

23 May 2022



Measurement of Outbound Tourism from the position of mobile phones April 2022

The number of residents in Spain who traveled abroad in April multiplied by three compared to 2021

Half chose France or Portugal as destinations

The National Institute of Statistics (INE) is today publishing experimental statistics with information on tourists residing in Spain who travel abroad, based on the position of their mobile phones.

The information source is the aggregate data provided by the three large mobile phone operators in Spain. This is done by tracking the positioning of users of these operators.

The statistical measurement of tourists is subject to operational limitations. These thus statistics identify a resident in Spain as a traveller in another country based on the position of their mobile device. The same person may travel with two or more devices, meaning that they would be counted two or more times. A person may also keep their phone disconnected throughout the trip or may connect using a SIM card specific to that country, meaning that they will not be detected by the Spanish operator.

It should also be taken into account that a tourist's mobile device is counted in the month when they leave the country they've travelled to, even if entry occurred in a previous month.

We should likewise note that the INE receives information from mobile phone companies in aggregate and without any type of individual identification, which makes it impossible to carry out individualized monitoring of any phone user.

Among the improvements obtained from these new information sources is the granularity or detail of information provided. Information is published from all the world's countries, in terms of tourist origin, at the autonomous community, province and municipality level of the main trip origin, provided that the results are significant.

Another improvement is the opportunity to publish the results prior to the end of the month following the reference month. In the best of cases, this would be four months before the publication of the data from the Resident Tourism Survey (RTS).

The short-term objective of this operation is to provide a rapid and highly detailed estimate of the number of residents in Spain who travel abroad –based on innovative sources and processes– that can serve as a complement to the estimates provided by the RTS.

In the medium term, the goal will be to integrate the two operations, thus combining the speed and granularity of the first with the details of tourist's trips (reason for the trip, type of accommodation,...) provided by the second.

Evolution and destination of resident tourists on trips abroad

The number of resident tourists travelling abroad in April 2022 increased by 212.9% compared to the same month in 2021, and the number of overnight stays increased by 240.5%.

The average duration of trips was 4.1 days, which represents a decline of 10.8% compared to estimates from a year ago.

If we look at the months of March and April combined¹, the number of tourists increased by 187.2% compared to the same period in 2021.

Destinations of tourists abroad

Analysing the destinations of tourists residing in Spain during the month of April, 88.2% of the total travelled to a European country. A total of 5.1% went to America, 4.8% to Africa, 1.9% to Asia, and less than 0.1% to Oceania.

Tourists, overnight stays and average stay

	Tourists		Overnight stays		Average stay	
	Absolute value	Annual variation	Absolute value	Annual variation	Absolute value	Annual variation
April 2022						
Total	1.971.044	212,9	8.028.208	240,5	4,1	10,8
Europe	1.739.104	237,8	6.626.629	251,7	3,8	2,7
America	100.315	341,2	846.666	280,7	8,4	-14,3
Africa	94.432	18,4	326.666	103,7	3,5	75,0
Asia	36.751	190,6	223.043	146,6	6,1	-15,3
Oceania	442	1.373,3	5.204	1.924,9	11,8	37,2

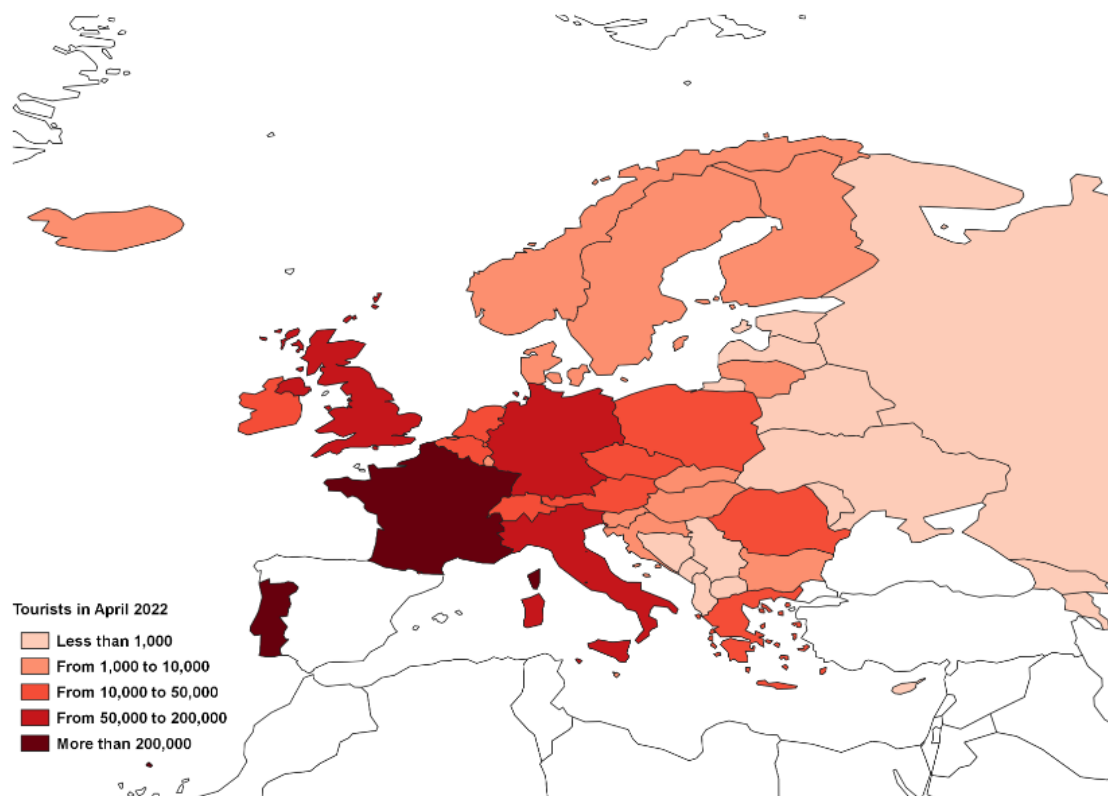
The three countries most visited by tourists residing in Spain in Europe were France, Portugal and Italy (in that order). Taken together, the three accounted for 62% of tourists.

¹ In 2022, Holy Week took place entirely in April. In 2021, it was spread between the months of March and April.

Main European destination countries

April 2022	Tourists			Overnight stays			Average stay	
	Absolute value	Annual variation	%	Absolute value	Annual variation	%	Absolute value	Annual variation
TOTAL	1.971.044	212,9	100,0	8.028.208	240,5	100,0	4,1	10,8
France	567.541	149,8	28,8	1.879.917	155,6	23,4	3,3	3,1
Portugal	473.572	237,6	24,0	1.270.363	314,2	15,8	2,7	22,7
Italy	180.550	795,9	9,2	866.919	567,0	10,8	4,8	-25,0
United Kingdom	103.140	1.340,1	5,2	510.254	674,6	6,4	4,9	-46,7
Germany	87.425	256,0	4,4	485.540	174,1	6,0	5,6	-22,2
Andorra	61.694	47,5	3,1	168.215	86,2	2,1	2,7	22,7
Netherlands	40.678	575,6	2,1	210.947	341,5	2,6	5,2	-34,2
Belgium	31.981	317,0	1,6	155.071	221,7	1,9	4,8	-23,8
Switzerland	20.420	221,5	1,0	132.017	165,2	1,6	3,1	-16,7
Ireland	20.333	2.131,9	1,0	117.435	1.144,3	1,5	6,5	-44,2

Distribution in Europe of tourists residing in Spain in April 2022



Apart from the European continent, the main countries receiving tourists from Spain in the month of April are Morocco, the United States and Turkey (with 4.2%, 2.7% and 0.9% of the total, respectively).

Main non-European destination countries

April 2022	Tourists			Overnight stays			Average stay	
	Absolute value	Annual variation	%	Absolute value	Annual variation	%	Absolute value	Annual variation
TOTAL	1.971.044	212,9	100,0	8.028.208	240,5	100,0	4,1	10,8
Morocco	81.806	6,7	4,2	235.153	71,0	2,9	2,9	61,1
United States of America	52.726	1.203,2	2,7	428.942	755,6	5,3	8,1	-34,7
Turkey	17.894	217,0	0,9	93.950	155,1	1,2	5,3	-18,5
Mexico	9.461	115,8	0,5	75.606	91,5	0,9	8,0	-11,1
Dominican Republic	7.028	37,6	0,4	53.618	31,8	0,7	7,6	-5,0
Egypt	6.983	571,4	0,4	46.804	502,1	0,6	6,7	-10,7
United Arab Emirates	5.881	93,8	0,3	37.284	77,5	0,5	6,3	-8,7
Colombia	5.825	184,3	0,3	45.349	128,6	0,6	7,8	-19,6
Argentina	5.139	248,9	0,3	59.062	236,7	0,7	11,5	-3,4
Brazil	3.653	454,3	0,2	34.351	399,0	0,4	9,4	-9,6

Municipalities of residence of tourists traveling abroad

Madrid is the municipality from which the most tourists went abroad in the month of April, with 194,020. It was followed by Barcelona, with 134,306, and Vigo, with 33,722.

Municipalities with the highest number of outbound tourists

April 2022	Absolute value	First destination	% tourists	Second destination	% tourists
TOTAL	1.844.231	France	30,1	Portugal	25,0
Madrid	194.020	Portugal	21,4	France	16,6
Barcelona	134.306	France	32,2	Italy	16,1
Vigo	33.722	Portugal	86,9	France	3,9
Donostia/San Sebastián	29.997	France	77,2	Portugal	5,7
Irun	29.957	France	96,6	Portugal	1,2
València	29.290	France	22,2	Italy	18,8
Badajoz	23.769	Portugal	94,4	France	1,8
Zaragoza	23.047	France	39,2	Italy	12,8
Sevilla	20.970	Portugal	48,6	France	10,4
Bilbao	19.099	France	46,7	Portugal	13,7

If the preferences shown in the main municipalities are taken into account, the three main destinations of these tourists are always France, Portugal and Italy (in a different order for each municipality). The United Kingdom is the fourth preferred destination in all of them.

Main destinations for the most populated cities

Madrid	Barcelona	València	Sevilla	Zaragoza	Málaga
Portugal	France	France	Portugal	France	Portugal
France	Italy	Italy	France	Italy	France
Italy	Portugal	Portugal	Italy	Portugal	Italy
United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
USA	Andorra	Germany	Morocco	Germany	Morocco
Germany	Germany	USA	Germany	Andorra	Germany
Morocco	USA	Morocco	USA	USA	USA
Netherlands	Netherlands	Andorra	Netherlands	Austria	Netherlands
Belgium	Morocco	Netherlands	Ireland	Belgium	Ireland
Switzerland	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium	Netherlands	Belgium

Project, concepts and results

All the information on the measurement of inbound tourism based on mobile phone positioning is available in the 'Experimental Statistics' section of the INE website. Monthly data from July 2019 to April 2022 are included.

The fundamental concepts of this experimental statistic are listed below (also included in the technical project, which likewise details adaptation to the field of mobile phone operators):

Tourist trip : designates any movement by a person to a destination outside of their regular pace of residence, from the moment of their departure until their return. It involves at least one overnight stay outside the aforementioned environment and lasts less than one year, provided that the main reason for the trip - including business, leisure or other personal reasons - is distinct from a job assignment at a company located in the place visited.

Tourist: the person who takes a trip whose main goal is tourism. In these statistics, a person who travels abroad several times in the same month will be counted as many times as trips are made. In other words, if a resident of Spain travels to France three times in the month of April, they will count as three tourists.

Habitual environment: in the geographical area, made up of areas that are not necessarily contiguous, in which a person habitually carries out their activities.

Main trip destination: the destination in which the most time has been spent, measured by number of overnight stays

Legs: a trip can have several destinations in addition to the main destination. Each of the destinations where there is at least one overnight stay will be considered a stage of the journey.

Day trip: a day trip is considered to be any visit without an overnight stay made outside of the regular environment, with the traveller's regular environment as starting point.

Today, statistics on tourists resident in Spain who travel abroad are published according to main trip destination, as well as the overnight stays made on said trips, taking into account the trips that end in the reference month (that is, the total overnight stays of the trip are assigned to the month in which it ends, even if they occurred in previous months). Work is underway to expand the scope of these experimental statistics to include results for number of legs and day trips.

The technical project and the results of this operation can be accessed at:

https://www.ine.es/experimental/turismo_moviles/experimental_turismo_moviles.htm

INE statistics are produced in accordance with the Code of Good Practice for European Statistics, which is the basis for the institution's quality policy and strategy. For more information, please see the [Calidad en el INE y Código de Buenas Prácticas Quality at INE and the Code of Good Practices](#) on the INE website.

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Press Office: Telephone numbers: (+34) 91 583 93 63 /94 08 – gprensa@ine.es

Information Area: Telephone number: (+34) 91 583 91 00 – www.ine.es/infoine/?L=1
