

Holiday Hassles

What disrupts British holidaymakers, how badly it hurts, and what they do to protect themselves.

RESPONDENTS

383 UK holidaymakers

HASSLE MENTIONS CODED

~830

FIELDWORK

April 2026

4.2%

said a hassle ruined the holiday completely

#1

hassle: airport queues with 212 mentions

23.8%

of scam/theft mentions ruined the trip

Friction is everywhere — but catastrophe is rare and concentrated

Every year, millions of British travellers step into airports full of optimism and step out the other side with a story. Sometimes it's about the queue that ate an hour of their lives. Sometimes it's about a bag that arrived in the wrong country. And occasionally — thankfully rarely — it's about something that genuinely derailed the whole trip. This research was commissioned to understand those stories at scale: which hassles are most common, which ones hurt the most, and what travellers do to protect themselves before they even leave home.

Across 383 UK holidaymakers surveyed in April 2026, we collected around 830 hassle descriptions covering the last two years of travel. The picture that emerges is one of **resilience with pockets of genuine damage**. The vast majority of travellers absorb friction — queues, delays, overpriced duty free — and get on with their holiday. But a small category of higher-stakes incidents, particularly scams, lost luggage, and health emergencies, carries a devastation rate that is orders of magnitude higher than the everyday annoyances.

There's a clear difference between the hassles that sting on the day and the ones that stay with you for years. Queues are friction. Lost luggage or a scam is a catastrophe. Those two categories need completely different responses from travel brands.

SEAMUS MCCAULEY, HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS — HOLIDAY EXTRAS

METHODOLOGY

How the research was conducted

An online survey of 383 UK holidaymakers was conducted via the Attest platform in April 2026. Respondents were drawn from a nationally representative sample of working-age adults across England, Scotland, and Wales.

Each respondent was asked to name up to three hassles experienced on holiday in the last two years, and to rate the overall impact on their holiday enjoyment using a five-point scale. Hassle descriptions were coded into thematic categories by analysts. **47 respondents** reported no issues, gave non-answers, or provided clearly positive descriptions and were excluded from frequency counts, leaving a working base of 336 respondents contributing approximately 830 coded hassle mentions.

Research platform	Attest
Fieldwork date	April 2026
Total qualified sample	383 UK holidaymakers
Working base (hassle questions)	336 respondents (47 excluded for non-answers)
Total hassle mentions coded	~830 across all respondents
Geography	England, Scotland and Wales
Age range	Working age, nationally representative
Gender split	Mixed male and female respondents
Severity scale	5-point: Ruined it completely · Significantly affected · Dampener but recovered · Minor annoyance · No effect

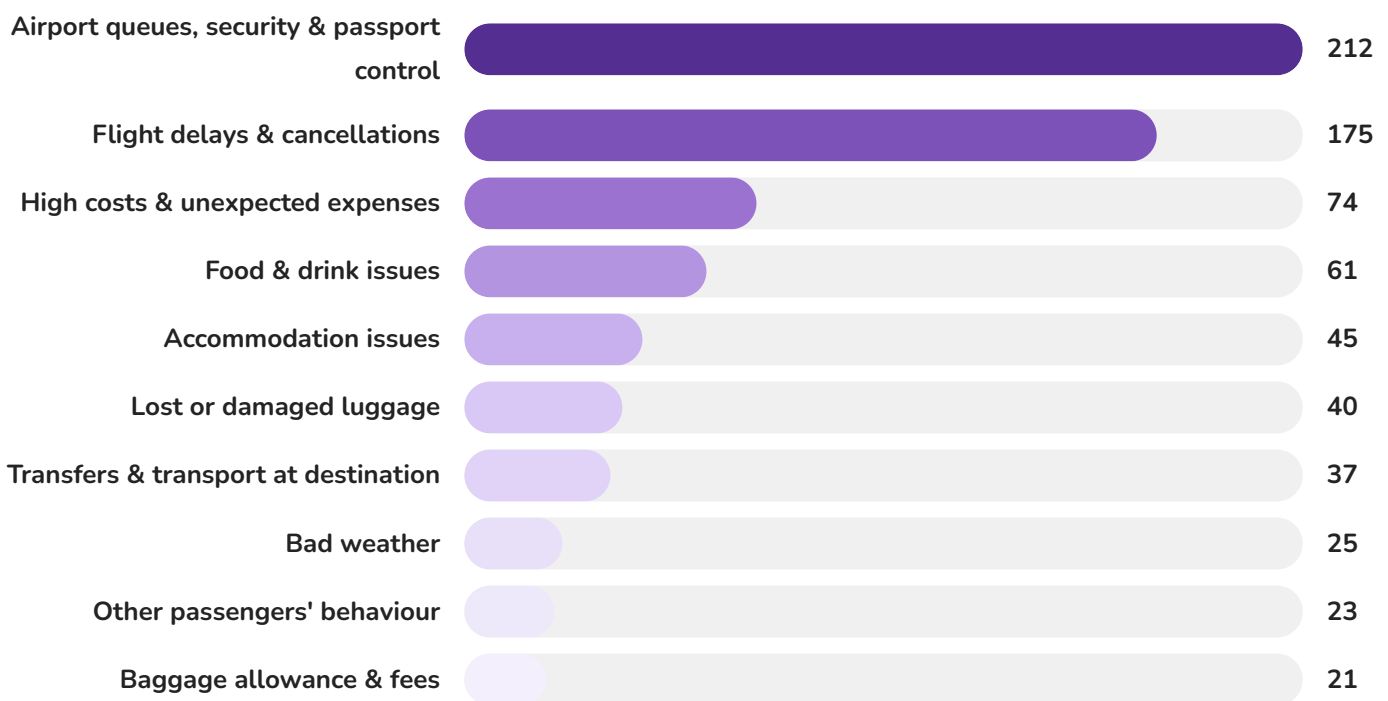
CHAPTER 1

Airport queues and flight delays dominate by volume — but most travellers recover

When British holidaymakers describe their biggest holiday hassles, two categories tower above everything else: the experience of getting through the airport, and the experience of waiting for a flight that should have already departed.

Airport queues, security, and passport control accumulated **212 mentions** — by far the largest single category and equivalent to more than one in four of all coded hassle references. Flight delays and cancellations came second with **175 mentions**. Together, these two categories account for roughly **47% of all hassle mentions** in the dataset, making them the defining texture of the modern British holiday experience.

Yet despite their dominance by volume, both categories sit at an average severity of **'Dampener'**, and their 'ruined it completely' rates are among the lowest in the top ten: just **0.9%** for queues and **2.9%** for flight delays. Travellers encounter these hassles, absorb them, and move on. The picture that emerges is one of **widespread low-level friction** that is accepted as part of the holiday experience rather than a dealbreaker.



Airport queues (**212 mentions**) and flight delays (**175 mentions**) together account for nearly half of all hassle mentions — yet their 'ruined it completely' rates are just **0.9%** and **2.9%** respectively. Volume and devastation are not the same thing.

This distinction matters for how travel brands communicate. Reducing queue friction is a **volume play** — addressing the hassle that most people experience most often. But it is not, by itself, the thing most likely to save a holiday from complete disaster. That requires looking at a different part of the data entirely.

In their own words: airport and flight friction

- **Passport control bottlenecks** — Long queues at passport control named repeatedly, often with only a single officer processing an entire airport
- **Security delays** — Security queues mentioned as a source of pre-flight stress across multiple respondents
- **Tarmac waiting** — Being stuck on the tarmac with no information or entertainment featured in several accounts



Passport control — it takes forever and the queues are long. Airport experiences: long waits. Luggage took about 2 hours to collect.

FEMALE, 48, SCOTLAND



Security queues, then only a single person for passport checks for the entire airport, then expensive duty free on top of that.

MALE, 51, EAST MIDLANDS



Flight delays. Being stuck on the tarmac for three hours with two restless kids and no working tablets is very stressful.

MALE, 35, LONDON

CHAPTER 2

Scams, theft and lost luggage are rare but carry the highest devastation rates

When we rank hassles not by how often they happen but by how often they destroy a trip, a very different picture emerges — one that has direct implications for what travel protection products matter most.

Scams, theft, and harassment recorded a **23.8% 'ruined it completely' rate** — meaning nearly one in four respondents who experienced this category said it wrecked their holiday entirely. With an

average severity of **'Significant'**, this is the category most likely to inflict lasting damage. Yet it appears in only 21 mentions, meaning it is both concentrated and under-discussed relative to its impact.

Lost or damaged luggage (**7.5% ruined rate**) and accommodation issues (**4.4% ruined rate**) also sit well above the dataset average of 4.2%. Critically, lost luggage is not a low-frequency edge case — it recorded **40 mentions**, placing it sixth overall by volume. It combines meaningful frequency with meaningful severity, making it one of the most important risk categories in the dataset.

HASSLE CATEGORY	% RUINED	RUINED COUNT	TOTAL MENTIONS	AVG SEVERITY
Scams, theft & harassment	23.8%	5	21	Significant
Visa & entry requirements	8.3%	1	12	Dampener
Lost or damaged luggage	7.5%	3	40	Significant
Health & medical issues	6.7%	1	15	Dampener
Overcrowding & busy destinations	5.3%	1	19	Dampener
Food & drink issues	4.9%	3	61	Dampener
Accommodation issues	4.4%	2	45	Significant
High costs & unexpected expenses	4.1%	3	74	Dampener
Bad weather	4.0%	1	25	Dampener
Flight delays & cancellations	2.9%	5	175	Dampener

23.8% of scam and theft mentions resulted in a holiday ruined completely — more than **eight times** the rate recorded for airport queues (0.9%). Low frequency does not mean low risk.

In their own words: high-impact incidents

- **Marketplace harassment and unwanted contact** — Respondents described being physically touched by vendors or followed to their accommodation
- **Luggage misdirection** — Bags sent to wrong destinations forced respondents to spend arrival days sourcing essentials
- **Accommodation misrepresentation** — Holiday rentals described as entirely different from their listings

Morocco — a guy started putting jewellery on me at a stall. Then someone wanted to braid my hair and started touching it. Then I was followed back to my hotel.

FEMALE, 32, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER

Lost luggage — our bags went to a different city, so we spent the first day hunting for swimsuits and clean clothes.

MALE, 35, LONDON

The holiday rental was a complete misrepresentation of the listing. The transfer from the airport was a total shambles too.

FEMALE, 37, LONDON

CHAPTER 3

Most travellers absorb hassles — only 4.2% say one ruined their holiday completely

Across the full sample, the dominant experience of holiday hassles is recovery, not devastation. The severity distribution reveals a population of travellers who are resilient by default — absorbing friction and adapting, rather than letting it wreck their trip.

The most common Q3 response across the visible survey data is **'They put a dampener on things but I recovered'** — selected by the largest share of respondents who experienced hassles. This mirrors the broader dataset finding, where only **4.2%** of respondents selected 'They ruined the holiday completely'. The severity scale runs from minor annoyance through to total ruin, and the mass of responses clusters firmly at the lower end.

All respondents (n=383)



~96%
recovered
or
unaffected

~96% of respondents said their worst holiday hassle left them recovered, only mildly annoyed, or entirely unaffected. But 4.2% — around 16 people in this sample — said a hassle ruined their trip completely. At scale across millions of UK travellers, that minority represents an enormous number of destroyed holidays each year.

The resilience finding is important context for travel brands. It means the **majority of negative experiences do not translate into lasting damage** to customer relationships — provided the brand responds well. However, the small proportion who experience genuine holiday destruction are disproportionately affected by the high-risk categories identified in Chapter 2. Protecting against catastrophe — through insurance, rapid response, and clear communication — matters precisely because it is rare: when it happens, it is total.

IMPLICATIONS

What this means for travel brands and Holiday Extras

The data points to a clear strategic distinction — and several specific actions for brands operating in the travel services space.

1 **Separate friction management from catastrophe protection**

Airport queues and flight delays are high-frequency, low-devastation. Scams, lost luggage, and health emergencies are low-frequency, high-devastation. These need different product responses: friction reduction for the former, robust insurance and rapid-response protocols for the latter.

2 **Lost luggage content and protection is a high-value product opportunity**

Lost or damaged luggage sits sixth by mention volume but third in devastation rate at 7.5% 'ruined it completely'. Travellers who experience it are far more likely to feel their holiday was destroyed. Clear luggage protection products and pre-trip advice content address a real and felt need.

3 **Scam and theft protection is low-volume but critical**

With a 23.8% devastation rate, scams and theft destroy holidays at more than eight times the rate of airport queues. Insurance products and destination safety content targeting this risk carry disproportionate value relative to the raw frequency of mentions.

4 **Most bad experiences don't end customer relationships — response does**

~96% of travellers recover from their worst hassle. Brands have a window in which a well-timed, empathetic response can convert a friction moment into a loyalty moment. The minority who experience genuine holiday destruction are the ones who most need proactive support.

ABOUT

About Holiday Extras

Holiday Extras is the UK's leading provider of airport travel services, including airport hotels, parking, lounges, and transfers. Every year, millions of British travellers use Holiday Extras products

to take the friction out of getting away.

This research was commissioned to better understand the holiday hassles facing UK travellers and how those hassles affect enjoyment.

For press enquiries, please contact press@holidayextras.com

Research note

This report is based on original survey research conducted via the Attest platform in April 2026. 383 UK holidaymakers completed the survey. Hassle descriptions were coded into thematic categories by thematic analysis. 47 respondents reporting no issues or giving non-answers were excluded from frequency counts. Severity data and 'ruined it completely' rates are calculated across the working base of coded mentions (~830). All percentages are rounded to one decimal place where applicable.

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Research conducted via Attest · n=383 UK holidaymakers
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