

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism: provisional results for Feb 2017

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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Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Things you need to know about this release](#)
3. [What are the main trends in visits and spending?](#)
4. [Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents](#)
5. [Trends in overseas visits by UK residents \(non-seasonally adjusted\)](#)
6. [Links to related statistics](#)
7. [Quality and methodology](#)

1 . Main points

- Overseas residents made 2.3 million visits to the UK in February 2017, the same as in February 2016.
- UK residents made 4.2 million visits abroad in February 2017; this has decreased by 2% when compared with February 2016.
- Overseas residents spent £1.2 billion on their visits to the UK in February 2017; this is an increase of 6% when compared with February 2016.
- UK residents spent £2.8 billion on their visits abroad in February 2017, a 9% increase when compared with February 2016.
- In the 3 months to February 2017, overseas residents made 15% more visits to the UK for holidays than the same period a year previously.
- In the 3 months to February 2017, UK residents made 4% more holiday visits abroad than the same period a year previously.

2 . Things you need to know about this release

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 \(IPS\)](#).

Responses to the survey are scaled up to represent all passengers using information on total international passenger traffic for the reporting period.

Estimates are based on interviews conducted when passengers end their visit. 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 (excluding fares) with the visit, which may occur before, during or after the trip.

Parts of the bulletin refer to countries visited abroad. It should be noted that if a UK resident visited more than one 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](#).

Overseas travel and tourism monthly estimates are revised during the processing of the quarterly dataset and again during the processing of the annual dataset. This bulletin contains provisional overseas travel and tourism estimates to and from the UK for February 2017. Revised, final estimates for 2015 were published in [Travel trends 2015](#) on 20 May 2016.

3 . What are the main trends in visits and spending?

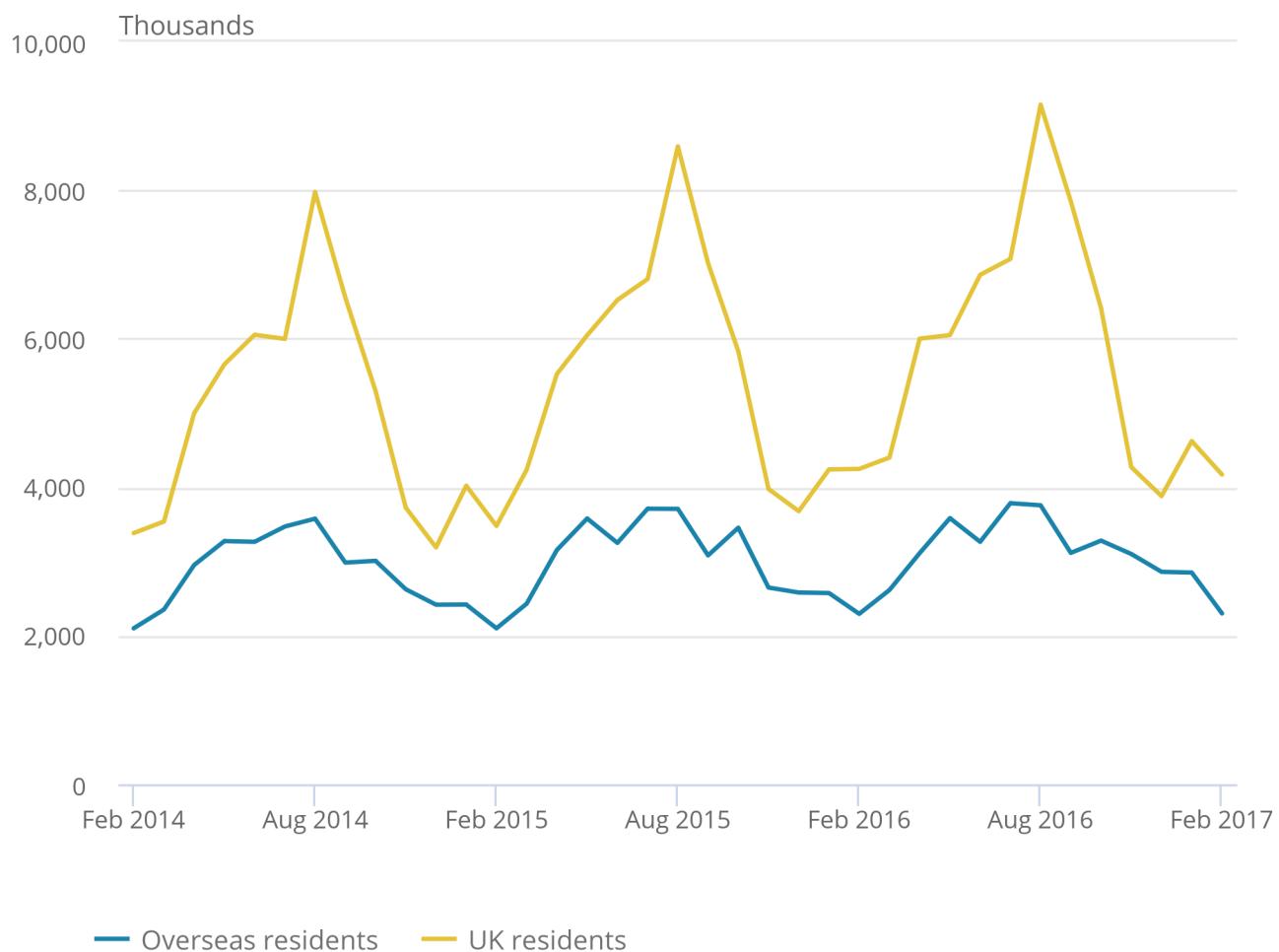
UK residents consistently make more visits abroad than foreign residents make to the UK. The total amount spent by UK residents during visits abroad is also higher than the total spent by foreign residents visiting the UK. The numbers of visits and the amounts spent vary through the year, with more in the summer. This is the case both for UK residents and overseas residents. However, UK residents show a much sharper peak both in visits and spend during the month of August, which is traditionally the only complete month of the UK school summer holidays.

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK and UK residents' visits abroad

February 2014 to February 2017

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February 2014 to February 2017



— Overseas residents — UK residents

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

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

February 2014 to February 2017

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February 2014 to February 2017



— Spending by overseas residents (earnings) — Spending by UK residents (expenditure)

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

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

4 . Trends in visits to the UK by overseas residents

The figures used in the commentary are sourced from the following monthly overseas travel and tourism datasets:

- Table 1 – Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month.
- Table 2 – Purpose of overseas residents' visits to the UK by month.
- Table 5 – Earnings in the UK and expenditure abroad by month.

The number of visits to the UK by overseas residents in February 2017 was 2.3 million, which was the same as in February 2016. Overseas residents spent £1.2 billion in the UK in February 2017, an increase of 6% when compared with February 2016.

During the period December 2016 to February 2017 the number of visits to the UK increased by 8% from 7.4 million to 8.0 million compared with the corresponding period a year earlier. Visits by residents of all areas of the world increased, with the exception of Other EU countries (those that joined the EU after January 2004), which decreased by 1%. Holiday visits for this period rose by 15% to 2.6 million and miscellaneous visits rose by 17% to 780,000, largely driven by the “watch sport” reason for visit.

For the period December 2016 to February 2017, spend in the UK by overseas residents increased 5% on the previous year to £4.4 billion.

Table 1: Main visit and spending estimates for overseas residents' visits to the UK in 2016 and 2017

	Overseas residents' visits to UK			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Earnings (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Feb 2017	2,300	+0	1,170	+6
Dec 2016 to Feb 2017	8,010	+8	4,430	+5
Year to date 2017	5,150	+6	2,670	+11
Latest 12 months	37,620	+3	22,420	+1
Seasonally adjusted				
Sep	3,080	+1	1,820	-3
Oct	3,080	-6	1,750	-9
Nov	3,410	+16	2,010	+15
Dec	3,320	+11	1,850	-4
Jan	3,310	+10	2,010	+17
Feb	3,160	+2	1,950	+11

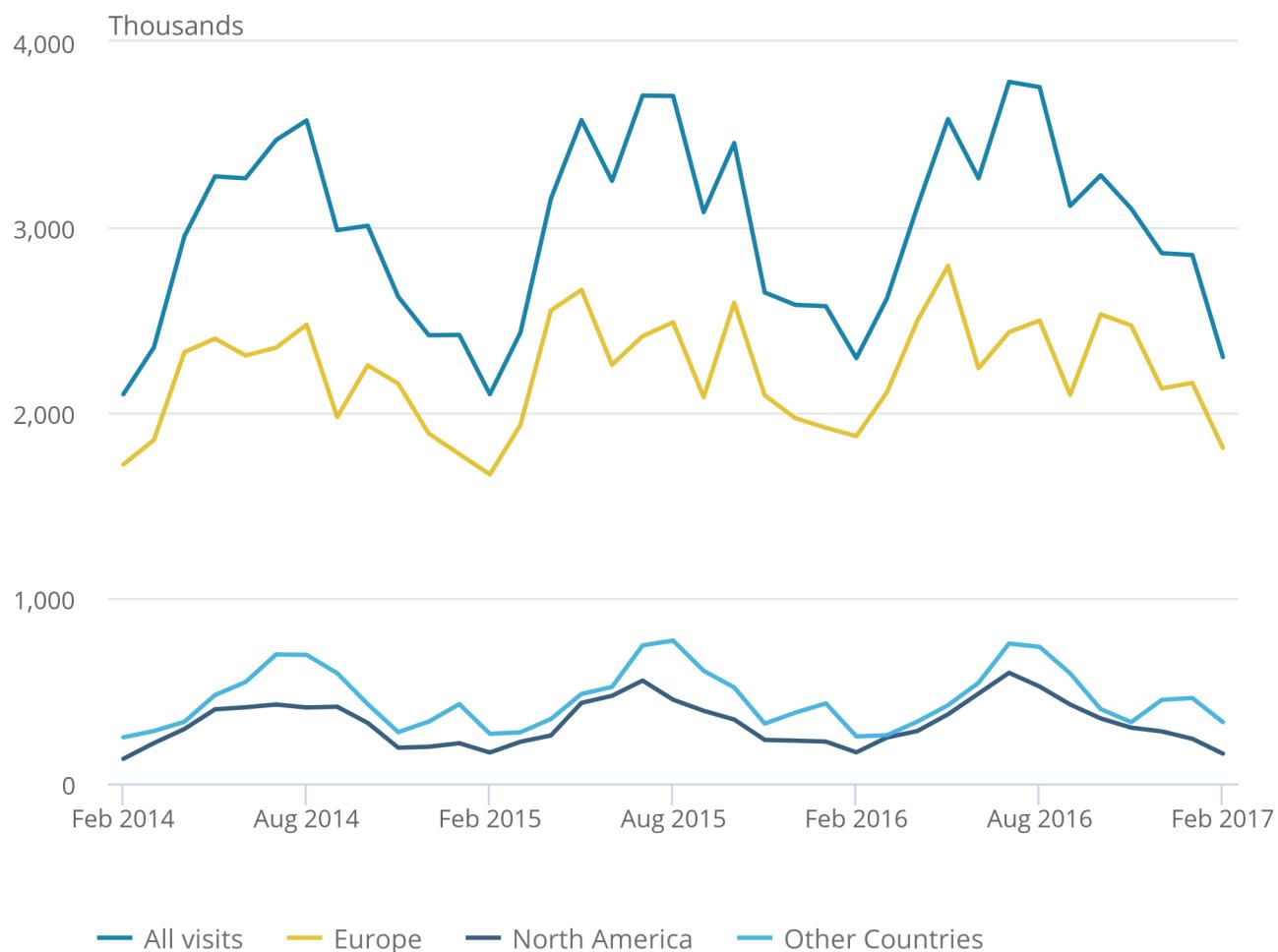
Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Figure 3: Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month

February 2014 to February 2017

Figure 3: Overseas residents' visits to the UK by month

February 2014 to February 2017



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

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

5 . Trends in overseas visits by UK residents (non-seasonally adjusted)

The figures used in the commentary are sourced from the following [monthly overseas travel and tourism datasets](#):

- Table 3 – UK residents' visits abroad by month.
- Table 4 – Purpose of UK residents' visits abroad by month.
- Table 5 – Earnings in the UK and expenditure abroad by month.

The estimated number of visits abroad by UK residents in February 2017 was 4.2 million, a decrease of 2% when compared with February 2016. UK residents spent £2.8 billion during these visits, an increase of 9% when compared with February 2016.

During the period December 2016 to February 2017, UK residents' visits abroad rose by 4% compared with the corresponding period a year earlier and they spent 7% more. Split by area of visit the largest increase was visits to Other EU countries (those that joined the EU after January 2004), which rose 14%. When looking at reason for visit, business visits fell by 6% from the same period in the previous year but all other reasons for visit increased. The largest increase, 23%, was for miscellaneous visits, although the numbers were relatively small.

Table 2: Main visit and spending estimates for UK residents' visits abroad in 2016 and 2017

	UK residents' visits abroad			
	Visits (thousands)	% change from year earlier	Expenditure (£ million)	% change from year earlier
Non seasonally adjusted				
Feb 2017	4,170	-2	2,760	+9
Dec 2016 to Feb 2017	12,670	+4	7,460	+7
Year to date 2017	8,790	+4	5,340	+7
Latest 12 months	70,730	+6	43,780	+11
Seasonally adjusted				
Sep	6,280	+15	3,760	17
Oct	6,030	+9	3,770	+15
Nov	5,880	+7	4,080	+20
Dec	5,820	+3	3,660	+6
Jan	5,900	+8	3,430	+8
Feb	5,940	+3	3,880	+12

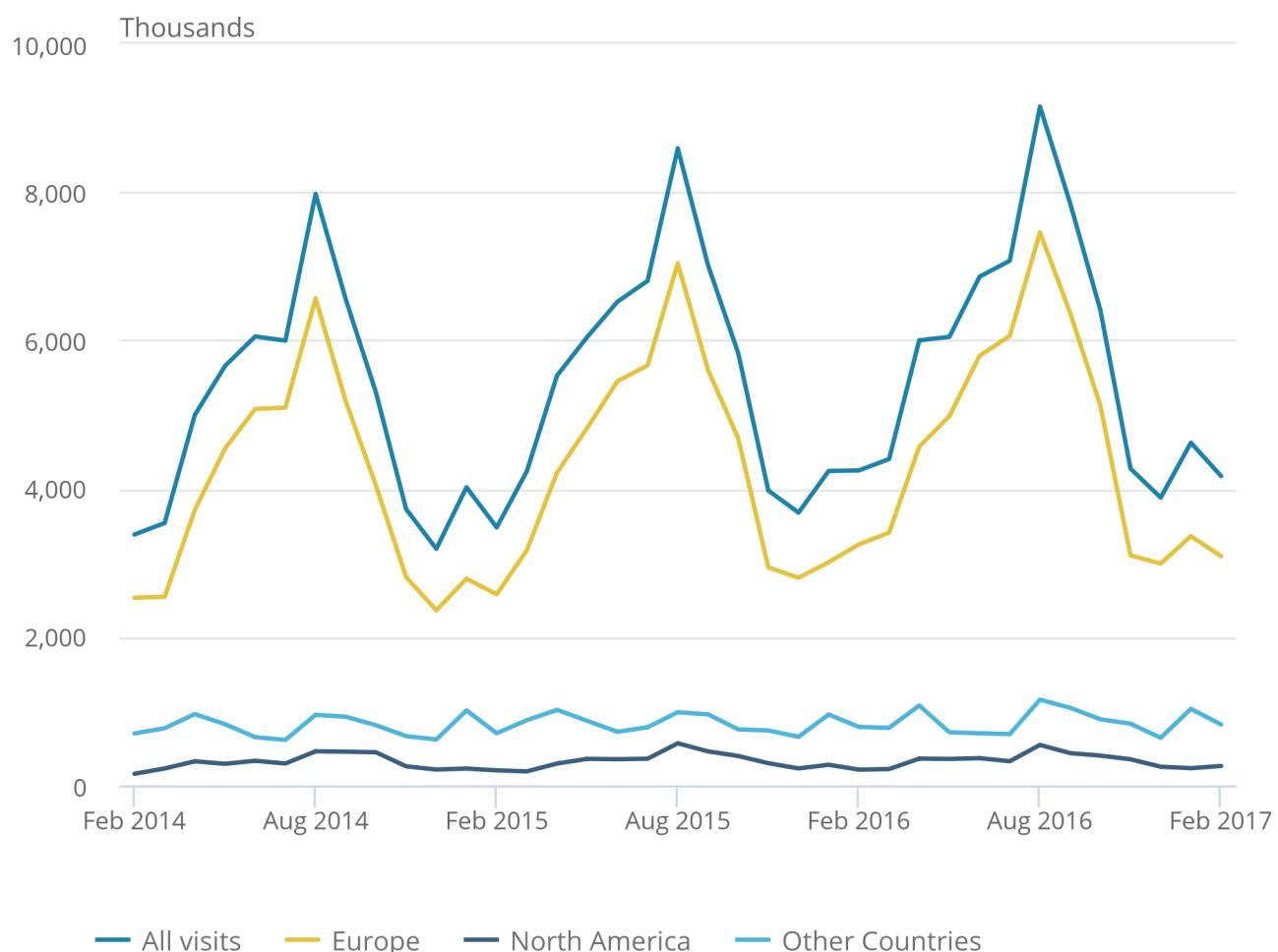
Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Figure 4: UK residents' visits abroad by month

February 2014 to February 2017

Figure 4: UK residents' visits abroad by month

February 2014 to February 2017



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

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

6 . Links to related statistics

[Travel trends](#): the latest publication (Travel trends 2015) was published on 20 May 2016, the next publication (Travel trends 2016) will be published in May 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 your own analyses of quarterly and annual data on main variables – the datasets are provided in SPSS and Excel.

[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 2016) figures will be found in Travel trends 2016.

[Overseas travel and tourism monthly](#): the latest publication (January 2017) was published on 24 March 2017 – this provides provisional results of visits to the UK by overseas residents, visits abroad by UK residents and spending by travellers, using provisional passenger traffic data.

7 . Quality and methodology

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

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

The International Passenger Survey Methodological Information outlines definitions and sample methodology.

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. Unplanned revisions are made to correct 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](#).

Seasonally adjusted figures are presented for the main figures in the publication. 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 20,000 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 February 2017

February 2017 monthly estimates	Estimate	Relative 95% Confidence Interval (+/- % of the estimate)
Visits to UK by overseas residents (thousands)	2,300	7.8%
Earnings from visits to UK (£ million)	1,170	10.8%
Visits abroad by UK residents (thousands)	4,170	7.1%
Expenditure on visits abroad (£ million)	2,760	10.4%

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 (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.

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.

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.

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