

Detours and day trips, by Mabel Banfield-Nwachi, *The Guardian*, January 4, 2025

More than 12 million Britons have already booked flights, transport or accommodation for international trips in 2025, with plans to spend £1,753 on the average holiday abroad, according to research by American Express.

This weekend UK travel companies were expecting a surge in bookings, with “Sunshine Saturday” one of the most popular days of the year to book a holiday.

And while last year the popular holiday trend was “destination dupes” – swapping well-known idyllic locations for more budget-friendly options – this year, travel companies are predicting holidaymakers will be doing detours – adding locations a little off the beaten track to their itineraries.

The online travel agency Expedia said it had seen an increase in searches for less well-known destinations for 2025, near main tourist hotspots, with 63% of travellers claiming they are likely to visit a “detour destination” on their next trip.

Expedia said these destinations included Waikato, from Auckland; Girona, for holidaymakers in Barcelona; and Krabi, Thailand, for those on their travels in Phuket.

This shift towards more unexplored travel experiences is also being fuelled by a desire to have unique experiences, moving away from the viral social media hotspots.

Paul Charles, chief executive of travel consultancy the PC Agency, said: “We are a generation that wants to explore, finding new experiences and usually in new destinations.”

Day trips will also continue to grow in popularity. Travel agents are reporting that some tourists are forgoing a night in a hotel for a packed one-day itinerary.

According to data from Eurostar, in 2023 an average of 12.3% of searches for London routes were for same-day travel; this jumped to an average of 17.9% in 2024, and the company expects to see this trend continue to rise in the new year. London to Paris was the most popular search.

“We’re seeing a marked increase in the popularity of day trips, and we believe this trend is driven by the convenience of travelling from city centre to city centre,” a spokesperson for Eurostar said.

This surge in popularity could be due to the “ease and efficiency” of train travel, the spokesperson said.

“Travellers can catch the 6:01am train from London and be in Paris by 9:20am, then return on the 6:01pm train, allowing them to enjoy a full day in the city before arriving home by 9:30pm. Additionally, they can arrive at the station just an hour before departure, rather than the two hours typically required for air travel, and carry liquids straight through security without issue.”

However, Charles said the opposite was true for destinations farther afield, such as Rome or Bucharest, and that weekend trips were being stretched ever longer.

“I’m seeing the decline of weekend getaways and the rise of longer stays in European destinations,” he said. “Travellers are combining their newfound freedom to work remotely with extra days for spending at leisure. So the old weekend break has become typically a four, or even five-day stay, with some of that spent working flexibly.”

Travel agents are also seeing a surge in demand for long-haul and multideestination trips. Abta, the trade association for travel, found Asia is set to see the biggest year-on-year rise in visitors, with Japan, Thailand, India and China among the top travel choices.

“Some of the main trends we’re seeing are increased interest in long-haul locations, especially in Asia and Africa”, Abta spokesperson, Graeme Buck, said.

Abta’s research shows that holidays are considered so important by consumers that they are now named as the last thing people would want to cut back spending on, ahead of eating out, clothes shopping and electronic gadgets.

Charles added: “Based on forward bookings, and despite geopolitical issues, 2025 will see more people travel than ever before.

“The challenge will be whether our infrastructure, such as airports, train stations, seaports and security eGates (automated self-service barriers), wherever you are in the world, will be able to cope.”