

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism: provisional results for March 2016

Visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents, and spending by travellers, using provisional passenger traffic data.



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1. Main points

In the 3 months to March 2016, there were 7.4 million overseas residents' visits to the UK, up by 6% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier. Spending in the UK by overseas residents decreased by 4%.

UK residents made 12.7 million visits abroad in the 3 months to March 2016, an 8% increase compared with the 3 months to March 2015.

Expenditure on visits abroad by UK residents in the 12 months to March 2016 increased by 11% to £39.6 billion when compared with the previous year.

2. About the estimates

Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly estimates are revised during the processing of the quarterly dataset and again during the processing of the annual dataset. The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

Estimates contained in this bulletin are produced from responses provided by international passengers arriving in and departing from the UK, sampled on the [International Passenger Survey](#) that we conduct.

This bulletin contains provisional overseas travel and tourism estimates for March 2016. Revised, final estimates for 2015 were published in [Travel Trends, 2015](#) on 20 May 2016. The monthly overseas travel and tourism estimates are produced using provisional passenger traffic data to inform the weighting process that is then revised for production of the quarterly estimates, and final data is then used in the production of the annual results published in Travel Trends (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). The title of the monthly overseas travel and tourism bulletin was renamed in December 2013 to "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for [Month] 2013" to clarify that the data contained in these bulletins are provisional.

The sample profile and responses are calibrated to international passenger traffic for the reporting period. Estimates are based on interviews conducted when passengers end their visit. Therefore any visits commencing in the reported month but not completed until later are not included in estimates for the reported month.

The reported spend for visits include any spending associated with the visit, which may occur before, during or after the trip.

In January 2015 the methodology for treating outliers was improved. For further information please contact the IPS team.

Parts of the bulletin refer to countries visited abroad. It should be noted that if a UK resident visited more than 1 country on a trip abroad, the country recorded as visited in this publication is the country that was visited for the longest period.

Estimates are subject to sampling error, and confidence intervals are provided to help readers interpret the estimates (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). Further guidance is provided about the [quality of overseas travel and tourism estimates](#).

3. Changes to overseas travel and tourism publications

The overseas travel and tourism monthly and quarterly bulletins have been updated to provide additional information about the revisions policy used to revise and finalise the estimates. As part of this improvement to the publications, the titles have been changed to indicate that the estimates are provisional. The final estimates, for the overseas travel and tourism data, are published in the annual Travel Trends publication. The first publications to include the additional information are:

- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for October 2013" published on 12 December 2013
- "Overseas Travel and Tourism, Provisional Results for Quarter 3, 2013" published on 16 January 2014

4. Main trends in figures and charts

Table 1: Main visit and spending estimates for overseas residents' visits to the UK in 2015 and 2016

	Overseas residents' visits to UK			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Mar 2016	2,570	+6	1,280	-9
Jan to Mar 2016	7,360	+6	3,640	-4
Year to date 2016	7,360	+6	3,640	-4
Latest 12 months	36,530	+6	21,920	+1
Seasonally adjusted				
October	3,260	+16	1,900	+10
November	2,960	+2	1,770	-4
December	3,020	+7	1,890	+3
January	3,010	+5	1,710	-6
February	3,040	+5	1,730	+1
March	3,050	+5	1,740	-8

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

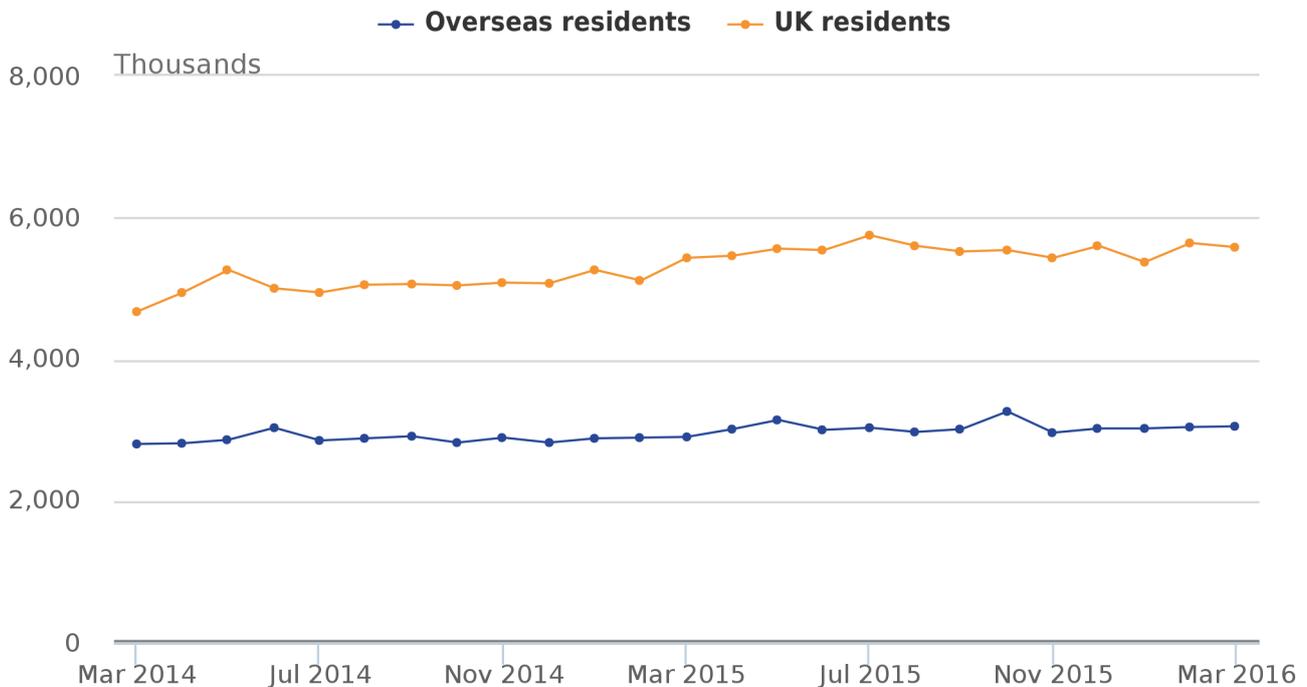
Table 2: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in 2015 and 2016

	UK residents' visits abroad			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Mar 2016	4,320	+2	2,610	+2
Jan to Mar 2016	12,670	+8	7,590	+9
Year to date 2016	12,670	+8	7,590	+9
Latest 12 months	66,660	+9	39,630	+11
Seasonally adjusted				
October	5,540	+10	3,320	+4
November	5,420	+7	3,460	+18
December	5,600	+10	3,400	+18
January	5,370	+2	3,120	+2
February	5,640	+10	3,500	+17
March	5,580	+3	3,390	+4

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK and UK residents' visits abroad (seasonally adjusted)

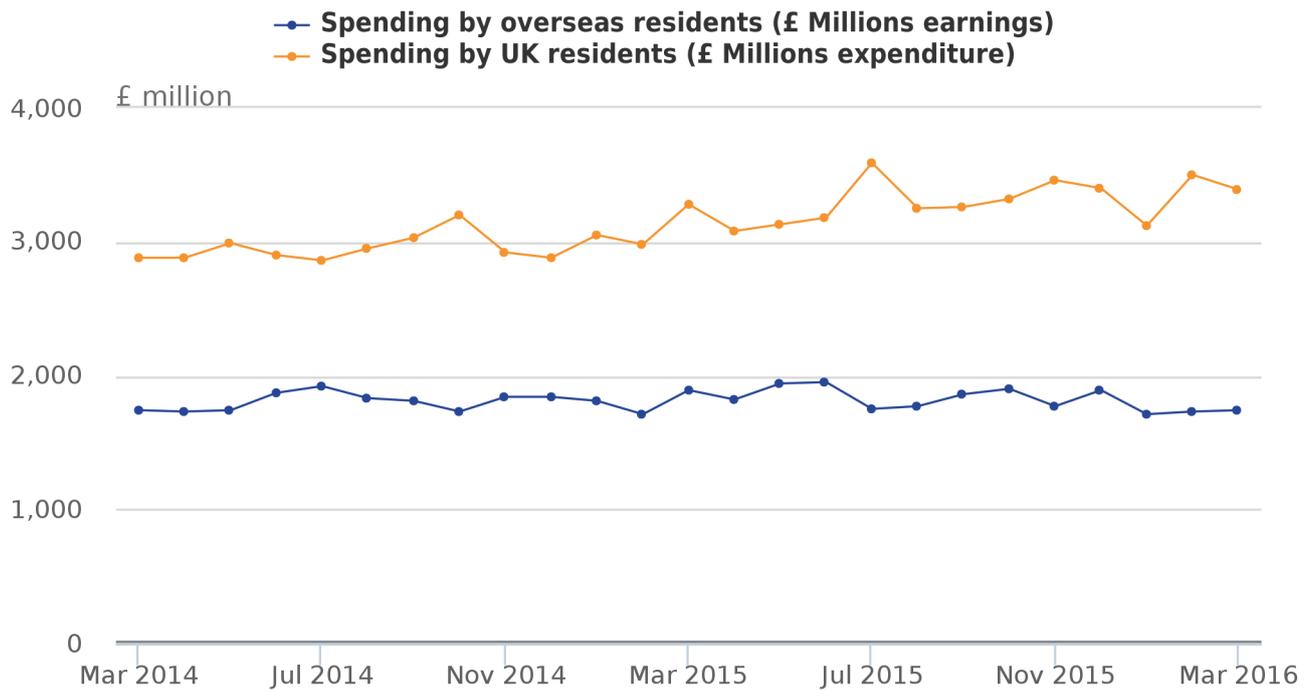
March 2014 to March 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK and spending by UK residents overseas by month (seasonally adjusted)

March 2014 to March 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

5. Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents non seasonally adjusted (dataset tables 1,2,5)

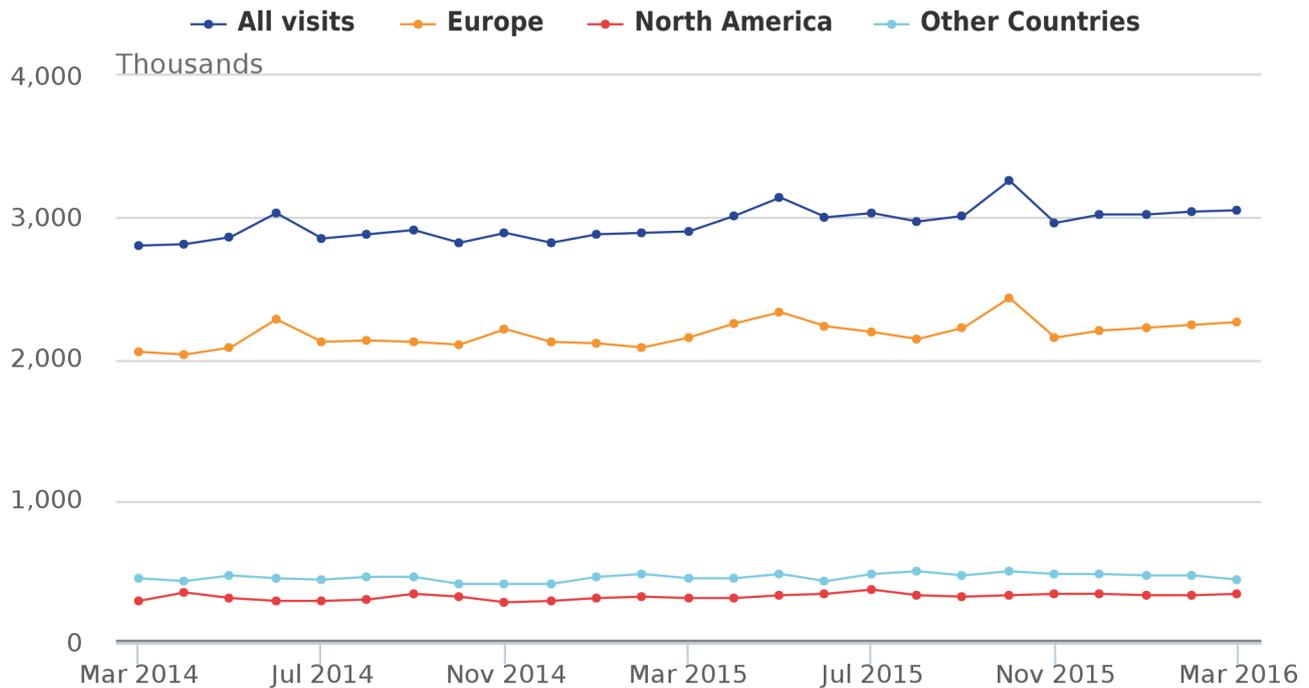
The number of visits to the UK by overseas residents in March 2016 was 2.6 million, an increase of 6% when compared with March 2015. Overseas residents spent £1.3 billion in the UK during these visits.

During the period January to March 2016, overseas residents' visits to the UK rose by 6% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 4% less during this period.

In the 12 months to March 2016, the number of visits to the UK was 6% higher than a year earlier and earnings grew by 1% during this period. Visits from North America and Europe (see "Background notes: Geographical areas") were up by 10% and 5% respectively and visits from Other Countries grew by 6%. Holiday visits grew 3%; business trips grew 5% and visits to friends or relatives by 9%.

Figure 3: Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month (seasonally adjusted)

March 2014 to March 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

6. Trends in visits abroad by UK residents non seasonally adjusted (dataset tables 3,4,5)

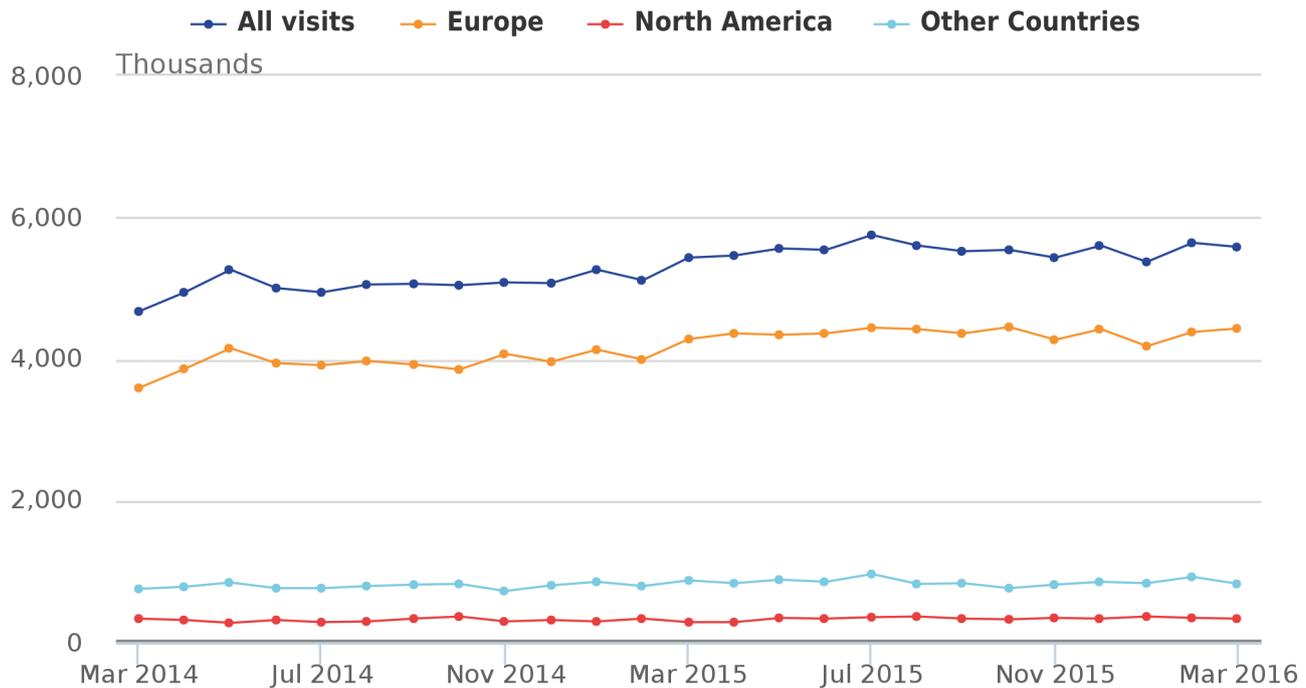
The estimated number of visits abroad by UK residents in March 2016 was 4.3 million. UK residents spent £2.6 billion during visits abroad in March 2016.

During the period January to March 2016, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 8% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 9% more during this period.

In the 12 months to March 2016, the number of visits abroad by UK residents was 9% higher when compared with a year earlier; expenditure on these visits also increased, by 11%, during this period. Visits to all areas of the world rose: North America by 9%, Europe by 10% and Other Countries by 6%. Travelling abroad also grew for all purposes including holidays (9%) and business (8%); visits to friends and relatives also rose by a similar amount (10%).

Figure 4: UK residents' visits abroad by month (seasonally adjusted)

March 2014 to March 2016



Source: International Passenger Survey (IPS) - Office for National Statistics

7. Other overseas travel and tourism releases

More detailed analysis of overseas travel and tourism trends are provided in the publications:

- [Overseas Travel and Tourism Quarterly](#), the latest publication for Quarter 3 July to September 2015 was published on 21 January 2016 – this provides more detailed analysis of visits and spending, isolating aspects such as countries of visit, mode of travel used, nationality of visitors and regions of the UK visited. Quarter 4 figures can be found in [Travel Trends 2015](#).
- [Travel Trends](#), latest publication [Travel Trends 2015](#) was published on 20 May 2016, the next publication ([Travel Trends 2016](#)) will be published in spring 2017 – this provides final overseas travel and tourism estimates and more detailed analysis of visits and spending, including analysis by demographics, towns visited in the UK and countries visited by residents of different parts of the UK
- [TravelPac](#) is a dataset which allows users to conduct their own analyses of quarterly and annual data on main variables – the datasets are provided in SPSS and Excel

Note that estimates are subject to revision between the monthly statistical bulletin and the quarterly publication and again when [Travel Trends](#) is published. Revisions result from more accurate passenger figures being made available. More information about the IPS revisions policy is available in the [Quality and Methodology Information](#). The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for all published months can be found in the latest edition of the [Overseas Travel and Tourism monthly statistical bulletin](#).

Note that, although data by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) feed into the calculation of migration statistics, the [Overseas Travel and Tourism](#) publications do not provide any information relating to international migration.

8. Dataset definitions

Abbreviations used in the tables:

NA ...not available

SA ...seasonally adjusted

NSA ...not seasonally adjusted

† ...point of earliest revision due to the most recent quarterly benchmarking

1 ...estimate (rounded to nearest 10,000 visits or £10 million)

Constituent items in the tables may not add exactly to totals due to rounding.

9. Exclusions

Trippers who cross the Channel or the North Sea but do not alight from the boat.

Migrants and persons travelling overseas to take up pre-arranged employment, together with military or diplomatic personnel, merchant seaman and airline personnel on duty.

Overseas residents passing through the UK on their way to other destinations (often known as transit passengers) but who do not stay overnight (however any spending whilst here is included in the figures for earnings).

10. Definitions

1. The figures relate to the number of completed “visits”, not the number of visitors. Anyone entering or leaving more than once in the same period is counted on each visit. The count of visits relates to UK residents returning to this country and to overseas residents leaving it.
2. “Day-visits” (that is, trips that do not involve an overnight stay) abroad by UK residents as well as day trips to the UK by overseas residents are included in the figures for visits and expenditure. Please note they do not cover day visits to or from the Republic of Ireland across the land border, although they are included in total visits.
3. An “overseas visitor” means a person who, being permanently resident in a country outside the UK, visits the UK for a period of less than 12 months. UK citizens resident overseas for 12 months or more coming home on leave are included in this category. Visits abroad are visits for a period of less than 12 months by people permanently resident in the UK (who may be of foreign nationality).
4. When a resident of the UK has visited more than 1 country the entire visit, expenditure and stay are allocated to the “country stayed in for the longest time”.
5. Visits for “miscellaneous” purposes include those for study; to attend sporting events, for shopping, health, religious, or for other purposes, together with visits for more than one purpose when none predominates (for example, visits both on business and on holiday). Overseas visitors staying overnight in the UK on their way to other destinations are also included in miscellaneous purposes.
6. Adjustments are made to the reported cost of an “inclusive tour” so that only the amount earned by the country of visit (for example, accommodation costs, car hire, etc.) is included. This estimate is then added to an individual's spending to give the total spending in the country of visit (see also note 7).
7. The term “earnings” refers to spending in the UK by overseas residents, whereas expenditure refers to spending abroad by UK residents.
8. “Earnings and expenditure” figures cover the same categories of travellers as do the number of visits, except that in addition, the earnings figures include the expenditure by same day transit passengers, and the foreign exchange earnings and expenditure due to travel relating to the Channel Islands. They exclude payments for air, sea and rail travel to and from the UK. For any traveller on an inclusive tour an estimate of the return fare is deducted from the total tour price.

9. Earnings do not include the personal export of cars that have been purchased in the UK by overseas residents. Similarly spending excludes the personal import of cars by UK residents.
10. An estimate for purchases by overseas visitors at airport "duty free" shops is included in the figures for earnings. Such purchases on British carriers are still excluded.
11. The question to identify whether the cost of fares and accommodation can be separated was simplified in the 2014 questionnaire. Up to December 2013 the question read: "Was your accommodation abroad paid for as part of an inclusive tour or holiday where fares and accommodation cannot be separated?" From January 2014 the question read: "Can you separate the cost of your fares and accommodation?" The routing to this question has remained constant and all respondents are routed to this question, regardless of purpose of visit. If they answer yes they are then asked to supply the breakdown of costs. Respondents whose purpose for visits was not "holiday" are still able to answer that they cannot separate fare and accommodation costs. This change should improve the cost breakdown of information collected.

11. Geographical areas

North America:

Canada (including Greenland and St Pierre et Miquelon), USA (including Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands).

Europe:

All countries within the European Union (see below for listing) plus the following central and Eastern European countries: North Cyprus, Gibraltar, Iceland (including Faroe Islands), Norway, Switzerland (including Liechtenstein), Turkey, the former USSR and the states of former Yugoslavia.

EU15:

All countries that joined the European Union before January 1 2004: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France (including Monaco), Finland, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy (including San Marino and Vatican City), Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Spain (including Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and Andorra) and Sweden. Note that the UK is among the 15 countries that formed the European Union prior to January 2004, but due to the nature of the data displayed in the IPS reference table's data for the UK is excluded.

European Union:

All countries that are current members of the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia**, Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France (including Monaco), Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Italy (including San Marino and Vatican City), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal (including Azores and Madeira), Romania, Spain (including Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and Andorra), Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden. Note that the UK is a member of the European Union but due to the nature of the data displayed in the IPS reference tables, data for the UK is excluded.

Other European Union:

All countries that joined the European Union from 1 January 2004 onwards: Bulgaria, Croatia**, Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

*Only the south of Cyprus is a member of the EU but the IPS is unable to separate North and South Cyprus for the period before May 2004 and so all of Cyprus is included in the European Union section until May 2004. From May 2004, only southern Cyprus is included in the European Union figures.

**Croatia joined the European Union on 1 July 2013 and data relating to Croatia collected from that date onwards has been included in the "European Union", "Other EU" and "Europe" categories. Data relating to Croatia collected prior to 1 July 2013 is included in the "Europe" category only.

12. Purpose groupings

1. Holiday: Holiday or pleasure, to play amateur sport, cruise.
2. Business: Business.

3. Visit friends or relatives: Visit family, visit friends.
4. Miscellaneous: Other reasons or cases where the respondent is not able to give a single purpose as the main reason for visit.
5. People migrating (to or from the UK) or travelling as crew of aircraft, ships or trains are excluded from analysis in this publication.

13. Sample methodology

1. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) produces estimates that are based on interviews with a stratified random sample of passengers entering and leaving the UK on the principle air, tunnel and sea routes. The main features of the stratification are: mode of transport (that is air, tunnel or sea), port and time of day.
2. The frequency of sampling within each stratum depends mainly on the variation of tourist expenditure and on the volume of migrants, for which the survey is also used to collect statistics. To collect overseas travel and tourism information, travellers passing through passport control are randomly selected for interview and in all some 281,000 interviews were conducted in 2014. Only interviews carried out at the end of a visit are used to generate estimates of expenditure and stay. Of these interviews, around 44,000 provided the published information on foreign visitors to the UK and around 57,000 were used for the estimate of UK residents travelling abroad. The interviews were conducted on a purely voluntary and anonymous basis.
3. Despite the introduction in April 1999 of interviewing on air and sea routes to and from the Republic of Ireland, the results from the IPS are still supplemented with estimates of travel between UK and the Republic of Ireland over the land border where no IPS interviewing takes place. Estimates for travel by land are based on information provided by the Central Statistics Office of the Republic of Ireland. Estimates of earnings and expenditure are also supplemented with figures from the Economic Advisor's Office of the States of Jersey, who provide information about the Channel Islands.
4. Around 90% of passengers entering and leaving the UK (excluding those travelling by land to and from the Republic of Ireland) travel on routes covered by the survey. The remainder are either passengers travelling at night when interviewing is suspended, or on those routes too small in volume to be covered. For those passengers, estimates are made and input into the main results of the survey.
5. At the major airports a sample of half days is taken and a fixed proportion of passengers are interviewed, whilst the smaller airports are sampled occasionally with the number of visits depending on the number of international passengers.
6. On the sea routes either particular cross-channel sailings are sampled and a fixed proportion of passengers interviewed on board, or a sample of days is taken and the passengers interviewed on the quay side.
7. In all, approximately 281,000 travellers were interviewed in 2014; the proportion varies from port to port.
8. UK residents who left a cruise boat at a foreign port and returned home on a scheduled air or sea service (for example, fly-cruises) are included in the IPS. Information on the number of passengers on cruises finishing in the UK is estimated in terms of the number of visits, length of stay and expenditure. These estimates are added to the cruise data collected from the IPS and included under the headings for "other areas", "holiday", and "sea". In 2010 a review took place of the methodology used to estimate the number of such visits. This review has led to more accurate methodology for estimating these visits and has resulted in an annual increase from the approximately 20,000 to 200,000 of such visits. The new estimates have been included since the publication *Travel Trends 2010*, published in late July 2011.
9. A complex weighting procedure is used in the survey results taking account of passengers' movement statistics produced by the BAA plc and AGS Airports Limited for air traffic, by the Department for Transport for sea traffic, EuroTunnel and EuroStar for tunnel traffic. In addition, for the monthly travel and tourism estimates, air passenger movement statistics from Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh and East Midlands Airports are also incorporated where final CAA statistics are not yet available. For Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester allowances are made for passengers in transit who do not pass through passport control and hence do not cross the IPS counting line. The organisations, listed above, that carried out the original collection and analysis of the passenger flow data, bear no responsibility for the further analysis or production of outputs and interpretation.

10. For further information please read the [IPS Methodology Report](#).

14. Accuracy of IPS estimates

Figures for the most recent months are provisional and subject to revision in light of (a) more accurate data on passenger figures becoming available at the end of each quarter and (b) additional passenger data obtained at the end of each year.

IPS monthly estimates are revised in line with the IPS revisions policy. The revisions policy is available in the [IPS report](#) to assist users in the understanding of the cycle and frequency of data revisions. Users of this bulletin are strongly advised to read this policy before using this data for research or policy related purposes.

Planned revisions usually arise from either the receipt of revised passenger traffic data or the correction of errors to existing data identified later in the quarterly and annual processing cycle. Those of significant magnitude will be highlighted and explained.

Revisions to published monthly IPS estimates can be expected at the following times in the normal overseas travel and tourism publication schedule:

- monthly estimates for the current reference year will usually be revised and statistically benchmarked across the quarter following the publication of the quarterly estimates within which that month falls
- monthly and quarterly estimates for the current reference year will be revised in the survey year's annual data release (Travel Trends)
- monthly estimates, for the full calendar year, will be statistically benchmarked as part of the annual data processing and the monthly estimates for the year will then be replaced in the monthly release with the benchmarked estimate following publication of the annual report (Travel Trends)

All other revisions will be regarded as unplanned and will be dealt with by non-standard releases. All revisions will be released in compliance with the same principles as other new information. Please refer to [our guide to statistical revisions](#).

The main series are seasonally adjusted. This aids interpretation by identifying seasonal patterns and calendar effects and removing them from the unadjusted data. The resulting figures give a more accurate indication of underlying movements in the series.

The estimates produced from the IPS are subject to sampling errors that result because not every traveller to and from the UK is interviewed on the survey. Sampling errors are determined both by the sample design and by the sample size generally speaking, the larger the sample supporting a particular estimate, the proportionately lower its sampling error. The survey sample size is approximately 25,000 per month. However, as the intensity of the sampling varies at each port, figures of a similar magnitude will not necessarily have the same percentage sampling error.

The IPS has a clustered sample design. The full effects of this complex sample design upon each of the main estimates is calculated and it is calculated the "complex" sampling errors which are quoted.

Accuracy of the estimates is expressed in terms of confidence intervals. The confidence interval is a range within which the true value of a proportion lies with known probability. For example, the 95% confidence interval represents the range into which there are 19 chances out of 20 that the true figure would fall had all passengers been sampled. This is obtained as +/- 1.96 the standard error.

Table 3: Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates in March 2016

March 2016 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	2,570	8.1%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,280	8.2%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	4,320	6.2%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	2,610	7.1%

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Units: GMAT and GMAX in thousands.
2. A statistical test has been applied to find out if the revision to each key indicator is statistically different from zero. An asterisk (*) indicates where the mean revision has been significantly different from zero.

Confidence intervals for [quarterly](#) and [annual](#) estimates are provided in our relevant overseas travel and tourism publications.

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this release can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. Table 4 records the size and pattern of revisions to the quarterly IPS data which have occurred over the last 5 years to the following main seasonally adjusted estimates:

- the number of visits by overseas residents to the UK (GMAT)

- the number of visits abroad by UK residents (GMAX)
- earnings made from overseas residents in the UK (GMAZ)
- expenditure abroad by UK residents (GMBB)

Table 4: Revisions over the last 5 years

	Value in the latest period (2016 quarter 1, Jan to Mar 2016)	Revisions between first publications and estimates 3 years later	
		Averages over the last 5 years (bias)	Average over the last 5 years without regard to sign (average absolute revision)
GMAT	9,110	12.00	105.00
GMAX	16,590	106.00	265.00
GMAZ	5,170	*65.50	*100.50
GMBB	10,020	*158.50	*182.50

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Units: GMAT and GMAX in thousands.
2. A statistical test has been applied to find out if the revision to each key indicator is statistically different from zero. An asterisk (*) indicates where the mean revision has been significantly different from zero.

15. Important change in IPS sampling

Traffic at all airports and seaports is monitored regularly to assess if they should be included in the IPS sample. As a consequence Liverpool and Prestwick airports were introduced into the sample at the beginning of 2005. Between 2000 and 2004, traffic through Liverpool had quadrupled to "over 2 and a half million" international passengers, while at Prestwick there was a 5 fold increase to nearly "1 and a half million" passengers over the same period. The inclusion of these ports in the IPS sample was shown to cause a discontinuity in regional results and methodology was modified to account for this. Similarly in early 2008, each of Doncaster, Bournemouth, Southampton and Heathrow Terminal 5 were added to the sample and in 2009 Aberdeen and Belfast International airports were added. Heathrow Terminal 2 was added to the sample from August 2014. Newhaven to Dieppe crossing was added to the sample from October 2014. Heathrow Terminal 1 ceased operation in July 2015 and was therefore removed from the International Passenger Survey sample. In October 2015 data collection for the Portsmouth routes changed to being entirely quayside in the UK.

16. Changes to the IPS in 2009

1. From January 2009, certain elements of the IPS have been revised to address recommendations put forward by the Interdepartmental Task Force on Migration Statistics, 2006. The changes involve revision to sample design, weighting and imputation methodology. These changes resulted in some discontinuity in estimates. An analysis was conducted and published in 2009. More details are available from the IPS team.
2. The model used to produce seasonal adjustment estimates is reviewed approximately every 2 years. A review was conducted in late 2009 and the new model was used for the first time to produce the seasonally adjusted estimates used in the December 2009 statistical bulletin publication. Details of the seasonal adjustment model can be obtained from the IPS team using the contact details attached.

17. Special events

Statistical series are affected by special events. However, as explained in our special events policy, it is not possible to make an estimate of the effect of particular events only on the basis of information collected in those series. However, we publish a [special events calendar](#) which may help the reader put some context on reported estimates.

18. Further statistics and other analyses

IPS data files

IPS data for the years 1993 onwards are available online from [our website](#). Travelpac is a free and simple to use dataset for those wishing to make further analyses of IPS data. It contains files provided in Excel and SPSS formats. More details can be found at [Travelpac, 2015](#).

Monthly figures of overseas travel and tourism

These are published in the [overseas travel and tourism statistical bulletin](#) available from:

Office for National Statistics,
Government Buildings,
Cardiff Road,
Newport,
NP10 8XG.

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455678 or from [our website](#).

Further statistics

More detailed statistics covering 1980 to 2014 may be found in our 2015 annual report, Travel Trends. A copy can be downloaded at [Travel Trends, 2015](#).

Other analyses

For general questions about the IPS and requests for user-requested data analysis (a service governed by our Income and Charging policy):

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455678

Email: socialsurveys@ons.gsi.gov.uk

19. Background notes

1. The information provided to us by respondents is treated as strictly confidential as directed by the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). It is used to produce statistics that will not identify any individuals.