

European holiday trends: Leaving the cold winter months behind

ITB Berlin and IPK International examine European trends in winter holidays abroad – increase in wintertime holiday trips – winter sports holidays suffer market losses

More and more Europeans are taking wintertime holidays and travelling in search of the sun, preferring beach holidays to winter sports. The traditional winter skiing holiday in the Alps has suffered market losses. According to the latest survey of the World Travel Monitor® by IPK International, more and more European holidaymakers are fleeing the cold winter temperatures, preferring destinations where the sun almost always shines. The survey, which was commissioned by ITB Berlin, shows that over the past seven years the number of Europeans taking wintertime holidays has risen by around 50 per cent. Overall, during the winter of 2013 Europeans undertook around 127 million holiday trips abroad. This means that compared to summer holidays, winter holidays have gained a significant market share. According to the survey beach holidays were much more popular than trips to snowbound destinations.

Over the past seven years, in terms of their market share European winter trips abroad have increased by 30 to 40 per cent. UK and German citizens in particular yearn to travel abroad in winter. Over the last seven years they have regularly swapped places in the rankings for the nation that goes on more winter holidays than any other. In 2013 Germany headed the list, followed by France and Russia

. In recent years Russian travellers have made up a disproportionately large share of the market. Overall, there has been significant growth in the number of foreign holiday trips undertaken by Russians. Winter holidays abroad have always been very important for the Swedes. According to the survey 52 per cent preferred holidaying in the cold winter months to trips abroad in summer. For 50 per cent of those polled in Finland, France, Spain, Italy and Croatia winter holidays abroad were also very important.

Looking at the type of winter holidays that Europeans undertake abroad, **in 2013 around 25 per cent went on beach holidays, while 23 per cent took city breaks and 17 per cent booked round trips.**

By contrast, holidays to snowbound destinations made up only seven per cent of Europeans' winter trips abroad. However, when it comes to skiing trips or holidays in the snow domestic

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destinations are generally preferred to those abroad. In recent years, in terms of their market share wintertime beach holidays have increased by four cent, while winter sports holidays have fallen by three per cent. At the same time other types of holidays have more or less retained their market share.

In 2013 Europeans spent an average of eight days on winter trips, with overall spending amounting to around 890 euros. Beach holidays lasted an average of ten days, considerably longer than winter sports holidays, which lasted seven days. At around 1,000 euros, travel spending on beach holidays also exceeded the amount spent on winter sports trips (around 700 euros). Spain was the most popular winter holiday destination, followed by Germany, France, Austria and Italy. By grouping winter sports and beach holidays into two categories the survey found that Austria was the most popular foreign winter sports destination. France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany were distant runners-up. Spain was the number one destination for wintertime beach holidays, followed by Turkey, Egypt, Thailand and Greece.

Dr. Martin Buck, director of Travel & Logistics at Messe Berlin: "Nowadays, when people yearn for wintertime beach holidays in the sun this results in different travel behaviour to that of only a few years ago. The relatively poor summer weather experienced in large parts of Germany in 2014 could well favour this trend and over the coming months could generate extra income for popular destinations in the sun."

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