

## Allianz Global Assistance #HELPME study

*A unique overview of the most widely discussed travel-related topics by internet users in 11 countries*

- Allianz Global Assistance has collated the concerns and topics discussed by internet users from 11 countries (Australia, Austria, China, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States) in traveller forums in the past five years.
- This study shows the great diversity of discussions among travellers, with **59 different themes** featuring in the **Top 10 of these 11 countries**.
- The top three most popular topics **on both global and European levels are**: air transport, looking for a travel companion, and cruises. Economic concerns also feature, with lots of discussions on bargain travel, camping and loyalty programs.
- **In Europe**, travellers also discuss travel agents, rights and laws abroad, and advice on travelling with children.
- In the U.S., loyalty and mileage programs far outweighed other topics, including concerns about travel safety and security which came in second. Interest in air transportation/airlines and travel bargains were the third and fourth most discussed categories.

The study focuses on 11 countries: eight European countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom) as well as Australia, China and the United States. For each of these countries, between five and ten travel forums were selected from the most highly ranked sites, featuring a total of several million comments over the five year period. A close analysis of these comments and their classification into different themes reveal the wide diversity of subjects and concerns which vary from one geographical area to another.

	World		Europe		U.S.A.
1	Air transport and Airlines	1	Air transport and Airlines	1	Loyalty and mileage programs
2	Looking for a travel companion	2	Looking for a travel companion	2	Travel safety and security
3	Sea travel and cruises	3	Sea travel and cruises	3	Air transport and airlines
4	Bargain travel	4	Camping	4	Travel bargains
5	Camping	5	Travel agencies	5	Traveling with technology
6	Loyalty and mileage programmes	6	Bargain travel	6	Food and restaurants
7	Travel agencies	7	Rights and laws	7	Car rental programs and partners
8	Equipment	8	Travelling with children	8	Travel news
9	Work, study and live abroad	9	Equipment	9	Online travel agencies
10	Rights and laws	10	Photo/video	10	Equipment and gadgets

“Once again, the #helpme observatory that we established a year ago is bursting with compelling information. It shows the incredible diversity of travel concerns and habits from one country to another. This observation is all the more interesting given that we live in a globalized world. The results show the extent to which it is important for international companies to address each market with humility and to understand its particularities, in order to be respond to everyone's needs,” says Rémi Grenier, CEO of Allianz Global Assistance.

### THE WORLD'S TOP 10 TRAVEL CONCERNS

On average, the main concern for travellers from the 11 countries studied is air travel. They discuss airline companies and airplanes as well as airports. Several discussions also look at luggage (weight, size), objects not allowed on board, etc. This topic tops the list of themes discussed in Australia, Austria, Germany and the United Kingdom, while Americans are primarily concerned with airline companies' loyalty and mileage programs.

Travel forums are often used by women to seek a companion with whom they can travel safely, one who knows the destination country and can provide guidance and reassurance. These search terms are very common particularly in China, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands (amongst top results of the Top 10).

In light of economic pressure, cruises are also a widely discussed theme among travellers wishing to maintain full control over their budgets and to travel in comfortable conditions. However, although cruises are a point of interest for France, Germany and Italy, they do not feature in the Top 10 for the USA or Australia and feature only in 10th position in China. From a similar economic perspective, bargain travel, camping and how to get the most out of airline companies' loyalty programs take 4th, 5th and 6th place in the World Top 10. These topics are particularly discussed in the Netherlands and in Italy.

Travel agencies (7th) are the subject of highly animated discussions. Tourism professionals are certainly looking closely at these discussions, which offer them the best possible study of customer satisfaction and reputation.

Eighth in the World Top 10 is equipment (luggage, clothing, tents, etc.) which concerns many travellers who want to be comfortable but also want to travel light. This is particularly true for China and the United Kingdom.

Ninth in the World Top 10 (shared across several European countries) is moving abroad to study or work. Internet users (often young people) seek advice on studying, standards of living, accommodations, obtaining long-term visas, etc. This theme was seen in several European countries (France, Italy, the Netherlands) where people seek better economic conditions in rapidly developing countries.

The Top 10 finishes, quite naturally, with questions on local rights and laws: visas, ID papers, passport renewal, driving licenses, commercial possibilities, local taxes, etc.

#### **LOCAL CURIOSITIES: THESE THEMES ONLY APPEAR IN ONE COUNTRY**

Some discussion themes only appear in a single country. This is the case in **China** for questions on 'travelling with parents'. The **French** appear to be the only ones concerned with 'All-inclusive hotels and packages' and 'Bike tours'. The **Americans** ask questions about 'car rental' while the **Polish** are the only country to discuss 'mountain holidays' and 'holiday camps'. 'Safety and security' is a specific point of interest for Americans, while the Spanish ask questions about 'Guides, drivers and taxi drivers'. The **British** ask questions about 'weather and climate conditions'. An **Italian** particularity is 'holidays excluding air transportation'. Afraid of missing out on something interesting, **Australians** ask about 'must see' locations, while **Austrians** look for 'outstanding destinations' and **Germans** appear to be interested in 'diving'.

#### **EUROPE IS NOT LIKE THE REST OF THE WORLD**

The Top 10 in Europe is significantly different from the World Top 10. Although the top three topics are the same (air transport, looking for a travel companion, cruises), camping moves up a place (4th) and travel agents moves up two notches (5th). Bargain travel moves from 4th to 6th, perhaps due the number of low-cost companies operating short and medium haul flights in Europe. Europeans are concerned about laws abroad (7th place) and travelling with children (8th place). Lastly, 'equipment' features as a vast topic which can be broken down into two categories: equipment in general (9th) and photo and video equipment in particular (10th).

#### **AMERICANS LOVE THEIR POINTS AND MILES**

In the U.S., the top three most discussed themes include **loyalty and mileage programs, safety and security of travel, and air transportation and airlines.**

**Recent changes in airline mileage programs have undoubtedly been on the minds of frequent flyers who are concerned about how these changes will impact their ability to earn valuable travel rewards.** Travelers are particularly interested in maximizing their miles before program changes take place next year and are looking for strategies that help them reach elite flyer levels.

In close relation to the free and discounted travel that awards programs offer, **bargain travel** is another category of information that is sought by consumers. The rise of travel deal websites, hotel bidding sites and flash deals via social media have created a group of consumers who spend time scouring the internet for the best possible travel deals.

New TSA rules related to demonstrating that electronic devices can be "turned on," in order to bring them on planes, has caused Americans to think more carefully about their **electronics**. Traveling with laptops, tablets, smartphones and other gadgets ranks high among discussed topics and will undoubtedly remain high in the future.

#### **AMERICANS LOVE THE OPEN ROAD**

Among the top 20 categories and unique to America's car-loving culture, the **Road Trip** is romanticized as the ultimate way to leave the world behind. Americans love the freedom that road trips offer, allowing travellers to explore new destinations and make fun side-trips, all without the need to book a reservation.

Also in the top 20, **Traveling with Family** is a related topic which causes travellers to research family-friendly destinations, accommodations and restaurants. Experienced travellers know that careful planning is the best way to insure that the family vacation is fun and memorable.

Not surprisingly, **Travel for Seniors** is another topic that makes the top 20. As Americans stay active as they get older, they seek travel experiences that enrich their lives while providing accessibility to those with varying degrees of mobility.

#### **\*About the #HELPME observatory**

In June 2013, Allianz Global Assistance launched an observatory of social networks in its main areas of activity, particularly the travel and automotive sectors. This platform is called, '#HELPME' and it analyses the impact of social networks, as well as the social and mobile dimension of digital tools, on the way in which consumers seek and find advice. This observatory of consumers' online habits and behaviours feeds into the development of new services implemented by the Allianz Global Assistance teams throughout the world, in response to new needs.

#### **Methodology**

In 2013, Allianz Global Assistance established the #HELPME observatory. After having deciphered Twitter usage by travellers, followed by interactions between drivers and car manufacturers through social networks, #HELPME unveils the results of its latest study: the concerns and topics of interest expressed by internet users in travel-related forums.

In order to find out how internet users surf the web to look for information on travel, several forums were selected from a search in Google, using the following search criteria: 'Forum + Tourism', 'Forum + Travel', and 'Forum + Holidays'. For each country, only the forums which ranked the highest (by Google) and which fulfilled to the following criteria were selected: popularity, presence of a dedicated tourism area, presence of cross-cutting topics, comments coming from a country's nationals.

The 5-10 forums selected were chosen depending on the size of the country and the results.

Several million comments addressing a wide variety of topics were posted on the selected forums and the analysis covered comments from a period of over five years. The study was conducted between 15 May and 15 June 2014 by Data Observer.

#### **About Allianz Global Assistance**

How can we help?

International leader in Assistance, Travel Insurance and health, life & home care services, today Allianz Global Assistance's global family

counts more than 13 224 employees who live to help. They speak 58 different languages and work throughout the world with a network of 400,000 service providers and 180 correspondents. 250 million people, or 4% of the world's total population, benefit from its services, which the Group provides on all five continents.

Website: [www.allianz-global-assistance.com](http://www.allianz-global-assistance.com)

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### **Allianz Global Assistance USA**

Allianz Global Assistance USA (AGA Service Company) is a leading consumer specialty insurance and assistance company. We insure 16 million customers annually and are best known for our Allianz Travel Insurance plans. In addition to travel insurance, Allianz Global Assistance USA offers event ticket protection, registration protection for endurance events and unique travel assistance services such as international medical assistance and concierge services. The company also serves as an outsource provider for in-bound callcenter services and claims administration for health insurers, property and casualty insurers, and credit card companies.

For more information about Allianz Travel Insurance plans, please visit [allianztravelinsurance.com](http://allianztravelinsurance.com) or Like us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/AllianzTravelInsuranceUS](https://Facebook.com/AllianzTravelInsuranceUS).