have all necessary visas
- Make copies of important travel documents, and keep them separately from the originals – either on paper or online on a secure data storage site
- Tell someone in the UK where you are going, and leave emergency contact details with them
- Make sure your mobile phone will work abroad and that you pack the charger
- If you plan to drive, familiarise yourself with local driving laws – and make sure your licence is current and valid where you are going
- Find out where your nearest British Embassy or Consulate will be and note their numbers
- If you have any enquiries for FCO consular staff before you go or while abroad you can now ask questions via the FCO's new Twitter service [@FCOtravel](https://twitter.com/FCOtravel). This service adds to the ways that British people travelling or living overseas can already get in touch with the FCO: by emailing the travel advice team or contacting local consular staff.

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

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

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

<b>The FCO can:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Issue you with 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 if necessary.</li><li>• Provide information about transferring funds.</li><li>• Visit you in hospital or if you have been arrested.</li></ul>	<b>The FCO cannot:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help you enter a country if you don't have a valid passport or necessary visas.</li><li>• Give you legal advice.</li><li>• Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people but will raise concerns if treatment falls below internationally recognised standards.</li><li>• Pay any bills or give you money.</li><li>• Make travel arrangements for you.</li></ul>
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