



PRESS RELEASE
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The Coronavirus still keeps package travel sales on a short leash **Sales continued to drop in 2021**

The year 2021 did not bring a significant change to international travel which is greatly suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The "Avoid non-essential travel" - recommendation given by the Finnish authorities was removed during midsummer for EU and Schengen countries. For other countries, the recommendation was amended in September urging everyone traveling abroad to receive full COVID-19 vaccination before traveling. Although negative travel recommendations were alleviated, this was not reflected in the recovery in international travel.

The Association of Finnish Travel Industry (SMAL) has traditionally gathered statistics on flight-based package travel¹ abroad. In 2021 in total about 116,700 flight-based travel packages were sold, which was 30 percent less than in 2020. Compared to the pre-pandemic period, the drop was as high as 87 percent. In 2021, the combined turnover of tour operators organizing flight-based travel packages was EUR 106.1 million, a decrease of 39.5 per cent on the previous year. In 2019, the corresponding figure was EUR 755.6 million, ie the monetary decline in 2021 was 86 per cent compared with the year before the pandemic. Due to restrictions on international travel more flight-based travel packages to domestic destinations were sold than ever before. These travel packages are not included in these statistics.

The majority of trips, or 89.5 percent, went to Europe. In the **European region** the Canary Islands covered 43% of all journeys with some 44,900 travel packages. The figure showed a leveling off from the situation in 2020, when the Canary Islands accounted for as much as 67 percent of the region's trips. The situation is partly explained by the fact that the destination is one of the most traditional winter destinations, but it was not possible to travel there in normal manner in early 2021. Another Finnish favorite destination in Europe, Greece, benefited from the reduced travel recommendations in June. Approximately 36,150 travel packages were made to Greece, up from 7,865 a year earlier. Greece accounted for 34.6 percent of all travel to Europe. The number of trips to destinations in the **Middle East and North Africa** was only about 7,550, which was a modest 6.5 per cent of all trips recorded. The region's long-time favorite, Turkey, had experienced a more than 98 percent collapse in 2020 with Finnish holidaymakers. In 2021, however, with a modest 4,800 trips, Turkey was once again the most popular destination within the region. About 2,000 people who bought a package traveled to the United Arab Emirates. Less than 4,700 trips were made to **long-haul destinations**, a drop of 89 percent from the number of travel packages in 2020 and 95 percent in 2019. The most popular long-haul destination was Thailand, which accounted for about 2,000 trips, or 39 percent of the region's trips. Less than 1,000 trips were made to Cape Verde and about 900 trips to the Caribbean and Central America.

The popularity of long international cruises was growing well among travelers from Finland before the pandemic. However, the number of package holidays on long cruises has fallen by almost 89 percent during the COVID-19-pandemic. In 2021, just over 900 cruise packages were sold and most of them were European cruises. It is worth mentioning, however, that the figures above are provided by tour operators and do not count trips booked by travelers directly with the cruise companies.

¹ Herein a travel package is defined as a combination of international travel services coordinated by a tour operator, lasting for at least 2 days and including at least relevant flights and accommodations. The travel package concept defined by the Package Travel Act is broader than the one used here. The statistics do not, therefore, include all those trip types that are included in the Act. Figures also do not include services for accommodations and transportation alone.



On the statistics

SMAL and its predecessor SMY have gathered statistics on package travel since 1965. The travel industry has changed considerably since those times. Package deals have changed their form over the years and traditional travel packages are more and more frequently joined by flight+hotel or similar arrangements that are ordered online. These are also considered travel packages. Travelers increasingly also tailor their own trips according to their own desires. These trips are now more often included in the statistics on travel packages as well, since 2018 legislation on travel packages added other travel types to the statistics as well.

A majority of the figures are based on the sales of travel packages that are produced serially. For this reason, popular European city destinations, for instance, are not represented in the correct proportion in the statistics.

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Attachment: - flight-based holiday packages in 2021, 2020 and 2019