



# DESTINATIONS TO WATCH 2024



# INSPIRING TRAVEL IN 2024

ABTA's Destinations to Watch 2024 report offers holidaymakers inspiration for their trips this year and insight on places we anticipate will become increasingly popular with the UK traveller.

Our recent research finds that 64% of people will travel abroad over the next 12 months<sup>1</sup>. If those numbers become reality, then the percentage of people travelling will be in line with 2019 – which was a bumper year for travel.

## Embracing new destinations

Holidaymakers are also expected to embrace their more curious side when it comes to the destinations they choose to visit.

Almost half (47%) of people say they plan to visit a new city or resort they have never been to this year, and 41% are planning to head to a country they've not been to before.

With a nod to that, this report puts under the spotlight some alternatives to UK holidaymakers' traditional favourite destinations and uncovers what different countries have to offer.

## Holidaying at home and abroad

ABTA's long-running research with consumers shows that the majority of holidaymakers take multiple trips a year – an average of 3.4 holidays per person taken in 2023 – holidaying both at home and abroad.

Over the next 12 months 58% are planning a holiday in the UK, and our members are here to help them, with many selling both UK and overseas trips.

For the first time in this report, we showcase a UK destination, offering food for thought for those wishing to explore what our shores have to offer.

## Discovering destinations throughout the year

As we reported in Holiday Habits 2023-24, people are embracing all-year-round travel – enjoying breaks in the shoulder season as well as the peak months.

We believe this is for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, as we already outlined, people take multiple trips so they spread them across the year.
- Secondly, it's currently a value driven market so, where they can, people are being flexible with when they travel to get the best price.
- Thirdly, this is what destinations have been working towards; encouraging people to travel across the year, and to a wide-range of destinations.

The content of this year's report reflects this, providing ideas and suggestions to places that are worthy of discovery and highlighting that visiting the same place at two different times of the year can offer a marked contrast in terms of what's on offer.

## Holidays remain a spending priority

It would be remiss to talk about travel this year without reflecting on the wider economic picture. Households continue to face a squeeze on their finances due to the rising cost of living, and the economic situation remains uncertain.

But data from ABTA and the wider industry continues to show the appetite for travel remains, with holidaymakers looking to cut back on other purchases before they sacrifice their holiday.

## ABTA members are here to help

This report uses the trends and buying habits of the UK travelling public, as well as industry and insights, to compile ten destinations we hope will inspire travel this year. Our members are on hand to help plan and book those dream holidays, and ABTA will continue to work to help people travel with confidence.



<sup>1</sup> All figures in this section are from ABTA's Holiday Habits 2023-24 report. Next 12 months refers to September 2023 to August 2024.

# DESTINATIONS TO WATCH 2024



Albania



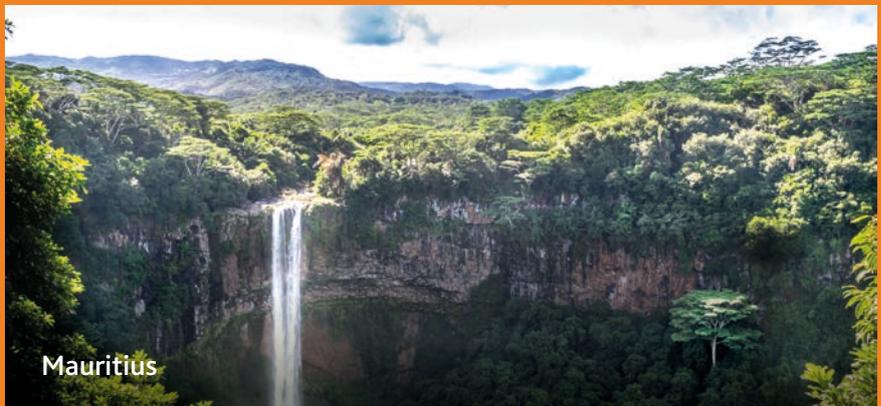
Aruba



Crete, Greece



Extremadura, Spain



Mauritius



Saxony, Germany



Shropshire, UK



The Tyrol, Austria/Italy



Vietnam



Zambia

# ALBANIA

More and more savvy holidaymakers are discovering this stunning, friendly and good value destination which is increasingly well served by UK tour operators and good quality accommodation.

The capital Tirana is a cosmopolitan, buzzy city with some highly original and interesting museums. Durres, the country's second largest city, is also one of its oldest, with a well-preserved Roman amphitheatre and other archaeological sites. The beautiful city of Berat boasts a lovely location and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Gjirokaster showcases the rich architectural legacy of the country.

Perhaps the greatest attraction of the country are the towns along the Albanian

Riviera with clear waters and incredibly reasonable prices. Saranda is a lovely resort on the Riviera from where you can take a boat to some beautiful beaches, such as the stand-out Kroreza.

Shkoder is an attractive, unspoilt town on the shores of Lake Shkodra and a great base to explore the Theth National Park with its impressive and imposing mountains. For nature lovers Bovilla lake is a wonderful location for hiking, climbing and fresh-water swimming and the crystal-

clear water of the Blue Eye spring is one of the most memorable sights in Albania.

Albanian food is delicious and healthy, reflecting its Mediterranean heritage and don't be surprised if you are asked to share a meal with local people who see hospitality as a pleasure rather than a duty. This makes for a warm, friendly experience for those lucky enough to take a holiday in one of Europe's best kept secrets.



Photos: *Top left* – Ksamil, Albania Mussels served on skewers *Top right* – Saranda  
*Bottom* – Theth National Park

# ARUBA

The beautiful Caribbean island of Aruba is increasingly featured by British tour operators, making it much more accessible for holidaymakers looking for something a little out of the ordinary.



Aruba, together with its sister islands Bonaire and Curacao, are part of the kingdom of the Netherlands and the strong Dutch influence is most clearly symbolised by an authentic Dutch windmill “De Olde Mollen” in the resort of Palm Beach and the colourful colonial buildings in the capital Oranjestad.

The Caribbean is justly famed for its incredible beaches and Aruba has some exceptional ones; the most popular is

Palm Beach lined with upmarket hotels, bars and restaurants but, if you fancy a more secluded private experience, head to Arashi beach and Eagle Bay for a truly idyllic stretch of sand.

The island’s close proximity to the USA means there are plenty of options to eat American-style food, but the more adventurous should sample the delicious local specialities in one of the beautifully restored old buildings, called ‘monuments’

on Aruba. These include lots of fresh fish, lobster, shrimp and prawns, but also more idiosyncratic fare such as goat stew and ‘pastechi’ deep fried savoury pastries. Kesho Kena, a dish of varied ingredients cooked in the hollowed-out rind of an Edam cheese, is considered to be the national dish and spice lovers will be well served with Siboyo Tempera, a mix of marinated onions and hot peppers served as delicious accompaniment to many dishes.

Photos: Top – Palm Beach

Bottom left – Oranjestad architecture Bottom right – Baby Beach

# CRETE

Greece's largest island is guaranteed to restore your love for life. Its most famous creation 'Zorba the Greek' star of book and film, fully expressing the Cretans' irrepressible *joie de vivre* and warm hospitality to guests.

Start your trip in the capital Heraklion with its impressive Venetian port, a city bursting with bars, museums and restaurants.

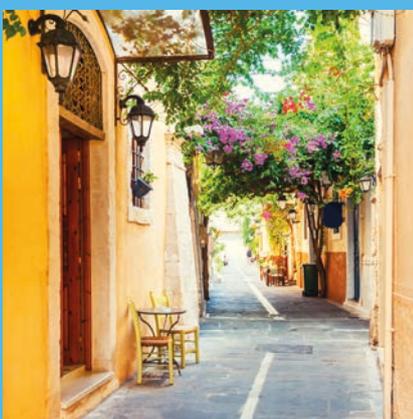
A must see is the palace of Knossos, an unforgettable reminder of the island's rich history and the Minoan civilisation that flourished on the island in antiquity and a very short drive away from the capital. Venetian influence is also strong in the town of Rethymno, and the historic

coastal towns of Ierapetra and Sitia are all well worth a visit.

Those looking for glamour and five-star luxury should head to the resorts of Agios Nikolaos and Elounda and beach lovers are in for a treat as the island has some of the best in the Mediterranean with some of the stand outs being Balos Lagoon, Falassarna and Elafonisi.

Crete is also home to spectacular and beautiful scenery and is a paradise for nature lovers and hikers, the most famous sights include the Samaria gorge and Mount Ida, reputed to be the birthplace of Zeus, the king of the gods.

Cretan food based on the freshest of local ingredients is a delight. You can eat very healthily and then enjoy a glass (or three!) of the fiery local alcohol 'Tsikoudia' with some of the most welcoming people on the planet.



Photos: Top – Heraklion harbor

Bottom left – Rethymno Bottom right – Knossos Palace

# EXTREMADURA

The central Spanish region of Extremadura is a largely undiscovered gem, home to three UNESCO world heritage sites and some of the country's most beautiful historic cities.

Start your trip in the capital Merida, a lively, fun city which has extensive, well-preserved Roman remains to rival any found in Italy. Next head to Caceres whose medieval centre has survived largely intact from the 1500s behind its defensive walls; it is an extraordinarily evocative city. The third city of your Extremaduran odyssey must be Trujillo, another impressively preserved historic town, which has a wealth of churches and upmarket houses

centred around the main square the Plaza Major.

The stunning landscapes of the region are largely unspoilt and highly recommended for bird watching, particularly the Monfragüe National Park. The Jerte valley is an undoubted high point in Extremadura, particularly in the spring when its multitude of cherry trees are in bloom.

The local produce is delicious and smoked

paprika, 'pimenton', is widely used in Extremaduran cuisine and is highly prized throughout the whole of Spain. The quality of cherries from the Jerte is also exceptional and the ham and pork of the little black pigs, 'Pata Negra' which live on the acorns dropped by the many oaks you will see scattered throughout the countryside, are regarded by foodies as amongst the best, if not the best, in the world.



Photos: *Top left* – Monastery of Guadalupe, Caceres *Top right* – Kingfisher, Monfragüe National Park  
*Middle right* – Spanish paprika and pepper powder *Bottom right* – Monfragüe National Park

# MAURITIUS

This beautiful island in the Indian ocean is a dream destination with a combination of perfect beaches and stunning landscapes.



The capital Port Louis is a vibrant, diverse city whose historic buildings reflect its rich history with busy, colourful markets and a chance to mix with the extremely welcoming, friendly and hospitable Mauritian people and sample the delicious, varied food of this remarkable island.

Mauritian beaches are, of course, one of the island's main attractions and they will not disappoint – white sand bordered by dramatic cliffs and mesmerising blue waters. The beaches in the north are

sheltered and perfect for swimming with Pereybere and Mont Choisy the most popular while those in the south are incredibly dramatic. The east has some of the best such as Belle Mare and you must head to the west and La Morne beach at the foot of the UNESCO World Heritage site mountain of the same name.

If you are feeling active take a climb up this spectacular peak, and why not try some of the many water activities the island has to offer such as kayaking or surfing, or

if feeling a little more sedate a pedalo or paddle board or a trip out in a boat where you have a good chance of seeing a dolphin or three.

Inland don't miss the magical 'Seven-Coloured Earths' in Chamarel with its majestic waterfall and the nature reserves of Ebony Forest and Lavillion Park. Mauritius once visited, never to be forgotten.

Photos: *Top left* – Kalaisson Temple Port Louis *Top right* – Chamarel village and its Seven-Coloured Earths *Bottom left* – Mont Choisy *Bottom right* – Port Louis waterfront

# SAXONY

The east German region of Saxony is one of the most beautiful parts of this amazing country with historic, stunning cities, easily accessible by its extensive rail network.

Germany is increasingly popular with UK holidaymakers, and in 2023 according to ABTA research, 12% of people who went on holiday visited the country<sup>2</sup>. Join in the festivities in 2024 as the city of Dresden celebrates the 250th anniversary of the birth of romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich, whose moody paintings feature strongly the dramatic landscapes of the area. Dresden is often called the 'Florence of the North' and its beautiful baroque buildings are best viewed on a cruise along the river Elbe.

Leipzig has begun to rival Berlin as a happening destination with street art and nightclubs plus a number of museums and art galleries for culture vultures for whom a pilgrimage to St Thomas Church, where Johan Sebastian Bach is buried, is essential. Other must-visit towns are the pretty medieval Gortitz, Meissen with its world-famous porcelain factory and 13th century Gothic cathedral, and Chemnitz which contains a wide range of impressive landmarks.

Castle lovers are in for a treat as Saxony boasts some impressive examples, including Kriebstein and Schloss Moritzburg. Aside from its man-made heritage the Saxon landscape is very beautiful and a winter visit to the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Ore mountains is a magical experience.

Finally, the Saxon Switzerland National Park is regarded as perhaps the most beautiful in the country with its dramatic rock formations, lovely valleys and waterfalls, and the iconic Bastei bridge.



Photos: *Top left* – Moritzburg Castle *Top right* – Frauenkirche, Dresden  
*Bottom* – Bastei bridge

<sup>2</sup> ABTA Holiday Habits 2023-24 report.

# SHROPSHIRE

This idyllic English county on the Welsh borders has some of the country's most beautiful landscapes, towns and villages.



Shropshire is a rural gem, but it was also the birthplace of the industrial revolution and history lovers must make a trip to Coalbrookdale in the Ironbridge Gorge with its elegant eponymous bridge, the first ever built in the world. Sports lovers should visit the nearby town of Much Wenlock, pretty as it undoubtedly is, it was also the site of the first attempt in 1850 to revive the Olympic games.

The county has a number of delightful towns including Ludlow, which is regarded

as a foodie paradise with great restaurants, which together with its very attractive high street containing many historic buildings, has one of the country's most impressive castles. Bridgnorth, the first stop on the Severn Valley Railway which kids of all ages will love, has a high and low town connected by a funicular railway which makes for a great day out.

The Shropshire Hills have been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Bishops Castle is a lively market town

which provides a great base to explore the stunning countryside with the added bonus of claiming the oldest working brewery in the country. Church Stretton, at the heart of this beautiful landscape, has a Norman church and buildings dating back to Tudor times with shops, bars and restaurants featuring the high-quality local produce.

Photos: *Top left* – Shropshire Hills *Middle left* – Clun Castle *Bottom left* – Ironbridge Gorge  
*Right* – Bridgnorth and the River Sever

# THE TYROL

The Austrian Tyrol and its Italian neighbour the Sud Tyrol are rightly famous for their outstanding ski resorts and facilities but travellers outside of the winter months already know that this area of outstanding beauty has an equally bewitching side.

The Tyrol also benefits from an excellent rail network so you shouldn't need to hire a car. Ski lifts and cars perform another function when the snow has departed, transporting passengers into a magical world of idyllic meadows and delightful hamlets, set against a backdrop of dramatic mountain vistas.

Start your visit in the region's capital Innsbruck, an extremely attractive, lively city with plenty of good quality restaurants

and bars and the iconic Bergisel ski jump, then visit the picturesque town of Kitzbuhel.

Head off into the countryside and base yourself in one of the many lovely villages with the opportunity to explore on foot, amazing countryside dotted with wildflowers, lakes and waterfalls; the more adventurous can even try zip lining over the alpine pastures.

Tyrolean cuisine is also delicious making full use of the food produced in this lush and fertile landscape, so you will eat very well.

Across the Italian border the Sud Tyrol is home to the UNESCO world heritage site of the Dolomite mountains and don't miss the opportunity to visit the capital Bolzano and its most famous resident Otzi, an ancestor from over 5,000 years ago whose body was recovered from a glacier and is now housed in the town's archaeological museum.



Photos: *Top left* – Dolomite mountains *Top right* – Bolzano  
*Bottom left* – Lake Braies *Bottom right* – Bergisel ski jump

# VIETNAM

UK visitors to Vietnam can now visit visa-free for up to 45 days, giving even more time to explore this beautiful, captivating country.

A great way to get a taste of the country is by taking a leisurely rail trip between the main cities of Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh is a bustling, dynamic blend of the old and new where you will eat tasty, great-value street food.

Head off to the Mekong Delta for a stay in a guesthouse on this imposing and memorable waterway. Then travel north to the World Heritage site of Hoi An for some amazing shopping, before travelling up to the historic city of Hue. Vietnam is

full of incredibly beautiful natural sights, including the caves and underground rivers of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, and the country has some of the most idyllic beaches in Southeast Asia.

The capital Hanoi is a joy, offering lovely parks, lakes and the majestic buildings of the Old Quarter. Ha Long Bay with its iconic limestone formations will provide you with some great memories, take a guided boat trip or if you're feeling more adventurous, try a bit of kayaking.

Vietnamese food is absolutely delicious, sophisticated and full of flavour, it makes full use of the freshest local ingredients such as fragrant herbs and spices. It tastes even better washed down with a bottle of ice cold, ridiculously good value, local beer. The country's French heritage is reflected in ubiquitous baguettes filled with exotic ingredients, and Vietnamese coffee is delicious; a great way to kickstart your day.



Photos: Top – Halong Bay

Bottom left – Mekong Delta Bottom right – Trấn Quốc Pagoda, Hanoi

# ZAMBIA

Zambia offers nature at its finest with a wealth of national parks teeming with wildlife, mighty waterfalls, and friendly vibrant cities. Start your trip in the capital Lusaka which is a proud showcase for the country's increasing prosperity and a chance to enjoy the city's restaurants, bars and nightlife.



For animal lovers, very few countries compare, with almost a third of the country set aside for wildlife. Of the 20 national parks, South Luangwa, Kafue and Lower Zambezi are considered amongst the best in the world. Although people are understandably attracted by the 'Big Five' of lion, leopard, buffalo, hippo and elephant, Zambia is also home to hundreds

of other wonderful species which make for a magical experience.

The majestic Victoria Falls is a must see, and Instagrammers will find some amazing photo opportunities. The mighty Zambezi River also offers adrenaline seekers some of the most spectacular white-water rafting in the world. There are many other beautiful waterfalls, rivers and incredible,

vast lakes in this water-rich country, visits to which provide an opportunity to see both less well-known areas and the diverse wildlife for which they provide a rich and sustainable environment.

Photos: *Top left* – South Luangwa National Park *Bottom left* – Lusaka  
*Right* – Victoria Falls

## About ABTA



ABTA is a trade association for UK travel agents, tour operators and the wider travel industry. We're the largest travel trade body, with over 4,600 travel brands in membership who have a combined pre-pandemic annual UK turnover of £40 billion.

We work closely with our members to help raise and maintain standards and build a more sustainable travel industry, and provide travellers with advice, guidance and support.

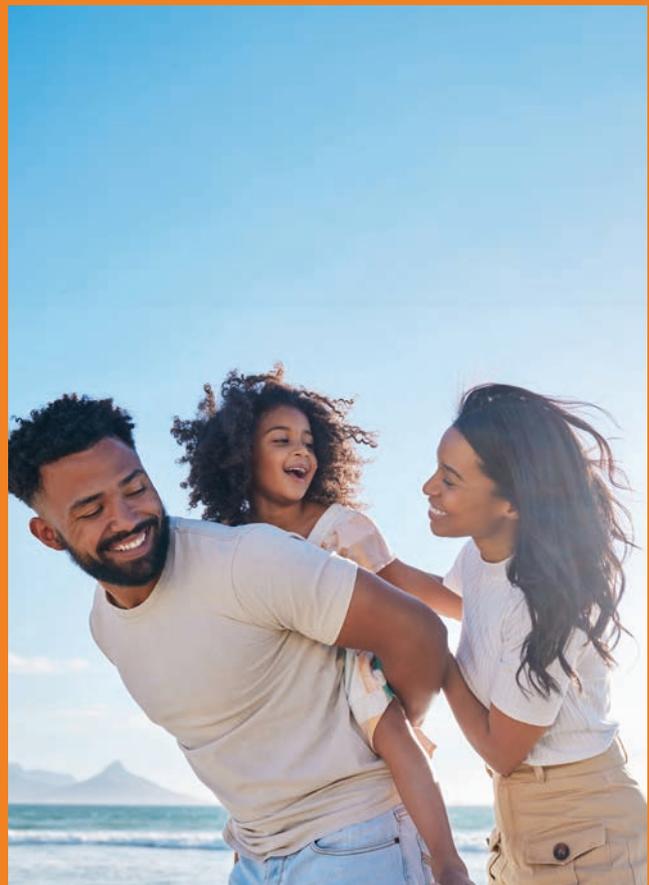
Our members sign up to a code of conduct and commit to agreed service standards and fair trading. When you need clear travel information, and accurate and impartial advice relating to your trip, we're here for you.

When you book with an ABTA member, reliable advice comes as standard. This means that booking with our members brings peace of mind.

ABTA also offers services to help you on your travels – **ABTA Travel Insurance** and **ABTA Travel Money**. ABTA Travel Insurance provides you with a reassuring range of benefits and cover as standard and ABTA Travel Money offers over 60 different currencies along with convenient and reliable service.

All this together means we help you travel with confidence.

[www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)



Before you travel, you should always check the Government's latest advice for the country you're planning to visit at [gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).



### Here are their top tips.

- ✓ Check the FCDO travel advice, which has all the latest information including entry rules, health care and cultural differences. There are some destinations they advise against travel to.
- ✓ Check your passport meets the entry requirements for your destination.
- ✓ Read the healthcare advice for the country you are visiting.
- ✓ Get appropriate travel insurance as soon as you book, and check your policy covers any medical conditions you have.
- ✓ Have a plan B to deal with the unexpected – for example, make sure you have a backup plan for accessing key information, in case you lose your phone.

## Consumer views of ABTA<sup>3</sup>



81%

of consumers associate ABTA with confidence



80%

of consumers associate  
ABTA with being **reassuring**

77%

of consumers associate  
ABTA with being **reliable**

81%

of consumers associate  
ABTA with being **safe**

79%

of consumers associate  
ABTA with being **experts**

Winner  
Travel Brand of  
the Year  
Established Brand

THE TRAVEL MARKETING AWARDS  
AWARDS SPONSORED BY  
Gail Kenny

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<sup>3</sup> ABTA brand tracking survey - March 2023