

EUROPEAN TRAVEL INDUSTRY CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC IN THE WAKE OF MASSIVE LOSSES



Preliminary travel statistics for 2009: shorter trips that are closer to home and saving money are the priorities. More and more people opt for last-minute bookings and the highest decline is in UK and Russia.

In the calendar year following the worldwide economic and financial crisis the international travel industry has experienced a serious decline, but nonetheless has survived this period in better shape than was expected in the spring of 2009. With eight per cent less arrivals, in the first eight months of this year **the losses experienced by the European travel industry were by comparison the highest.**

According to the ITB World Travel Trends Report, commissioned by the international travel trade show and compiled by the consultancy IPK International, during this period the number of outbound **trips undertaken by Europeans went down by seven per cent**, who also spent 15 per cent less on their travels. Long-haul travel fell by twelve per cent, short-haul trips by only six per cent.

Europeans are also less willing to make a firm decision regarding their travel intentions in 2010 than they were a year ago. More than two thirds (68 per cent) of those polled in October 2009 said they would travel at least as often as they did in 2009, however in the same period last year the figure was 80 per cent.

The researchers found that among the most important European markets travel activity had declined strongest in the UK (minus 15 per cent), Russia (minus twelve per cent) and in Sweden (minus ten per cent). Germans undertook five per cent less trips abroad. **Austria was the only nation to report gains, with travel activity up by two per cent over 2008.**

The findings of the ITB Report are based on the assessments of 60 tourism experts from 30 countries, on a special IPK International trend analysis undertaken in leading source markets, and on core data supplied by the World Travel Monitor, recognised as the largest ongoing survey of global travel behaviour in some 60 source countries.

The Report noted that this year the travel industry was particularly hard hit by the effects of consumer insecurity. According to the researchers there was a record number of last-minute bookings in 2009. Thus, compared with the same period in 2008, in the first eight months of this year the number of people booking their holiday one week before travelling rose by 18 per cent. By contrast, the number of reservations made in the period from one week to one month before the start of a trip fell by five per cent. Bookings made from one month to three months before travelling went down by 13 per cent, and for three months and more by twelve per cent.

Dr. Martin Buck, Director Competence Center Travel & Logistics, Messe Berlin: "For holiday destinations, airlines, hotels, tour operators and travel agencies, travellers are becoming an increasingly indeterminable factor. Together with demographic shifts, changing lifestyles and technological progress, **the recession is changing travel behaviour.** Holidaymakers are not showing their hand and last-minute bookings are at a record high. With the economic situation as it is there are huge challenges awaiting the travel industry."

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<http://www.tourism-review.com/last-minute-bookings-immensely-popular-in-2009-news1970>