This article is part of the Eurostat online publication Tourism trips of Europeans, providing recent statistics on tourism demand in the European Union (EU) and EFTA countries.

The article takes a closer look at trips that EU residents (aged 15 and over) made in 2017, with a focus on the characteristics of these trips. Specific aspects such as top destinations, seasonality and expenditure on tourism trips are dealt with in more detail elsewhere in other articles of this publication. This article concentrates on analysis for the European Union at aggregate level. More detailed information at country level is available in the online database.

General overview

During 2017, EU residents made 1,255 million trips with overnight stays - regardless of destination and duration. Of these, 11.5% were trips for professional purposes, while the remaining 88.5% were trips made for personal purposes (see Table 1, Figure 1). The highest number of trips was made by residents of Germany (244 million trips), followed by France (221 million trips), the United Kingdom (159 million trips, 2013 data) and Spain (153 million trips). The trips made by the residents of these four countries accounted for 61.9% of all EU residents’ trips.
Table 1: Trips, nights spent and average length of trips made by EU residents by destination, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of residence of the tourist</th>
<th>Total (thousand)</th>
<th>Trips of which (% Domestic)</th>
<th>Total (thousand)</th>
<th>Nights of which (% Domestic)</th>
<th>Average length of trips (Nights)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Outbound</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-28(1)</td>
<td>1,025,747</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>6,273,896</td>
<td>55.1</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>15,250</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>99,016</td>
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<td>5,494</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>22,071</td>
<td>71.8</td>
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<td>Czechia</td>
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<td>81.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>145,454</td>
<td>69.6</td>
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<td>71.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>131,276</td>
<td>40.1</td>
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<td>40.9</td>
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<td>48.0</td>
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<td>61,514</td>
<td>89.5</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
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<td>51.2</td>
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<td>49.0</td>
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<td>40.8</td>
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<td>63.4</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35.1</td>
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<td>39.7</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>148,132</td>
<td>17.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Due to rounding, deviations can occur between total and subtotals.
(1) EU-28 aggregate estimated using (2013) data for the United Kingdom.
(2) (1) data.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tour_dem_tttot, tour_dem_tntot)

Tourism statistics - characteristics of tourism trips 2
On average for the EU, nearly three out of four trips were domestic trips. More than 90 % of trips made by residents of Romania (94.0 %) and Spain (90.6 %) had a main destination inside their own country. In only five Member States, outbound trips accounted for more than half of all tourism trips: Luxembourg (98.3 %), Belgium (79.9 %), Malta (67.7 %), Slovenia (62.4 %) and Cyprus (50.2 %).

Half of all tourism trips made in the course of 2017 were short domestic breaks of one to three overnight stays (50.1 % of all tourism trips, see Table 2). Trips of four nights or more accounted for 42.2 % of all tourism trips (23.2 % with a domestic destination and 19.0 % with a destination outside the country of residence).

**Europeans prefer trips inside their own country of residence**

In 2017, EU residents spent on average 73.3 % of their tourism trips inside their country of residence. In all but five Member States, domestic trips outnumbered trips with a destination abroad (see Table 2). However, more than two out of three domestic trips were short breaks of one to three overnight stays (see Table 3). Given the relatively short duration of domestic trips (on average 3.9 nights, as compared to 8.4 nights for outbound trips, see Table 1), the proportion of nights spent on domestic trips within all tourism nights was - at 56.1 % - significantly lower than the 73.3 % share of domestic trips in all tourism trips. The highest number of domestic trips was in France, with more than 192 million accounting for 20.9 % of all domestic trips made by Europeans. As regards outbound trips, German tourists came top, with more than 92 million trips abroad (27.6 % of all outbound trips made by Europeans).
The EU is an attractive destination for its residents

More than three out of four outbound trips had as main destination another EU Member State, accounting for 258.6 million trips out of a total of 335.3 million outbound trips. Taking into account the 920 million domestic trips, this means that 93.9% of all trips with overnight stays that EU residents made in 2017 were within the European Union. Even when restricting the analysis to longer trips of at least four overnight stays – more likely to be further away from home – 87.6% were spent within the EU. Only in five Member States was the share of trips outside the EU 10% or more: Lithuania (13.7%), Croatia (13.3%), Luxembourg (12.1%), Belgium (11.8%) and Sweden (10.0%) (see Table 2). There is more detailed information on the destinations EU residents chose for their trips in a separate article.

83.6% of all trips made in 2017 lasted a maximum of one week

In 2017, 57.8% of the tourism trips that EU residents made were short, taking a maximum of three overnight stays (see Table 2 and Figure 2). More than three out of four trips made by residents of Estonia and Latvia, were short trips. Only in five Member States, the number of long trips exceeded the number of short trips: Greece (72.2%), Luxembourg (60.2%), Belgium (57.1%), Malta (52.1%) and Italy (50.3%).

Table 2: Trips of EU residents by duration and destination, 2017 - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_ttw)
The share of trips that lasted a maximum of one week was obtained by adding the short trips of one to three nights (57.8%) with the trips lasting four to seven nights (25.8%), resulting in a dominant share of 83.6% of all trips made in 2017 (if we consider only trips for professional purposes this share was 93.3%). Only 5.3% of all trips were longer than two weeks (See Table 3).

Table 3: Trips made by EU-28 residents by duration, destination and purpose, 2017 - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_ttls)

One in nine trips was for professional purposes

Nearly half the tourism trips (49.4%) had holidays, leisure and recreation as the main purpose, and 34.7% were to visit relatives and friends. The latter accounted for a big share of short trips and of domestic trips (see Figure 1). In total, - including other purposes such as pilgrimages or health treatment – trips for personal purposes made up 88.5% of all tourism trips in 2017.

In 2017, EU residents made 145 million trips for professional purposes (e.g. business trips), representing 11.5% of the total number of tourism trips. Most of these trips were domestic (70.6%) and had a duration of maximum 3 nights (74.4%).
Over half of all overnight stays were in rented accommodation

EU residents made a total of 6.4 billion overnight stays during tourism trips in 2017 (see Table 1). More than half of these nights (55.2%) were spent in rented accommodation (see Figure 3). Hotels or similar accommodation providing services such as daily cleaning and bed-making came on top with 31.9%, while 6.5% were spent at campsites (including caravan or trailer parks) and the remaining 16.8% in other types of rented accommodation (e.g. rented holiday dwelling, youth hostel, mountain hut).

Rented accommodation was more prevalent for outbound trips (68.8%), while tourists travelling within their own country were more likely to stay at non-rented accommodation (55.4%), provided mainly for free by friends or relatives (38.0%) or at their own holiday homes (15.3%).

Looking only at nights spent in rented accommodation, EU-28 residents spent, in 2017, more than half of these tourism nights (56.9%) in hotels (or similar), while more than one out of three nights (34.4%) were spent in rented accommodation other than hotels or campsites (see figure 4). This latter category includes, among others, holiday dwellings and rented rooms in family houses. In 2017 compared with 2012, nights spent in this type of accommodation grew by 4.9%, possibly reflecting the emerging online platforms where tourists can book short-stay accommodation. During this five-year period, nights spent in hotels and similar accommodation grew
by 3.6% while nights spent in campsites decreased by -16.8% (see figure 5).

Figure 4: Distribution of tourism nights spent in rented accommodation by EU-28 residents, by mode of accommodation, 2012 and 2017 (%) - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_tnac)

Figure 5: Change in the number of tourism nights of EU-28 residents, by mode of accommodation (% change 2012-2017) - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_tnac)

In 2017, EU residents spent an estimate EUR 179 billion on tourist accommodation (For more detailed information on tourism expenditure, see separate article).

In the five-year period 2012-2017, trips of EU residents made by airplane increased by 15%.

Motor vehicles (private or rented) were the main means of transport for 63.5% of all trips, followed by air and railway transport (17.4% and 10.8%, respectively) (see Figure 6). Other modes of transport were relatively
insignificant, though it is important to note that this pattern can be very different at country level. Waterways were the main means of transport for 36.8 % of trips made by residents of Malta and 16.8 % of trips made by Greek residents, while in Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria and Estonia residents took buses for more than 15 % of their trips (see Table 4).

Airplane was the preferred means of transport for outbound trips (56.1 %), while for domestic trips EU residents travelled mainly by motor vehicles (75.8 %), followed by rail (13.2 %).

![Figure 6: Trips made by EU-28 residents by main means of transport, 2017 - Source: Eurostat](tour_dem_tttr)
In the five-year period 2012-2017, the number of trips made by EU residents increased by 2 %, while those made by airplane increased by 15 % over that same five-year period. Looking at personal trips, those made by air grew by 23 % overall, with an increase of 42 % for journeys abroad for less than 4 nights (see figure 7). In contrast, over the same period, for business travel there was an overall fall of 13 %, with a drop of 9 % in the number of trips by air. The decline in air travel was particularly marked for domestic business trips, with trips lasting 4 or more nights down by 34 % between 2012 and 2017.

Table 4: Trips made by EU residents by main means of transport, 2017 - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_tttot), (tour_dem_tttr)

In the five-year period 2012-2017, the number of trips made by EU residents increased by 2 %, while those made by airplane increased by 15 % over that same five-year period. Looking at personal trips, those made by air grew by 23 % overall, with an increase of 42 % for journeys abroad for less than 4 nights (see figure 7). In contrast, over the same period, for business travel there was an overall fall of 13 %, with a drop of 9 % in the number of trips by air. The decline in air travel was particularly marked for domestic business trips, with trips lasting 4 or more nights down by 34 % between 2012 and 2017.

Table 4: Trips made by EU residents by main means of transport, 2017 - Source: Eurostat (tour_dem_tttot), (tour_dem_tttr)
Tourism is recovering from the financial crisis

The main trends in EU residents’ trips for the period 2007-2017 are shown in Figure 8. The impact of the financial and economic crisis started to show only in 2009 and is more visible in business trips than in trips for personal purposes.
The number of professional trips dropped by -2 % to -13 % per year in the period 2009 to 2015, resulting in a total decrease of -39.4 % in 2015 compared with 2008, while the number of nights spent on professional trips fell even faster (-40.8 %) during this period. However, in 2016 compared with 2015 business trips and nights spent increased by +8.0 % and +8.9 % respectively and this positive trend continued in 2017 with increases of +6.6 % and 5.6 % respectively compared with 2016.

During the period 2007 to 2017, although the number of trips for personal purposes increased by +6.1 %, the number of overnight stays fell by -2.2 %. As a result, the average duration of trips for personal purposes dropped from 5.7 nights per trip in 2007 to 5.2 nights in 2017. In 2017, however, compared with 2016, trips and nights spent for personal purposes increased by +2.3 % and +1.7 % respectively.

**Source data for tables and graphs**

- [Download Excel file](#)

**Data sources**

Collection of annual data on trips of EU residents


The scope of observation for data on tourism trips are all tourism trips with at least one overnight stay, made by the resident population aged 15 and over. It includes trips made for private or professional purpose, outside the usual environment.
**Context**

The EU is a major tourist destination, with five Member States among the world’s top ten destinations for holidaymakers, according to UNWTO¹ data. Tourism is an important activity in the EU which has the potential to contribute towards employment and economic growth, as well as to development in rural, peripheral or less-developed areas. These characteristics drive the demand for reliable and harmonised statistics within this field, as well as within the wider context of regional policy and sustainable development policy areas.

**Other articles**

- Tourism trips of Europeans (online publication)
- All articles on tourism statistics

**Publications**

- Recent Eurostat publications on tourism

**Main tables**

- Tourism (t_tour), see:
  - Number of trips by purpose (tin00188)
  - Number of trips by length of stay (tin00189)
  - Number of nights spent by purpose (tin00191)
  - Number of nights spent by length of stay (tin00192)

**Database**

- Tourism (tour), see "Annual data on trips of EU residents":
  - Number of tourism trips (tour_dem_tt)
  - Number of tourism nights (tour_dem_tn)

**Dedicated section**

- Tourism statistics

**Methodology**

- Annual data on trips of EU residents (ESMS metadata file — tour_dem_esms)

¹ UNWTO Tourism Highlights
Legislation

- With 2012 as reference year:

- Previous legal acts (concerning reference periods before 2012):
  - Directive 95/57/EC of 23 November 1995 on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism

External links

- Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism (Communication from the European Commission, October 2007)
- European Commission - Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs - Tourism

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_statistics_-_characteristics_of_tourism_trips