

'Almost unsaleable': slump in school trips to UK blamed on Brexit

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. What's the best way to learn a foreign language? Put these suggestions in order from 1 (the best) to 6 (the least effective).

- learning grammar from a book
- visiting a country where the language is spoken with a school group
- watching films online
- studying for a year in a country where the language is spoken
- reading novels in the language you want to learn
- writing emails to a pen friend

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

collapse	entrepreneur	firm	gesture	inflict
off peak	precisely	push for	short-sighted	unsaleable

1. A / An _____ or *slump* is a sudden fall in the value or level of something.
2. To _____ means *to cause something unpleasant to happen*.
3. _____ is another word for *exactly*.
4. A / An _____ booking is one that is definite and unlikely to change.
5. If you travel _____, you travel at times when prices are lower because not as many people want to travel then.
6. If something is _____, it cannot be sold.
7. If you _____ something, you try very hard to get or achieve it.
8. A / An _____ is something that you do to communicate your good intentions to someone.
9. A / An _____ approach is one that deals with things that are happening now but fails to consider what will happen in the future.
10. A / An _____ is someone who uses money to start businesses.

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Groups from the continent are going elsewhere, tour operators say, deterred more by passport and visa rules than the pandemic

John Henley

26 December, 2021

- 1 Changes to Britain's immigration rules after Brexit have caused a collapse in bookings for school trips from Europe, organizers say, with countries such as Ireland and the Netherlands now more popular than the UK.
- 2 Tour operators say that, while Britain's day two Covid test requirement is a factor, by far the most significant is the UK's decision not to accept EU group passports or identity cards from 1 October, instead requiring full passports – plus expensive individual visas for non-EU pupils.
- 3 The British government has said the collapse is because of the pandemic and that the measures are needed "to strengthen the security of our border", but critics say they are unnecessary for under-18s on short, organized trips with teachers.
- 4 They argue the slump will deprive UK host families, hostels and attractions of valuable income, and also inflict longer-term damage since school trips can promote intercultural exchange and forge greater mutual understanding.
- 5 Eurovoyages, a big French school trips operator, said it had received 53 requests for short-stay visits to Ireland in 2022, as well as others for the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic.
- 6 "We have received precisely two requests for the UK, one of which has already changed its mind and decided to visit Ireland," said Monique Tissot Martel, the company's general manager. "Schools have forgotten the UK was a destination. It is really a shame, as trips to the UK were very popular," she said. "In 2019, we sent more than 11,000 students to the UK. Next year, it will be between zero and 100."

- 7 Peter Adam said his company in Germany had sent more than 1,200 school groups and 37,000 pupils to the UK in 2019 but had had no firm bookings for 2022. About 80% of the company's customers that regularly booked trips to the UK were choosing alternative destinations, he said.
- 8 "The majority see the UK as too difficult now," Adam said. Covid-19 restrictions were not the problem, he added, "even if they are tougher in the UK than in other European countries", and parents were "often prepared to pay the extra cost of obtaining a full passport instead of an EU identity card."
- 9 The biggest issue was "the EU 'list of travellers' group passport, which is no longer valid for travelling to the UK", he said. "About 4% of all pupils in Germany are not EU nationals. They can't afford a visa. Teachers don't like to leave them at home so are choosing other destinations," such as Amsterdam or Copenhagen, he said.
- 10 In the UK, Susan Jones of LinguaStay, a UK homestay accommodation provider that usually welcomes 10,000 continental schoolchildren a year into about 300 host families in Chester, said the slump was "absolutely dramatic".
- 11 Continental schools typically sent about a million pupils to the UK each year on organized trips, Jones said, with France and Germany alone accounting for 850,000. But for the February to June season, it was now clear that schools across the continent had "completely abandoned the UK for other countries," she said.
- 12 "These children learn English staying in host families," she said. "They mix with the local community, take part in workshops such as drama and cookery, have integration days at local schools and guided tours of cities and tourist attractions. They travel off peak, which helps many smaller UK towns and businesses outside peak season."
- 13 Verdié Voyages, a French company that in 2019 sent 800 coachloads of schoolchildren to England, said it had received just 146 inquiries for UK trips in 2022, a fall of 80%. By contrast, inquiries for trips to Ireland were down only 40%.

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- 14 "Requests are down for all destinations because of Covid," said Marie Bayol, the company's accommodation manager. The slump in interest for the UK "is due to Brexit, a second impact that makes our main destination almost unsaleable," she said.
- 15 Jones said the sector was pushing for EU nationals coming to the UK on organized short school trips to be allowed to enter with an ID card, and for non-EU nationals travelling with them to enter with just a passport. "It just seems such a small gesture compared to the benefits; not just the economic benefit, but the soft power," she said.
- 16 Morag Anderson of ETSUK, another British homestay company, said the government's stance was short-sighted. "Give me a child at 12 years old on a school trip to the UK," Anderson said, "and I give you a future higher education student, employee, researcher, entrepreneur, tourist – with family and friends ... and a future parent, encouraging a future child to travel, work and study in the UK. Once this cycle is interrupted, there is no going back."

First published in *The Guardian*, 26/12/2021

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. As of 1 October 2021, what does the UK no longer accept?
2. What is the problem for non-EU pupils?
3. What impact will the slump in bookings have on host families and hostels?
4. What does the British government say is the reason for the collapse in bookings?
5. Which English-speaking country is now a more popular destination than the UK for groups of school students?
6. According to Peter Adam, what is the biggest issue?
7. What percentage of German school pupils are not EU nationals?
8. What particularly helped smaller UK towns and businesses in the past?
9. While Covid has had an impact on requests for all destinations, what is the main reason for the slump in demand to the UK, according to Marie Bayol?
10. What is the UK short-stay education sector pushing for?

4 Key language

a. Match the verbs in the left-hand column with the nouns or noun phrases in the right-hand column.

1. inflict	a. mutual understanding
2. promote	b. your mind
3. forge	c. an alternative
4. change	d. damage
5. choose	e. security
6. strengthen	f. intercultural exchange

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Travel broadens the mind.”
- “School trips are not a good way to learn a language.”
- “Children under 16 years old should not need a passport.”

6 In your own words

a. Open an internet search engine and find the following information.

- How many languages are there in the world?
- Which languages have the most speakers?
- Which five foreign languages are the most popular for students to learn in your country?
- Which are the most endangered languages?
- How many Indo-European languages are there?
- Which are the three main Finno-Ugric languages?
- Which continent has the most languages?
- How many languages are spoken in Australia?

b. Can you find any other interesting facts about languages? Share your ideas with the group.