

Article

# Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: April to June 2018

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



Contact:  
Giles Horsfield  
socialsurveys@ons.gsi.gov.uk  
+44 (0)1633 455731

Release date:  
11 October 2018

Next release:  
17 January 2019

## 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. [Visits abroad by UK residents](#)
5. [What's changed in this release?](#)
6. [Other overseas travel and tourism releases](#)
7. [Publication tables](#)
8. [Quality and methodology](#)
9. [Accuracy of the results](#)
10. [Further statistics and other analyses](#)
11. [Other notes](#)

# 1 . Main points

- Overseas residents made 10.0 million visits to the UK in Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018; this was a decrease of 8% compared with Quarter 2 2017, when record visits for the quarter were recorded.
- The number of overseas residents visiting the UK in Quarter 2 2018 was similar to the numbers recorded for the corresponding periods of 2016 and 2015.
- Overseas residents spent £5.8 billion on their visits to the UK in the second quarter of 2018; this was 10% less than in Quarter 2 2017.
- UK residents made 19.9 million visits abroad in Quarter 2 2018, the same as the corresponding period the previous year.
- UK residents spent £11.6 billion on visits abroad in the second quarter of 2018; this was an increase of 1% compared with Quarter 2 2017.

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

Overseas travel and tourism quarterly estimates are revised during the processing of the annual dataset. The most up-to-date and accurate estimates for the previous year's published quarters can be found in the latest edition of [Travel trends](#).

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) is in the process of transferring outputs from data collected on paper forms to an improved method using tablet computers. Tablet data collection was phased in gradually from September 2017 to April 2018. More [background information about the rollout](#) can be found in the linked note.

With the new tablets offering the potential to improve the quality of the IPS data collected, discontinuities arising from the introduction of tablet data collection in the IPS were possible. We have therefore worked with academic experts and ONS Methodology to produce a method for detecting any such discontinuities.

We have continued to monitor the results as more data have become available. Analysis so far has found no detectable discontinuities, but some caution is still advised in the interpretation of data in 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 includes any spending associated (excluding fares) with the visit, which 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.

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 the second quarter (April to June) of 2018. Revised, final estimates for 2017 were published in Travel trends 2017 on 20 July 2018.

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

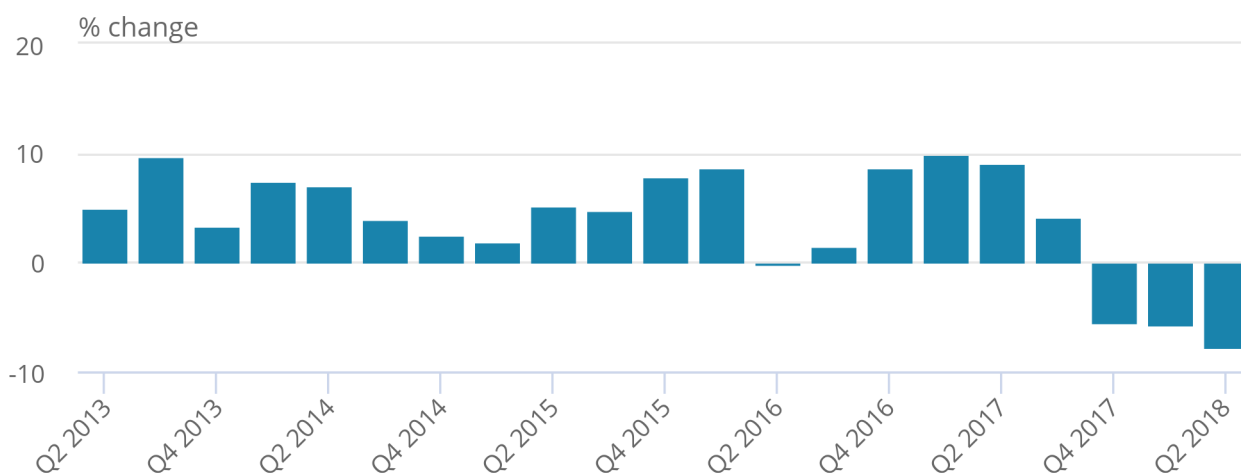
There were fewer international visits to the UK by overseas residents in the second quarter (April to June) of 2018 than a year previously. An estimated 10 million visits were made in Quarter 2 2018, a decrease of 8% when compared with the same period in 2017. However, the number of visits in Quarter 2 2017 was the highest ever recorded by the survey for the second quarter of the year. The number of visits in Quarter 2 2018 was similar to the numbers recorded for Quarter 2 in 2016 and 2015, and higher than in preceding years.

**Figure 1: Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits to the UK from overseas residents**

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018

Figure 1: Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits to the UK from overseas residents

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018



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

Notes:

Q1 stands for Quarter 1 (January to March), Q2 for Quarter 2 (April to June), Q3 for Quarter 3 (July to September), Q4 for Quarter 4 (October to December).

Taking holidays was the most popular reason for visiting the UK in Quarter 2 2018, with 4.3 million visits. This was an 8% decrease compared with the second quarter of 2017. There were also fewer business visits: 2.1 million, 15% fewer than in the second quarter of 2017. Visits to friends and relatives increased by 6% to 3.0 million.

Visits decreased from across different areas of the world. The number of visits from North American residents decreased by 10%, visits from European residents decreased by 8% and visits from residents of “other countries” (countries outside of Europe and North America) fell by 6%.

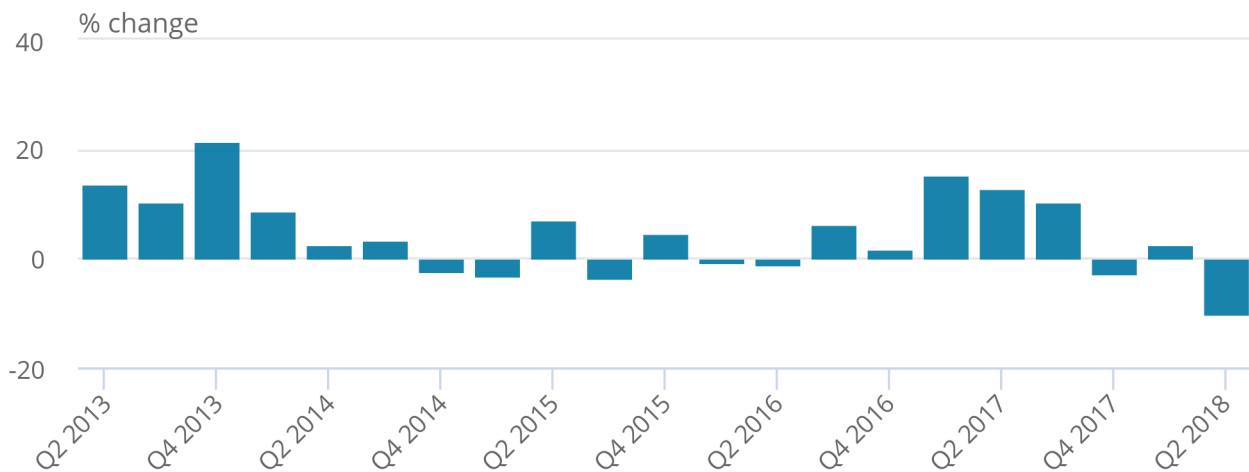
Estimated spending in the UK by overseas visitors fell by 10% to £5.8 billion in Quarter 2 2018 when compared with Quarter 2 2017 (Figure 2), broadly in line with the fall in the number of visits. There was a 12% decrease in spending by residents of North America, to £1.2 billion, while spending by European residents decreased by 10% to £2.9 billion. Spending by residents of “other countries” decreased by 9% to £1.7 billion.

**Figure 2: Quarterly change from a year earlier in earnings from visits to the UK**

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018

Figure 2: Quarterly change from a year earlier in earnings from visits to the UK

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018



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

Notes:

Q1 stands for Quarter 1 (January to March), Q2 for Quarter 2 (April to June), Q3 for Quarter 3 (July to September), Q4 for Quarter 4 (October to December).

## 4 . Visits abroad by UK residents

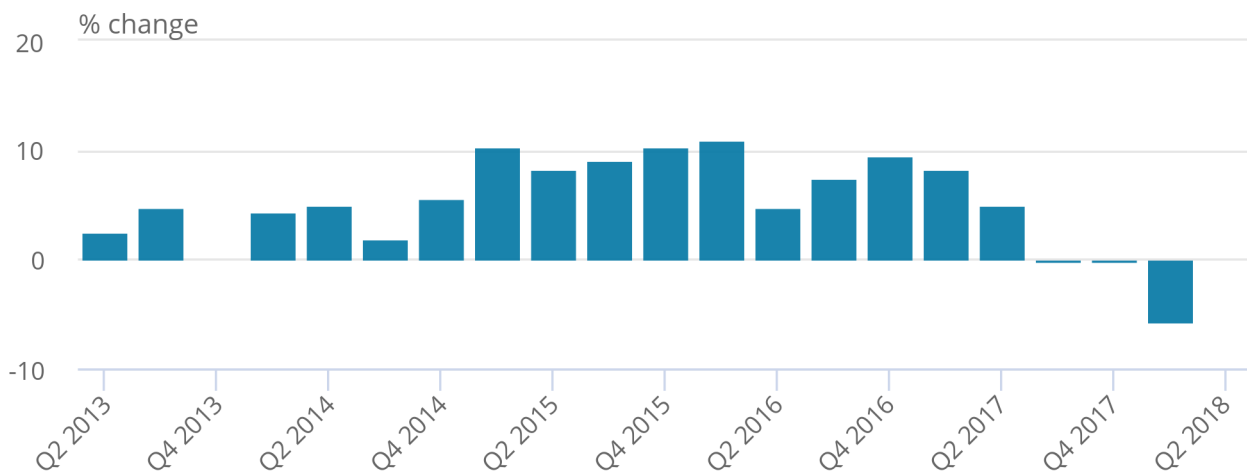
UK residents made 19.9 million visits abroad in Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018. This total was unchanged from the same quarter in 2017 (Figure 3), but trends were different for different areas of the world. There was a 12% increase in visits to North America (1.1 million visits) and a 1% increase in visits to European countries (16.2 million visits). However, visits to “other countries” decreased by 11.1% to 2.5 million.

**Figure 3: Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits abroad by UK residents**

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018

Figure 3: Quarterly change from a year earlier in visits abroad by UK residents

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018



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

**Notes:**

Q1 stands for Quarter 1 (January to March), Q2 for Quarter 2 (April to June), Q3 for Quarter 3 (July to September), Q4 for Quarter 4 (October to December).

Holiday visits continued to be the most common reason for UK residents' visits abroad. In Quarter 2 2018, there were 13.4 million holidays, an increase of 3% compared with the same quarter a year previously. There were decreases in visits for other reasons: business visits decreased by 9% to 1.7 million and visits to friends or relatives decreased by 1% to 4.4 million. The number of visits for miscellaneous reasons decreased by 30%, although it should be noted that the numbers of visits in this category are relatively small (0.4 million in Quarter 2 2018).

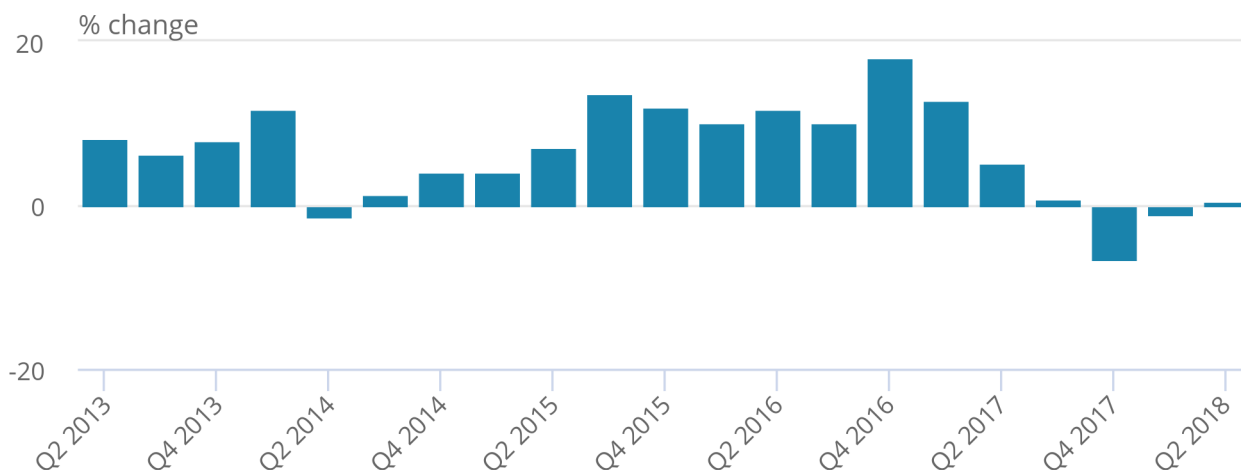
UK residents spent £11.6 billion during visits abroad in Quarter 2 2018, an increase of 1% compared with the same period of 2017 (Figure 4). Expenditure in North America decreased by 6% and expenditure in “other countries” increased by 2%. Spending in Europe rose by 1%.

**Figure 4: Quarterly change from a year earlier in expenditure from UK residents' visits abroad**

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018

### Figure 4: Quarterly change from a year earlier in expenditure from UK residents' visits abroad

Quarter 2 (April to June) 2013 to Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018



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

**Notes:**

Q1 stands for Quarter 1 (January to March), Q2 for Quarter 2 (April to June), Q3 for Quarter 3 (July to September), Q4 for Quarter 4 (October to December).

## 5 . What’s changed in this release?

In September 2017, we implemented a seven-month programme to phase out our paper-based data collection on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) and phase in a new tablet-based approach. Data collection by tablet offers significant advantages, including improved efficiency through reduced manual data entry, improved translations into different languages, easier survey updates due to greater flexibility and there is evidence that respondents relate better to the “one-question-per-screen” layout of the tablet, where they can see the questions in writing more easily themselves.

Rollout of tablet data collection started in September 2017 and completed in April 2018 when Heathrow Airport moved to tablets. The proportion of data collected by tablets has therefore increased over time. For the period covered in the previous release (January to March 2018) tablets accounted for approximately 65% of the weighted estimates of visits. For the period covered in this release (April to June 2018) tablets accounted for almost 100% of data collected.

See also the section “Things you need to know about this release” for consideration of possible discontinuities in outputs arising from the introduction of tablet data collection.

## 6 . Other overseas travel and tourism releases

Further analysis of overseas travel and tourism trends are provided in the publications:

- [Monthly overseas travel and tourism](#), latest release April, May and June 2018 (published on 11 October 2018); next release July, August and September 2018 (to be published on 17 January 2019).
- [Travel trends](#) provides more detailed analysis of visits and spending, including analysis by demographics, towns in the UK visited and countries visited by residents or different parts of the UK; latest release Travel trends 2017 (published July 2018); next release Travel trends 2018 (to be published spring 2019).
- [Travelpac](#) is a dataset that allows you to conduct your own analysis of quarterly and annual data on important variables; the datasets are provided in SPSS and Excel; latest release Travelpac Quarter 2 2018 published 11 October 2018.
- 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 International Passenger Survey (IPS) revisions policy is available in the [Quality and Methodology Information](#).
- Note that, although data by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) also feeds into the calculation of migration statistics, the Overseas travel and tourism publications do not provide any information relating to international migration.

## 7 . Publication tables

### Notes to tables

Table 6: Nights spent abroad by UK residents includes cruises allocated to "other areas".

The following tables have been removed from the quarterly publication from Quarter 2 2016:

- Tables 17 and 18: Number of overseas visits to the UK by country of residence and mode of travel
- Tables 26 and 27: Number of visits abroad by UK residents by country visited and mode of travel

## 8 . Quality and methodology

The [International Passenger Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#) report 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.

## 9 . Accuracy of the results

Figures for the most recent quarter are provisional and subject to revision in light of additional passenger data obtained at the end of each year.

International Passenger Survey (IPS) quarterly estimates are revised in line with the IPS revisions policy. The revisions policy is available in the IPS [Quality and Methodology Information report](#) to help users understand the cycle and frequency of data revisions. Users of this report are strongly advised to read this policy before using this data for research or policy-related purposes.

Planned revisions usually arise from either the receipt of revised passenger traffic data or the correction of errors to existing data identified later in the annual processing cycle. Those of significant magnitude will be highlighted and explained.

Revisions to published quarterly IPS estimates can be expected in the publication of the annual overseas travel and tourism 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 [ONS guide to statistical revisions](#).

The main series are seasonally adjusted. This aids interpretation by identifying seasonal patterns and calendar effects and removing them from the unadjusted data. The resulting figures give a more accurate indication of underlying movements in the series.

The estimates produced from the IPS are subject to sampling errors that result because not every traveller to or 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 smaller is its sampling error. The survey sample size is approximately 70,000 per quarter.

Table 1 shows the 95% confidence intervals for the main quarterly estimates of the total number of visits, nights and expenditure for both overseas residents visiting the UK and UK residents going abroad. These represent the interval in which there is a 19 out of 20 chance that the true figure (had all travellers been surveyed) would lie.



If, for example, the relative 95% confidence interval relating to an estimate of 10,000 was 5.0%, there would be a 19 out of 20 chance that the true figure (if all travellers had been surveyed) would lie in the range 9,500 to 10,500.

Table 1: Sampling errors, Quarter 2 (April to June) 2018  
Confidence intervals relating to overseas travel and tourism estimates, Q2 2018

		<b>Relative 95% Estimate confidence interval (+/- % the estimate)</b>
Overseas visitors to the UK		
Number of visits ('000s)	10,038	5.1
Total earnings (£million)	5,839	6.4
Number of visitor nights ('000s)	65,359	6.2
UK residents going abroad		
Number of visits ('000s)	19,868	3.9
Total expenditure (£million)	11,629	5.9
Number of visitor nights ('000s)	174,011	4.8

Source: International Passenger Survey - Office for National Statistics

Sampling errors relating to visits, nights and expenditure across regions of the world and purpose groups together with countries visited or visits from and region of the UK visited are provided within the [Confidence intervals, Quarter 2 2018 tables](#).

Further guidance for readers is provided about the quality of [Overseas travel and tourism estimates](#) (PDF, 404KB).

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this release can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. The [monthly statistical bulletin](#) provides information about the size and pattern of revisions to the quarterly IPS data that have occurred over the last five 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)

Additional spreadsheets giving details of how the revisions have affected the provisional monthly and quarterly estimates are available in the data section of the [monthly statistical bulletin](#).

## 10 . Further statistics and other analyses

## IPS data files

International Passenger Survey (IPS) data for the years 1993 onwards are available online. TraveIpac is a free and simple to use dataset for those wishing to make further analyses of IPS data. It contains files provided in Excel and SPSS formats. More details can be found at [TraveIpac, Quarter 2 \(April to June\) 2018](#).

## Monthly figures of Overseas travel and tourism

These are published in the [Overseas travel and tourism statistical bulletin](#).

## Further statistics

More detailed statistics covering 1980 to 2014 may be found in our 2015 annual report, Travel trends. A copy can be downloaded at [Travel trends 2017](#).

## Other analyses

For general questions about the IPS and requests for ad hoc data analysis (a service governed by our Income and Charging policy):

Telephone: +44 (0)1633 455678  
Email: [socialsurveys@ons.gov.uk](mailto:socialsurveys@ons.gov.uk)

## Marketing agents

It is possible to commission more detailed analyses of the IPS data from marketing agents appointed by ONS. The marketing agents are:

IRN Research (trading name of IRN Consultants Ltd)  
60 Eastern Green Road  
Coventry  
CV5 7LH  
Telephone: +44 (0)7905 239599  
Email: [info@irn-research.com](mailto:info@irn-research.com)  
Web: [www.irn-research.com](http://www.irn-research.com)

MDS Transmodal 5-6 Hunters Walk  
Canal Street  
Chester  
CH1 4EB  
Telephone: +44 (0)1244 348301  
Fax: +44 (0)1244 348471  
Email: [enquiries@mdst.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@mdst.co.uk)  
Web: [www.mdst.co.uk](http://www.mdst.co.uk)

## 11 . Other notes

1. The information provided to us by respondents is treated as strictly confidential as directed by the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). It is used to produce statistics that will not identify any individuals.
2. Next publication: Quarter 3 (July to September) 2018 data will be published on 17 January 2019.