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BIG BIRTHDAYS, SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES & GETTING MARRIED – THE MOST POPULAR MILESTONE TRIPS REVEALED

People spend nearly £1,500 more on 'milestone' trips for life events, such as big birthdays, than they do on regular holidays.

A poll of 2,000 adults* found 87 per cent have marked significant life moments, such as a significant anniversary or a work achievement, by planning a trip away, spending as much as £2,650 on average per person.

In fact, 51 per cent would be most likely to celebrate a big birthday with a trip away, with 64 per cent of these celebrating their 50th birthday in style.

When it came to wedding anniversaries, the third most popular reason for a milestone trip, 65 per cent would choose a holiday, perhaps over traditional gift of silver, to mark their 25th year as a couple.

As well as wanting to mark these milestone life moments in a special way (55 per cent), many use it as an opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones (51 per cent), and to indulge in a bit of luxury (36 per cent).

While 31 per cent use it as an opportunity to experience something new and exciting or finally tick a dream destination off their bucket list (24 per cent).

When it comes to splashing out on a milestone holiday, 61 per cent are willing to stretch their budget for luxury accommodation, and 46 per cent will fork out more for unforgettable dining experiences. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) will pay extra to upgrade their flights, with one in ten (10 per cent) even spending extra on photography or videography to capture the moment.

And to make these trips truly memorable, travellers start saving 16 months in advance, on average.

Paul Stokes, from M&S Credit Card, which commissioned the research, said: "Holidaymakers today are increasingly choosing to mark life's big moments with experiences.

"A special getaway for that big birthday, graduation or work milestone, whether here in the UK or abroad, is a great way to do that and really make memories that last."

The study also revealed that milestone holidays tend to be more thoughtfully planned – with 57 per cent spending more time organising the details compared to a standard getaway.

Two in three (64 per cent) say it's because they want the trip to feel extra special, while 46 per cent need time to carefully select the perfect destination.

A third (36 per cent) will research thoroughly to ensure they enjoy once-in-a-lifetime experiences while away.

Whereas 24 per cent want more time to coordinate with loved ones joining them, and 23 per cent need to ensure the timing aligns perfectly with the occasion itself.

When it comes to what matters most on these milestone breaks, 33 per cent are seeking the chance to relax and unwind.

But 26 per cent prioritise a beautiful destination with cultural significance and one in five (19 per cent) look for an adventure or activity they'll never forget.

And the popularity of milestone holidays shows no sign of slowing down – with 42 per cent planning to go on a milestone holiday within the next five years.

More than half (55 per cent) have a big birthday on the horizon they want to celebrate with a special trip, while 13 per cent plan to jet off after completing a major life project.

Paul Stokes added: "It's no surprise that holidaymakers are choosing to prioritise meaningful experiences and marking some of their key life moments with travel – and also spending more to do this.

"But it's also great to know that they are taking the time to plan ahead when it comes to these milestone holidays, and putting real thought into creating that perfect trip.

"Often, planning for a holiday is an exciting time - and for some, just as exciting as the trip itself – but by taking the time to ensure that they're well prepared, holidaymakers can ensure they're making the most of their holiday budget, whilst enjoying what is often, a once in a lifetime trip away."

TOP 10 OCCASIONS CELEBRATED WITH A HOLIDAY

1. A big birthday
2. Getting married or having a civil partnership
3. A big wedding anniversary
4. Retirement
5. Overcoming a personal challenge
6. Getting engaged
7. Graduating from university
8. Getting a promotion at work
9. Finishing school
10. Child's first birthday

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

*Research conducted by OnPoll between 1st and 2nd April 2025 with 2,000 UK adults who have been on holiday

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About M&S Bank

M&S Bank (the trading name of Marks & Spencer Financial Services plc) launched in 2012 on the foundations of M&S Money, which was established in 1985 as the financial services division of Marks and Spencer plc. In November 2004, HSBC bought 100 per cent of the share capital of Marks and Spencer Retail Financial Services Holdings Limited.

Today, M&S Bank operates as a joint venture arrangement between HSBC and Marks & Spencer, however, M&S Bank has its own banking licence and its own Board.

M&S BANK

M&S Bank offers a broad range of financial products, including the M&S Credit Card, and a range of loans, savings and general insurance products.

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HSBC UK serves over 15 million active customers across the UK, supported by 23,900 colleagues. HSBC UK offers a complete range of retail banking and wealth management to personal and private banking customers, as well as commercial banking for small to medium businesses and large corporates. HSBC UK is a ring-fenced bank and wholly-owned subsidiary of HSBC Holdings plc.

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of HSBC, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 58 countries and territories. With assets of US\$3,017bn at 31 December 2024, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.