

Statistical bulletin

Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: January to March 2022

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 3.8 million visits to the UK in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2022; this was much higher than in Quarter 1 2021, when just 245,000 visits were made by air when travel restrictions were in place.
- Overseas residents spent £3.1 billion on their visits to the UK in Quarter 1 2022, an increase of £2.8 billion compared with air visits in Quarter 1 2021.
- UK residents made 9.5 million visits abroad in Quarter 1 2022; this compares with total visits by air in Quarter 1 2021 of 918,000.
- UK residents spent £7.5 billion on visits abroad in the first Quarter of 2022; this was £6.5 billion more than in Quarter 1 2021.

The estimates provided for 2022 should be treated with caution as the numbers are smaller than pre-coronavirus pandemic years. The data still exclude the EuroTunnel as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was unable to interview at this site until July 2022. No estimates are included for any travel across the Irish border.

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

This article 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: Data sources and quality](#). This is because the IPS was not run during this period due to COVID-19.

3 . Overseas' residents visits to the UK: January to March 2022

Overseas residents made a total of 3.8 million visits to the UK during Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) of 2022, compared with 245,000 visits by air in Quarter 1 2021. The large increase in visits can be attributed to the easing of coronavirus (COVID-19) travel restrictions towards the end of 2021.

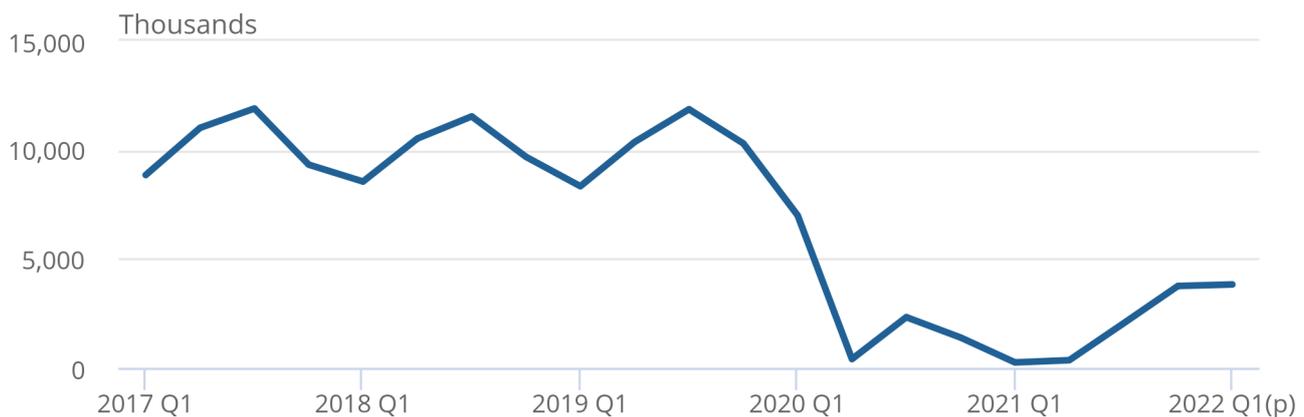
There were 8.3 million overseas visits made by overseas' residents in Quarter 1 2019 before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In Quarter 1 2022, visits fell by 53% to 3.8 million and spending also decreased by 36% to £3.1 billion when compared with Quarter 1 2019. This shows visitor numbers are still short of pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, but are starting to increase.

Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by 3.6 million in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2022

Quarter 1 (Jan to March) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only) with the addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter1 2022. Quarter 1 2022 figures are provisional (p)

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Source: International Passenger Survey – Overseas travel and tourism

Visits to the UK by overseas visitors increased in Quarter 1 2022 when compared with Quarter 1 2021. Although holiday visits increased in 2022, visiting friends or relatives was still the most common reason for visiting the UK, and increased from 151,000 to 1.7 million visits. Holiday visits increased from 8,000 to 928,000 visits, and business trips increased from 34,000 to 787,000.

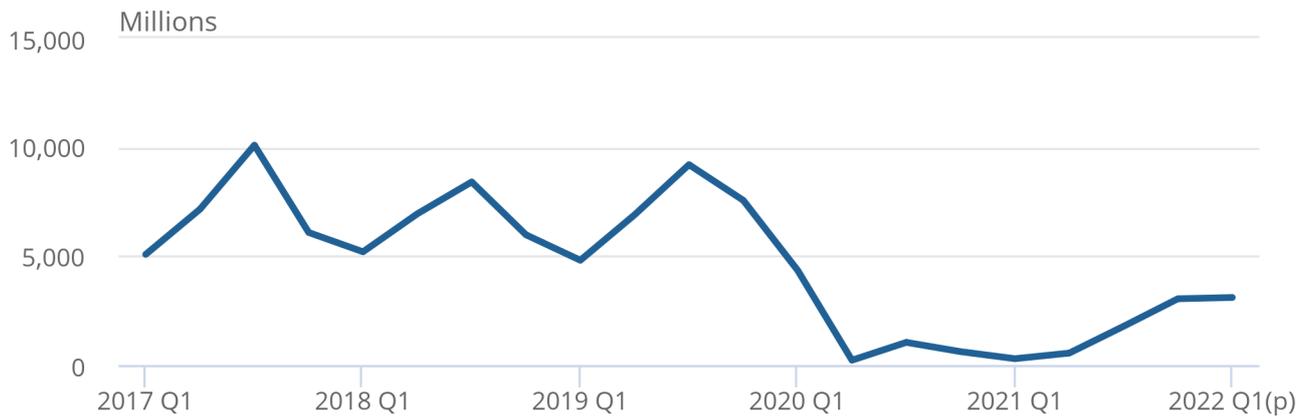
Estimated spending in the UK by overseas visitors was £3.1 billion in Quarter 1 2022, compared with £287 million in Quarter 1 2021. Similar levels of increase were seen for all areas of the world.

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

Quarter 1 (Jan to March) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only) with the addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter 1 2022

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

Quarter 1 (Jan to March) 2017 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2020 (all modes) and Quarter 1 to Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2021 (air only) with the addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter 1 2022



Source: International Passenger Survey – Overseas travel and tourism

4 . Visits abroad by UK residents

UK residents made 9.5 million visits abroad in Quarter 1 (January to March) 2022. This compares with 918,000 visits by air in the same Quarter in 2021. This large increase in visits overseas could be attributed to the lifting of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic travel restrictions. However, the visits abroad in Quarter 1 2022 were 48% down on pre-pandemic levels. The disruption at airports across the UK caused by staff shortages or by the rising cost of living could be linked to this slower growth of UK residents visits abroad.

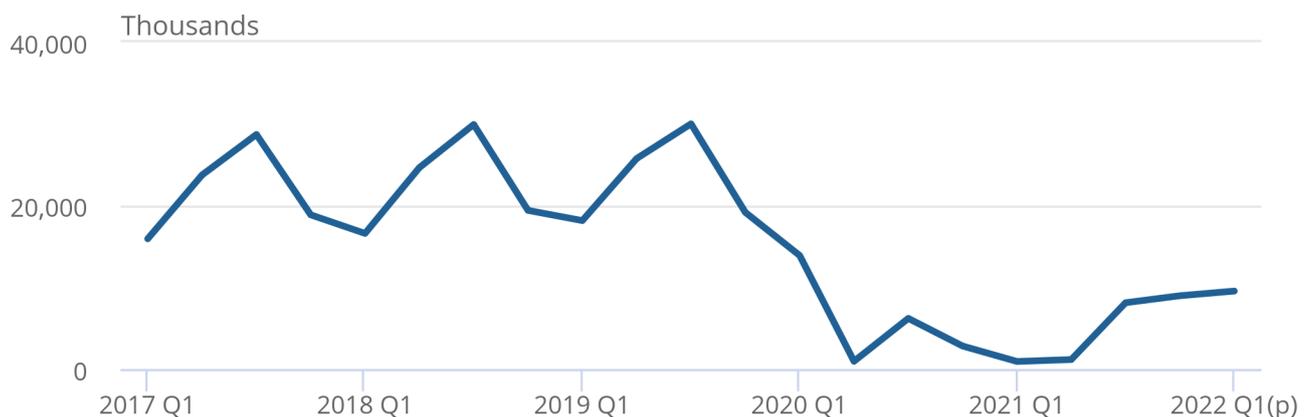
The largest number of visits abroad were made to Europe (7.1 million), an increase of 6.6 million visits from Quarter 1 in 2021.

Figure 3: UK residents' visits abroad increased by 8.6 million in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 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 addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter 1 2022

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Source: International Passenger Survey – Overseas travel and tourism

Business visits were the least likely reason for UK residents' visits abroad. In Quarter 1 2022, there were just 653,000 business trips. Holidays have returned to be the most common reason for travelling again, accounting for 51% of all visits (4.9 million).

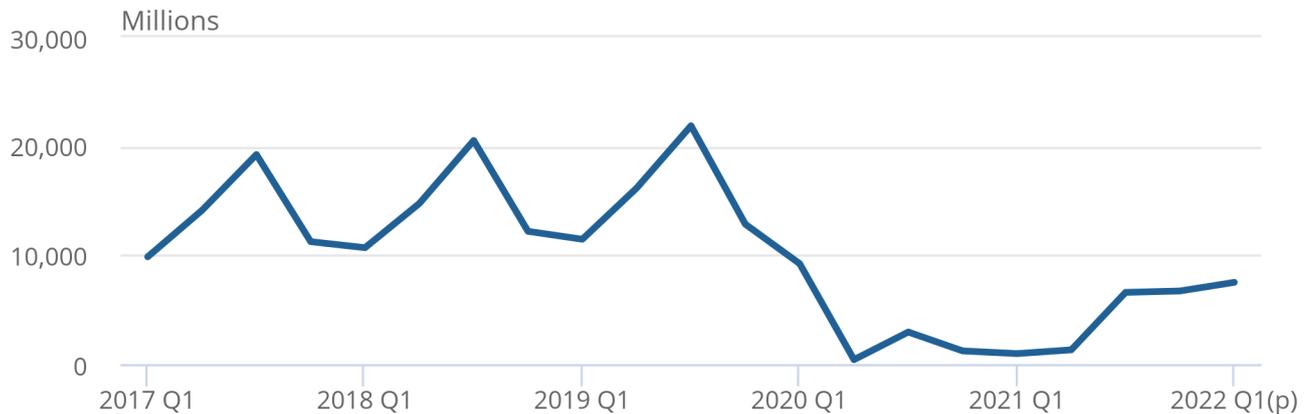
UK residents spent £7.5 billion during visits abroad in Quarter 1 2022. This was an increase of £6.5 billion when compared with the same period in 2021.

Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £6.5 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 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 addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter 1 2022

Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £6.5 billion in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 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 addition of sea data from Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021 to Quarter 1 2022



Source: International Passenger Survey – Overseas travel and tourism

5 . Overseas travel and tourism data

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

Dataset | Released on 23 September 2022

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 23 September 2022

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

6 . 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 which are shown in the data tables associated with this publication](#). For more information on how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys, see our [Uncertainty and how we measure it page](#).

7 . 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.

8 . Measuring the data

The collection of the International Passenger Survey (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 the [IPS QMI report](#). This report will be updated shortly to reflect recent changes to the survey's processes.

9 . Related links

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

Dataset | Released 23 September 2022

Quarterly data on travel to and from the UK, taken from the International Passenger Survey (IPS). Includes detail on age and sex of travellers, purpose and length of trip, and spending. These data are in a form suitable for small businesses and students.

[Travel trends: 2021](#)

Article | Released 15 June 2022

Annual estimates of travel and tourism visits to the UK (of less than 12 months' duration) and associated earnings and expenditure between the UK and the rest of the world.

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

Bulletin | Released 20 September 2022

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

10 . Cite This Release

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