

Statistical bulletin

# Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: July to September 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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# 1 . Main points

- Overseas residents made 10.9 million visits to the UK in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023; this has increased from the 9.9 million visits that were made in Quarter 3 2022.
- Overseas residents spent £10.1 billion on their visits to the UK in Quarter 3 2023, an increase of £1 billion compared with visits in Quarter 3 2022.
- UK residents made 28.3 million visits abroad in Quarter 3 2023; this compares with 25 million visits in Quarter 3 2022.
- UK residents spent £24.5 billion on their visits abroad in Quarter 3 2023; this was £2.2 billion more than they spent in Quarter 3 2022.
- Holidays were the most popular reason for UK residents to travel abroad in Quarter 3 2023; this is also true for overseas residents visiting the UK.
- Overseas residents' visits to the UK and UK residents' visits abroad remain lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels from 2019; however, spending was higher in Quarter 3 2023 than in Quarter 3 2019 for both groups.

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. No estimates are included for any travel across the Irish border.

## 2 . Overseas residents' visits to the UK

Overseas residents made a total of 10.9 million visits to the UK during Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023. This is an increase of 1 million visits when compared with the same period in 2022 (9.9 million).

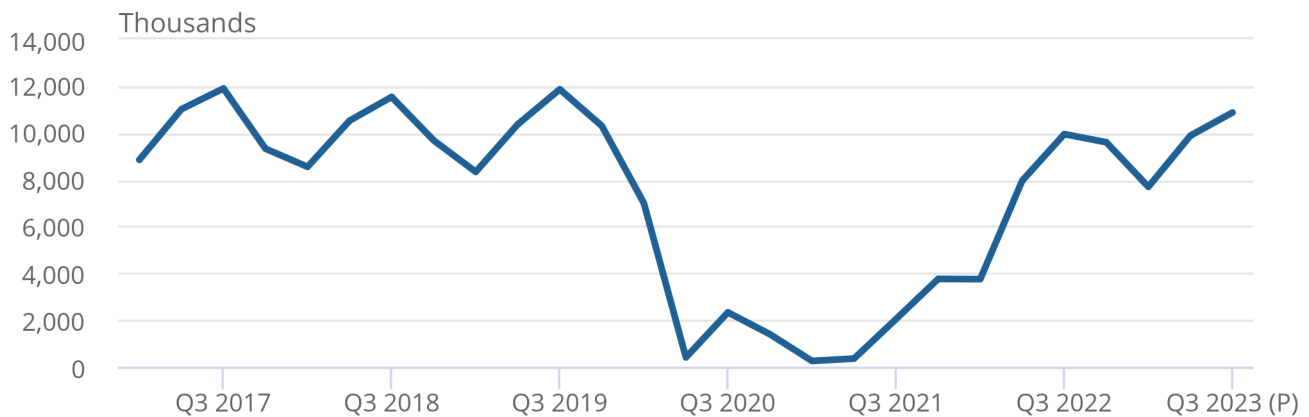
The number of visits in Quarter 3 2023 is still lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels, where in 2019, 11.9 million visits were made to the UK by overseas residents in Quarter 3 2019. This is a decrease of around 8% between Quarter 3 2019 and Quarter 3 2023.

### Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by around 1 million in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023

### Figure 1: Overseas residents' visits to the UK increased by around 1 million in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023



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

#### Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand .

Holidays were the most popular reason for overseas residents to visit the UK, with an increase of around 15% from Quarter 3 2022 (4.3 million visits) to Quarter 3 2023 (4.9 million visits). Visits to friends or relatives was the next most common reason for visiting the UK, with an increase from 3.5 million visits in Quarter 3 2022 to 3.6 million visits in Quarter 3 2023. Business trips increased from 1.4 million to 1.6 million during Quarter 3 2022 to Quarter 3 2023.

While visits are close to pre-coronavirus pandemic levels, spending is higher in Quarter 3 2023 than in the third quarter of 2019. In Quarter 3 2023, estimated spending in the UK by overseas visitors was £10.1 billion, which was an increase of around 10% from Quarter 3 2019 (£9.2 billion). This does not factor in inflation for that period.

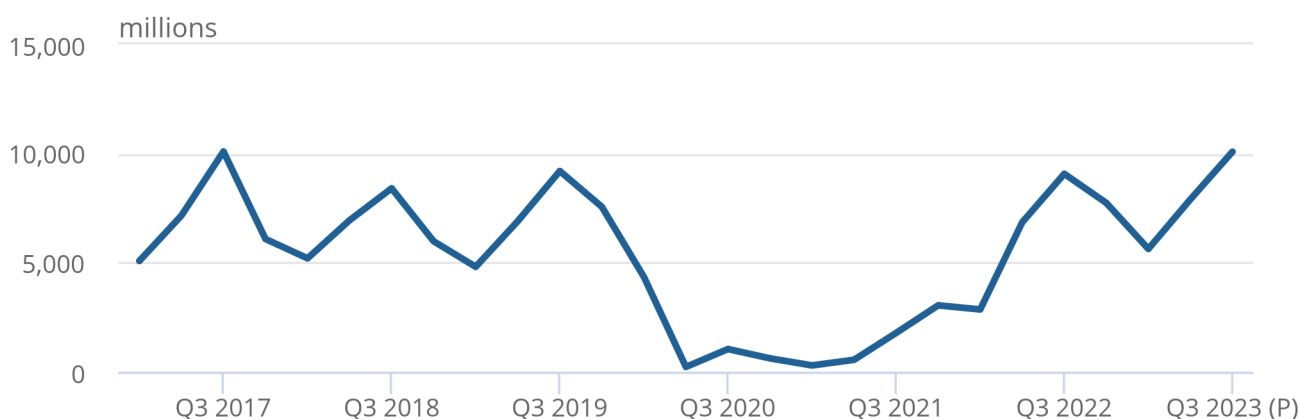
Spending was 11% higher in Quarter 3 2023 than in Quarter 3 2022. In Quarter 3 2023, an increase in spending was seen for all areas of the world when compared with the same quarter of the previous year, except for North America. North America saw a decrease of around 13% in spending, from £2.7 billion to £2.4 billion. The largest increase was from "Other Countries" which saw a 33% rise in spending from Quarter 3 2022 to Quarter 3 2023. The change in spending for this group was driven by a 55% rise in holiday spending, from £1.1 billion to £1.7 billion.

**Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK increased by £1 billion in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023

Figure 2: Spending by overseas residents in the UK increased by £1 billion in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023



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

Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest million.

For a monthly breakdown of the Quarter 3 2023 data, please see our [Overseas travel and tourism, monthly datasets](#).

### 3 . Visits abroad by UK residents

UK residents made 28.3 million visits abroad in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023. This compares with 25 million visits in the same quarter in 2022.

However, visits abroad in Quarter 3 2023 were still lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels; down by 6% from Quarter 3 2019 (30 million). Disruptions at major airports in the UK, caused by air traffic-control issues in August 2023, could factor into this.

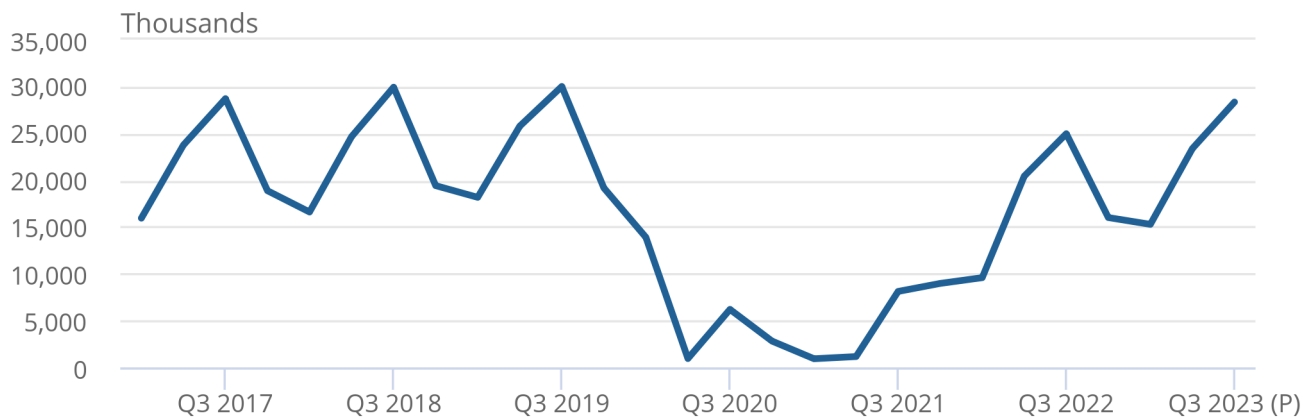
The largest number of visits abroad were made to Europe (23.0 million). This was an increase of 13% from the same quarter in 2022, when 20.4 million visits were made.

#### Figure 3: UK residents' visits abroad increased by 3.3 million in Quarter 3 2023 (July to Sept) compared with Quarter 3 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 2023

#### Figure 3: UK residents' visits abroad increased by 3.3 million in Quarter 3 2023 (July to Sept) compared with Quarter 3 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 2023



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

#### Notes:

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Holidays were the most common reason for UK residents' visits abroad in Quarter 3 2023, accounting for 69% of all visits (19.4 million). This is a 12% increase between Quarter 3 2022 and Quarter 3 2023. The second most popular reason for travelling abroad was to visit friends or relatives, with 7.1 million visits made. Business trips were broadly consistent between Quarter 3 2022 and Quarter 3 2023 at around 1.3 million.

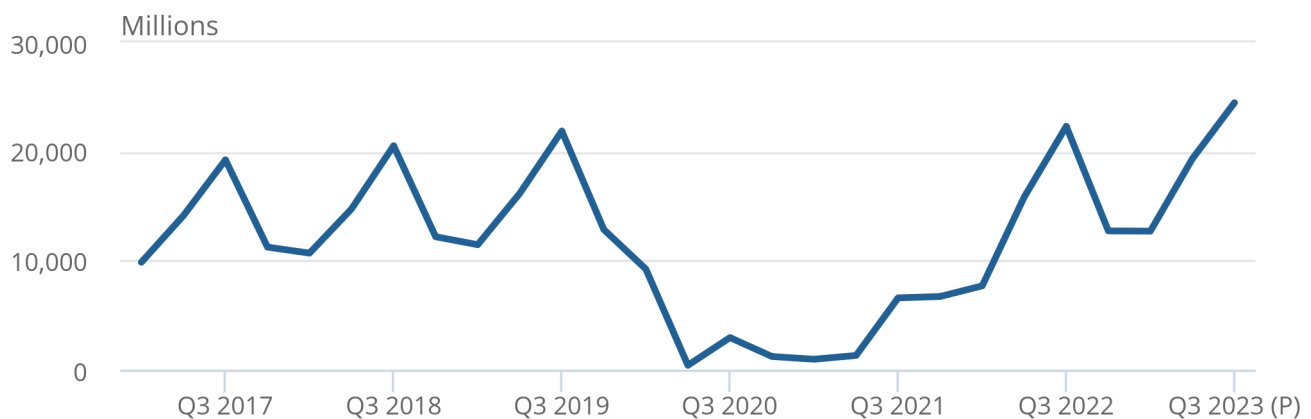
UK residents spent £24.5 billion during visits abroad in Quarter 3 2023. This was an increase of £2.2 billion when compared with the same period in 2022. Like overseas spending in the UK, this is also higher than pre-coronavirus pandemic levels. UK spending abroad in Quarter 3 2023 was around 12% higher than in the same quarter in 2019 (where spending was £21.9 billion).

**Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £2.2 billion in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023

Figure 4: Spending by UK residents abroad increased by £2.2 billion in Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2023 compared with Quarter 3 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 2023



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

**Notes:**

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest million.

For a monthly breakdown of the Quarter 3 2023 data, see our [Overseas travel and tourism, monthly datasets](#)

## 4 . Overseas travel and tourism data

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

Dataset | Released 24 January 2024

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 24 January 2024

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

## 5 . 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.

## 6 . Measuring the data

### Accuracy of the International Passenger Survey estimates

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](#).

Travel and tourism statistics are usually based on the results of the International Passenger Survey (IPS). However, the IPS was suspended on 16 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The estimates presented in this bulletin for April to December 2020 must be treated with caution because they were collected using administrative data and modelling, rather than the (IPS).

### 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.

Sea and Eurotunnel data are excluded for the periods when it was not possible to interview on board Dover ferries or the Eurotunnel, because of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions. Interviewing restarted in Dover in July 2021 and on the Eurotunnel vehicles on trains in July 2022.

Further guidance is available about the quality of overseas travel and tourism estimates in our [IPS quality and methodology information \(QMI\) report](#).

### Travel and tourism reform project

In May 2022, we published a report outlining the next steps for developing our travel and tourism statistics following a review of our data and methods. Please see our [Travel and tourism review: final report](#) for more information.

We have continued to progress our work in this area, including working with stakeholders to understand their needs. To stay up to date with our work, please [subscribe to our newsletter](#).



## 7 . Related links

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

Dataset | Released 24 January 2024

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.

[Travel and tourism review: final report](#)

Article | Released 16 May 2022

Final report of the travel and tourism review, including the findings of the review and the next steps for this work.

## 8 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 24 January 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Overseas travel and tourism, provisional: July to September 2023](#)