

A MANIFESTO FOR TRAVEL & TOURISM

Working together for a sustainable and successful future

Travel and tourism is an economic powerhouse, worth more than £150 billion in GVA annually and supports more than three million jobs across the UK.

The next five years will be critical in shaping the future of the UK's world-leading travel and tourism industry. It has never been more important that government works in partnership with industry to build the foundations for a sustainable future, enabling travel and tourism dependent businesses to prosper and people to travel with confidence.

**ABTA URGES
THE NEXT
GOVERNMENT
TO FOCUS
ON THREE
THEMES:**

1 Positioning the UK as a sustainable travel leader

2 Promoting fulfilling and rewarding careers in travel and tourism

3 Creating the conditions for travel businesses to compete successfully

ABTA members – offering trusted support and expertise since 1950

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 with a combined annual UK turnover of more than £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. Booking with our members brings peace of mind, and helps people to travel with confidence.



Why travel matters

9/10

Nine out of ten people agree that 'holidays are important' to them.⁴

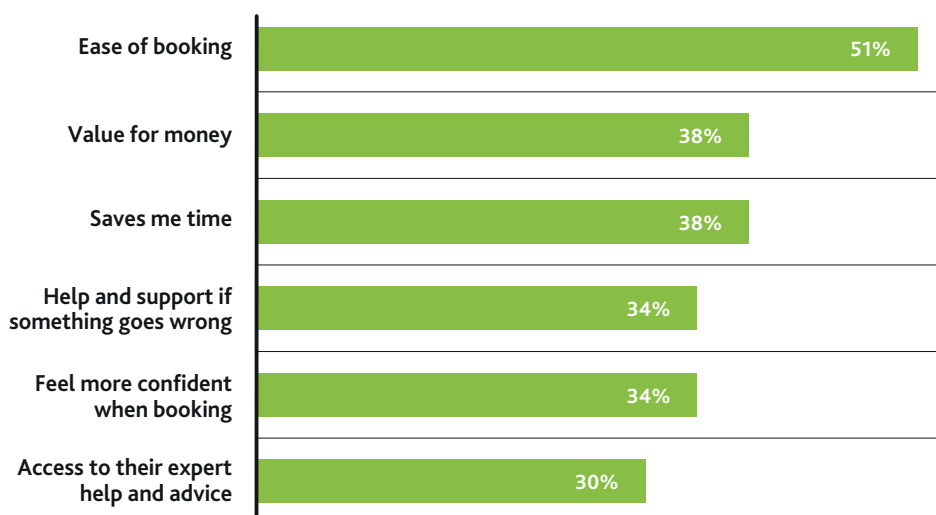
6/10

Around 6 in 10 people book package holidays in the UK.⁵

93%

of people say that holidays improve their mental health.⁶

Top reasons for booking with a travel professional



Helping you in your role as an MP

ABTA can assist the customers of our members – your constituents – to resolve complaints involving their travel providers. By working with our members and their customers, ABTA is able to resolve the vast majority of cases speedily and without the need for formal arbitration. However, where arbitration is necessary, it is available – and offered by an organisation that is fully independent from ABTA.

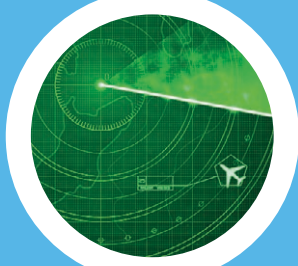
If you have queries relating to casework, you can contact our Public Affairs team (publicaffairs@abta.com).



Positioning the UK as a sustainable travel leader

For decades the UK has been a world leader in organised travel, with one of the most developed leisure and business travel markets in the world. International travel alone contributes £80bn in GVA to the UK economy each year and supports more than 1.5 million jobs right across the country.

To achieve the sector's potential the next government must act swiftly to deliver the immediate policy support that will lay the foundations for future success, and work with the industry to develop a long-term strategic plan to realise the potential of aviation for the UK economy. **Priority areas include:**



1 Delivering the commitment to build a domestic industry in sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), and incentivising investment in the development of new technologies.

The government must fulfil its Jet Zero pledge to develop a world leading UK SAF industry. This will require delivery on the commitment to have five SAF plants under construction early in the next parliament, and also acceleration of a revenue support mechanism to incentivise private investment.

2 Ensuring that flying remains affordable, and stimulating investment in the transition - including through the development of new technologies.

Flying is integral to the UK's economy. We must ensure it remains affordable and accessible, for holidaymakers and business travellers, at the same time as achieving the transition to Net Zero. The government must also support the development of new technologies including electric and hydrogen flight, and act to ensure incentives are comparable to those offered by the EU, including 'free' SAF allowances in the UK's emissions trading scheme, to maintain the competitiveness of UK aviation.

3 Improving the UK's domestic transport infrastructure, including enhancing links to international gateways – whether ports, airports or rail stations.

ABTA believes investment in improving the UK's domestic infrastructure is critical to improving our economic productivity and driving growth. Successful schemes, such as the Elizabeth Line in London, and Manchester Metrolink extension, demonstrate the transformative potential of infrastructure in providing better domestic connectivity, reducing emissions, and improving surface access to our international gateways.

4 Progressing with the UK's airspace modernisation programme and working with international counterparts to deliver improvements elsewhere, especially in Europe.

The UK's existing airspace regime dates back to the 1960s and is in need of urgent modernisation to improve efficiency, increase capacity, and deliver environmental benefits, including significant falls in emissions – of up to 10%¹.

5 Incentivising the installation of shoreside power at UK ports.

The UK cruise and maritime industry is committed to the Net Zero transition. Investment in shoreside power can play a meaningful role by reducing emissions in-port. If government, regulators and the industry work in close partnership, we are confident the UK can continue to enjoy the significant societal and economic benefits that travel brings, whilst putting in place the concrete steps that will enable the sector to transition to Net Zero.

Promoting fulfilling and rewarding careers in travel and tourism

The travel and tourism industry is people focused. The success of the businesses that operate across travel and tourism – whether travel agents, tour operators, airlines, cruise companies, accommodation providers, or the many other types of businesses that make up our sectors – are dependent on the dedication and responsiveness of their staff.

The industry is committed to working with the next government to promote the many opportunities available to people to develop a career in travel and tourism. **We ask ministers to:**



1 Reform the Apprenticeship Levy:

The travel industry already offers a range of apprenticeship opportunities to those who want to enter our industry, at all career stages. However, businesses report frequently that they are struggling to use effectively the funding allocated under the existing apprenticeship system. Businesses require greater flexibility to use their funding allocations, including through the ability to access short courses and qualifications that can upskill their workforce and improve productivity



2 Ensure the continuation of sector-specific qualifications for travel and tourism throughout further and higher education:

ABTA has worked with industry partners and educational providers, as well as awarding bodies, to develop replacement courses at level 3 (further education) in response to the ongoing reforms that will see all existing courses de-funded from September 2026. It is vitally important the next government works with us to get those courses approved and successfully embedded. It is also important that recognition is given to tourism management and similar courses at degree level and that the uncertainty that has surrounded future higher education provision for the sector is brought to an end.



3 Promote the benefits of youth mobility agreements, and seek to do deals with EU countries:

The UK has existing youth mobility agreements in place with many countries around the world – including Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. The economic and cultural benefits of these schemes – which allow young people to move between the signatory countries for a specified period, usually two or three years – are widely recognised. They are also distinct from other forms of migration, as youth mobility agreements do not confer longer-term right to remain on participants. ABTA has long championed these agreements, as a partial solution to the problems that have faced tourism businesses – inbound and outbound – since the UK's departure from the EU. We urge the next government to enhance existing agreements, and strike new deals with countries around the world. However, the greatest opportunity lies in reaching agreements with our EU neighbours.

38%

of travel staff and 49% of leaders in the industry have worked overseas earlier in their careers.

69%

fall in UK nationals working in tourism support roles within Europe since the UK's departure from the EU.

94%

of businesses said barriers to mobility for workers between the UK and EU reduce opportunities for young people to develop a career in travel.

20%²

fall in the proportion of 18-24 year olds employed by UK travel companies in EU based tourism support roles since the end of the transition period.

Creating the conditions for travel businesses to compete and thrive

UK travel and tourism businesses make an important impact on communities across the UK. For example, outbound travel stimulates wider economic activity – including through spending in retail, accommodation and other related sectors, that is worth more than £51bn³ annually. **It is vital that policymakers provide the right framework for travel and tourism businesses to succeed, including by:**



1 Delivering business rates reform to support high street businesses

The UK's current system of business rates is outdated and disincentivises companies by making it more expensive to operate in-person premises. Any new system must seek to deliver a fair system of taxation and the regeneration of high streets.



2 Ensuring a balanced consumer protection framework

The UK travel industry is dependent on the confident purchasing decisions of consumers – who spend large amounts on their travel bookings, often far in advance of travel. The entire industry supports sensible, proportionate consumer protection, such as ATOL, the Package Travel Regulations, and passenger rights legislation, which help to underpin the success of our industry. It is vital any reforms are conducted in partnership with the sector.



3 Seeking cooperation with the EU on e-visa regimes

The EU will shortly introduce new electronic border management processes, in the shape of the Entry/Exit Scheme (EES) and the Electronic Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). With the UK government also introducing its own Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), which will apply to most EU citizens, it is essential our government works in partnership with its international counterparts to avoid disruption to travel flows. In the longer-term, ABTA advocates for the removal of electronic travel schemes for UK and EU citizens travelling for short periods and touristic purposes.



4 Facilitating seamless school travel between the UK & EU

Since the UK left the EU it has become notably harder for school and youth groups to travel, with the introduction of restrictions on ID cards, the phasing out of collective passports (outbound), and removal of the List of Travellers regime, which allowed young people who would ordinarily require a visa to travel visa-free as part of an organised school group. While the UK reached an agreement with France in late 2023 to remove some barriers, such as ID cards, this agreement has done little to improve the ease of outbound trips, and the agreement doesn't apply EU-wide. ABTA urges the next government to seek an agreement with the EU to facilitate school travel in both directions.



5 Use the review of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) to reduce barriers to tourism and business travel

ABTA is urging the next government to use the review of the TCA to reduce barriers to travel between the UK and EU, and for businesses selling tourism services. Alongside youth mobility deals, ABTA would like to see the UK government negotiate a wider mobility chapter for tourism professionals – recognising the mutual economic benefits these jobs bring, an agreement on mutual recognition of professional qualifications concerning tourism support roles, and also agreements to remove visa requirements and other rules hampering short-term business trips, such as the need to get approval when travelling with certain audio/visual equipment and computers.



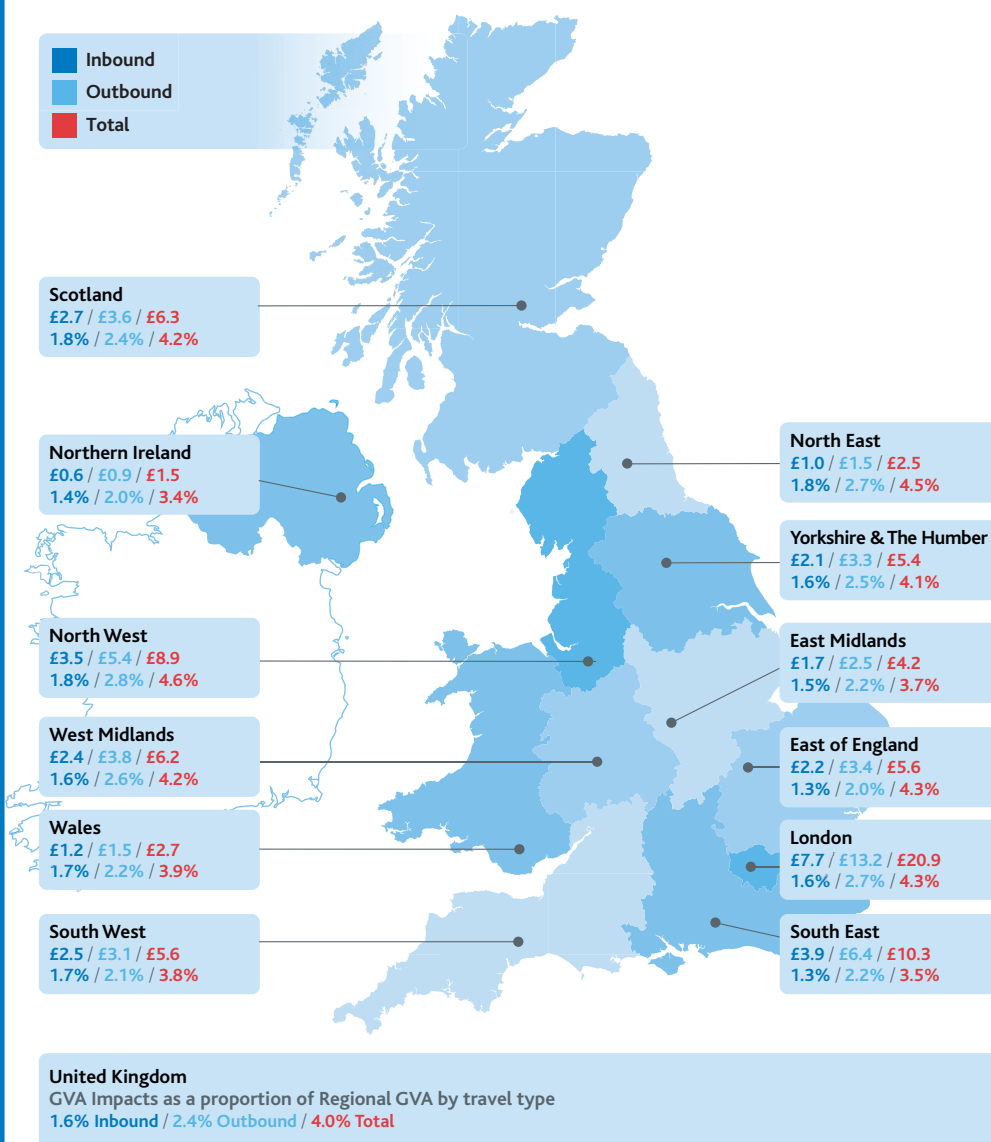
6 Avoiding layering of taxation and providing a fair tax framework for the aviation sector

Through Air Passenger Duty (APD), the UK already applies some of the highest levels of aviation departure tax in the world, with revenues already set to increase notably from £3.2bn (financial year 22/23) to above £5bn (financial year 27/28). Against this backdrop, the UK government should be mindful of further limiting the competitiveness of UK aviation through future increases in APD, avoid additional layering of other carbon charges, taxes and levies, and also seek to remove anomalies in the existing APD regime – such as the treatment of children and premium economy.

Why the next government should back outbound travel

Travel brings jobs and economic activity to all parts of the UK⁷

GVA in the UK Nations and regions, 2019
(£bn & % of GVA by travel type)



Outbound travel is worth

£49bn annually.⁸

Outbound travel supports over

843,000 jobs across the UK.⁹

ABTA's research shows the sector is due to outperform significantly the wider UK economy in the years ahead, with forecast **growth levels 50% higher than the wider economy** by the middle of the next parliament.¹⁰

The average traveller spends

£670 in the UK economy prior to travelling overseas.¹¹

£6.9bn contribution in tax annually to HM Treasury.¹²

📍 ABTA Ltd, 30 Park Street, London, SE1 9EQ

☎ +44 (0) 20 3117 0500

🌐 Find out more at www.abta.com

✉ publicaffairs@abta.com

✂ @ABTALoveTravel / @ABTAtravel