



Easter and the Royal Bank Holiday

Capture customers before the extended Easter Bank holiday break

Jonny Cranmer, Industry Analyst, jcranmer@google.com

Insight	Facts	Opportunities/ Actions/ Conclusions
The Easter bank holiday weekend is becoming increasingly important for online travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">March remains important in the online travel market. Year-on-year travel queries grew 19% in March 2010, which was 4 percentage points more than the previous year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Advertisers should beware of budgeting for March. Not appearing during this period means not being in the consideration set when searchers come to make a purchase.
Advertisers are not keeping up with searchers before the Easter Bank Holiday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The growth of travel ad's around Easter has not matched query growth for the last three years.Advertisers are not keeping up with searchers and there remain opportunities to capture cost effective traffic in the long tail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure your keyword lists are aligned to what searchers are looking for around Easter.
The Royal Wedding could attract tourism to the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sweden had the last major European Royal Wedding in July 2010. During this month queries for hotels in Sweden originating from the USA grew 40% year-on-year, Norway 92% and the UK by 37%.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Keyword lists should be monitored constantly in order to account for niche queries. Creatives should be tailored to cover both research and planning.
Expect high query volumes for this bumper bank holiday period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Those who take 3 official work vacation days receive 11 days holiday in return this year. Travel queries have grown 29% year-to-date, expect similar growth through Easter as people research for holidays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be prepared for a surge in demand before the first Easter Bank Holiday, Good Friday on April 22ndContact your local Google team for up to date keyword lists to ensure you are visible to potential customers.
Mobile is the highest growth channel for travel searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Year-to-date we have seen mobile travel queries increase by an impressive 143% and clicks by 250%, 2010 vs. 2009.Mobile accounts for 15% of total travel search traffic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create separate campaigns to cover mobile queries. Contact your local Google for up to date mobile keyword lists.Additionally, the expansive Google Display Network has an 84% reach of the UK internet population. Use this to your advantage by appearing on creative price-lead display & text ad's.
High demand for short haul destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There has been more interest for short haul destinations when compared to long haul, the former growing 20% vs. 7% year-on-year in January 2011.This makes sense as the cost of travelling increases with additional fuel surcharges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use Google Insights for Search to keep abreast of changes in demand for particular destinations.Contact the Google travel team to receive weekly destination analysis reports.
Travel queries related to foreign countries are growing faster than their domestic counterparts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">For the first time in over a year searches for foreign countries grew more than those for domestic destinations. 18% vs. 10% year-on-year.A large part of this growth could be attributed to political unrest and natural disasters. For example travel searches grew 652% for Tunis because of political unrest (all Jan 2010 Year-on-year).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use Google Insights for Search to keep abreast of changes in demand for particular destinations. Monitor rising searches and keep your keyword lists up to date.Ensure your spend is focused on monetizable queries. Contact your local Google team for advice on negative keyword suggestions.

Easter 2011

To help advertisers plan for seasonal events, we have written a research paper for the 2011 Easter and Royal Wedding bank holiday period. Travel query growth year-to-date suggests that **demand** from the online travel consumer **continues to grow**, and we expect this to carry through the Easter weekend. With this in mind, we anticipate some shifts in query traffic leading into this bank holiday period. We have analysed a number of relevant factors that could shape Easter's query patterns and they are presented below.

General market dynamics

Before we examine the trends from previous years let us quickly discuss some factors likely to impact the choices travel consumers make this Easter. Early 2011 has challenged the tourism industry. Political unrest in the Middle East and North Africa has not only inflated the price of oil, but has also reduced travel to popular package destinations like Sharm el Sheikh, Sousse and Hammamet.

As the price of oil increases (*see chart below*), so does the cost of travel. Several airlines and tour operators have already taken action by increasing their fuel surcharges. Many analysts link the recent rise in oil prices directly to growing incidences of political unrest; whilst others say oil prices will continue to grow due to the fact that demand in emerging markets is growing, whilst supplies are tightening.

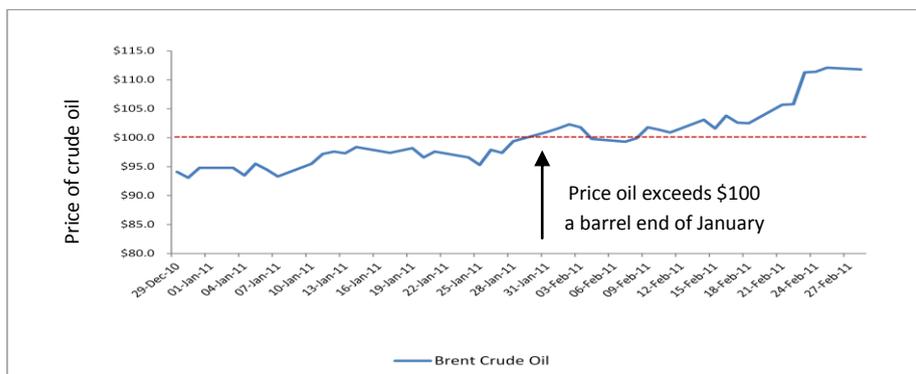


Figure 1: Source Livecharts, Brent Oil price history

Currency exchange rates will also impact the tourism industry. The pound strengthened against the dollar (+2.31%) and weakened against the Euro (-2.41%) in early 2011. (See below). We will examine how this could impact the consumer's choice of travel destination later in the paper.



Figure 2: Source Google Finance, strength of GBP vs. USD and EUR, measured by % growth over time

These macroeconomic factors will influence travel patterns. Tourists from the USA looking to visit the UK will be hit the hardest. Transatlantic airfares have risen and the dollar has less spending power in the UK. However, the upcoming Royal Wedding may yet convince more travellers despite the higher cost. This is a plausible thought; Sweden had the last major European Royal Wedding on July 19th 2010. During this month, queries for hotels in Sweden originating from the USA **grew 40%** year-on-year, **Norway 92%** and the **UK by 37%**. More impressively, hotel queries within Sweden **rose 124% Year-on-year**. Advertisers should expect similar query patterns for the UK Royal Wedding.

UK residents not staying in the country for the wedding could be looking to the United States as a possible holiday destination, due to favourable exchange rates. In addition, the UK should expect more Euro zone tourists as their spending power has increased here.

A bank holiday rollover

2011 is a great year for Easter bank holidays! It starts with Good Friday on April 22nd and ends with the early May bank holiday nine days later. Wedged between these dates is the new public holiday for the Royal Wedding on Friday 29th April. The savvy holidaymakers who beat their colleagues to booking this time off work will get 11 days away for the price of 3 official work vacation days. Or they could take 7 days off work and be away from your desk for 17 days. (See diagram below)

April – 2011									
Thu -21	Fri -22	Sat - 23	Sun -24	Mon -25	Tues - 26	Wed - 27	Thur - 28	Fri -29	Sat -30
X					X	X	X		

May - 2011									
Sun -1	Mon -2	Tue - 3	Wed - 4	Thu -5	Fri -6	Sat -7	Sun -8	Mon -9	Tue -10
		X	X	X	X			X	X

Red indicates a bank holiday. Friday 29th is for the Royal wedding. Blue indicates a weekend. A "X" indicates a official work day.

Such generous bank holiday periods like this are rare, so examining year-on-year trends for Easter 2010 will not provide all the insights we need to prepare for Easter 2011. The recent 2010 Christmas break could be used as a 'long-holiday' example, in order to gain some insights. Because both Christmas and Boxing day fell on a weekend, it meant that people could take 4 days off work and actually be away for 11 days. (See below).

December 2010 – January 2011										
Fri -24	Sat -25	Sun - 26	Mon -27	Tues -28	Wed- 29	Thur- 30	Fri - 31	Sat -1	Sun -2	Mon-3
					X	X	X			

What insights can we take from this holiday period? Overall December travel queries grew by 35% year-on-year, almost 10 percentage points more than for the same year-on-year time period in 2009. Some of this strong growth will have been caused by the adverse weather conditions the UK experienced in December 2010. However, some of this growth may have been driven by people looking to use these Christmas 'days in lieu' to their holiday advantage. **Expect strong query demand for Easter this year then too.**

This time last year...

Travel query volumes peak at least a week before Good Friday as people research potential holiday ideas. We have noticed that this peak in queries happens later each year, suggesting that people are taking longer to research and compare products before they commit to purchase. This is supported by our recent path to purchase study with Nielsen (*posted on the Google UK travel blog*).

As figures 3 through 6 show, travel queries are peaking later before the Easter bank holiday; and at the same time advertisers have not fully capitalised on the uplift in this traffic.

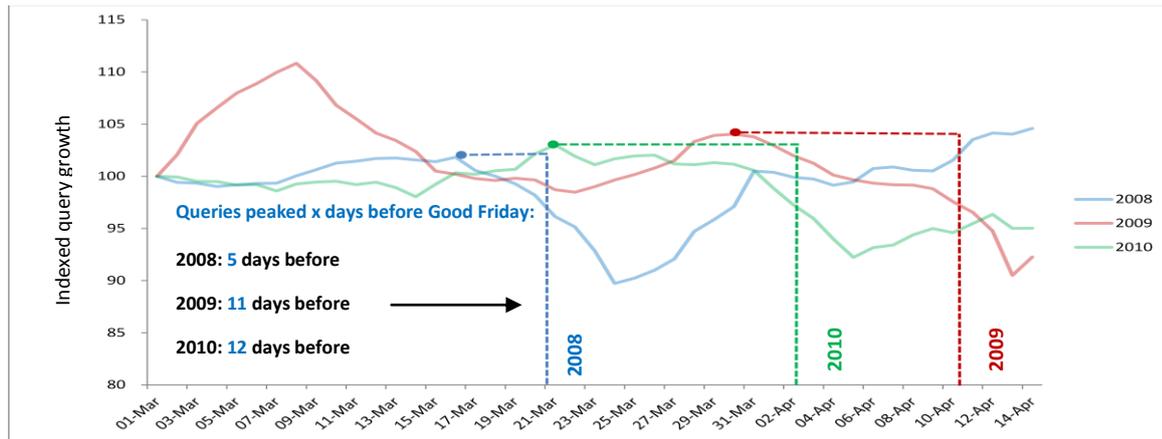


Figure 3: Comparison of travel query growth before the Good Friday bank holiday, for 2008, 2009 and 2010

2008

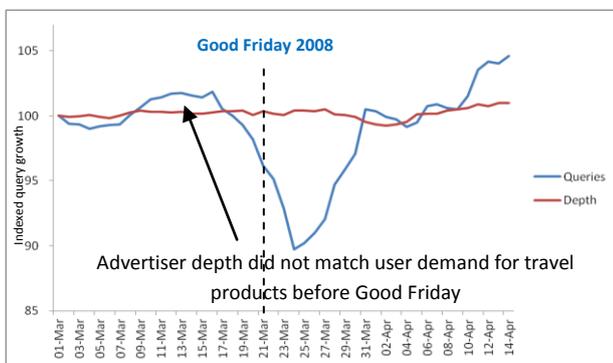


Figure 4: Advertiser coverage vs. consumer demand in 2008

2009

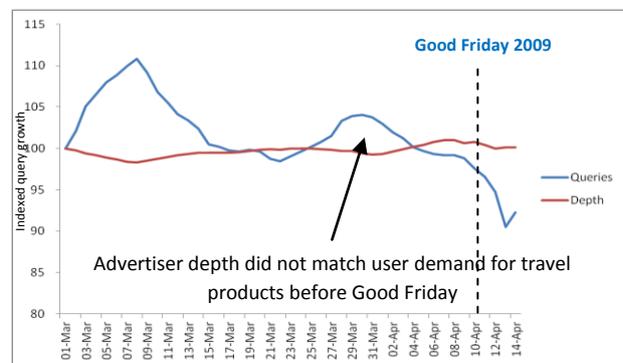


Figure 5: Advertiser coverage vs. consumer demand in 2009

2010

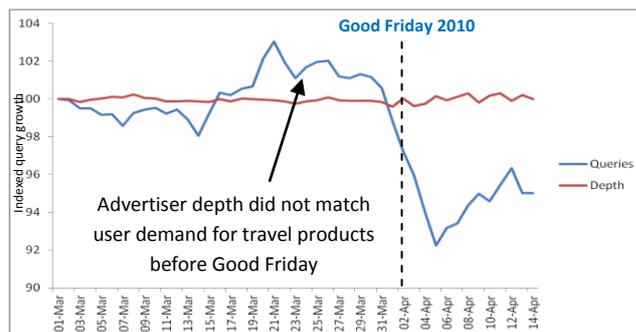


Figure 6: Advertiser coverage vs. consumer demand in 2010

What insights can we provide?

By looking at current trends in our travel query data, we hope to provide insights that will help you plan for the Easter bank holiday period.

a) How are people searching?

The majority of online travel searches are still made through traditional desktops PC's and they continue to grow at a healthy rate. Mobile is the highest growth channel for travel searches; year-to-date we have seen queries increase by an impressive 143% and clicks by 250%, 2010 vs. 2009. Mobile accounts for **15% total travel search traffic**¹. The table below highlights the comparative YTD growth rates, by travel product, for desktop and mobile.

	Travel	Hotels	Air	Car hire
Desktop queries	29%	29%	26%	26%
Desktop clicks	10%	13%	16%	9%
Mobile queries	143%	156%	157%	136%
Mobile clicks	250%	250%	243%	222%

We know that travel query volumes are increasing, but what sort of queries do users type in before seasonal events like Easter? The chart below split travel queries into three buckets, brand terms, head and long tail queries²; to see how they performed in the run-up to Easter 2010. Brand and head queries were the biggest volume drivers, and they peaked almost simultaneously together, 12 days before Good Friday. Long tail queries increased in line with brand and head queries, but actually peaked later, 8 days before the Easter weekend.

This would suggest that people research their holiday plans using head and brand queries, before purchasing on further refined long tail queries. **It is important for travel advertisers to cover all such query types, in order to capture potential conversions in the run up to Easter 2011.**

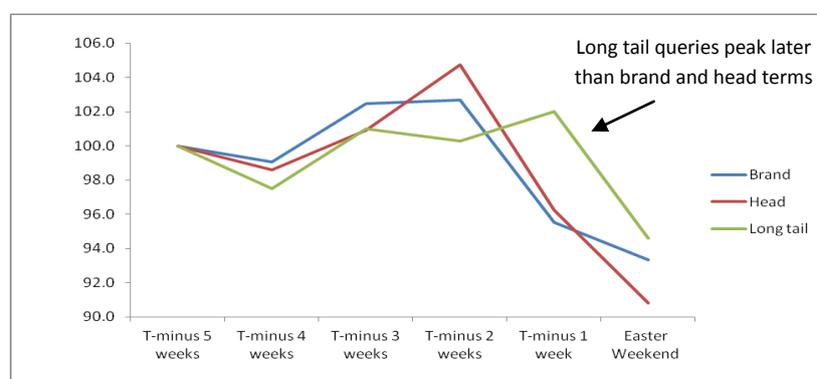


Figure 7: Indexed growth of travel queries types, before the Easter bank holiday weekend

¹ Google internal mobile study, figure accurate as of Q3 2010.

² Head query defined as non-brand, and 3 or less words long. Long tail query defined as 4 or more words in length.

b) Where are people looking to visit?

Recent figures show that travel queries (*made through Google.co.uk*) related to foreign countries are growing faster than their domestic counterparts. In January 2011 year-on-year, searches for foreign countries grew 18% compared to 10% for domestic destinations. We have not seen this trend occur in over a year. The last time foreign query volumes and year-on-year growth beat domestic was in April 2010, when travellers were grounded by the ash cloud.

Unfortunately, the majority of this growth has been caused by political unrest and natural disasters. For example travel searches grew 100% for Queensland due to the flooding; 201% for Moscow due to the airport bombing; and 652% for Tunis because of the political unrest (*all Jan 2010 Year-on-year*).

Those people who decide to holiday over the Easter period will either escape for a long weekend, or take an extended break from work and stay away for longer. To that end, our data shows that there has been more interest for short haul destinations when compared to long haul, the former growing 20% vs. 7% year-on-year in January 2011. This makes sense as increased flight surcharges make it more expensive to travel.

The table below shows year-to-date growth for the most popular holiday destinations; this measures searches made that include a destination plus holiday associated keywords. As expected, the top 25 is dominated by short haul locations. However, it is interesting to note that there is popular interest for USA long-haul destinations. This suggests that some people might be tempted to travel to the USA because of the favourable exchange rates ([Las Vegas queries up 45% year-to-date, 2010 vs. 2009](#)).

Year on Year Performance (Queries YTD)									
Holiday Destination Rankings by Query Volume					Top 10 Gainers (Weighted Change in Queries YoY)				
Destination	This Year Rank	Rank Change	Queries YoY	Queries Index	This Year Rank	Destination	Rank Change	Queries YoY	Queries Index
Tenerife	1	↑ +1	-13%	100.0%	3	Dubai	↑ +2	32.00%	97.49%
Florida	2	↑ +2	16%	98.6%	5	Las Vegas	↑ +8	44.81%	70.59%
Dubai	3	↑ +2	32%	97.5%	9	Majorca	↑ +28	118.01%	38.35%
New York	4	↓ -3	-60%	81.5%	12	Zante	↑ +38	161.34%	25.67%
Las Vegas	5	↑ +8	45%	70.6%	6	Ibiza	↑ +11	42.97%	50.59%
Ibiza	6	↑ +11	43%	50.6%	2	Florida	↑ +2	15.97%	98.61%
Goa	7	↑ +14	39%	42.5%	11	Crete	↑ +36	97.95%	25.77%
Lanzarote	8	↑ +1	-28%	42.4%	10	Gran Canaria	↑ +14	48.74%	37.88%
Majorca	9	↑ +28	118%	38.4%	7	Goa	↑ +14	38.94%	42.51%
Gran Canaria	10	↑ +14	49%	37.9%	15	Menorca	↑ +27	34.62%	20.15%
Crete	11	↑ +36	98%	25.8%	Top 10 Droppers (Weighted Change in Queries YoY)				
Zante	12	↑ +38	161%	25.7%					
Fuerteventura	13	↑ +14	-3%	23.8%	This Year Rank	Destination	Rank Change	Queries YoY	Queries Index
Jersey	14	↑ +19	16%	23.2%	4	New York	↓ -3	-59.52%	81.52%
Menorca	15	↑ +27	35%	20.2%	17	Amsterdam	↓ -14	-83.02%	17.63%
Rome	16	↓ -1	-59%	18.1%	34	Malaga	↓ -28	-96.89%	2.18%
Amsterdam	17	↓ -14	-83%	17.6%	33	Dublin	↓ -26	-96.61%	2.19%
Orlando	18	↓ -4	-64%	17.6%	41	Bangkok	↓ -31	-98.03%	1.12%
Paris	19	↓ -11	-76%	15.5%	37	Alicante	↓ -25	-97.49%	1.31%
Corfu	20	↑ +26	13%	15.1%	19	Paris	↓ -11	-75.60%	15.55%
Miami	21	↑ +7	-38%	15.0%	23	Barcelona	↓ -12	-74.24%	13.73%
Nice	22	↓ -6	-63%	14.2%	47	Faro	↓ -27	-98.41%	0.53%
Barcelona	23	↓ -12	-74%	13.7%	35	Dalaman	↓ -17	-93.88%	2.12%
Venice	24	↑ +8	-44%	11.8%					
Rhodes	25	↑ +24	1%	10.2%					

Figure 7: Year on year performance of holiday destinations

As the 2011 Easter Bank holiday fast approaches we recommend that advertisers review their online advertising strategies for this period; because there are opportunities to acquire cost-effective traffic. Please contact the Google UK travel team if you have any further questions. Thanks!