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Australia's favourite overseas holiday destinations (and how they've changed)

Ten years ago, 6.0% of Australians 14+ reported that they were planning to go overseas on their next holiday. That figure has since risen to 10.6% of the population, the latest findings from Roy Morgan Research reveal. Not only has overall overseas holiday intention increased, but the destinations people are planning to visit are changing. So which countries are the winners and losers among Aussies planning an overseas holiday?

In the 12 months to June 2016, 18.0% of Aussies with an overseas holiday on the horizon reported that they were planning to go to New Zealand. This has dropped from June 2006, when New Zealand featured in the plans of 19.5% overseas-holiday intenders.

But whereas the Land of the Long White Cloud was pipped at the post by England (20.2%) back then, England's popularity has slumped in the ensuing years to 13.6%, putting it third behind a much improved USA (17.8%, up from 14.6% in 2006).

Most popular destinations among Aussies planning an overseas holiday: 2006-2016

Intended destination	July 2005–June 2006	July 2015–June 2016
New Zealand	19.5%	18% (↓)
USA	14.6%	17.8% (↑)
England	20.2%	13.6% (↓)
Japan	6.1%	9.1% (↑)
Singapore	8.7%	8.7% (–)
Indonesia	4.0%	8.5% (↑)
Thailand	8.4%	7.4% (↓)
France	11.7%	7.3% (↓)
Italy	9.7%	6.6% (↓)
Fiji	5.9%	5.4% (↓)

Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), May 2015–April 2016. Base: Australians 14+

Japan was another winner, with the proportion of intending holiday-goers planning to visit rising from 6.1% to 9.1%. Indonesia has also seen its popularity more than double—thanks primarily to interest in Bali—and is now on the itinerary of 8.5% of Aussies planning an overseas holiday (up from 4.0%).

England and New Zealand aren't the only international destinations that have lost ground over the past decade. Holiday intention to Thailand, France and Italy has also slipped, as the table above shows.

Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“While the proportion of Australians intending to take an overseas holiday has increased by more than 75% over the last 10 years, intention has dropped off for several historically popular destinations. In fact, among the 10 countries featured here, only the US, Japan and Indonesia are more popular with Aussies planning a holiday than they were in 2006.

“At a continental level, Roy Morgan data shows that overall European holiday intention has slipped while Asian holiday intention has risen—but it’s certainly not as cut and dried as that. Some European countries (Switzerland, Austria, Greece and the Netherlands, for example) feature in the holiday plans of more Aussies now than they did 10 years ago. And some Asian countries have lost ground (Hong Kong and China, to name two).

“Although New Zealand figures in the itineraries of 18% of Australians planning an overseas holiday, topping the list for international travel destinations, it was more popular 10 years ago. It should be noted, however, that holiday intention to New Zealand bottomed out over the 2012-2013 period (at 13.6%), and has since turned around. Holiday intention to Christchurch also crashed during this time in the wake of the 2011 earthquake, but appears to be bouncing back. Could this mark the start of a positive new phase?

“The growing profile of the US is most likely linked to factors such as the continued strength of the Australian dollar (which actually surpassed parity in 2011, and is currently sitting at a similar level to that of 2006) and the proliferation of affordable airfares to that part of the world. The 25-34 year-old age group is leading the way in US holiday intention: nearly one quarter of overseas holiday intenders in this age bracket are planning to head Stateside on their next holiday (up from 19.1%).

“This same age group is also behind Indonesia’s surge in popularity, along with young Aussies under 25. With the Australian dollar going further in Indonesia and the US than Europe, it’s not surprising that younger travellers favour these destinations. But the value of the dollar is just one factor affecting overseas holiday trends.

“Ever since the Twin Towers attacks, the spectre of terrorism and international unrest has had a very real influence on the way we travel. The proportion of Aussie overseas holiday intenders planning to visit France has dropped from 10.6% as of June 2014 to 7.3% in June 2016, a period in which there have been several terrorist incidents in the country, including the Charlie Hebdo shooting and the multiple attacks across Paris in November 2015. But then, Paris is ranked the world’s fifth-most expensive city according to the latest Economist Intelligence Unit’s Worldwide Cost of Living Survey, so that may also be a deterrent.

“Tracking, analysing and predicting holiday intention and destination trends is a fine science, subject to many influences, both uncontrollable and controllable. Roy Morgan’s Holiday Tracking Survey allows tourism operators to drill down to the real nitty-gritty of Australians’ holiday habits, gleaning invaluable insights not only into their travel intentions and past holiday behaviours, but their shifting attitudes to destinations and general Consumer Confidence. Only with this kind of knowledge can industry players hope to stay competitive in such a dynamic, ever-changing market.”

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About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years’ experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2