

The Ethical Traveller - UK - February 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the UK holiday market and travellers' priorities.
- Holidaying intentions and likely behavioural changes in 2021.
- Purchase drivers when choosing a travel company and the relative importance of brands' environmental policies.
- Environmental and ethical factors that consumers would like to see travel brands prioritise.
- Opportunities to encourage ethical travel.

The pandemic has raised awareness of the risks associated with over-crowding in popular tourist destinations. Tackling over-crowding is now seen as the third-highest ethical priority for travel companies to address, behind reducing carbon emissions and recycling waste. Consumers' desire to avoid crowds provides operators and destinations with an opportunity to promote activities with a low environmental impact such as hikes in wide open spaces with stops at local farms.

Both widespread media coverage of drops in pollution levels and consumers noticing changes such as cleaner air have resulted in increased awareness of the impact of travel on the environment. Whilst some consumers plan to take fewer holidays for the sake of the environment, financial concerns play a much bigger role. When the economy fully recovers, the growth of the holiday market is likely to accelerate.

When demand for overseas travel bounces back and the impact of travel on the environment starts to be witnessed again, activist groups and the media will likely jump on this topic. Travel brands will have to ensure growth remains accepted by the government and consumers over the longer term, by limiting carbon emissions.

Though only a small share of UK travellers prioritise the environment in the holiday planning and booking process, the majority are open to taking steps to



"Consumers' desire to avoid crowds provides operators and destinations with an opportunity to promote activities with a low environmental impact such as hikes in wide open spaces and cycle tours with stops at local farms."

– Marloes de Vries, Associate Director – Travel, 26 February 2021

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minimise their impact when on holiday. Learning about the local culture and reconnecting with nature on holiday have the widest appeal across ethical travel segments.



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