

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: January to March 2023

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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To be announced

Notice

20 July 2023

We are pausing our monthly travel and tourism bulletins and data releases for the January to June 2023 period. This is to focus on making improvements to the timeliness of quarterly outputs. Our next bulletin will be the second quarterly travel and tourism output for April to June 2023, which will publish in October. To keep up to date and to receive our travel and tourism newsletter, [subscribe to our email updates](#).

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1 . Main points

- Overseas residents made 7.7 million visits to the UK in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023; this was much higher than the 3.7 million visits that were made in Quarter 1 2022.
- Overseas residents spent £5.6 billion on their visits to the UK in Quarter 1 2023, an increase of £2.8 billion compared with visits in Quarter 1 2022.
- UK residents made 15.3 million visits abroad in Quarter 1 2023; this compares with 9.6 million visits in Quarter 1 2022.
- UK residents spent £12.7 billion on their visits abroad in Quarter 1 2023; this was £5 billion more than they spent in Quarter 1 2022.
- Holidays were the most popular reason for UK residents to travel abroad in Quarter 1 2023; for overseas residents, the most common reason to travel was to visit friends or relatives.

The estimates provided for 2021 and the start of 2022 should be treated with caution as the numbers are smaller than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic years. The data exclude the Eurotunnel as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were unable to interview at this site between January 2021 and June 2022. No estimates are included for any travel across the Irish border.

2 . International Passenger Survey and coronavirus (COVID-19)

This bulletin analyses data from the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which collects details from overseas residents leaving the UK, and UK residents returning home. Sea and Eurotunnel data are excluded for some periods when, because of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, it was not possible to interview on board Dover ferries or the Eurotunnel. Interviewing restarted in Dover in July 2021 and on the Eurotunnel vehicles on trains in July 2022.

The figures shown for April to December 2020 are based on administrative sources and modelling, and the methods used are described in Section 6 of our [Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: April to June 2020 bulletin](#). The IPS was not run during this period because of the coronavirus pandemic.

3 . Overseas residents' visits to the UK

Overseas residents made a total of 7.7 million visits to the UK during Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023. This was more than twice the number of visits made for the same period in 2022 (3.7 million visits). This increase was to be expected as restrictions on international travel were lifted.

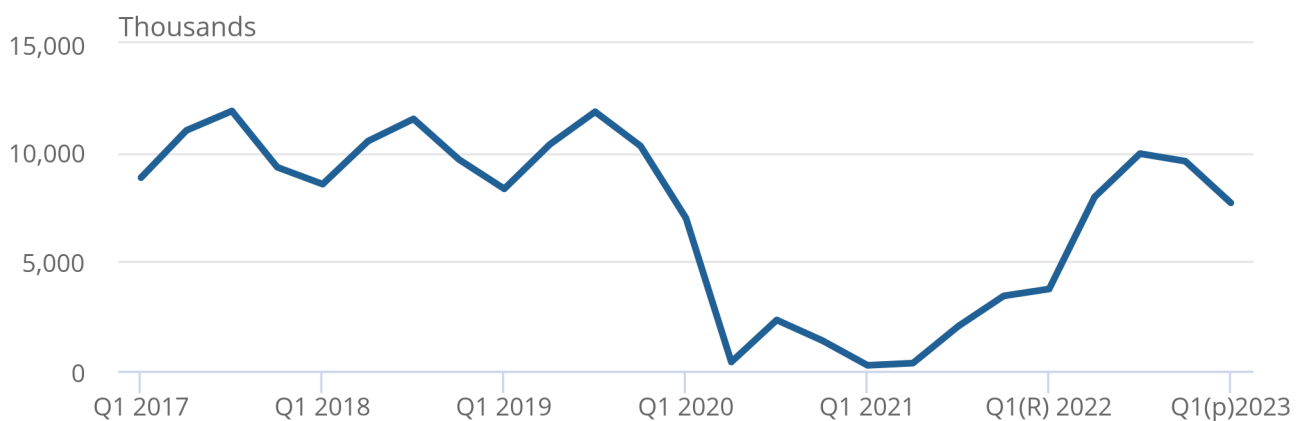
The number of visits in 2023 is close to pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels, where in 2019, 8.3 million visits were made to the UK by overseas residents in Quarter 1. This is a decrease of around 8% between Quarter 1 2019 and Quarter 1 2023.

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by 4 million in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only) with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 1 2023

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by 4 million in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only) with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 1 2023



Source: International Passenger Survey and Overseas travel and tourism from the Office for National Statistics

Visiting friends or relatives was the most popular reason for overseas residents to visit the UK, with an increase of 64% from Quarter 1 2022 (1.7 million visits) to Quarter 1 2023 (2.9 million visits). Holidays were the next most common reason for visiting the UK, with an increase from 944,000 in Quarter 1 2022 to 2.8 million visits in Quarter 1 2023. Business trips increased from 802,000 to 1.4 million during Quarter 1 2022 to Quarter 1 2023.

While visits are close to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, spending is higher in Quarter 1 2023 than in the first quarter of 2019. In Quarter 1 2023, estimated spending in the UK by overseas visitors was £5.6 billion, which was an increase of 17% from Quarter 1 2019 (£4.8 billion). This does not factor in inflation for that period.

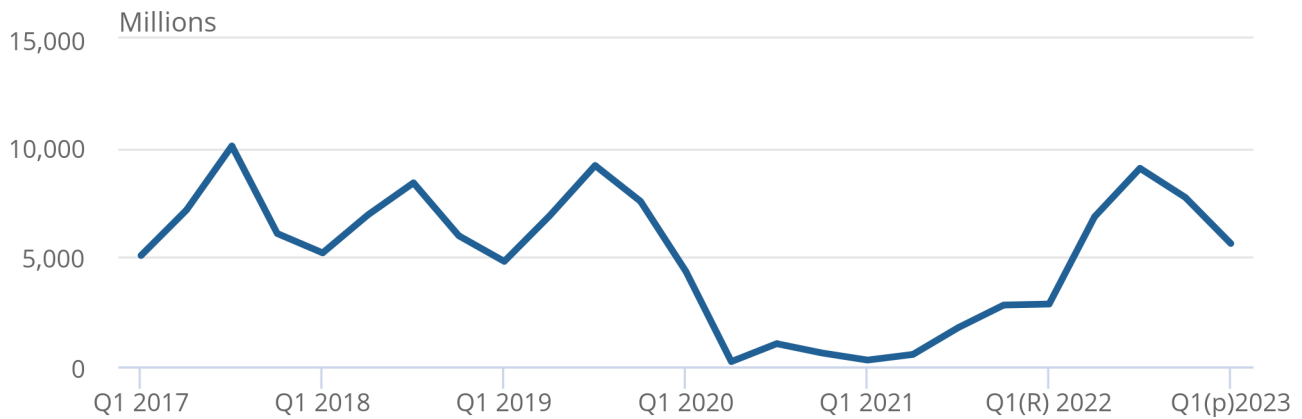
Spending was 97% higher in Quarter 1 2023 than in Quarter 1 2022. This increase in spending was seen for all areas of the world, and the largest increase was for residents visiting from Europe. Spending by residents of Europe, in Quarter 1 2023, was almost double the amount spent in the same quarter in the previous year (£2.6 billion and £1.4 billion, respectively).

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK increased by £2.8 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 1 2023

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK increased by £2.8 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 1 2023



Source: International Passenger Survey and Overseas travel and tourism from the Office for National Statistics

For a monthly breakdown of the Quarter 1 2023 data, please see our [Overseas travel and tourism, monthly data tables](#).

4 . Visits abroad by UK residents

UK residents made 15.3 million visits abroad in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023. This compares with 9.6 million visits in the same quarter in 2022. This 59% increase in visits abroad compares to a period where travel restrictions remained in the UK because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

However, visits abroad in Quarter 1 2023 were still lower than pre-coronavirus pandemic levels; down by 16% from Quarter 1 2019 (18.2 million). Disruptions at some airports across the UK, caused by staff shortages and the rising cost of living, could factor into this.

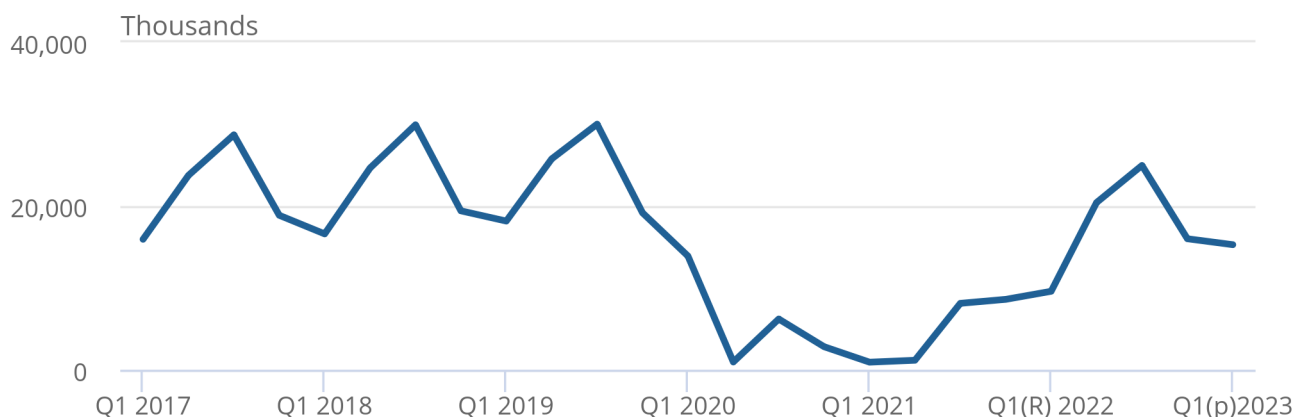
The largest number of visits abroad were made to Europe (10.9 million). This was an increase of 54% from the same quarter in 2022, when 7.1 million visits were made.

Figure 3: UK residents' visits abroad increased by 5.7 million in Quarter 1 2023 (Jan to Mar) compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 3 2022

Figure 3: UK residents' visits abroad increased by 5.7 million in Quarter 1 2023 (Jan to Mar) compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 3 2022



Source: International Passenger Survey and Overseas travel and tourism from the Office for National Statistics

Holidays were the most common reason for UK residents' visits abroad in Quarter 1 2023, accounting for 56% of all visits (at 8.6 million). The second most popular reason for travelling abroad was to visit friends or family, 4.9 million visits. Business trips also increased between Quarter 1 2022 and Quarter 1 2023, from 661,000 to 1.4 million.

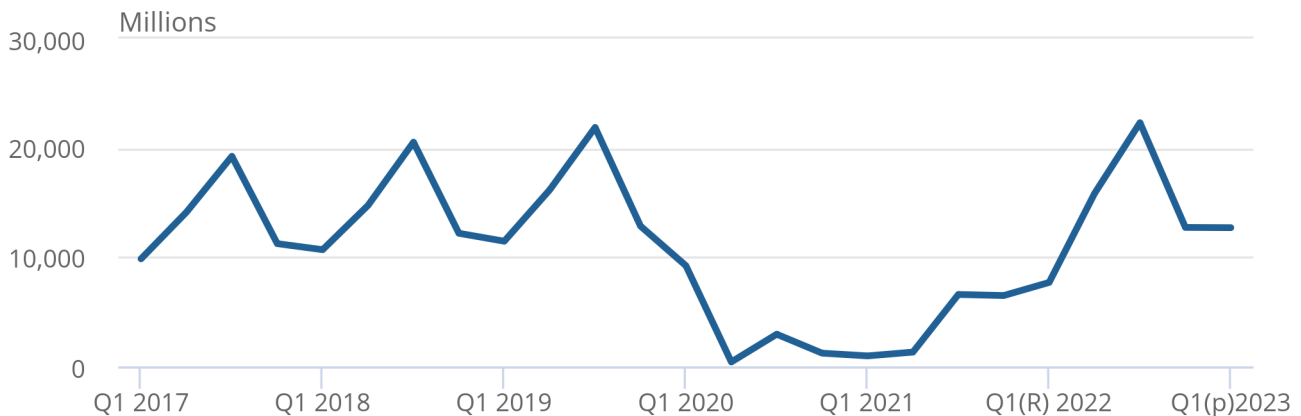
UK residents spent £12.7 billion during visits abroad in Quarter 1 2023. This was an increase of £5 billion when compared with the same period in 2022. Like overseas spending in the UK, this is also higher than pre-coronavirus pandemic levels. UK spending abroad in Quarter 1 2023 was around 11% higher than in the same quarter in 2019 (where spending was £11.5 billion).

Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £5 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 3 2022

Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £5 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2023 compared with Quarter 1 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2017 to Quarter 4 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 2021 (air only), with the return to all modes from Quarter 3 2021 to Quarter 3 2022



Source: International Passenger Survey and Overseas travel and tourism from the Office for National Statistics

For a monthly breakdown of the Quarter 1 2023 data, see our [Overseas travel and tourism, monthly datasets](#).

5 . Overseas travel and tourism data

[Estimates of overseas residents' visits and spending in the UK](#)

Dataset | Released on 20 July 2023

Quarterly estimates of overseas residents' visits and spending from the International Passenger Survey, using administrative sources and modelling.

[Estimates of UK residents' visits and spending abroad](#)

Dataset | Released on 20 July 2023

Quarterly estimates of UK residents' visits and spending abroad from the International Passenger Survey, using administrative sources and modelling.

6 . Glossary

Visits

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.

Overseas visitor

An overseas visitor is 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 residing 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 residing in the UK (who may be of foreign nationality).

Visiting multiple countries

When a resident of the UK has visited more than one country, expenditure and stay are allocated to the country that was stayed in for the longest time.

Miscellaneous visits

Visits for miscellaneous purposes include:

- those for study
- those to attend sporting events
- those for shopping
- health
- religious events
- other purposes

It also includes 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.

Earnings and expenditure

Earnings refer to spending in the UK by overseas residents, whereas expenditure refers to spending abroad by UK residents.

7 . Measuring the data

Accuracy of the International Passenger Survey (IPS) estimates

The estimates presented in this article for the whole of 2020 must be treated with particular caution, since the methods used have not been fully scrutinised or tested.

The accuracy of the estimates is expressed in terms of confidence intervals. For more information on confidence levels and how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys, see our [Uncertainty and how we measure it web page](#).

Collection of the IPS data

IPS data are collected by a team of over 200 interviewers who are recruited and trained specifically to work on the IPS. Interviews are carried out at air and sea ports, on board vessels leaving or returning to the UK, or on board the Eurotunnel trains. Interviews are carried out on all days of the year, apart from Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Further guidance is available about the quality of overseas travel and tourism estimates in our [IPS Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) report](#). This report will be updated shortly to reflect recent changes to the survey's processes.

8 . Related links

[Travelpac: travel to and from the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 20 July 2023

Travel to and from the UK, with detail on traveller age and sex, trip purpose, length, and spending. From International Passenger Survey (IPS), quarterly data.

[Travel trends: 2022](#)

Article | Released 26 May 2023

Annual estimates of completed international visits to and from the UK and earnings and expenditure associated with these visits.

[Overseas travel and tourism: December 2022 provisional results](#)

Bulletin | Released 26 April 2023

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

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 20 July 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: January to March 2023](#).