

Press release: Celeb-led travel trends prompt FCO warning this Easter

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is warning young Brits following in the footsteps of globe-trotting celebs not to fall foul of lesser-known local laws and customs, which could land them in serious trouble.

New research from the FCO shows that one third of 18 – 24 year olds (33%) will be influenced by celebrities when preparing for their holiday this Easter, with nearly one in three (30%) saying stars inspire their travel destination.

However, many of these destinations have more unusual and surprising rules than UK travellers are used to.

As most young Brits don't have A-listers' concierge support when planning trips abroad, the FCO is urging British people to be aware of local laws and customs in the destinations they are travelling to by reading up on Travel Advice – something that fewer than two fifths of young people (38%) currently do – if they want to avoid getting into trouble abroad.

FCO analysis of ONS data has found a significant increase in Brits travelling further afield than the traditional European trips, often to popular celebrity destinations that have stricter laws and customs than the UK. Visits to Sri Lanka are up more than a fifth (22%) and the UAE up more than a sixth (17%).

Jack White, celeb content director at Now magazine said:

We've all felt the pang of envy that comes from scrolling through a celebrity's luxury holiday snaps on social media, but if you're ever lucky enough to end up in Dubai or St Lucia it's worth remembering different countries have different rules – and sometimes even the stars seem unaware of this.

It's easy to get caught up the moment on holiday, so it's worth researching the local laws beforehand to make sure your dream trip doesn't end in disaster. After all, there's definitely nothing glamorous about ending up behind bars!

The FCO recommends Brits making trips abroad this Easter join the 16 million people a year who check its Travel Advice before they travel. All sorts of local laws and customs are covered in the travel advice, including the 10 listed below:

1. UAE: Swearing and making rude gestures (including online) are considered obscene acts and offenders can be jailed or deported.

2. Thailand: You can't bring vaporisers, such as e-cigarettes, e-baraku or refills into Thailand. These items are likely to be confiscated and you could be fined or sent to prison for up to ten years if convicted.
3. Greece: Indecent behaviour, including mooning, isn't tolerated and could result in arrest and a fine or a prison sentence.
4. Sri Lanka: The mistreatment of Buddhist images and artefacts is a serious offence and tourists have been convicted for this. British nationals have been refused entry to Sri Lanka or faced deportation for having visible tattoos of Buddha. Don't pose for photographs standing in front of a statue of Buddha.
5. Japan: The use or possession of some medicines like Vicks Inhalers or painkillers containing Codeine is banned in Japan and can result in detention and deportation
6. Turkey: It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you could face a prison sentence of between six months and three years.
7. Caribbean: Many Caribbean countries, such as Barbados, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia ban the wearing of camouflage clothing, including by children.
8. Spain: Causing a forest fire is treated as a criminal offence in Spain even if unintentional.
9. Australia: Australia has strict quarantine rules to keep out pests and diseases that could affect plant, animal and human health. Breaches of quarantine regulations can result in large fines.
10. Ukraine: Smoking and drinking alcoholic drinks in public places (including transport, bus stops, underground crossings, sports and government establishments, playgrounds and parks) is officially banned.

Julia Longbottom, FCO Consular Director said:

It's great to see the British people being inspired to travel to new and exciting places. This makes it all the more important to follow our Travel Advice and respect local laws and customs to avoid unnecessary trouble. For instance, e-cigarettes are banned in Thailand and can result in a prison sentence of up to ten years.

Even in places closer to home, disrespecting local laws can have serious consequences – in Greece indecent behaviour, such as mooning, can be punishable with a fine or even a prison sentence. We see many cases each year of people breaking local laws and customs.

It is important that our travellers understand that the UK Government can't give legal advice or get them out of prison. Instead, we want to do all we can to help British people stay safe when they are travelling, and avoid ending up in these difficult situations.

For more information and to find out about local laws and customs in destinations around the world, visit the [FCO's travel advice pages](#).

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