

# TRAVEL TRENDS IN EUROPE BEAT THE ODDS TO BREAK RECORDS



The 2014 ITB World Travel Trends Report has revealed that the number of Europeans travelling to various foreign destinations rose by 3%. This was in spite of tense global situation instigated by a precarious Middle East flare-up, Ebola outbreak in West Africa and an economic crisis within Europe.

Economic meltdown in Greece, political showdown in Turkey, recession alert in Britain and pitch high tension in Europe; all these circumstances would portend a gloomy foreign travel environment. Surprisingly the European population was not willing to let all these challenges put a damper into their travel plans. What's more these travelers were even pushing the envelope further by raking in more miles and travelling longer distances and with more frequency. On the surface analysts would have expected limited spending during these travels but they were surprised to find **a 4% increase in per fortnight spending.**

Some of the source markets contributing to increased foreign travel include Switzerland which enjoyed a 7% increase, Denmark and Poland at 6% each, Sweden, Spain and the UK at 5% and Germany at 2%. The figures get even more exciting with France and Italy which had recorded a tumultuous economic streak recording a 3% and 2% increase in travel. Of course, Russia experienced a 1% drop due to myriad political and economic challenges plaguing it which include sanctions from the EU countries.

So, who cashed in on these foreign tourists? The 1st eight months of 2014 have seen a 7% increase in trips to Asia, 6% in North America and Caribbean travels and 5% growth in European tourists to the South Americas and Pacific regions. Africa which is still reeling from the aftershocks of a deadly Ebola outbreak saw a slight increase in European visitors.

In the report another notable trend is the incorporation of internet booking in the ordinary traveler's plans. With a 7% increase in online bookings the traditional travel agencies had a bad day in the office. With the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) reporting the region hosts 20.2% of global internet users, internet booking is bound to continue.

Who is travelling in Europe? **Holiday trips were most popular in the 1st eight months and grew by 5% from there on.** City breaks enjoyed a big jump with a 10% increase but the hitherto popular trips to enjoy the countryside and snow recorded a decline. One unique trend that has appeared is Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) travel. This aspect of travel increased by 4% but at the expense of conventional business trips which fell by 3% due to budget constraints.

But in an interesting twist the world seems to be reciprocating in terms of visiting to Europe. Visitors from China, U.A.E and India recorded double-digit increase. Travelers from U.S.A and Canada as usual flocked into Europe both for business and holiday purposes as has been the norm. Data collated from papers in the World Travel Monitor® Forum shows that 413 million visitors arrived in Europe, a notable 4.2% increase. Southern and Northern Europe impressed with 7% growth rates in foreign tourists. Countries that recorded the highest numbers in terms of visitors received included Greece, Spain, Germany, Turkey, and the UK.

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