

Statistical bulletin

# Overseas travel and tourism: Dec 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

Overseas residents made 9.2 million visits to the UK in the 3 months to December 2016. This was 6% higher than the same 3 months in 2015. The amount spent on these visits was unchanged at £5.3 billion.

Visits from North America increased by 15% in the 3 months to December 2016, when compared with the same 3 months in 2015. Visits from residents of EU countries increased by 8% over the same period and visits from residents of other countries (countries other than Europe and North America) decreased by 3%.

In the 3 months to December 2016, overseas residents made 11% more visits for holidays than in the same period in 2015, trips to visit friends and relatives increased by 15%, while business visits decreased by 1%.

UK residents made 14.6 million visits abroad in the 3 months to December 2016, an increase of 8% compared with the same period in 2015. There was a 16% increase in trips to visit friends and relatives, the number of holidays increased by 7%, but business visits decreased by 2%. The amount spent on visits overseas increased by 15% to £9 billion.

## 2 . Things you need to know about this release

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 our [International Passenger Survey \(IPS\)](#).

This bulletin contains provisional overseas travel and tourism estimates to and from the UK for December 2016. Revised, final estimates for 2015 were published in [Travel trends 2015](#) on 20 May 2016. In the production of the monthly overseas travel and tourism estimates, provisional passenger traffic data is used to inform the weighting process that is then revised for production of the quarterly estimates. The 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 and year]" 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 you interpret the estimates (see background note: Accuracy of IPS estimates). Further guidance is available 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 2016**

	Overseas residents' visits to UK			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Dec 2016	2,860	+11	1,760	-2
Oct to Dec 2016	9,240	+6	5,320	0
Year to date 2016	37,340	+3	22,160	0
Latest 12 months	37,340	+3	22,160	0
Seasonally adjusted				
July	3,080	+2	1,830	+5
Aug	3,060	+2	1,900	+8
Sep	3,080	+1	1,810	-4
Oct	3,070	-6	1,750	-9
Nov	3,400	+16	2,010	+15
Dec	3,330	+11	1,840	-4

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

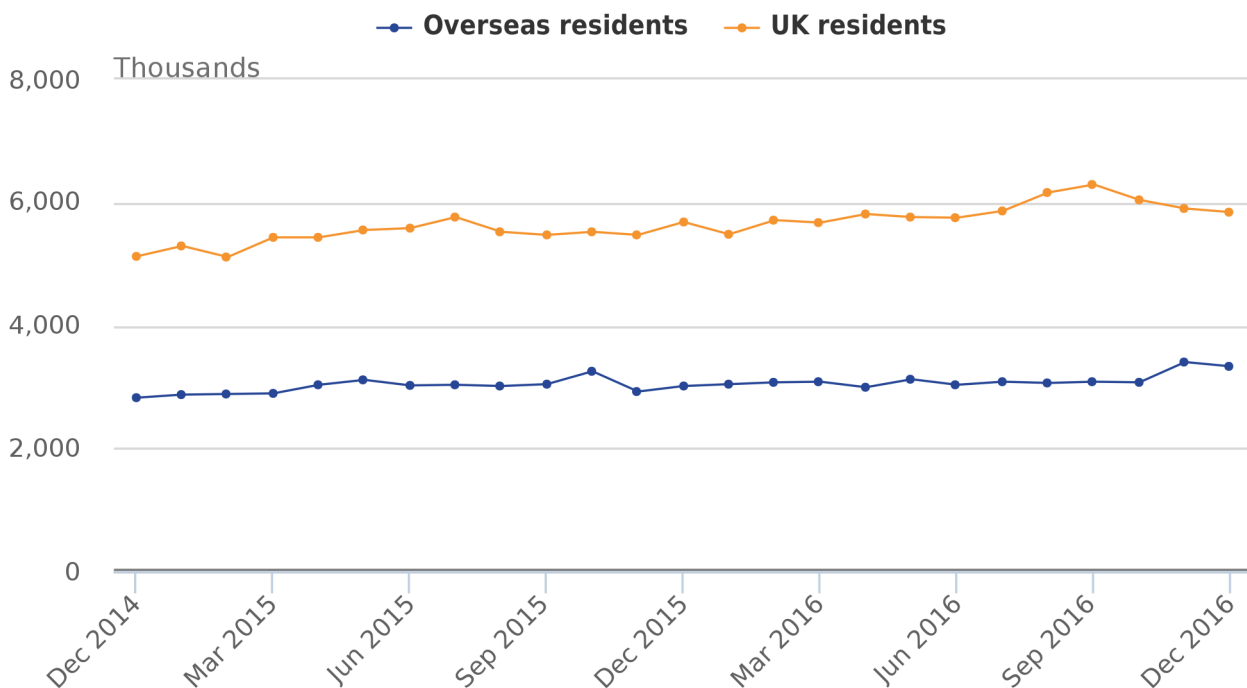
**Table 2: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in 2016**

	UK residents' visits abroad			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Dec 2016	3,880	+6	2,120	+8
Oct to Dec 2016	14,560	+8	8,970	+15
Year to date 2016	70,430	+7	43,420	+11
Latest 12 months	70,430	+7	43,420	+11
Seasonally adjusted				
July	5,860	+2	3,610	0
Aug	6,160	+12	3,680	+14
Sep	6,290	+15	3,760	+17
Oct	6,040	+9	3,790	+15
Nov	5,900	+8	4,090	+20
Dec	5,840	+3	3,680	+7

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

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

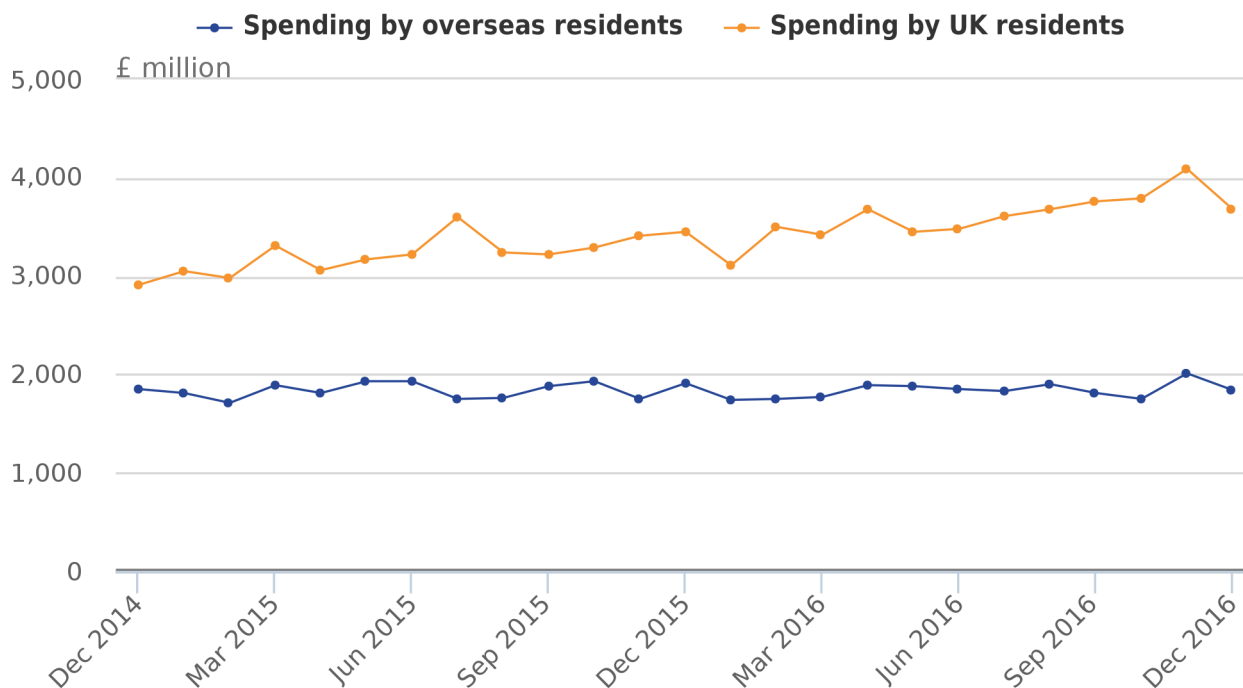
December 2014 to December 2016



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)**

December 2014 to December 2016



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

## 5 . Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents, non-seasonally adjusted (monthly overseas travel and tourism dataset tables 1,2,5)

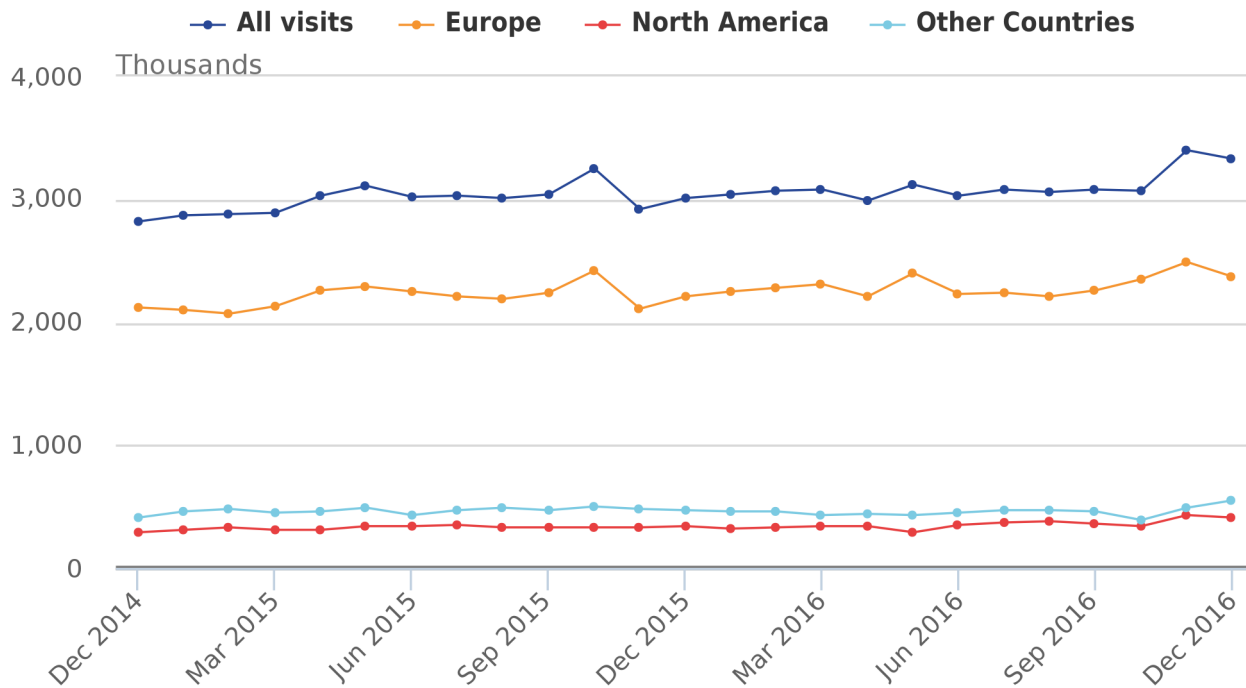
The number of visits to the UK by overseas residents in December 2016 was 2.9 million, an increase of 11% when compared with December 2015. Overseas residents spent £1.8 billion in the UK during these visits, a decrease of 2% compared with December 2015.

During the period October to December 2016, the number of overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by 6% to 9.2 million compared with the corresponding period a year earlier; the total amount spent on these visits remained the same at £5.3 billion when compared with the same period in 2015.

In the 12 months to December 2016, the number of visits to the UK was 3% higher than a year earlier, while the total amount spent remained unchanged. Visits from North America and Europe (see background note: Geographical areas) were both up, by 7% and 4% respectively, visits from other countries (countries other than Europe and North America) fell by 3%. The number of holidays remained unchanged, business visits and visiting friends and family increased by 2% and 10% respectively.

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

December 2014 to December 2016



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

## 6 . Trends in visits abroad by UK residents, non-seasonally adjusted (monthly overseas travel and tourism dataset tables 3,4,5)

The estimated number of visits abroad by UK residents in December 2016 was 3.9 million, an increase of 6% compared with December 2015. UK residents spent £2.1 billion during visits abroad in December 2016, an increase of 8% compared with December 2015.

During the period October to December 2016, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 8% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 15% more during this period.

In the 12 months to December 2016, the number of visits abroad by UK residents was 7% higher when compared with a year earlier; expenditure on these visits also increased, by 11%, during this period. Visits to North America, Europe and other countries rose by 4%, 8% and 2% respectively. Travelling abroad for holidays went up by 6%; visiting friends and relatives also increased by 12%.

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

December 2014 to December 2016



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

## 7 . 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.

International Passenger Survey (IPS) monthly estimates are revised in line with the IPS revisions policy. The revisions policy is available in the [IPS quality and methodology report](#), to assist you in the understanding of the cycle and frequency of data revisions. You 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 which that month falls within
- 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 occur 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.

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 plus or minus 1.96 the standard error.

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

December 2016 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	2,860	8.3%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,760	12.1%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	3,880	9.2%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	2,120	12.3%

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

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 that 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 4, October to December 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	9,800	13.00	107.00
GMAX	17,780	144.00	272.00
GMAZ	5,600	*74.50	*120.00
GMBB	11,560	*165.00	*192.00

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.

## 8 . 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 2016) was published on 19 January 2017 – 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 (October to December 2015) figures can be found in [Travel trends 2015](#)
- [Travel trends](#): the 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 that allows you 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 report](#). 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.

## 9 . Further statistics and other analyses

## IPS data files

International Passenger Survey (IPS) data for the years from 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](#).

## Further statistics

More detailed statistics covering 1980 to 2014 may be found in our 2015 annual report, [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](#)), please get in touch using the contact details accompanying this release.

# 10 . Quality and methodology

The [International Passenger Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data
- the quality of the output: including the accuracy of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users
- how the output was created

The International Passenger Survey background notes outline dataset definitions, sample methodology, geography and purpose groupings.