

Tourism in Europe: does age matter?

This publication focuses on selective aspects of the travel behaviour of residents from the EU Member States in 2006. In so doing it mainly deals with differences, if any, in the travel behaviour of four different age groups, that is tourists aged 15 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45 to 64 years and older than 64 years.

Highlights

- People aged 25 to 44 years make up the largest share of the total number of tourists
- While on average 55% of the population makes at least one holiday trip of four nights or more during the year, this is only the case for 41% of the population aged 65 years and over
- More than 6 out of 10 holiday trips are spent within the own country, for the oldest age group more than 7 out of 10 trips are domestic trips
- Of all persons participating in tourism, tourists aged 65 and over make on average the most and the longest trips

The age distribution of tourists corresponds approximately to the age distribution of the total population

People aged 25 to 44 years represent a share of 35% of the total population, while the same group accounts for 38% of all tourists¹ (see Figure 1). For the youngest age group (15 to 24 years), on the other hand, the percentages are identical. The oldest age group (65+ years) makes up the smallest proportion of both the population and the number of tourists.

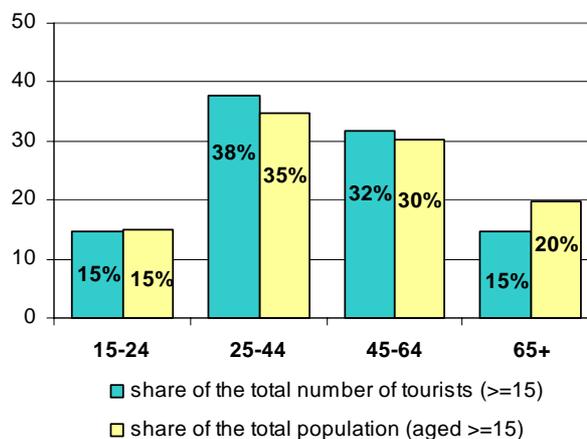
¹ Due to a lack of data or no breakdown by age the following countries were excluded: Bulgaria, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden.

² Data were missing for Bulgaria, Ireland, Slovakia and Sweden.

However, it can be assumed, given the prevailing tendency of an ageing population, that this age pattern will change within the coming decades.

Translating these numbers into the participation rate, that is the share of the population taking part in tourism, for the different age groups, the following picture emerges: the youngest group (15 to 24 years) is, with 55%, at the level of the overall average for the EU-27; with 61% and 59% respectively persons aged 25 to 44 and 45 to 64 years show a participation rate slightly above the average; while people aged 65 and over tend to take less part in tourism, with only 41% of them making at least one holiday trip of four nights or more.

Figure 1: Age distribution in %, 2006 (persons aged 15 years and over)

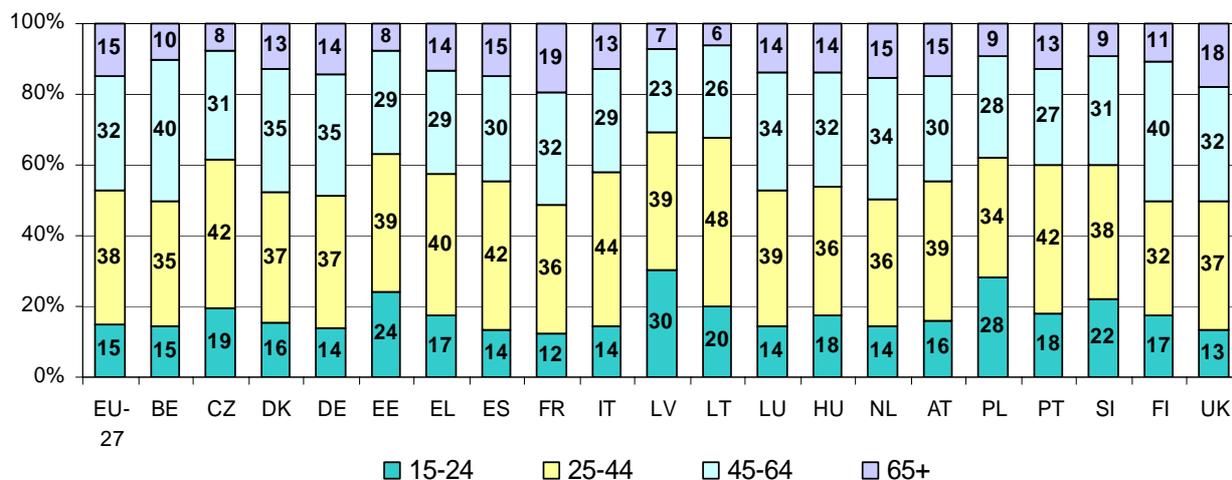


Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics / Population Statistics

Approximately one tourist in three is between 25 and 44 years old

In 2006, 213 million Europeans² went on holiday at least once for four nights or more. Of these, some 80 million tourists are aged between 25 and 44 years. This is obviously a reflection of the fact that this age group also makes up the highest proportion of the total population.

Figure 2: Share of each age group as a percentage of the total number of tourists in 2006 (holidays of four nights or more)



Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

Figure 2 shows each age group as a share of the total number of tourists who went on holiday for four nights or more in 2006, both for the EU-27 and for each country individually.³ Again, people aged 25 to 44 years make up the largest share of tourists in nearly all Member States. To recap, they represent 38% of all tourists as an EU-average with the highest proportion in Lithuania (48%) and Italy (44%). The exceptions, however, are Belgium and Finland where people between the ages of 45 and 64 make up the largest proportion of tourists.

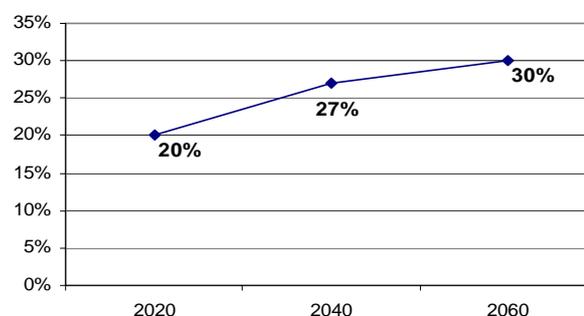
Younger tourists aged between 15 and 24 years account for an average share of 15% of all tourists Europe-wide, with the lowest proportion in France (12%) and the highest proportion in Latvia (30%). There is evidence that, in this younger age group, the share of tourists tends to be higher for the new Member States than for the old ones.

Additionally, in the new Member States, the oldest age class measured as a percentage of the total number of tourists is generally 5 percentage points or more below the EU-27 average, except for Hungary. For the two remaining age classes (25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years) it is not possible to detect any particular geographical difference. In five Member States, that is Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands and the UK, the youngest group has the smallest percentage in the total number of tourists. Nevertheless, people older than 64 years represent the lowest proportion of tourists in fifteen EU Member States.

The demographic trend suggests, however, that the share of people older than 64 years in the total population will increase in the long run (see Figure 3).

Their share is expected to nearly double, reaching 30% by the year 2060. As a consequence, the share of older people in the number of tourists will also grow. Due to various influencing factors, e.g. improving health conditions, their share will most probably increase even faster than that expected on the basis of the demographic trend. Furthermore, many people who belong to the younger age groups nowadays actively participate in tourism as most of them have gone on holidays since childhood which is not always the case for the current older generation. Thus, they will most likely keep on travelling when they are older which will also increase the share of older people in the number of tourists.

Figure 3: Estimated share of people aged 65 and over as a percentage of the total population for the EU-27



Source: Eurostat, EUROPOP 2008, convergence scenario

³ A breakdown by age groups for the number of tourists is not available for Bulgaria, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden.

Balance of the number of short trips and long trips

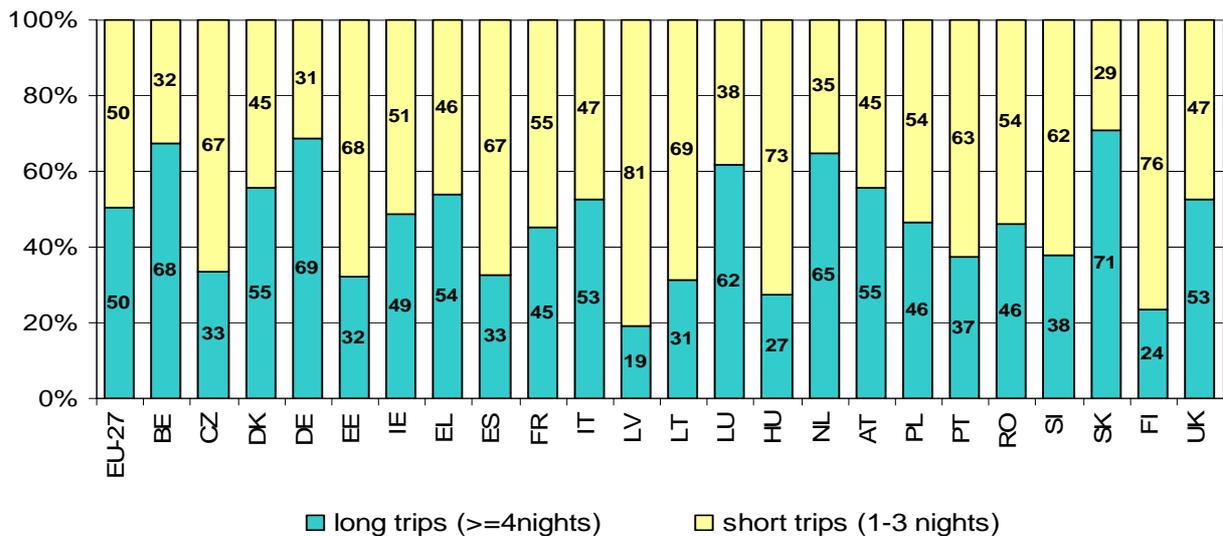
In 2006, European tourists made 901 million trips in total.⁴ Half of these trips were short trips lasting from one to three nights, while the other half were longer trips involving at least four overnight stays (see Figure 4).

However, while this split is balanced on average in the EU-27, there are marked differences between the individual Member States. For example, 71% of all trips made by Slovakian tourists lasted four

nights or more, while residents of the new Member States generally tended to make short trips (lasting one to three nights).

In Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, more than 60% of all trips made by residents lasted four nights or more, while especially in Latvia, Finland and Hungary over 70% of all trips were not more than one to three nights in length.⁵

Figure 4: Share of short and long trips as a percentage of the total number of trips in 2006



Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

In all age cohorts the majority make holidays in their country of residence

On a European average, 38% of the 438 million long trips⁶ of four nights or more in 2006 were undertaken by persons aged 25 to 44 years, while the age group of 45 to 64 year-olds accounted for 32% of all trips. The two other age classes each accounted for 15% (see Figure 2). This approximately reflects the share of each age group in the total number of tourists (see Figure 1). This feature suggests that there is little or no difference in the frequency with which each age group participates in tourism, meaning that all age classes travel to approximately the same extent. In addition, it can be assumed that a positive relationship between the number of tourists and the number of trips does exist.

Of these 438 million long trips, tourists made 61%

within their respective country of residence, while the remaining 39% were trips abroad (see Table 1). In Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and Slovenia, more than 70% of all trips were made to destinations outside the country of residence. In Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Romania, on the other hand, more than 70% of all trips were within the borders of the respective country. The decision whether to go abroad or to stay within the country of residence is definitely influenced by the size of the respective country, as well as by its geographical location.

Consequently, this tendency is also reflected in all four age groups, meaning that in 2006 European tourists of every age group made more trips within

⁴ Data on the number of trips for 2006 were missing for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta and Sweden.

⁵ For the following examination of differences between age groups only holidays of four nights or more are taken into account because no breakdown by age is given for trips lasting one to three nights.

⁶ Due to a lack of data Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta were excluded. In addition, Austria, Denmark and Estonia were not taken into account, even though data on the total number of trips were available but no breakdown by age was given. Including the data of these three countries the total number of trips increases to 453 million. The amount of 438 million trips, however, accounts for 96.8% of this total.

their country of residence than to a foreign country.

On closer inspection, it appears that travel behaviour in the individual Member States tends to follow a consistent pattern in most cases: either the majority of holiday trips throughout all age groups are made to a destination abroad or the majority of trips in all age groups are holidays in the respective home country.

To illustrate: Spanish people of all age groups make more trips within Spain than to destinations outside the country. The same applies to people from the Czech Republic, Greece, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland and Sweden. In Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands this situation is the reverse.

However, in six of the EU Member States, namely in Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, this trend is not consistent across the age classes. While in Slovakia the 25 to 44 year-olds predominantly go abroad for their holidays, most of the trips made by the other age groups are domestic trips. For the most part Germans aged 15 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years or 45 to 64 years take their holidays outside their own country; this does not apply, however, to those aged over 64 years. The same pattern is seen in Lithuania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. In Latvia, it is additionally the youngest age group (15 to 24 years) who makes more domestic trips than trips abroad.

The average European tourist made 2 trips in 2006

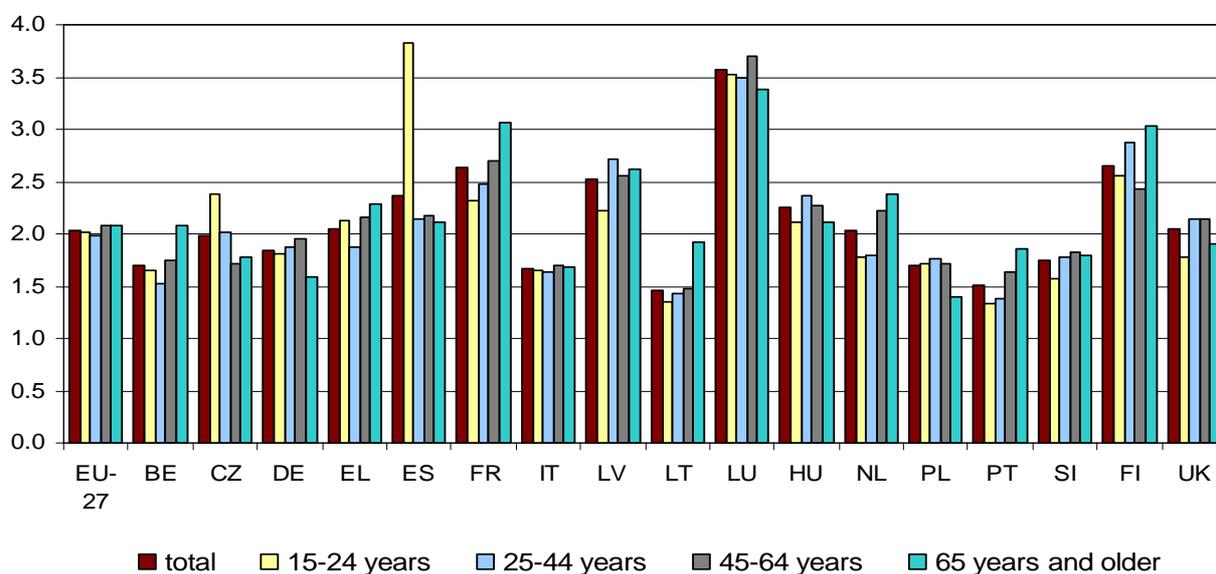
Generally speaking, people living in France, Luxembourg, Latvia or Finland made at least 0.5 trips more than the EU-average. People from Lithuania or Portugal, on the other hand, made at least 0.5 trips less than the average European tourist (see Figure 5).

Grouping the European tourists⁷ by their age produces the following picture: none of the age classes stands out as differing notably from the EU-average of two trips per tourist. More specifically: in

2006, tourists aged either 15 to 24 years or 25 to 44 years made two trips on average, while the two 'oldest' age classes (45 to 64 years and 65 years or above) made slightly more trips (2.1 trips in both cases).

However, it should be noted that, although tourists aged between 25 and 44 years make up the largest share of all tourists (see Figure 1), the older age groups, i.e. persons older than 44 years, are taking slightly more trips per tourist.

Figure 5: Average number of trips per tourist in 2006 (holidays of 4 nights or more)



Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

Figure 5 also shows the average number of trips of each age group according to the country of residence of the tourist. As can be seen, residents of Luxembourg – regardless of their age – make the most trips of all Europeans. They are only surpassed

by young Spanish residents who went on 3.8 trips on average in 2006. Nevertheless, there is neither a particular trend for one age group nor a specific geographical trend for a group of countries.

⁷ Due to either a lack of data or no breakdown by age Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Cyprus, Malta, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden were excluded.

Table 1: Number of trips in 2006 (%) (holidays of 4 nights or more)

	total				15-24 years				25-44 years				45-64 years				65 years and older			
	domestic	outbound			domestic	outbound			domestic	outbound			domestic	outbound			domestic	outbound		
		total	in the EU-27	outside the EU-27		total	in the EU-27	outside the EU-27		total	in the EU-27	outside the EU-27		total	in the EU-27	outside the EU-27		total	in the EU-27	outside the EU-27
EU-27	61	39	:	:	61	40	:	:	58	42	:	:	58	42	:	:	71	30	:	:
BE	19	81	78	22	21	79	77	23	18	82	74	26	18	82	79	21	24	76	88	12
BG	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
CZ	56	44	62	38	57	43	:	:	55	45	:	:	52	48	:	:	73	27	:	:
DK	31	69	80	27	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
DE	38	62	74	26	35	65	:	:	33	67	:	:	41	59	:	:	51	49	:	:
EE	33	67	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
IE	23	77	79	21	19	81	:	:	24	76	:	:	19	81	:	:	33	67	:	:
EL	89	11	56	44	92	8	46	54	87	13	56	44	90	10	60	40	89	11	59	41
ES	86	14	58	42	91	9	64	36	82	18	55	45	84	16	60	40	94	6	68	32
FR	83	17	54	46	80	20	58	42	85	15	50	50	83	17	51	49	83	17	60	40
IT	75	25	65	35	69	31	77	23	73	27	63	37	77	23	59	42	85	15	71	29
CY	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
LV	47	53	57	43	57	43	68	32	39	61	58	42	46	54	47	53	66	34	35	65
LT	38	62	54	46	38	62	:	:	28	72	:	:	39	61	:	:	85	15	:	:
LU	<1	>99	82	18	1	99	80	19	<1	>99	81	19	<1	>99	83	17	<1	>99	87	11
HU	64	36	74	26	61	39	79	21	53	47	70	30	66	34	76	24	92	8	74	26
MT	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
NL	38	62	77	23	34	66	81	19	34	66	75	24	37	63	76	24	50	50	78	22
AT	37	63	63	37	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
PL	81	19	81	19	83	17	:	:	77	23	:	:	80	20	:	:	87	13	:	:
PT	79	21	:	:	81	19	:	:	77	23	:	:	77	23	:	:	85	15	:	:
RO	88	12	83	17	90	10	:	:	87	13	:	:	88	12	:	:	88	12	:	:
SI	28	72	19	81	20	80	:	:	23	77	:	:	29	71	:	:	54	46	:	:
SK	53	47	62	38	55	45	71	29	48	52	56	44	53	47	63	37	70	30	65	35
FI	69	31	75	25	73	27	:	:	68	32	:	:	67	33	:	:	72	28	:	:
SE	57	43	65	35	61	39	66	34	61	39	61	39	50	50	68	32	60	40	73	27
UK	46	54	71	29	36	64	69	31	47	53	66	34	41	59	72	28	60	40	77	23

Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

On average, each tourist spent 20.5 nights away from home in 2006

In 2006, European tourists spent a total of 4.2 billion nights during their holidays of 4 nights or more.⁸ Of that total, 56% were spent within the tourist's respective country of residence while 44% were spent abroad, reflecting the fact that, for the EU 27, the number of domestic trips exceeds the number of trips made to destinations abroad (see Table 1).

As a logical consequence, in countries where the residents make predominantly domestic trips the total number of nights spent within the respective country also exceeds the number of nights spent abroad. The only exception in this case is Sweden, where the majority of trips (57%) were made within the Swedish borders, but less than half of all nights (46%) were spent within the country. This suggests that Swedish residents make more trips within their country, but of a shorter duration and that their trips to destinations abroad are fewer, but of a longer duration.

On average each tourist spent 20.5 nights away from home (see Table 2). As for the total EU-27 average, it appears that residents of Portugal and Slovenia spent at least 4 nights fewer away from home than the average European tourist, while the opposite was the case for residents of Greece, Spain, France and Luxembourg.

Table 2 also shows that Europeans aged 65 and over spent more nights away than tourists of all other age groups. However, both the total EU-average and the average for each age group should be treated with care as there are remarkable differences between countries in the average number of nights spent. Residents from Greece, Spain and Luxembourg in the 15 to 24 age-group spent at least five nights more away than the average European tourist, while for 25 to 45 and 45 to 64 age groups, this only applies to people from Luxembourg.

However, the differences between the individual countries are the highest for tourists aged over 64 years. People from Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom spent at least 5 nights less away from home than the average, while people from Greece, Spain, France, Luxembourg and Finland spent 5 nights or more away from home than the average.

Table 2: Average number of nights spent per tourist in 2006 (holidays of 4 nights or more)

	total	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
EU-27	20.5	19.0	19.1	21.1	24.3
BE ¹	19.8	.	.	.	.
BG	.	.	.	.	.
CZ	16.9	20.2	17.2	14.7	14.9
DK ¹	18.8	.	.	.	.
DE	18.6	17.6	19	19.5	16.6
EE ¹	9.2	.	.	.	.
IE	.	.	.	.	.
EL	25.0	26.1	18.0	26.0	42.4
ES	24.4	31.8	21.2	22.5	30.1
FR	25.4	21.0	21.1	26.1	35.4
IT	19.3	17.1	17.4	19.1	28.4
CY	.	.	.	.	.
LV	22.9	19.1	23.5	25.0	28.4
LT	16.5	20.7	15.1	14.8	20.7
LU	36.0	37.1	34.4	37.1	35.6
HU	16.6	16.7	17.1	16.4	16.0
MT	.	.	.	.	.
NL	21.5	17.7	18.8	23.8	26.1
AT ¹	17.7	.	.	.	.
PL	17.8	15.3	16.9	21.0	19.1
PT	15.9	13.1	13.5	17.9	23.9
RO ¹	9.5	.	.	.	.
SI	14.3	11.7	14.6	15.4	16.1
SK	.	.	.	.	.
FI	20.7	18.0	20.8	19.0	30.7
SE	.	.	.	.	.
UK	19.2	17.4	19.3	20.5	17.9

¹ Although the numbers for these countries are shown they are not included in the total EU-average as these countries do not declare age groups

Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

Persons older than 64 years make on average the longest trips of all tourists

Table 3 presents the average number of nights every tourist spent per trip in 2006. In general, Greek residents make the longest trips, spending 12.2 nights per trip, followed by residents of Belgium with 11.7 nights and residents of the Netherlands with 11.6 nights. In contrast, the trips undertaken by Finnish and Hungarian people are at least 2 nights shorter than the EU average.

⁸ For the following countries the breakdown by age with regard to the number of nights spent was missing: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, Austria and Romania. Including these countries the total number of nights spent in 2006 increases to 4.507 million.

Table 3: Average number of nights spent per trip per tourist in 2006 (holidays of 4 nights or more)

	total	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
EU-27	10.1	9.4	9.6	10.1	11.7
BE ¹	11.7	:	:	:	:
BG	:	:	:	:	:
CZ	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.4
DK ¹	9.1	:	:	:	:
DE	10.1	9.8	10.2	10.0	10.5
EE ¹	8.6	:	:	:	:
IE	9.5	10.7	9.0	9.2	9.9
EL	12.2	12.3	9.6	12.0	18.6
ES	10.3	8.3	9.9	10.4	14.2
FR	9.6	9.1	8.5	9.7	11.5
IT	11.6	10.3	10.7	11.2	16.9
CY	:	:	:	:	:
LV	9.1	8.6	8.6	9.8	10.8
LT	11.3	15.3	10.6	10.0	10.8
LU	10.1	10.5	9.8	10.0	10.5
HU	7.4	7.9	7.2	7.2	7.6
MT	:	:	:	:	:
NL	10.6	9.9	10.5	10.7	11.0
AT ¹	8.7	:	:	:	:
PL	10.5	9.0	9.6	12.2	13.7
PT	10.6	9.8	9.7	10.9	12.9
RO ¹	8.8	:	:	:	:
SI	8.2	7.5	8.2	8.5	9.0
SK	8.4	8.9	7.7	8.8	8.5
FI	7.8	7.0	7.2	7.8	10.1
SE	8.6	8.9	8.1	8.5	9.8
UK	9.4	9.8	9.0	9.6	9.4

¹ Although the numbers for these countries are shown they are not included in the total EU-average as these countries do not declare age groups

Source: Eurostat, Tourism Statistics

As to the different age classes, once again it is the oldest age group (65 years and over) who makes the longest trips on average in the EU, spending 11.7 nights away on each trip. Thus, they make longer trips than the EU average, while people aged 15 to 24 years or 25 to 44 years generally make shorter trips than the average European tourist.

It is worth mentioning that the variation between the individual countries is smaller than it was for the average number of nights spent (see Table 2). The only group that deviates from the EU-27 average by more than five nights are Lithuanians aged between 15 and 24 years.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Tourism

The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes. Tourism means the practice of travelling outside a person's usual environment for all purposes. In relation to a given country, three forms of tourism can be distinguished:

- (i) Domestic tourism comprises the activities of residents of a given country travelling to and staying in places only within that country but outside their usual environment;
- (ii) Inbound tourism comprises the activities of non-residents of a given country travelling to and staying in places in that country and outside their usual environment;
- (iii) Outbound tourism comprises the activities of residents of a given country travelling

Tourist / Number of tourists

Visitors who stay at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the place/country visited.

Number of tourism trips

Trips made by tourists, i.e. overnight trips.

Number of tourism nights spent

A tourism night (or overnight stay) is each night that a guest actually spends (sleeps or stays) or is registered (his/her physical presence there being unnecessary) in a collective accommodation establishment or in private tourism accommodation.

Place/Country of origin

This is the place/country from which the trip originates. It is usually the same as the place and country of residence. When people live during the survey period in another place than their

usual residence (e.g. short-term migrants and seasonal workers), this place should be taken as the origin.

Country abbreviations

BE	Belgium	BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic	DK	Denmark
DE	Germany	EE	Estonia
EL	Greece	ES	Spain
FR	France	IE	Ireland
IT	Italy	CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia	LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg	HU	Hungary
MT	Malta	NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria	PL	Poland
PT	Portugal	RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia	SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland	SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom		

Symbols

: Data missing / data not available

Data source

The data used in this Statistics in Focus was in general collected by the national statistical institutes of the EU Member States, under Council Directive 95/57/EC of 23 November 1995 on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tourism> In most Member States, the data is collected via surveys after the holidays have taken place or via border surveys at the moment of return. The scope of the statistics on tourism demand is individuals aged 15 or more.

Further information

Data: [Eurostat Website: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

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Manuscript completed on: 07.07.2008

Data extracted on: 13.05.2008

ISSN 1977-0316

Catalogue number: KS-SF-08-069-EN-N

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