

ABTA Travel Trends Report 2012

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2011 Travel Market Overview

The British public showed remarkable resilience in 2011 when it came to taking their holiday; faced with uncertain economic conditions and a squeeze on household budgets, most people took the same number of holidays as in 2010. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in the 12 months to September 2011 approximately 36.3 million people took a holiday (a decrease of 1% year on year), of which it is estimated 15 million were booked as packages.

Figures from the ABTA Consumer Trends survey showed that in the 12 months to September 2011, 63% of Brits took a foreign holiday with a third (34%) taking more than one trip abroad. Figures for domestic holidays were also strong, with approximately 4 in 5 taking one or more breaks in the UK. Only 10% of the population took no holidays, either in the UK or abroad.

It was a challenging year for some popular tourist destinations. Most significantly, the 'Arab Spring' meant a dramatic fall in tourism to North Africa. The devastating floods in Thailand caused a drop in numbers travelling to Bangkok and other parts of the country and an unseasonably mild November in 2011 meant that some of the prime European ski resorts were late to start their seasons. Spain, France and the USA were amongst the most popular destinations of 2011.

When it comes to booking habits, travel agents and tour operators remained a popular option in 2011, with over half of consumers who took a foreign holiday booking this way. This method of booking was particularly popular with the younger end of the market; with a third (32%) of 16-24 year olds booking this way. 42% of foreign holidays were booked as a package, which is exactly the same percentage as holidays where travel and accommodation were booked separately.

One in five travellers were still going abroad uninsured in 2011, however, annual travel insurance policies have become very popular in the past twelve months, with 30% of travellers opting for this (up from only 13% in 2010).

ABTA, which represents around 1,300 travel companies, saw its members' turnover reach £29.3 billion for the 2010-2011 financial year, which ended on 30th June 2011, compared to £27.3 billion in the previous financial year - an increase of £2 billion, highlighting the resilience of the holiday market.

2012 Travel Market Outlook

With the Eurozone financial crisis still unfolding, high inflation and low economic growth forecast in 2012, the squeeze on household budgets is set to continue into the New Year. Despite the gloomy economic outlook, the holiday market looks poised to remain relatively resilient. Feedback from the ABTA Consumer Trends survey shows that holidays are the last to go when the public is cutting back on spending, with consumers choosing to make savings on eating out or home improvements before losing out on their holiday. One in five consumers is so keen on their foreign breaks that they regard a longer trip overseas as a necessity they couldn't do without.

The continuing financial crisis is expected to see holidaymakers continue to seek value for money in 2012, with 71% of consumers believing that getting good value for money, but not necessarily the lowest price, is an essential or important element when booking a holiday. Perhaps surprisingly, finding the lowest prices comes much further down people's list of priorities, with only 53% seeing this as essential or important. In fact this came lowest out of a list of ten considerations when booking a holiday. The focus on value for money rather than the cheapest price, suggests people are thinking carefully about what they want and being more discerning about their holidays and where they spend their money.

The double inflation rise in Air Passenger Duty that comes into effect in April 2012 will put additional pressure on the travel market. Long haul destinations, where a family of four travelling in economy class can pay up to £368 in taxes, are likely to be most affected.

Financial protection is expected to continue to be a priority for holidaymakers in 2012. Recent events, such as the Ash Cloud, and economic downturn have made consumers more cautious when booking their holidays and eight in 10 (79% of consumers) now see a financial protection scheme as essential or important – up from 74% in 2010. Due to the financial protection they offer, package holidays are expected to remain popular. The reform of ATOL regulations in early 2012 will also see consumer financial protection rise up the news agenda.

Key Trends 2012

1. Authentic and specialist holidays

With value for money looking to remain a key trend, a lot of consumers are increasingly seeking holidays that offer a more “authentic” or specialist experience. Many travel companies have increased their offerings in these areas, recognising the value they can bring by using their knowledge and experience to create highly tailored and personalised experiences.

Beach holidays are expected to continue to remain the most popular kind of holiday but holidaymakers, particularly at the mid to high end of the income scale, are increasingly looking for destinations that have a strong and authentic sense of location, in everything from food and setting to excursions and entertainment. This trend is reflected in some travel companies abandoning summer/winter brochures in favour of destination-only titles with a greater focus on location. Several travel companies at the higher end of the market have also launched packages specifically focused on offering authentic experiences. These include trips for adventurous tourists such as exploring wildlife in the Galapagos Islands, discovering Patagonia or walking in Annapurna, Tibet.

The trend towards more authentic experiences is also supported by an increased concern amongst holidaymakers that their holiday is benefiting the local destination, with 50% (as opposed to 47% in 2010) believing that their holiday should help the local economy and people.

Specialist holidays are expected to perform well in 2012 with travel companies offering something for everyone, whether it’s a couples holiday, river cruise, mini-gap, spiritual spa break, learning/adventure trip or a wedding/vow renewal/honeymoon package.

The growing demand for ‘adult gaps’, as empty nesters and adults on career breaks head off abroad to explore and immerse themselves in another culture, is expected to drive demand for volunteering and learning breaks for adults and families. Travel companies have responded to this demand with many offering longer package breaks for adults or families that include volunteering, conservation, teaching or learning a new skill or language. Holidaymakers’ growing concern about the impact of their holidays on local destinations means that in 2012 it will be crucial for travel companies to ensure that these types of breaks have a positive and long term impact.

Cruise holidays are expected to continue to grow modestly in 2012 after a very strong 2011. The Passenger Shipping Association estimates that 1.73 million cruise holidays will be taken by British passengers in 2012, an increase of just over one per cent on the 2011 figure. River cruising is emerging as the fastest growing sector of the cruise market with European river cruises particularly popular.

Weddings abroad continue to be popular and are seen as a cheaper alternative to marrying in the UK where research now indicates the average cost is £20,000 compared to £6,500 abroad. Mintel, a leading research company, revealed in 2011 that 1 in 5 couples (18%) now marry abroad.

Foreign honeymoons are expected to grow in popularity in 2012. Many couples are also opting for a “mini-moon” in or close to the UK immediately after their wedding and then delaying their honeymoon overseas to capitalise on better weather or cheaper deals.

2. Budget and luxury travel

The downturn is expected to see high demand for the budget and luxury markets in 2012, with the mid-market coming under the greatest pressure from reductions in household spending.

2011 was a strong year for all-inclusive holidays and demand for this type of holiday looks set to continue into 2012 as budget conscious holidaymakers favour the transparency and control all-inclusive holidays provide over finances. Resorts in Tunisia, along the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico and around the Red Sea in Egypt are all likely to offer good value and high quality accommodation in 2012.

The high end of the market looks set to perform well in 2012. At the luxury end of the market, there is a growing trend towards remote and discreet holidays. Globalisation and over commoditisation has led high-end holidaymakers to seek out locations that are off the beaten track with a certain kudos attached to going to destinations that are less well trodden, such as Ethiopia, the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica.

3. Hot destinations

Uncertain economic times are likely to see Britons put their faith in places they know well in 2012 – this suggests destinations like France, Italy, Greece, USA (Florida) and Spain will fare particularly well. Early summer 2012 bookings for these destinations are all looking healthy, while numbers are slightly down in other destinations, such as Egypt and Tunisia.

January and February are the most popular times for people to book a holiday and while certain areas of North Africa continue to experience unrest, holidaymakers should look out for good deals in areas that have returned to relative calm. Tunisia and the Red Sea Resorts in Egypt in particular will be relatively affordable with deals on offer as travel companies look to lure tourists back into these areas.

Destinations to watch next year include: Poland and Ukraine, the hosts of the European football championships; Jordan, which is celebrating the 200th anniversary of the rediscovery of Petra; Cape Verde, for its low-key beauty and relaxing vibe; Iceland, as meteorologists predict a particularly spectacular year for the Aurelia Borealis; and Colombia which offers diverse culture and beautiful landscapes.

Spain continues to be the favourite destination for families, followed by the UK, USA, France and Greece.

4. Age group trends

The over 55s, or 'Baby Boomers', look set to enjoy lots of travel in 2012 as the group least prepared to give up their holidays in times of economic difficulty. 30% of those aged 55-64 took more than four holidays in the UK in the twelve months to September 2011 and 10% took more than four holidays abroad. Cruise, coach and rail holidays are all expected to be popular with this age group as they tend to be less time pressured than younger holidaymakers and can enjoy the more leisurely pace of these types of holiday.

Holidays continue to be popular with the "backpacker brigade" with one in ten under 24s taking more than four foreign holidays a year.

Those aged between 35 and 54 took the fewest number of holidays in 2011, suggesting that it is cash-strapped families who have been the hardest hit by current economic conditions.

5. Online Vs High Street

When it comes to holiday booking habits, 2012 looks set to be an interesting year with changes afoot on the high street and an explosion in mobile booking apps. Whatever the booking method, customers are increasingly looking to travel companies to provide highly personalised inspiration and ideas based on their tastes and budgets.

High street bookings had a bit of a comeback in 2011; while consolidation saw overall shop numbers decline, bookings were up, with 25% of the public booking their foreign holiday on the high street compared to 17% in 2010. Perhaps surprisingly, this method of booking was most popular with younger holidaymakers, with nearly a third (32%) of 15-24 year olds booking their holiday on the high street compared to just 15% of 45-54 year olds. To capitalise on this demand for in-person booking, in 2012 several major travel companies are expanding their high street presence and we can expect to see companies adopt new approaches to better compete with and differentiate themselves from online outlets.

Following the success of stores like Apple, many travel companies will place a greater focus on creating an in-store experience in 2012, moving away from rows of booking agents behind desks to provide greater interaction and fun for customers to better reflect the product they are buying. Technology such as iPads may be used to enhance the in-store experience and many companies are investing more in the training of their frontline staff to ensure they offer customers a high level of expertise.

Online travel companies in 2012 are likely to invest in mobile apps. The business traveller is already well catered for, but in 2012 many more leisure providers are expected to get on board with an explosion of consumers buying smartphones and other mobile devices. The challenge for the industry is to keep the booking process simple while adding value by doing things that cannot be done through websites. Consumers can also expect to see greater integration of off and online advertising campaigns, for example through the use of QR (quick response) codes that allow customers to link straight through to booking pages using their smart phones.

6. Late bookings

Travel companies are expecting that consumers will leave it late to book in 2012, like they did in 2011, as they cautiously wait and see what happens to the job market, exchange rates and the economy. The increase in online booking and discount sites such as Groupon, have increased the belief that it is easy for holidaymakers to wait to the last minute, however, in reality many of the best deals are still to be found for those who book in advance just after Christmas. Holidaymakers planning on last minute bargains should be aware that choice could be limited, particularly if they are looking for something specific such as family deals.

7. Sustainable Tourism

Consumer awareness of the environmental impact of their holidays is expected to continue to rise in 2012. One in three holidaymakers now believes that holidays should have an environmental rating, such as that offered by the ABTA developed Travelife Sustainability System. ABTA estimates that this represents over ten million people taking foreign holidays. The figure has grown from 29% in 2010 to 33% in 2011, and is higher amongst women - 38%. The research also suggests that companies which invest in making their business better for the environment stand to gain a competitive edge, with 19% (up 2% from 2010) of consumers saying they are prepared to pay more for a holiday with a company that has a better environmental and social record.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) will take place in June, where nations will come together to discuss the progress made in the 20 years since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and look towards a common future direction. This is likely to further increase consumer awareness of sustainability issues.

2012 will also see the large-scale introduction of the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner. The new aircraft is 20% more fuel-efficient than aircraft of an equivalent size and is the first to use extensively composite materials and is an important example of technological advances addressing the emissions impact of aviation.

Observations from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) dealt with about 1.79 million consular enquiries from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, and supported some 45,197 Brits in difficulty abroad, from visiting those who had been hospitalised or arrested, to rescuing citizens from forced marriages.

Britons in Difficulty

As an indication of the types of cases the FCO deals with, over the period April 10 – March 11, 4,971 Britons¹ needed consular assistance in Spain. There were 1,272 British arrests in the USA, 347 deaths in Thailand (of which 60% were of natural causes) and 452 Britons were hospitalised in Greece. In addition to assistance cases, FCO staff around the world dealt with 1.79m consular enquiries last year².

1 Lost/stolen passports are not included in the figures because in the vast majority of cases, the work done by consular staff is mainly data entry with no additional assistance required

2 An enquiry is a request for information that doesn't require any further action from the FCO staff concerned. A case requires action to assist the individual in dealing with whatever situation they face.

Arrests and drug offences

1,745 Britons were arrested in Spain last year, significantly more than any other country. Globally, arrests for drugs offences formed a significant percentage of the total, and contributed to almost a quarter of the total arrests in Thailand. There were 799 total arrests for drug offences worldwide which accounted for around a seventh of all arrestable offences. Chewing gum (Singapore), wearing swimwear away from the beach (Barcelona) or eating near churches (Florence) are all against the law in some countries or regions, highlighting the need for Britons to carefully research the area to which they are travelling. Local laws and customs can vary from the UK significantly and ignorance of these laws can lead to more severe punishments than in the UK.

Hospitalisations and deaths

The highest number of hospitalisations occurred in Spain (1,024), followed by Greece (452), Thailand (246), France (228), the USA (150) and Turkey (143). Many of these hospitalisations were due to moped and motorbike accidents as well as drink-related incidents such as balcony falls. All of these incidents escalate over the summer months with the increase in consumption of alcohol and drugs. There were 5,972 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths and murders.

Passports

Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists with 25,969 reported incidents worldwide. The FCO recommends photocopying 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 processes. Various countries continue to report increases in scams and thefts of British passports so travellers are advised to stay vigilant.

This report contains facts and travel advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. For comprehensive and up-to-date travel advice visit www.fco.gov.uk/travel to find the latest information for the country you are visiting.

2012 Domestic Outlook

Still riding high from the 'Wills and Kate' effect, the UK looks set to have a further boost in 2012 with the Olympics, Paralympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. These events will be a strong pull for both international visitors and domestic holidaymakers.

The Diamond Jubilee is being celebrated with a double bank holiday giving many people a four day weekend in June (2-5), providing a great opportunity for holidays at home and abroad. With the successful Royal Wedding celebrations still fresh in peoples' minds, many streets and towns are likely to hold their own street parties and festivities.

In the summer the Olympic Games will be a momentous event for the UK and London in particular. With 8.8 million tickets sold, the Capital will be busy during the two week event. While London will be the centre of the action, events are also taking place across the country in Weymouth (Sailing), Broxbourne (Canoeing), and Hadleigh (Mountain Bikes) while Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, Coventry, Glasgow and Wembley will all host football matches.

The Torch Relay provides an opportunity for all areas of the country to shine and celebrate, taking place between 18 May to 27 July. The relay starts in Land's End, Cornwall moving to the North via Wales, the Isle of Man, and Northern Ireland across to Scotland reaching the Shetland Islands on 10 June. The torch then heads South via Edinburgh, heading along the east coast and into East Anglia, continuing its journey into the South East and Channel Islands before arriving into London in late July.

Films often provide a boost for tourism and 2012 is no different. In March we will see the long awaited opening of the Warner Bros. Studio Tour - The Making of Harry Potter in London. Potter aficionados will have the chance to discover the iconic sets of the film including the Great Hall, Dumbledore's office, the boy's dormitory, the Weasley's kitchen and many more.

Scotland is embracing itself for the release of the new Disney Pixar film "Brave", being released in June. It is a new tale to join many of the epic battles and mystical legends of Scotland where a courageous girl, Merida, confronts tradition, destiny and the fiercest of beasts to discover the true meaning of bravery.

Scotland will continue the celebration of the Olympics and Paralympic Games in August with a Speed of Light festival at Arthurs Seat, Edinburgh. The festival is a mass-participation event bringing together sport and innovation; runners will wear specially designed light suits at night to illuminate the hillside whilst the audience will also generate light creating a spectacular sight on the hillside in Edinburgh.

In Northern Ireland the centenary of the Titanic will be commemorated in April in Belfast. The Titanic was built in Belfast and 2012 sees the opening of a multi-million pound Titanic Belfast visitor attraction, enabling the visitor to re-live the story of the ill-fated ship.

In Wales, 2012 marks the celebration of the 100th Birthday of the National Showcaves Centre for Wales. The Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways are joining to enable rail enthusiasts to travel for the first time along the 40 miles of narrow gauge track from Caernarfon to Blaeneu Ffestiniog through the Snowdonia National Park, making it the longest heritage railway route in Britain.

For walking enthusiasts, the 850 miles coastline of Wales is opening to walkers in May 2012, making it one of the only countries in the world where visitors can walk the entire coastline along marked trails.

ABTA's Destinations to Watch 2012

Long haul

Colombia

Most first time visitors to Colombia are advised to head to the north of the country to the beautiful colonial walled city of Cartagena. Built by the Spanish as a base for protection against mostly English pirates, Cartagena is a UNESCO world heritage site and a city of beautiful squares dotted with cathedrals, churches and restaurants. Cartagena is a stopping off port on many Caribbean cruises and not far from the city are the 27 Rosario Islands, a national park which has some of the most unspoilt beaches in the Caribbean. Like most South American countries Colombia has a tasty and varied cuisine with an emphasis on fresh ingredients. If you find yourself in Colombia in the rainy season you may even be offered the unusual delicacy of ants, which are regarded as a potent aphrodisiac!

Visitors to Colombia's capital Bogota will find an interesting architectural mix of colonial and modern architecture. The city has benefited from recent investment in renovating some of the more historic parts of town. It boasts a vibrant restaurant and nightlife scene, packed with locals, tourists and people from all over Colombia.

Although the safety and security situation in Colombia has improved considerably in recent years, visitors to the country are advised to take sensible precautions and to read and follow the Foreign Office travel advice to the country.

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

- Colombia continues to have a high rate of kidnapping for ransom. Street crime is also a problem in major cities, particularly in deprived areas.
- During the rainy season (April-June and September-November), there is a risk of floods and landslides after heavy rains throughout the Colombian Andes. Seek local advice before travelling on mountain roads after heavy rain.
- Airport tax for international departures for visitors who stay in Colombia for less than three months is US\$34. For stays in excess of three months the tax is US\$68. However, the charge depends on the type of visa with which you are issued.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is a lively Caribbean island offering pristine sandy beaches, colourful street life and enough adventure and water sports to satisfy even the most extreme adrenalin junkie. The east coast offers 40 kilometres of beautiful white sand beaches, at the centre of which is the low-slung resort town of Punta Cana, the largest and fastest growing tourist destination in the Caribbean. As well as its beaches, Punta Cana offers great water sports and an ecological park where visitors can have guided tours to see many different types of birds and plants. Other notable resorts on the island include Cabarete on the north coast, which is a surfer's paradise and Península de Samaná, an idyllic tropical hideaway. For those wanting a break from beach life, the capital Santo Domingo offers lively street life and pretty cobblestone streets.

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

- You must hold a valid passport to enter the Dominican Republic. Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of your departure from the Dominican Republic.
- Most local tour companies offering excursions, water sports, jeep and quad bike rental, horse riding etc do not provide insurance cover, so you must check the terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy before undertaking any such activities.
- Be particularly alert if you travel from the airport ‘Las Americas’ in Santo Domingo at night. There have been several reports of passengers being stopped and robbed and/or assaulted en route to their final destination. Most attacks have occurred early in the morning or late at night.

Mexico

2012 is set to be Mexico’s year with the Mayan calendar coming to the end of a 5,125 year cycle, which optimists predict will herald the start of a new spiritual era (though pessimists fear the end of the world). So let’s be optimistic! The country is showcasing its Mayan heritage both contemporary and historical in 2012. The majority of UK tourists are likely to head to the beautiful Caribbean beaches of the Yucatán peninsula with the resorts of Cancun and Cozumel leading the way. The resort town, Playa Del Carmen, just 50 minutes south of Cancun is emerging as a great destination for families thanks to its sandy white beaches, fantastic restaurants and range of activities on offer. Those looking for history are advised to base themselves in the colonial town of Campeche. For something a little bit different in the Yucatán, holidaymakers can volunteer for the not for profit group “El Hombre Sobre la Tierra” staying with local inhabitants, getting first-hand experience of Mayan cuisine and lifestyles as well as working on a range of eco projects. From gourmet gastronomy through to traditional Mayan culture, action and adventure travel and eco-tourism, Mexico has something for everyone.

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

- According to the Mexican authorities, tourist numbers from the UK are up by 20% in 2011 over numbers in 2010.
- Most visits to Mexico by Britons are problem-free, but crime and violence are serious problems in specific areas. Visitors are advised to travel only during daylight hours throughout Mexico, to seek advice from local contacts, and avoid travel off the beaten track.
- In order to reduce air pollution, Mexico City and some other regions of the country have introduced restrictions on driving such as forbidding cars from entering certain areas on particular days, based on their number plates. This applies equally to permanent, temporary and foreign plates, and is strictly enforced.

Sri Lanka

The host of the 2012 Cricket Championships is expecting 4 million tourists in 2012, drawn not only by the cricket but by the stunning beaches, interesting culture and delicious food. The island is ideal for adventure holidays with many tour operators offering whale and dolphin-watching packages. Inland, travellers can discover beautiful waterfalls and tea plantations often shrouded in an enigmatic early morning mist. With beautiful scenery, great weather, magnificent beaches and a warm welcome from the Sri Lankan people, there is no doubt that anyone travelling to watch the two-Test series in March and April 2012 will want to make the most of their stay.

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

- Although the military conflict in Sri Lanka involving the LTTE (the “Tamil Tigers”) ended in May 2009, there is a continued military presence in parts of the country. Some areas were heavily mined, so operations continue to clear minefields. There are signs providing warnings of mined areas but you should exercise caution.
- You can be fined if you ignore instructions not to smoke or drink in certain public areas.
- A new online visa application process, the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA), will become fully operational from 1 January 2012. Further details can be obtained from the [ETA official website](#) of the Department of Immigration and Emigration.

The USA

The USA is always a popular destination for the Brits, being the third most visited destination by UK residents in 2010 (ONS) and voted one of the top UK destinations for families in 2011 (ABTA Consumer Survey 2011). In 2012, the US will be firmly on the political map in the run up to the November US Presidential elections. New York remains a popular city for shopping breaks for UK tourists and won't disappoint in 2012. Florida will continue to attract tourists with its year-round warm weather and great family attractions. A new Legoland Water Park will open in spring 2012 and Universal Studios will go 3D with the reanimated Amazing Adventures of Spider Man ride and Despicable Me.

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

- The US Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) allows most British travellers to visit for up to 90 days without a visa. To do so, visitors need to provide details online at least 72 hours prior to travel through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation or ESTA, at a cost of US\$14.
- Laws vary from state to state, including speed limits and the age of consent. So does the age at which you may legally buy and consume alcohol, but this is usually 21 years.
- The hurricane season normally runs from June to November and can affect the whole of the southern USA. You can monitor the progress of storms on the [US National Hurricane Centre](#) website.

Mid haul

Cape Verde

The ten tiny islands of Cape Verde are set to offer a popular all year round sun option in 2012 with new flight routes for the summer opening up from Gatwick and Manchester. A blend of African, Brazilian and Portuguese cultures, Cape Verde has been dubbed the African Caribbean. Well served by tour operators and only six hours flight from the UK, the islands offer a laid back and relaxing vibe.

One of the most popular is Sal, which is known for its striking lunar-like landscape. It's also dotted with rainbow-coloured towns, like Santa Maria, whose cobbled streets hug the island's southern shores. Boa Vista is famed for its 55km of pristine beaches with the beach of Praia Chave standing out thanks to its snow-white sands and shape-shifting dunes. Also at certain times of the year it's a good base for turtle and whale watching. Sao Vicente is known as the cultural capital of the islands and the place to go to catch the most authentic music and nightlife.

Cape Verde cuisine is a delicious mixture of African and Portuguese influences with a heavy emphasis on fresh ingredients particularly fish and other sea produce, which are found in abundance in the waters around the islands. Cape Verde offers an exotic and interesting alternative for those looking for something a little out of the ordinary.

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

- The rainy season in Cape Verde runs from August to October. Hurricanes can develop in this time. Torrential rains can cause floods and landslides. You should monitor local weather reports and expect difficulties when travelling to affected areas during this season.
- Crime rates in Cape Verde are low but there have been incidents of muggings involving British nationals. You should avoid carrying valuables in public and remain vigilant at all times. The local equivalent to the "999" emergency line in Cape Verde is: 132 (police) and 131 (fire).
- The Cape Verde Escudo is tied to the Euro at CV Esc 110.265 = 1 Euro. Banks will exchange hard currencies. Main hotels and restaurants will accept the major credit cards.

Egypt

While continuing political unrest may affect Egypt's capital Cairo in the run up to the spring presidential elections, the tourist destinations on the Red Sea Riviera are a long distance away and remain safe for holidaymakers. The budget conscious can expect to see some excellent deals on high quality resorts, including all-inclusive holidays. The resorts of Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada are ideal for families as they are packed with great activities, including diving schools and snorkelling, and have shallow water for young children. Those wanting to see some of Egypt's ancient culture should visit, or take a cruise, to Luxor on the banks of the Nile where can they visit the famous Ancient Valley of the Kings, including Tutankhamen's tomb.

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

- Egypt is a popular destination for British tourists; 1,455,906 British nationals visited in 2010 (Source: Egyptian Ministry of Tourism). Most visits are trouble free.
- You should carry some form of photographic ID at all times. A copy of your passport is sufficient.
- The Egyptian Chamber of Diving and Water Sports ([CDWS](#)) website provides regular updates on diving conditions in Sharm el Sheikh.
- In 2010, British consular staff in Egypt handled 25 cases of sexual assault and three cases of rape. Some assaults were against minors. Many occurred in what were considered to be safe environments e.g. hotel premises.

Greece

2012 looks set to be another tough year for Greece and the country is likely to encourage tourism to help its economic recovery. Prices for food and accommodation look like they may be cheaper than in 2011 and there should be lots of good value packages on offer. The island of Crete is one of Greece's star attractions, offering something for everyone with gorgeous beaches and mountains, lively nightlife and fascinating architectural heritage. For those wanting to explore, island hopping remains a popular option and there are now lots of different types of Greek island cruises to suit every taste and budget.

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

- Calling 999 from a UK mobile in Greece will automatically transfer you to the Greek emergency services.
- The plant Khat is an illegal narcotic in Greece. You will be arrested and detained with the possibility of a prison sentence if you are caught trying to take Khat into Greece.
- When hiring a car, moped, quad bike, boat, jet ski or other vehicle, check that it is road or sea worthy and that you have appropriate insurance cover and safety equipment. Greek law requires you to wear a crash helmet on a scooter, moped or motorcycle. Quad bike riders require a full-face helmet (or non-full face helmet plus goggles). You may be arrested if you do not comply. Failure to wear a crash helmet might also invalidate your insurance if you are involved in an accident. If you intend to hire a moped you require a valid driving licence with at least category A1 – 'light motorcycle'. Category P which is valid in the UK for driving mopeds up to 50cc, is not valid in Greece.

Jordan

The Jordan Tourism board is launching a major campaign next year, doubling its UK advertising spend in the hope to attract more visitors. Jordan's tourism rock star is Petra, the 8,000-year-old Nabatean city listed as one of the new Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and 2012 marks the 200th anniversary of the rediscovery of the magical lost city; there will be lots of special events for visitors to commemorate the occasion. Prices have historically been high in Jordan but have come down recently thanks to the arrival of budget carriers, while operators have added more value accommodation options. Aside from Petra tourists can enjoy sights such as Wadi Rum, the desert featured in Lawrence of Arabia, and the ancient cities of Jerash and Madaba, as well as enjoying the friendly and welcoming hospitality. Its history and tourist infrastructure make it one of the most accessible Arab states for English-speaking travellers.

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

- You need an entry visa to Jordan. You can obtain single entry visas, valid for one month, on arrival at any port of entry, except for the King Hussein Bridge at the Jordan/Israel border. A single entry visa costs 20 Jordanian Dinars.
- The temperature in summer months can reach over 40 degrees Celsius. Visitors should use high factor sun-block, and drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- You must undergo an HIV test if you intend to stay in Jordan for more than 30 days, either as a resident or as a long-term visitor. The fee to obtain the health certificate is currently 20 Jordanian Dinars.

Turkey

In the last 15 years Turkey has gone from an exotic but rarely visited destination, to a firm favourite for UK holidaymakers. Over the last five years, the country has seen a 50% increase in foreign visitors. As a destination Turkey has it all with its stunning beaches, beautiful and varied countryside, warm and welcoming people and one of the world's great cities. In 2012, Istanbul is set to continue its march to join Rome, Paris and London as one of the must-see European capital cities.

The main beach resorts for Brits remain Bodrum, Marmaris and Antalya, but there are many more beach options available, from the sophisticated resort of Alacati near Izmir, to the largely undeveloped coast near Iskenderum in the far east of the country. For golf fans Belek in Antalya offers 17 state of the art courses and will host the ABTA Travel Convention in October. Turkey is also home to some of the best preserved classical ruins in the Mediterranean with the sites of Pergamon, Troy and, most spectacular of all, the city of Ephesus near Kusadasi, which makes Pompeii look like a small village. Inland the area of Cappadocia dotted with otherworldly rock formations is a must see sight as you drift at sunrise under a hot air balloon having checked out of your unique hotel hollowed into a cave.

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

- Generally crime is low, but street robbery and pickpocketing are common in the major tourist areas of Istanbul. You should be wary of approaches from strangers offering to change money, offering food and drink or offering to take you to a restaurant or nightclub.
- In 2010 40 cases of sexual assaults, including rape, were reported to our Consular staff in Turkey. The majority of these cases occurred during the summer holiday period in coastal tourist areas in South Western Turkey. Most occurred late at night and most assaults were committed by someone that the victim had met during the evening.
- Turkey has strict laws against the use, possession or trafficking of illegal drugs. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you can expect to receive a heavy fine or a prison sentence of four to 24 years.
- Be aware that alcohol and drugs can lead to you being less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. If you are going to drink, know your limit. Remember that drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK. In all circumstances, you should buy your own drinks and keep sight of them at all times to make sure they are not spiked.

Short haul

Iceland and Aurora Borealis

2012 is set to be an explosive year for the Aurora Borealis, as between now and winter 2013, Earth will bear witness to a 'solar maxim'. This peak in the sun's 11-year cycle produces surges of electrically charged subatomic particles fuelling spectacular displays from Aurora Borealis, and Iceland is one of the best locations to witness the show. Many tour operators are offering combined whale-watching, dog-sledding and volcano tours to boost interest further. It is also cheaper than it has been in previous years to visit Iceland due to the current exchange rates.

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

- Many highland tracks only open for a short part of the summer. If you intend to drive to the highland, or remoter regions of the country, you should always check first with the [Icelandic Road Administration](#) (Vegagerdin) before departure
- Whale meat is available in Iceland but tourists should be aware that its importation into the UK/EU is illegal under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Any importation of whale meat to the UK will result in seizure of the goods, possibly a fine of up to £5,000 and a custodial sentence.
- Smoking in restaurants, bars, public transport and public buildings is prohibited. Anyone caught smoking will initially be asked to leave the premises. Failure to do so will result in arrest and a fine.

Poland/Ukraine

As joint hosts of the 2012 European Championship thousands of football fans will be getting their first taste of these beautiful and varied countries.

England has wisely chosen the beautiful city of Krakow as its base. Centred around an idyllic main square and Wawel Cathedral, the Westminster Abbey of Poland, Krakow is also a short train ride from the salt mine of Wieliczka with galleries, chapels and sculptures carved from salt and the intensely moving warning from history contained in an exhibit at Auschwitz. Those of you who couldn't get into the Leonardo Da Vinci exhibition in London in 2011 can see the poster girl "Girl with an Ermine" back in her Krakow home. Poland is also home to some of the most unspoilt nature and countryside in Europe. Three areas stand out, the lakeland area of Masuria, Poland's answer to Cumbria, the Tatra mountains where yes, you can go skiing and the untouched Bialowieza forest which provides a taste of what mainland Europe would have been like for our medieval ancestors. Due in part to the large Polish community in the UK, we are well served with air routes to Poland.

The Ukraine is set to hit the UK tourism radar when it hosts England's opening game in the European Championship. The Ukraine is already the eighth most popular tourism destination in Europe with 21m visitors in 2010. It is an enormous country with historic cities, castles and beautiful nature reserves. Kiev, the capital, is under three hours flying from the UK and contains two UNESCO world heritage sites: the St Sophia Cathedral and Pechersk Lara Monastery as well as the awe inspiring 203ft tall WW2 statue Mother Motherland made from shining titanium. A lot of money has been spent in recent years sprucing up the centre of town and visitors will find a wide range of good quality hotels as well as very lively nightlife and bars. Odessa on the Black Sea coast was once a favourite of the Russian aristocracy and boasts beautiful Italian and French style buildings as well as long sandy beaches, and for film buffs, the Potemkin steps immortalised by director Sergei Eisenstein. The Ukraine is a mecca for the more active with its national parks

providing a wealth of choice for skiing, climbing, hiking and cycling. Donetsk, which hosts another of England's matches, is a key industrial city based around steel production as its twinning with Sheffield shows, but fans with time to spend before or after the match should head for the 2.5km leafy Pushkin Boulevard which is lined with cafes and bars.

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

- The UEFA Euro 2012 Championships will be held in Poland and Ukraine in June 2012. If you plan to attend, organise your travel and accommodation well in advance. Distances between venue cities are significant.
- Polish police take a strict approach to public drunkenness and if found to be drunk in a public place you may be taken to a drying out clinic where a doctor or nurse will medically assess you. You will not be released until you have sobered up and this may necessitate an overnight stay. You will be required to pay for the cost of the stay.
- You should carry your passport at all times in Ukraine for ID purposes. Police often carry out passport checks on foreign nationals, particularly in the Khreschatik (central) area of Kyiv.

Serbia

Serbia is set to take its place on the UK tourist map in 2012. The capital Belgrade makes an ideal city break and is famous for its welcoming atmosphere and exciting nightlife. The river Sava which flows through the city, is lined with barges which double up as bars and cafes and in the summer the action moves to the island of Ada Cilganlija which has over 7km of beaches and sports facilities. For culture lovers Belgrade has many museums and architectural gems including the church of Saint Sava and the White Palace Museum.

Serbia's second city Novi Sad has been developing a reputation in recent years as the place to go to catch some of the world's best bands at a fraction of the price you would pay in the UK. The EXIT festival takes place from 12-15 July 2012 and has in recent years attracted acts of the calibre of Arcade Fire, Pulp, Fatboy Slim and Portishead. This year's line-up has yet to be confirmed but savvy hipsters are advised to book early to avoid disappointment.

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

- On entering Serbia, make sure you get an entry stamp in your passport from the border police. Temporary residents (in the country for more than 90 days) should have exit-entry visas as well as residence stamps in their passports.
- You will be required to declare money (including travellers' cheques) in excess of €10,000 (or equivalent in other currencies) that you bring into Serbia.
- Rabies is common in Serbia, largely in parks and the outskirts of major cities, including in areas that have previously been rabies free for decades.

Spain

2011 was an excellent year for Spain with visitor numbers from the UK rising by 10%, cementing its position as the most popular overseas destination for UK holidaymakers. Voted the most family friendly country in the 2011 ABTA Consumer Trends survey, 2012 should see it continue to make up some of the downturn in visitor numbers caused by sterling's fall in 2009. The majority of UK visitors in 2012 will head off to the Balearic and Canary Islands and the various Costas for beach holidays. Barcelona remains number one for

city breaks but Madrid, Grenada and Seville are growing substantially in popularity. In 2012 Spain is concentrating its efforts in publicising some of the less well known parts of the peninsula. The Basque and Galician regions of Northern Spain are famous throughout the country for the exceptional quality of their food with the coastal resort of San Sebastian leading the way. These two areas and Asturias are known as green Spain, with beautiful heavily wooded hills and mountains and rugged dramatic coastlines reminiscent of Cornwall. Further south, the medieval towns of Toledo, Salamanca and Avila are all easily accessible from the UK. Spain's climate sees good weather from April often until early November, with even in winter, sunny, relatively warm weather being common in the south and on the islands making a holiday visit a good bet outside of the main summer months.

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

- In some city centres and resorts, thieves posing as police officers on foot patrol may approach tourists and ask to see their wallets for identification purposes. If this happens to you, be careful. First establish that the officers are genuine. If the police request ID, either show them your passport, driver's licence or other photographic identification. Genuine police officers do not request to see wallets or purses.
- If an accident occurs whilst mountaineering, canyoning, potholing or climbing, or if you become lost in the mountains or other areas requiring mountain rescue, call 112 for the emergency services or 062 for the Civil Guard.
- In Barcelona it is against the law to be in the street wearing only a bikini or swimming shorts/trunks. Being bare-chested or going fully nude has also been banned. The only exception to this law is when you are on the beach, the seafront promenade or the adjacent streets. Failure to respect this law may result in a fine.

Tunisia

After the uprisings earlier this year, stability has returned to Tunisia and it is well placed to attract attention in 2012. Offering year round sunshine, long stretches of sandy beaches and a 3,000 year cultural heritage, Tunisia continues to offer good value holidays with great excursions and historic sites to explore. While tourist arrivals fell by 35% in 2011, officials are predicting a return to the record breaking numbers of British visitors seen in 2010, when Tunisia welcomed 353,282 British visitors. TUI and Thomas Cook have both increased their Tunisian capacity for 2012 in anticipation of this.

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

- In the coastal holiday resorts the dress code is very much like any European city or tourist area. If visiting the main cities, religious sites or more remote areas of Tunisia, dress more modestly and avoid any articles of clothing which may cause offence. Topless sunbathing on beaches may cause offence.
- In the case of prescription medication, we recommend that you carry a note from your GP confirming that the medication has been prescribed for an existing condition.
- It is not permitted to remove antiquities from Tunisia without first obtaining permission from Customs authorities. Failure to do so could result in lengthy delays on departure, fines and/or imprisonment.

FCO General Advice

The FCO has a simple message for travellers: in order to have a great time while you're away, you just need to 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.fco.gov.uk/travel 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 or twitter.com/fcotravel.
- The FCO is encouraged to see an increase in take-up of annual travel insurance by Britons heading off around the world. However, some travellers are still not taking out any or adequate insurance. It is really important to 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 take their numbers.

What FCO can and cannot do to help British nationals abroad

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

The FCO can:	The FCO can't:
Issue you with an emergency travel document	Help you enter a country without a valid passport
Give you a list of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors or funeral directors	Give you legal advice
Contact friends and family back home for you	Search for missing people
Provide information about transferring funds	Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people
Visit you in hospital or if you have been arrested	Pay any bills or give you money
	Make travel arrangements for you