



VisitEngland 

Understanding Short Breaks –
Topline Findings

trajectory
the futures partnership

Consumers' experience of the downturn and recovery

- Some optimism beginning to emerge for some, with a sense that they can make plans for the year ahead
- But most still not feeling better off – especially those in the public sector (who are aware they will not have a pay rise in 2015)
- The extent to which people are feeling the recovery is strongly linked to life events and non-financial drivers
- For empty nesters and parents with pre-school children, life events (having first child, kids leaving home, retiring and/or caring for an older relative) are much more significant in shaping holiday choices than the economy
- Many consumers are striving to get the most for their money – they have significant holiday plans for 2015, but will have to balance this against budgets

'I know I'm not going to get a pay rise next year, so it's going to be much the same as this year – but I still want to do what I want to do.' – London, Family

Short breaks and wider holiday behaviour and patterns

- Consumers enjoy the short breaks they take and see them as very important – whether for having better quality family time or for taking a break from their routine
- Primarily seen as weekends away that break up the gap between longer holidays
- School holidays very important for families – with parents having half terms etc in their minds when thinking of the year ahead
- A sense that short breaks in England are very convenient and easy:
 - For families with kids, it is easy to go somewhere nearby (without missing kids weekend activities)
 - Easier to leave kids with someone for the weekend than for a week
 - Feel less guilty about leaving a caring responsibilities behind

- For younger consumers, they are easy to organise with friends, and often structured around events or activities – such as Festivals or Hen/Stag parties

'Even though it's just me and the kids at home, sometimes (a break) is better quality time, because you're all together. And it's just nice to have fun all together and change of scenery.' – London, Family

"We always take short breaks in England. I have to care for my mother in law who is 94. It means we are not leaving her for long and if anything went wrong, we could be back quickly." – Sheffield, Empty Nester

"If I go away for the weekend with the girls (friends), I can leave the little one with my mum. I couldn't really leave her any longer."
Sheffield, Pre-school kids

Priorities and perceptions of short breaks

- For some, short breaks are not considered holidays – a strong perception that a holiday involves getting on a plane.
- Those who have only taken domestic breaks in the last year are generally desperate to go abroad in 2015
- But these longer foreign trips will still be complemented by short breaks – which fulfil a basic need in terms of taking a break from routine
- There is a desire to explore new places, and short breaks are seen as essential to this.
 - While destinations vary (and often include Europe) there is a consistent perception that England has a huge amount to offer, with respondents expressing interest in visiting all types of location
 - Drivers of this interest varied, from historical or cultural (i.e. wanting to see Whitby due to Dracula) or familial/nostalgic (Cornwall, Lake District).
 - Inspiration can also come from adverts, papers, travel supplements – but there is a perception that England is less well advertised than destinations abroad

- Older groups and those with families generally perceived the quality of English tourism destinations and accommodation to have improved over the past 20 years – although the pre family group thought it compared unfavourably to destinations abroad, especially in terms of value for money and customer service

'A long hot holiday is better, but sometimes, if you can't get the time off, you need that weekend away.' – London, pre-family

Booking patterns and behaviours, particularly 'last minute' bookings

- Can vary hugely, with different priorities for different types of trip – for example, many will always book flights first for foreign trips
- Short breaks can be planned and booked very close to the trip - many had experience of planning and booking a trip within two weeks of going
- Short breaks often determined by the weather forecast a few days before the trip takes place
- A combination of a 'tough week at work', plus a good weather forecast for the coming weekend prompt a trip (especially to the coast)
- This spontaneity was more common amongst the younger groups – not having children made spur of the moment decisions easier
- Families more likely to have potential weekend in their mind, and be looking out for offers or deals that could inspire that trip
 - For example, one respondent in the family group knew her daughter had an inset day in January, making a long weekend – nothing has been booked, but the weekend is in her mind as a potential opportunity
- Consistently, the ease of being able to book and travel in England came through as a reason why last minute short breaks in England were taken (although this led to grumbles about the cost of travel and comparisons between English and European levels of customer service/value)
- For many, the idea of a short break and booking it are separate processes

'I wouldn't plan and book at the same time – I like to think on things.' – London, Family

"It's so easy (a short break in England), you just throw a few things in the car and you're off. Before we had kids, we didn't even worry about booking anywhere. We would just find somewhere to stay when we arrived." Sheffield, pre-school

Promotions, deals and their impact on planning and booking

- While deals and promotions can disrupt the planning process and catalyse or inspire trips that may not have happened otherwise – but typically they are combined with existing plans to make a trip happen
- There are potential short break opportunities throughout the year that are permanently in the planner's mind – whether inspired by a type or trip or a specific destination. Deals and promotions often help these trips to happen – especially families – and can result in plans being changed or adapted slightly
- Some examples of deals being entirely responsible for the trip – family trip to Camber Sands made possible by Groupon offer, Cornwall camping through Sun Holidays
- Many younger consumers wary and more cynical of deals – they expect lower quality and poor value – but some always look for deals, and are confident they will be able to find one
- Those that do use deals prefer getting something extra to money off – and combine this with research (Tripadvisor etc).

'Normally, I'd start thinking about a short break about 2 months in advance. But if there's a deal, in say, I two weeks, I think – can I squeeze that in?' – London, Family

'In the UK you can get a lot of deals – so you can be more last minute' – London, Family

'You're telling me it's worth £500 but I can have it for £130. Why?' – London, Pre-family

How does information seeking for inspiration, planning and booking differ for short breaks

- The information seeking depends heavily on the nature of the trip and the reason for it
 - Where the destination comes first, information is then sought around finding the best accommodation or looking for a deal
- For domestic short breaks, although destinations are important, price is more often the primary driver. When considering a foreign trip, destination is as important as what they feel they can afford
- In many cases, less information is needed for domestic short breaks – no hassle with travel, language or culture
- This is seen as a key benefit of domestic short breaks – meaning that less planning is needed and increasing the extent to which they can be last minute or even spontaneous
- Tripadvisor and similar sites used for all types of holiday – no difference here between domestic and foreign/short and long
- Sense that many people have a small portfolio of regular short break destinations (this also makes the trip easy/convenient if you are going back to a place you know) – so inspiration seeking not really relevant to these frequently visited destinations

What role does social media play?

- Younger group considered social media to be very important - and particularly important for inspiring trips to England. Instagram and Facebook both mentioned in this context
- A sense that recommendations from friends were very powerful – and certainly worth more than anonymous reviews ('they know what you like'). Increasingly, these recommendations and word of mouth is moving online
- Social media and online sources of information also important to older groups – who perceive there to be less encouragement to holiday in England in the media