



Travel Better. Travel Further. Travel Forward.

AUSTRALIA'S TRAVEL HOTLIST 2021–2025: THE WINNERS AND LOSERS



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Highlights

- **The familiar loop:** Indonesia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan dominate departures, showing Australians' reliance on well-trodden travel corridors.
- **New stars:** Japan and Vietnam saw explosive growth, becoming major contenders within just a few years.
- **Regional contrasts:** Southeast Asia surged while Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean remained largely absent from Australian itineraries.
- **Persistent invisibility:** Dozens of countries recorded fewer than five (or even zero) visitors across all four years.
- **Volatility vs. stability:** Some markets shifted dramatically in rank year-on-year, while others barely moved, cementing their place as either “firm favourites” or “forgotten corners.”
- **Forward Travel's lens:** Many of the consistently overlooked destinations are exactly where Forward Travel operates, turning void into opportunity.

Introduction

Australian travel has roared back to life since international borders reopened, but not every corner of the globe has shared in the resurgence. While Indonesia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Japan dominate the departure boards, large swathes of the world remain virtually untouched by Australian tourists. Some countries flicker briefly onto the radar before vanishing again; others never register at all.

This report examines four years of official departure data to reveal the **winners, losers, and invisibles of Australian travel demand**. By tracking the top 20 most popular destinations, the bottom 20 least visited, and those with literally zero or <5 visitors, the analysis uncovers intriguing contrasts. The volatility of surging destinations like Japan and Vietnam sits alongside the stubborn invisibility of entire regions of Africa, the Caribbean, and Central Asia.

For **Forward Travel**, these findings cut to the heart of our mission. As a tour operator specialising in journeys to underexplored destinations, we offer packages precisely to the places absent from most Australians' itineraries. The data makes clear that while the bulk of travellers continue to circle familiar hubs, a whole world of landscapes, cultures, and stories lies beyond the mainstream. This is where Forward Travel steps in: to connect adventurous Australians with the overlooked corners of the globe.

AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS' TOP 20 DESTINATIONS (2021–2025)

Rank	Destination		21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25	Total Visitors
1	Indonesia		66,786	930,306	1,288,828	1,456,466	3,742,386
2	Singapore		75,993	647,773	860,453	972,995	2,557,214
3	New Zealand		30,471	470,326	536,235	603,180	1,640,212
4	United Arab Emirates		46,104	287,855	422,641	425,886	1,182,486
5	Fiji		99,982	296,699	322,150	336,501	1,055,332
6	United States of America		61,050	296,700	347,572	347,903	1,053,225
7	Japan		1,013	141,065	380,904	493,069	1,016,051
8	Thailand		32,044	197,631	246,501	350,430	826,606
9	Malaysia		3,028	122,581	214,204	214,029	553,842
10	Vietnam		6,188	95,639	185,714	241,474	529,015
11	Qatar		11,960	98,012	158,260	163,320	431,552
12	Hong Kong (SAR of China)		325	44,544	143,261	217,563	405,693
13	China		67	9,756	123,884	197,055	330,762
14	Philippines		5,703	68,978	99,588	114,250	288,519
15	Canada		7,069	48,942	58,025	57,051	171,087
16	Korea, Republic of South		745	30,719	58,161	59,873	149,498
17	United Kingdom, Channel Islands & Isle of Man		6,008	29,113	34,622	32,572	102,315
18	Vanuatu		19	27,790	37,688	35,808	101,305
19	England		3,174	25,216	34,568	31,749	94,707
20	Taiwan		141	20,445	35,021	34,449	90,056

TABLE 1: MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2021–2025)

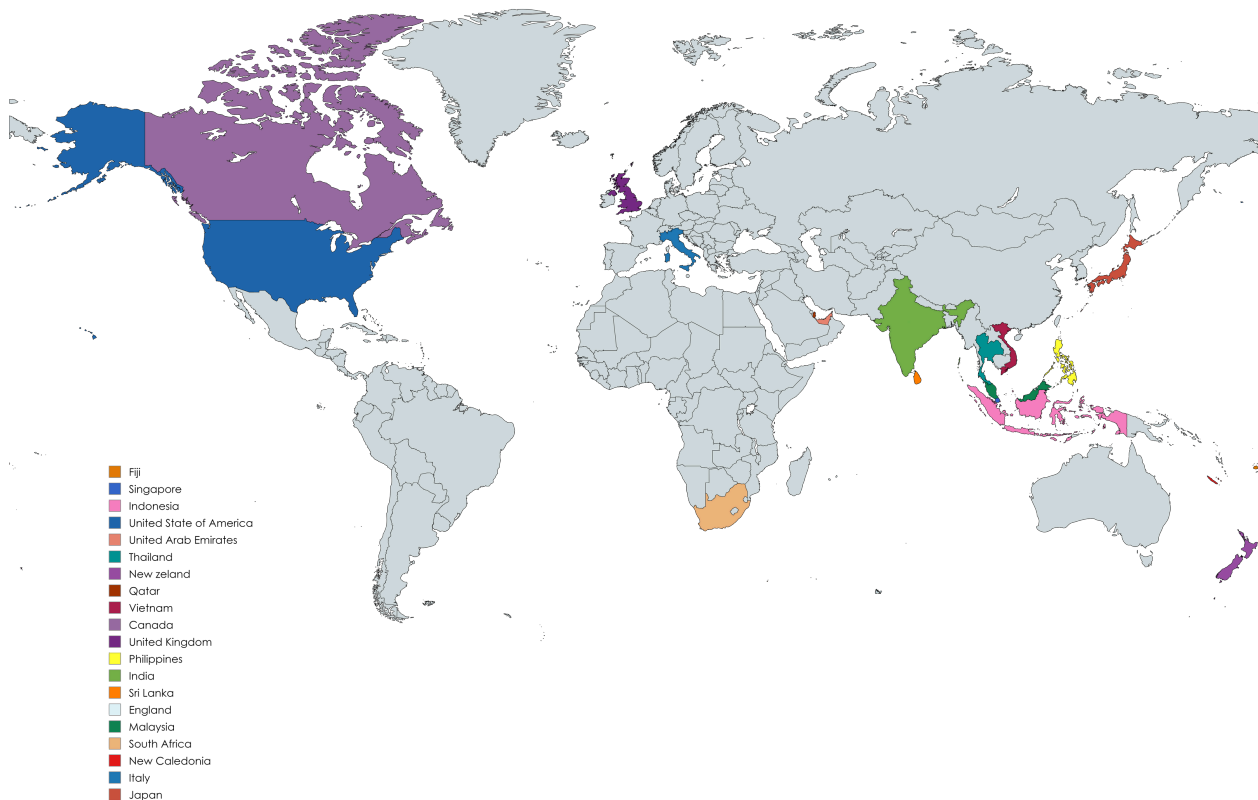


TABLE 2: MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2021–2022)

Rank	Destination	21-22 Visitors	Rank	Destination	21-22 Visitors
1	 Fiji	99,982	11	 United Kingdom, Channel Islands & Isle of Man	6,008
2	 Singapore	75,993	12	 Philippines	5,703
3	 Indonesia	66,786	13	 India	4,427
4	 United States of America	61,050	14	 Sri Lanka	3,293
5	 United Arab Emirates	46,104	15	 England	3,174
6	 Thailand	32,044	16	 Malaysia	3,028
7	 New Zealand	30,471	17	 South Africa	1,803
8	 Qatar	11,960	18	 New Caledonia	1,206
9	 Canada	7,069	19	 Italy	1,108
10	 Vietnam	6,188	20	 Japan	1,013

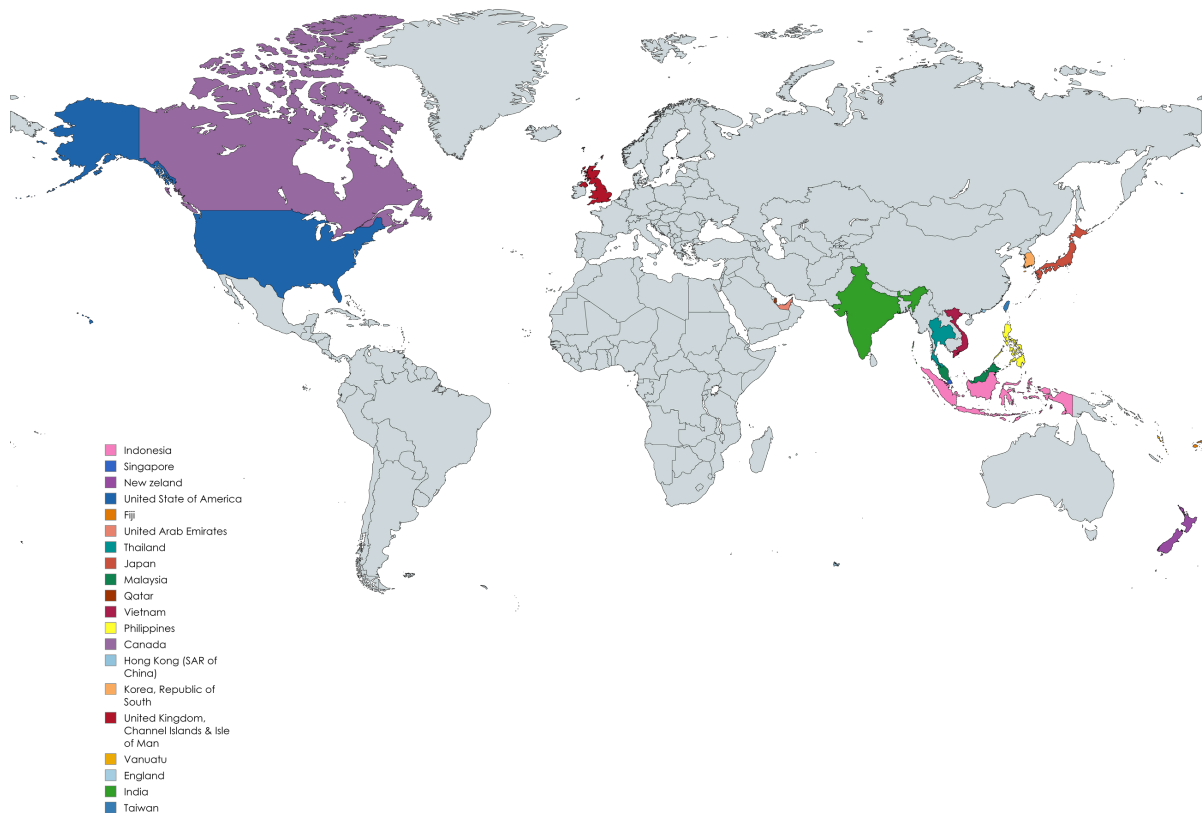


TABLE 3: MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2022–2023)

Rank	Destination	22-23 Visitors	Rank	Destination	22-23 Visitors
1	 Indonesia	930,306	11	 Vietnam	95,639
2	 Singapore	647,773	12	 Philippines	68,978
3	 New Zealand	470,326	13	 Canada	48,942
4	 United States of America	296,700	14	 Hong Kong (SAR of China)	44,544
5	 Fiji	296,699	15	 Korea, Republic of South	30,719
6	 United Arab Emirates	287,855	16	 United Kingdom, Channel Islands & Isle of Man	29,113
7	 Thailand	197,631	17	 Vanuatu	27,790
8	 Japan	141,065	18	 England	25,216
9	 Malaysia	122,581	19	 India	20,906
10	 Qatar	98,012	20	 Taiwan	20,445

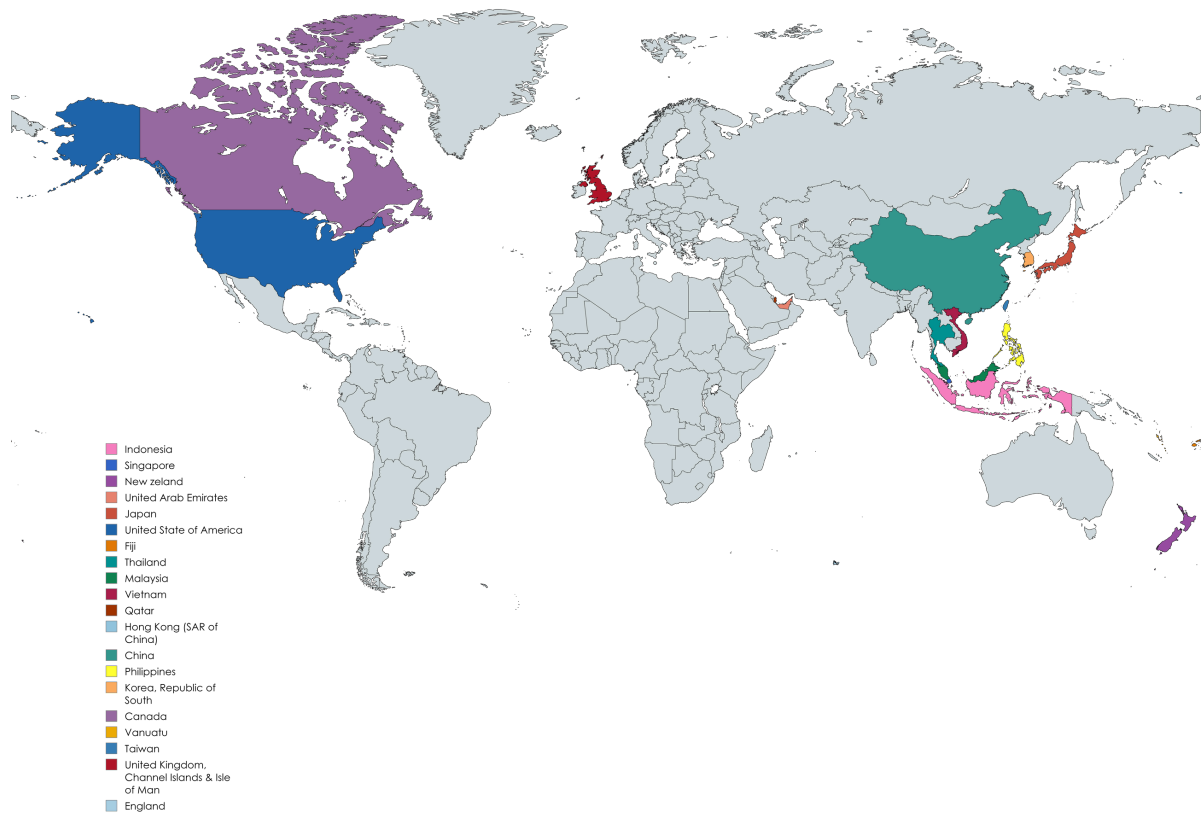


TABLE 4: MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2023–2024)

Rank	Destination	23-24 Visitors	Rank	Destination	23-24 Visitors
1	 Indonesia	1,288,828	11	 Qatar	158,260
2	 Singapore	860,453	12	 Hong Kong (SAR of China)	143,261
3	 New Zealand	536,235	13	 China	123,884
4	 United Arab Emirates	422,641	14	 Philippines	99,588
5	 Japan	380,904	15	 Korea, Republic of South	58,161
6	 United States of America	347,572	16	 Canada	58,025
7	 Fiji	322,150	17	 Vanuatu	37,688
8	 Thailand	246,501	18	 Taiwan	35,021
9	 Malaysia	214,204	19	 United Kingdom, Channel Islands & Isle of Man	34,622
10	 Vietnam	185,714	20	 England	34,568

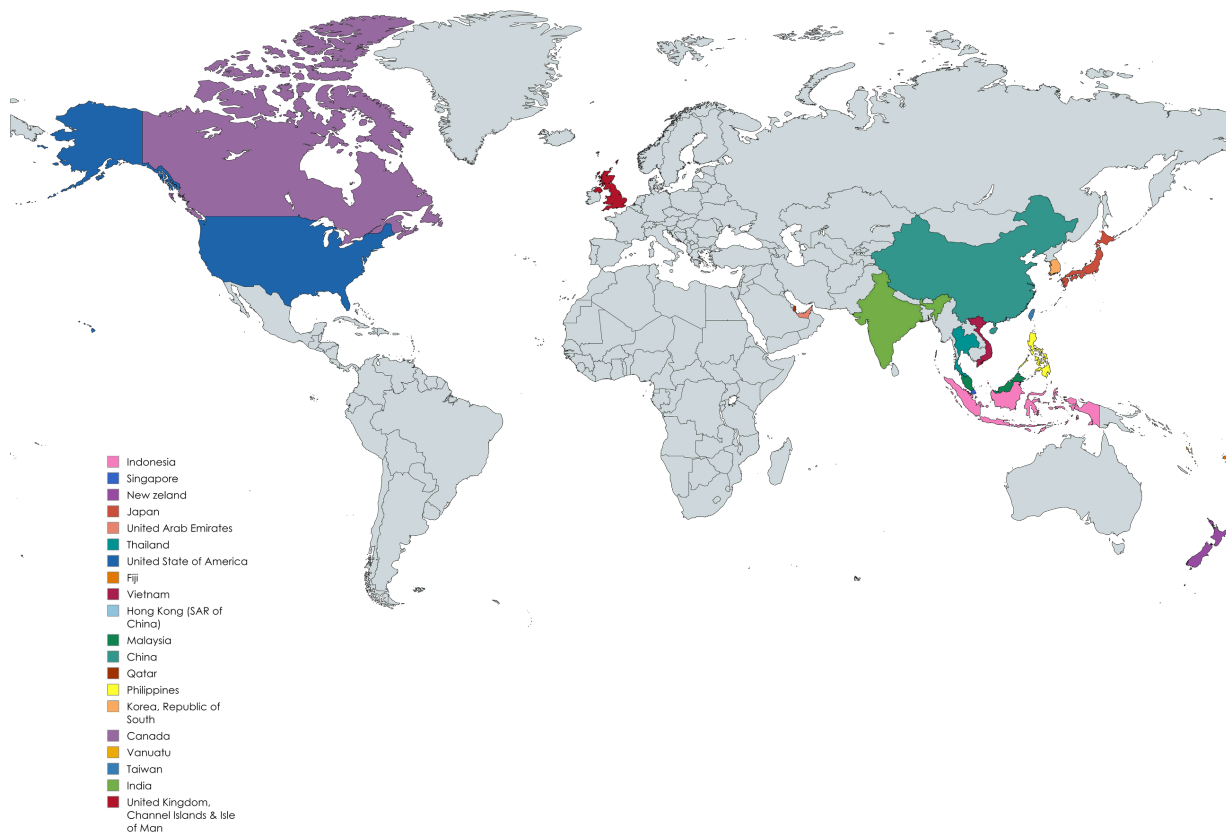


TABLE 5: MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2024–2025)

Rank	Destination	24-25 Visitors	Rank	Destination	24-25 Visitors
1	 Indonesia	1,456,466	11	 Malaysia	214,029
2	 Singapore	972,995	12	 China	197,055
3	 New Zealand	603,180	13	 Qatar	163,320
4	 Japan	493,069	14	 Philippines	114,250
5	 United Arab Emirates	425,886	15	 Korea, Republic of South	59,873
6	 Thailand	350,430	16	 Canada	57,051
7	 United States of America	347,903	17	 Vanuatu	35,808
8	 Fiji	336,501	18	 Taiwan	34,449
9	 Vietnam	241,474	19	 India	33,466
10	 Hong Kong (SAR of China)	217,563	20	 United Kingdom, Channel Islands & Isle of Man	32,572

Momentum & Persistence

Key Insights

- **14 destinations** never left the Top 20 over four years, proving Australians' steadfast loyalty to a mix of close-to-home getaways and long-haul staples.
- **Japan's** rise is the standout travel story of the decade so far: from obscurity to Top 5 in just four years.
- No major collapses among leading destinations. Early favourites remain entrenched.
- **Italy, New Caledonia, South Africa, and Sri Lanka** highlight the pandemic's one-off distortions, appearing once then vanishing entirely.



One of the clearest indicators of travel demand stability is how often destinations show up in the rankings year after year. Looking at the Top 20 destinations for Australians between 2021 and 2025, we see which destinations endure and which ones vanish.

The Ever-Presents

Fourteen destinations never missed a year in the Top 20 of Australian international travel, including near neighbours such as **New Zealand, Fiji, Singapore, and Indonesia**, long-haul heavyweights like the **United States** and **United Arab Emirates**, and a mix of regional favourites from **Vietnam** and **Thailand** to **Canada** and **Japan**. Their uninterrupted presence points to enduring appeal, whether through proximity, cultural draw, or connectivity via major hubs.

The Climbers

The single standout climber is **Japan**. Ranked **20th in 2021–22 with barely 1,000 flights**, it surged to **4th by 2024–25**, with nearly half a million trips. That trajectory reflects not just border reopenings, but also the magnetism of the Yen's decline, ski tourism, and growing cultural fascination among Australians.

The Faders

Interestingly, the dataset shows **no dramatic collapses** among the top tier. Early leaders such as **Indonesia, Fiji, Singapore**, and the **UAE** all held their ground through 2024–25, even as newer players rose.

One-Hit Wonders

By contrast, several destinations were “**one-hit wonders**” – appearing in the Top 20 only once before disappearing: **Italy, New Caledonia, South Africa**, and **Sri Lanka**. Their fleeting popularity in 2021–22 reflects the unique travel dynamics of the pandemic rebound, when border rules, flight availability, and one-off travel bubbles briefly shifted patterns before normal demand returned.

Year-on-Year Ranking Volatility

Key Insights

- **India** is the most unpredictable market, moving in and out of the Top 20 with the widest ranking swings.
- **Japan** is volatile, but in the best way – its instability reflects rapid upward movement, not decline.
- **UK** and **Malaysia** show signs of slow repositioning, either through gradual erosion (UK) or catch-up (Malaysia).
- **Indonesia**, **Singapore**, and **New Zealand** are the bedrock destinations, retaining near-unchanging popularity.



Not all destinations hold their ground with equal steadiness. To measure how turbulent or predictable Aussie travel demand has been, we built a **Volatility Index** for the Top 20 destinations between 2021 and 2025.

How it works: Each country's ranking was tracked year by year. The Volatility Index is the average movement up or down the list from one year to the next. The higher the score, the more unstable the destination's popularity; the lower the score, the more entrenched its appeal.

The Big Movers

- **India** showed the greatest volatility, swinging from 13th to 19th, dropping out entirely, and then returning at 19th in 2024–25. Its Index score of **6.0** makes it the most inconsistent performer of the period.
- **Japan** was the second most volatile. Its spectacular leap from 20th in 2021–22 to 4th in 2024–25 (Index **5.3**) reflects both the pace and scale of its rise.

Moderate Shifts

- **United Kingdom (Channel Islands & Isle of Man group)** slipped from 11th to 20th, signalling a slow but steady loss of traction with Australian travellers.
- **Malaysia** showed mid-level instability, rising sharply from 16th to 9th before flattening around the 9th–11th range.

The Anchors

Indonesia, Singapore, New Zealand, Fiji, the USA, UAE, and Thailand barely shifted positions at all. Their Index scores hovered around **0–1**, making them the most stable performers in the dataset. These destinations appear to be “set and forget” choices – embedded in the Aussie travel psyche regardless of wider global shifts.

Regional and Continental Trends

Key Insights

- **Asia** is the growth engine – led by **Indonesia**, **Singapore**, and **Japan**, with **Vietnam** and **Thailand** gaining momentum.
- **Japan**'s rise is extraordinary, moving from the margins to Top 5 in four years.
- **Pacific** destinations are steady favourites, but growth has slowed compared to Asia.
- **Europe** and **North America** are flat performers, with Europe in particular missing the expected rebound.
- The **Middle East** thrives as a transit hub, not a primary destination.



When destinations are grouped by region, a clear pattern emerges: Australians are increasingly favouring short-haul Asian travel, while Pacific neighbours remain steady and Europe struggles to regain share.

Asia

South-East and North Asia together form the powerhouse of Australian outbound travel. **Indonesia and Singapore alone accounted for more than six million visitors between 2021 and 2025**, cementing their role as the giants of short-haul leisure. Other regional players such as **Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines** steadily rebuilt their visitor numbers after the pandemic. The late return of **China and Hong Kong** to the Top 20 in 2023–24 and 2024–25 shows the reopening rebound in action. The standout within Asia is **Japan**, climbing from almost invisible in 2021–22 (~1,000 visitors) to the **fourth-most popular destination by 2024–25** with nearly half a million Australians visiting. No other market demonstrated a comparable surge.

Pacific

Australians have long turned to nearby islands, and that loyalty continues. **New Zealand** has grown year-on-year to over 600,000 visitors, consistently ranking in the top three. **Fiji**, by contrast, remains a popular getaway (~320–336K visitors annually) but shows signs of plateauing. Smaller Pacific nations like **Vanuatu and New Caledonia** appeared sporadically, underlining their niche appeal rather than mainstream growth.

Middle East

The United Arab Emirates and Qatar remain entrenched in the Top 20, reflecting their role as global aviation hubs. The UAE, in particular, has grown past 425,000 visitors annually. These figures signal **connectivity-driven traffic** rather than holiday-driven demand – Australians passing through on their way to Europe and beyond.

North America

The **United States** remains mid-table, attracting around 347,000 travellers a year since 2022–23, but showing no growth momentum. **Canada** is far smaller (around 57,000 in 2024–25), retaining a niche role. For both, demand is stable but flat, overshadowed by Asia's surge.

Europe

Despite expectations of a post-pandemic European boom, **the UK, England, and Italy remained fringe players**, each attracting only 30–35K Australians annually in recent years. Italy was a one-off in 2021–22, disappearing thereafter. Europe’s underperformance reflects both the cost and complexity of long-haul travel compared with Asia-Pacific alternatives.

South Asia and Africa

India has been volatile, shifting in and out of the Top 20 before settling at ~33K visitors in 2024–25. **Sri Lanka and South Africa** appeared once in 2021–22 but quickly dropped out. These destinations remain peripheral for Australian travellers.

New Entrants & Dropouts

Key Insights

- **Japan** is the breakout entrant, soaring from 20th to 4th in just four years.
- **China** and **Hong Kong** reflect the reopening rebound, rising from to major destinations post-2022.
- **Qatar, Canada**, and the **UK** represent quiet fade-outs, still visited but no longer prestige players.
- Pandemic-era anomalies (**Sri Lanka, South Africa, Italy, New Caledonia**) were one-hit appearances, not lasting travel trends.

The Top 20 list is not static. It evolves with global events, exchange rates, and shifting consumer tastes. Tracking who has entered, who has stayed, and who has fallen away provides a window into how Australians' travel priorities have changed between 2021 and 2025.

The New Entrants

The most striking arrival is **Japan**, which leapt from the bottom of the list in 2021–22 (20th place) to crack the Top 10 the following year, and by 2024–25 had climbed into the Top 5, overtaking the USA. Its rise reflects both affordability and renewed appetite for cultural and seasonal travel.

China and Hong Kong (SAR of China) also tell a strong story of re-entry. Absent in 2021–22, both returned to the Top 20 once borders reopened, climbing rapidly into mid-tier positions. By 2024–25, **Hong Kong broke into the Top 10**, underscoring the strength of pent-up demand and restored connectivity.

The Dropouts

At the same time, several destinations that were once near the top of the table have slipped back. **Qatar and Canada**, both Top 10 players in 2021–22, slid down to mid-table positions by 2023–24 and 2024–25. **The UK (including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man group)** also illustrates a quiet fade: once close to the Top 10, it has now settled at the margins of the Top 20.

The dataset also shows clear **pandemic-era outliers**. **India, Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Caledonia, and Italy** all appeared in 2021–22 but quickly dropped out, their presence explained more by border dynamics and travel bubbles than enduring demand.

Cumulative Popularity

Key Insights

- **Singapore, New Zealand, UAE, and the USA** are the workhorses – consistently strong, cumulatively dominant, and essential to Australia's travel mix.
- **Japan** is propelled by a surge – a late rebound that lifted it from near-invisibility to the Top 5 overall.
- **Hong Kong** and **China's** prominence is reopening-led, underscoring the power of border dynamics.
- Peripheral destinations like **Canada**, the **UK**, and **Taiwan** are stable but secondary, reflecting steady yet modest appeal.



Looking beyond single-year spikes, cumulative performance across 2021–2025 highlights which destinations are true stalwarts, which are riding momentum from rebound years, and which remain peripheral players despite regular appearances.

The Workhorses

Some destinations never reached the top spot but maintained consistently high rankings year after year. **Singapore** averaged second place across the four years, never ranked number one, yet never far from it. **New Zealand** also punched well above its weight, averaging 4th, proving itself as the Pacific's most reliable performer. Similarly, the **United Arab Emirates and the USA** held steady around 5th place, reflecting their dual roles as connectors (UAE) and cultural draws (USA).

The Surge-Driven Winners

Other destinations owe their cumulative positions to dramatic rebounds rather than steady performance. **Japan** is the standout here, with its leap from 20th place in 2021–22 to 4th in 2024–25. Its median rank still sits mid-table, but the scale of its late surge has propelled it into the overall Top 10. **Hong Kong and China** follow a similar pattern: absent from the early years, but post-reopening rebounds pushed them into significant positions by 2023–24 and 2024–25.

The Peripherals

Then there are the countries that regularly appear in the rankings but never manage to break into the Top 10. **Canada, the UK, England, Taiwan, and Vanuatu** fall into this category. They attract consistent, modest flows but lack the cumulative weight of the bigger players. Their role in the Aussie travel landscape is defined more by niche appeal than mainstream dominance.

Relative Positioning

Key Insights

- **Bali**'s supremacy is unchallenged, widening the gap over **Thailand**.
- **Japan** has decisively overtaken **South Korea**, cementing its place as Australia's North Asian favourite.
- **Hong Kong** consistently edges **China**, though the race is close.
- **New Zealand** has overtaken **Fiji**, now the stronger Pacific draw.
- The **UAE** has surpassed the **USA**, reflecting its role as a global connector hub.
- **Vietnam vs. Malaysia** is the most fluid rivalry, with positions swapping multiple times in four years.



Beyond raw numbers, the rankings reveal fascinating head-to-head rivalries: countries competing for position in the Australian travel market. Some have maintained dominance, while others have swapped places as tastes shifted.

Indonesia vs. Thailand

Indonesia has dominated Thailand every year, starting 3rd in 2021–22 and then holding the top spot from 2022–23 onwards. Thailand, by contrast, remained mid-table, never breaking into the upper tier. This rivalry shows that while both destinations appeal to Aussies seeking affordable escapes, Indonesia's dominance has only widened since borders reopened.

Japan vs. South Korea

The clearest example of a takeover is **Japan's ascent over South Korea**. From 20th in 2021–22, Japan shot up to 8th in 2022–23, then 5th in 2023–24, and 4th in 2024–25. South Korea, meanwhile, hovered around 15th–17th. Japan has decisively claimed the North Asia crown in the eyes of Australian travellers.

Hong Kong vs. Mainland China

Both destinations re-entered the rankings after borders reopened. Since then, **Hong Kong has consistently edged China**, ranking 14th vs. unlisted in 2022–23, 12th vs. 13th in 2023–24, and 10th vs. 12th in 2024–25. It's a close race, but Hong Kong maintains the lead.

Fiji vs. New Zealand

In 2021–22, **Fiji led New Zealand** as Australians favoured short-haul island getaways. From 2022–23 onwards, however, New Zealand overtook Fiji and held the higher rank consistently. This swap reflects New Zealand's stronger long-term pull, despite Fiji's steady popularity.

USA vs. UAE

Initially, the **USA ranked above the UAE** in 2021–22 and 2022–23. But in 2023–24 the UAE pulled ahead and stayed in front through 2024–25. This reflects the UAE's growing role as a key global hub for Australians travelling onwards to Europe, the UK, and beyond.

Malaysia vs. Vietnam

A true see-saw rivalry: **Vietnam ranked above Malaysia** in 2021–22, only for Malaysia to overtake in 2022–23 and 2023–24. By 2024–25, Vietnam had reclaimed the lead, underscoring its growing momentum as a mainstream Aussie holiday option.

Macro-Storylines

Key Insights

- **Japan** is the breakout macro-story, climbing from 20th to 4th in four years.
- **Asia** is the engine of growth, with **Indonesia**, **Singapore**, and **Vietnam** driving sustained demand.
- **Pacific** destinations remain steady but are no longer leading the recovery.
- The **UAE** overtaking the **USA** marks a shift in global transit patterns.
- **Europe** has failed to rebound, constrained by costs and long-haul fatigue.
- **Pandemic-era outliers** disappeared quickly, showing how border restrictions distorted early trends.



Looking across four years of rankings, broader themes emerge that go beyond individual destinations. These macro-trends reveal how exchange rates, border policies, and shifting consumer habits have reshaped where Australians choose to travel.

Japan's Meteoric Rise

Few stories stand out more clearly than **Japan's ascent**. From 20th place in 2021–22 with barely 1,000 visitors, it climbed to 4th by 2024–25 with nearly half a million Australians making the trip. A weaker Yen made Japan more affordable, while the appeal of skiing, cherry blossoms, and cultural experiences translated into surging demand once borders reopened.

Asia Reclaims Dominance

Asia (both South-East and North Asia) has been the powerhouse of recovery. **Indonesia and Singapore together drew more than six million trips between 2021 and 2025**, cementing their status as runaway leaders. Destinations such as **Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines** steadily grew, while **Hong Kong and China** re-emerged strongly after reopening in 2023. For Australians, Asia is increasingly the go-to option for short-haul, affordable, repeat travel.

Pacific Favourites Hold Steady

The Pacific played a central role in 2021–22, when nearby destinations felt safest as international travel resumed. **Fiji initially led New Zealand**, but from 2022–23 onwards New Zealand overtook and kept its lead. The Pacific remains a reliable region, but growth has been modest compared to Asia's acceleration.

Middle East as Transit Titans

The United Arab Emirates and Qatar held steady positions throughout, reflecting their status as global aviation connectors. The UAE overtook the USA in 2023–24, a symbolic moment that underlines how Australians are increasingly flowing through Middle Eastern hubs on the way to Europe and beyond.

Europe Still a Non-Story

Despite predictions of a “revenge travel” boom to Europe, the numbers stayed flat. **The UK, England, and Italy** never broke into the mid-table, with volumes hovering around 30–35K annually. High costs, long-haul fatigue, and airfare inflation have kept Europe on the margins compared with Asia-Pacific travel.

USA Stagnates

The **United States** attracted a steady base of ~300–350K travellers per year but has not grown since 2022–23. Once a key aspirational destination, it is now being overtaken by the UAE for connectivity and by Japan for cultural appeal. The USA remains popular but no longer dynamic.

Pandemic-Era Outliers Vanish

The dataset also captures one-off anomalies from the first year after borders reopened. **Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Caledonia, and Italy** appeared in 2021–22 but quickly disappeared. Their presence reflected border constraints rather than true shifts in traveller desire.

AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS' BOTTOM 20 DESTINATIONS (2021–2025)

TABLE 6: LEAST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2021–2025)

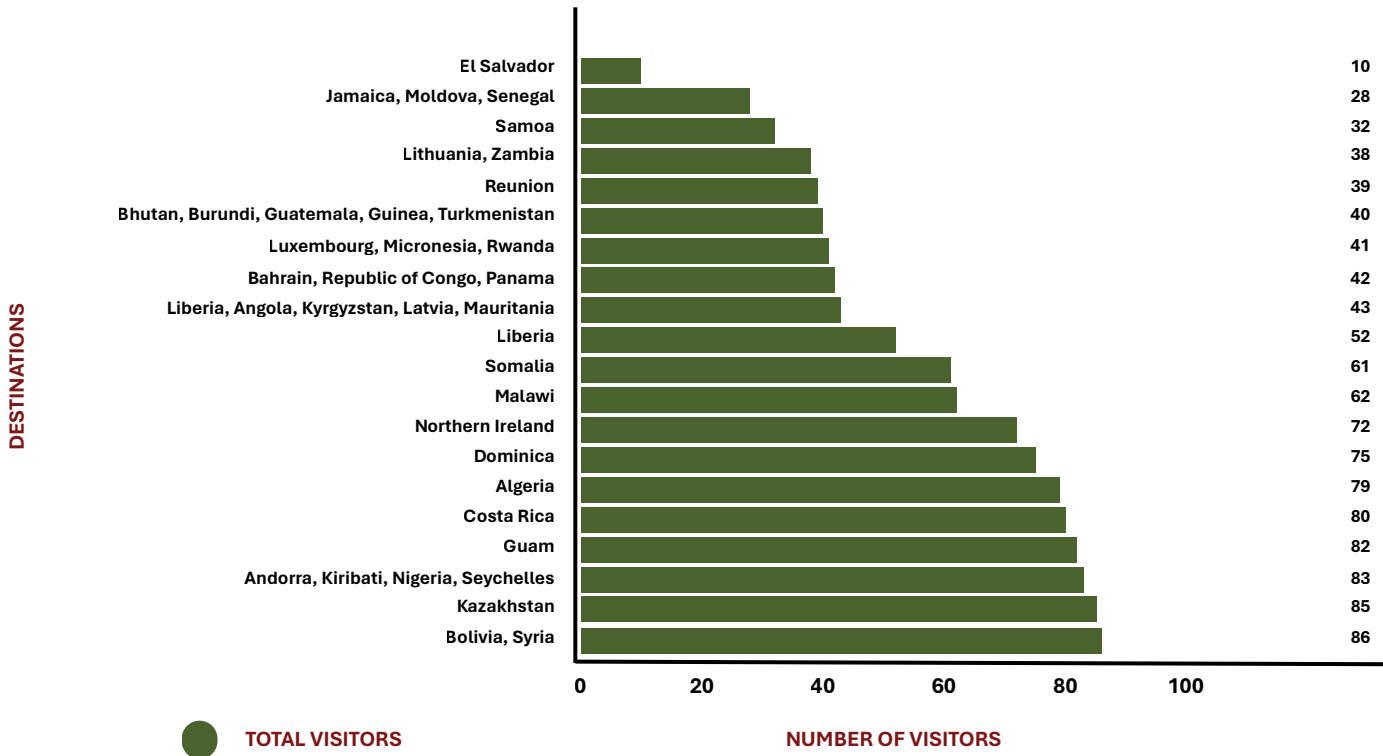


TABLE 7: LEAST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2021–2022)

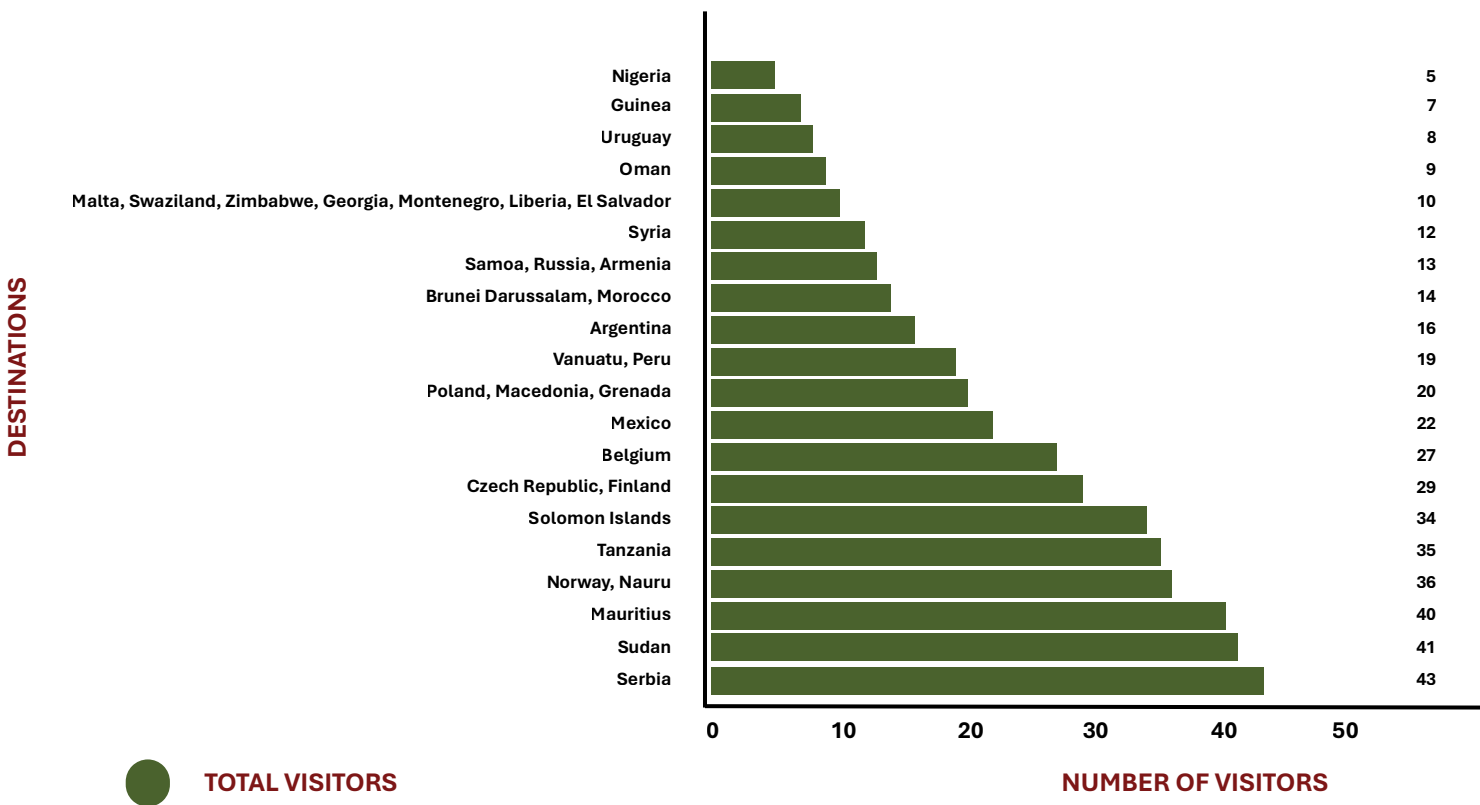


TABLE 8: LEAST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2022–2023)

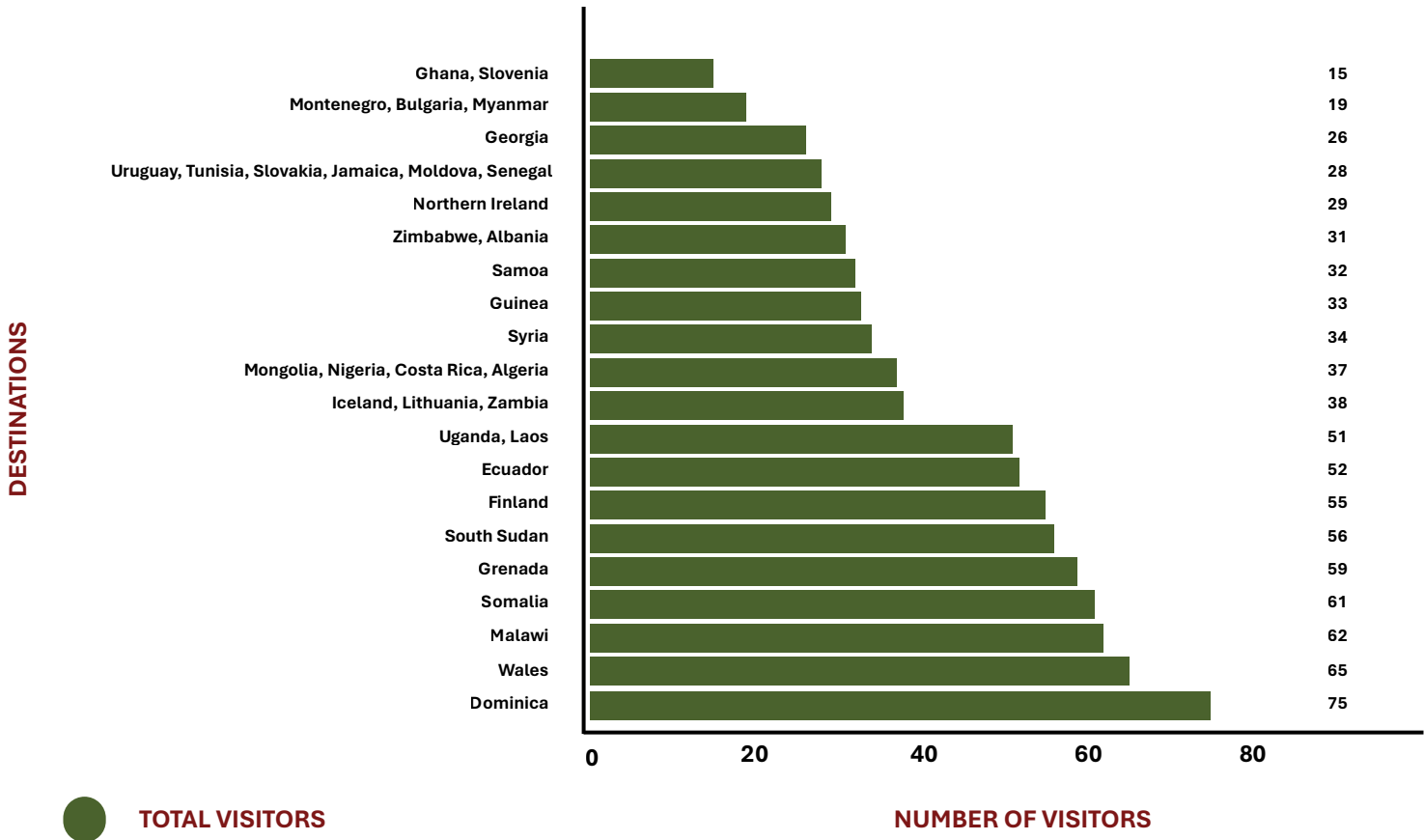


TABLE 9: LEAST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2023–2024)

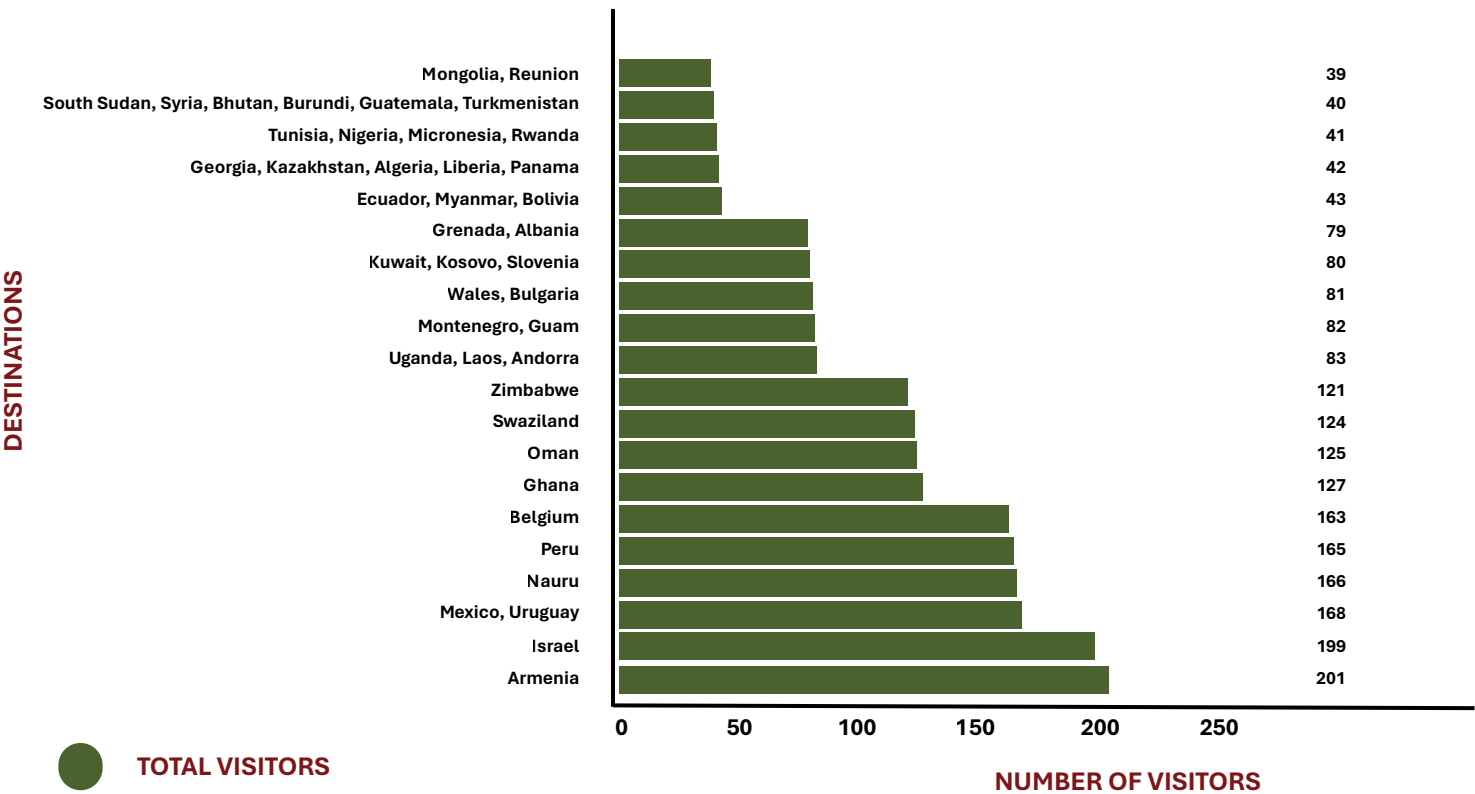


TABLE 10: LEAST POPULAR DESTINATIONS FOR AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS (2024–2025)



Momentum & Persistence

Key Insights

- **Six destinations** were bottom 20 constants – **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, Montenegro, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe** never escaped the least-visited bracket.
- Marginal climbers like **Uruguay** and **Zimbabwe** improved slightly over time, though still among the least popular.
- **Mexico, Peru, and Oman** slid downwards, showing how mid-ranking destinations can fade into obscurity.
- One-hit appearances (**Argentina, Poland, Finland**) illustrate how the pandemic temporarily reshaped even the “unpopular” end of the rankings.



Just as the top of the rankings shows loyalty and consistency, the bottom 20 destinations also reveal patterns of persistence, volatility, and one-off appearances. These countries represent the least-visited markets for Australians, and their positions tell us as much about barriers to travel as they do about demand.

The Consistently Unpopular

A handful of countries were **ever-present in the bottom 20 across all four years**. These include **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, Montenegro, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe**. Their repeated low rankings highlight either structural constraints (limited flight connectivity, political instability, or lack of tourism marketing) or the fact that they simply do not feature prominently in Australian travel habits.

The Climbers

Even within the bottom group, some destinations managed to **crawl upward from the very bottom ranks**. **Uruguay**, for instance, sat as low as 3rd-worst in 2021–22 but moved into mid-bottom positions in later years. **Zimbabwe**, once among the very lowest, climbed out of the bottom five by 2023–24 and 2024–25. These aren't success stories in absolute terms, but they show marginal recovery or stabilisation.

The Faders

By contrast, a few destinations **slipped into obscurity** after previously holding higher positions. **Mexico and Peru**, for example, began in the mid-tier of the 2021–22 dataset but by 2023–24 and 2024–25 found themselves in the bottom 20. Similarly, **Oman**, present outside the very lowest ranks in 2021–22, had sunk back into the lower positions by 2024–25. These faders suggest destinations that could not sustain Australian interest in the face of competition or changing travel conditions.

The One-Hit Wonders

Some countries appeared in the bottom 20 **only once** across the period, reflecting temporary disruption rather than chronic unpopularity. Examples include **Argentina, Poland, and Finland**, which appeared during the pandemic-distorted year of 2021–22 but vanished from the bottom 20 afterwards. Their fleeting presence reflects the unusual travel constraints of that time rather than steadfast traveller avoidance.

Year-on-Year Ranking Volatility

Key Insights

- **Uruguay, Mexico, Peru, and Oman** were the most unstable – bouncing between positions but never breaking free of the bottom 20.
- **Zimbabwe** and **Georgia** showed moderate volatility, shifting within the lower ranks but never climbing high.
- **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, Montenegro, Dominica, and Malawi** are the anchors of obscurity – destinations stuck at the very bottom across the four years.
- The Bottom 20 rankings are defined more by persistent obscurity than by breakout stories – most destinations struggle to escape their low positions.



To understand how volatile the least popular destinations were, we built a **Volatility Index** for the Bottom 20. Each country's rank was tracked across the four years. The Volatility Index measures the average year-to-year movement up or down the list. Higher scores mean a destination bounced around wildly between positions, while lower scores mean it was locked in the basement year after year.

The Most Unstable

- **Uruguay** was one of the most volatile. Ranked among the very bottom in 2021–22, it climbed slightly in 2022–23, dropped back into obscurity in 2023–24, and then clustered again at the lower end in 2024–25. Its constant repositioning gave it one of the highest volatility scores.
- **Mexico and Peru** also bounced between mid-tier obscurity and deep-bottom ranks. They drifted down from modest positions in 2021–22 to become entrenched in the bottom group by 2023–24 and 2024–25.
- **Oman** is another unstable case, moving from the very bottom in 2021–22 to out of sight, and then back into the lowest bracket by 2024–25.

Moderately Volatile

- **Zimbabwe** began in the bottom 10 in 2021–22, but climbed gradually, improving to just outside the lowest few positions by 2023–24 and 2024–25.
- **Georgia** oscillated between low and mid-bottom ranks, never escaping the bottom 20 but not firmly anchored either.

Complete Obscurity

Some destinations hardly budged. **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, and Montenegro** were ever-present in the bottom group with very little year-to-year change. These “anchors” reveal countries that consistently fail to attract Australians in significant numbers. Other anchors include **Dominica and Malawi**, both sitting firmly at the bottom throughout.

Regional & Continental Trends

Key Insights

- **Africa** is over-represented at the bottom, with multiple nations entrenched due to instability, cost, and lack of direct access.
- **Eastern Europe** and the **Balkans** feature heavily, showing Australians' preference for **Western Europe** if they travel long-haul.
- **Latin America** and the **Caribbean** remain fringe destinations, constrained by distance and lack of connectivity.
- **Asia-Pacific's** smallest nations are “forgotten corners”, left behind despite the region's overall dominance at the top of the rankings.
- **Middle Eastern** and **Central Asian countries** are marginal players, failing to convert transit connectivity into tourist demand.



Who's over-represented at the bottom? When the least popular destinations are grouped by region, clear geographic patterns emerge. The Bottom 20 is not evenly spread across the globe. Certain continents dominate the “unvisited” bracket, pointing to structural barriers that keep them off Australians’ travel maps.

Africa

African countries consistently make up a large share of the Bottom 20. **Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Angola, and Zambia** are recurring names. Limited direct flights, political instability, and low-profile tourism marketing keep them firmly anchored at the bottom. Even countries with recognised attractions, such as **Seychelles**, barely register. This region is the most structurally underperforming in the dataset.

Eastern Europe & the Balkans

A cluster of Eastern European and Balkan destinations appears year after year in the Bottom 20. **Montenegro, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Armenia** frequently rank among the least visited. Distance from Australia and lack of direct air links are the main culprits, combined with weaker destination branding compared to Western Europe.

Latin America & the Caribbean

Several Latin American nations (**El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Bolivia, and Ecuador**) are in the bottom group. Caribbean countries such as **Jamaica and Dominica** also feature. These destinations suffer from extreme long-haul distances, limited flight options, and strong competition from Asia-Pacific alternatives that are closer and cheaper for Australians.

Asia-Pacific

Despite Asia-Pacific being the growth engine at the top of the rankings, its “forgotten corners” populate the bottom. **Samoa, Kiribati, Nauru, and Micronesia** illustrate how small island states with limited infrastructure and connectivity fail to draw meaningful numbers. Similarly, landlocked or less accessible Asian nations like **Bhutan, Laos, and Mongolia** appear repeatedly, highlighting how geography and accessibility shape underperformance.

Middle East & Central Asia

A handful of Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries (**Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan**) are regulars at the bottom. While they have aviation connections, they lack strong positioning as primary tourist destinations for Australians. Most remain stopovers at best, not headline trips.

New Entrants & Dropouts

Key Insights

- **Mexico** and **Peru** slid into obscurity, joining the Bottom 20 only in later years.
- **Oman** and **Costa Rica** fell back after early promise, unable to hold onto mid-ranking positions.
- **Poland, Finland, Belgium, Argentina, and Morocco** escaped the bottom and stayed out, proving that recovery is possible with stabilised demand.
- **Zimbabwe, Uruguay, and Georgia** illustrate rebound attempts, lifting marginally out of the basement but failing to sustain long-term growth.



The Bottom 20 is not a static list. Some destinations fell into obscurity after once being higher ranked, while others escaped the least-visited bracket and never returned. A handful even staged partial rebounds after years in the wilderness.

The New Entrants

A number of destinations slipped into the Bottom 20 after once holding more stable mid-ranking positions.

- **Mexico and Peru** both began outside the very lowest bracket in 2021–22 but by 2023–24 and 2024–25 were embedded in the Bottom 20.
- **Oman**, which sat near the bottom in 2021–22, briefly lifted but fell back into low ranks by 2023–24 and 2024–25.
- **Costa Rica and Ecuador** also emerged as bottom-tier destinations from 2022 onwards, despite not featuring among the lowest early on.

These cases illustrate how destinations without strong direct access or visibility can slide gradually into obscurity.

The Dropouts

A few countries that appeared in the Bottom 20 in the early years managed to climb out and stay out.

- **Poland, Finland, Belgium, and the Czech Republic** appeared in 2021–22 but did not return in later years.
- Similarly, **Argentina and Morocco** were bottom-tier in 2021–22 but disappeared from the lowest rankings thereafter.

These “escapees” suggest markets where Aussie travel demand normalised once borders reopened and long-haul routes stabilised.

The Rebounds

Some destinations bounced in and out of the list, showing partial recovery but not sustained momentum.

- **Zimbabwe** was firmly among the least visited in 2021–22 and 2022–23, but by 2023–24 and 2024–25 it had climbed slightly higher, no longer in the very bottom cluster.
- **Uruguay** oscillated between deep obscurity and marginally higher ranks, never breaking through but not fully stuck either.
- **Georgia** similarly swung between mid- and low-bottom positions, reflecting instability rather than entrenched avoidance.

These rebound stories reveal the fragile position of certain destinations: able to lift slightly but lacking the strength to sustain a major turnaround.

Cumulative Unpopularity

Key Insights

- **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, Montenegro, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe** are the perennial strugglers — consistently among the least visited.
- **Poland, Finland, Belgium, Argentina, and Morocco** were one-off appearances, reflecting border-era disruption, not chronic lack of demand.
- **Eastern European** minnows, **Pacific** microstates, and **Latin American** small nations punch below their weight, stuck at the bottom even as their regional peers improve.
- Cumulative data shows that most Bottom 20 destinations are structurally marginal, with little sign of long-term change.



When averaged across four years, the Bottom 20 reveals two distinct groups: the perennial strugglers that rarely shift, and those that only appear low due to one disrupted year. Looking at median positions helps separate destinations consistently overlooked by Australians from those dragged down by temporary conditions.

The Perennial Strugglers

Several destinations are at the bottom across all years. **Samoa, Syria, Guinea, Montenegro, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe** rarely moved out of the bottom 20, locking in consistently low positions. Their median ranks place them firmly in the “chronic obscurity” category. These are countries Australians simply do not travel to in meaningful numbers, whether because of limited air connectivity (Samoa, Montenegro), political instability (Syria, Guinea), or long-haul distance with weak brand appeal (Uruguay, Zimbabwe).

The Brief Visitors

A number of countries dipped into the bottom 20 only once, then disappeared. **Poland, Finland, Belgium, Argentina, Morocco, and the Czech Republic** fell into the lower ranks in 2021–22, a year still distorted by border closures and restricted aviation networks. Once global travel stabilised, they escaped the bottom bracket and did not return. These are not structurally “unpopular” destinations, but victims of temporary disruption.

Punching Below Their Weight

Some destinations consistently underperformed compared to their regional peers.

- In **Eastern Europe**, countries like **Moldova, Latvia, and Lithuania** languished in the bottom group while neighbours such as Poland and Czechia climbed out.
- In the **Pacific**, microstates such as **Nauru, Kiribati, and Micronesia** appear repeatedly, even as Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia maintain visibility further up the table.
- In **Latin America**, **El Salvador, Guatemala, and Bolivia** remained bottom fixtures, while more prominent markets like Argentina and Mexico at least broke free in some years.

This “underperformance” points to destinations that are not just small but consistently overlooked relative to their neighbours.

Relative Positioning

Key Insights

- **Nigeria** and **Guinea** traded the title of least visited African destination, never leaving the basement.
- **Montenegro** and **Georgia** swapped places repeatedly, proving Eastern Europe's struggle to attract Australians.
- Pacific microstates like **Nauru**, **Kiribati**, and **Micronesia** are locked in a race for irrelevance, consistently jostling for last place.
- **El Salvador** stands out as the least visited overall, cementing its spot at the very bottom of the table.



At the foot of the rankings, countries compete for the unenviable position of being the least visited by Australians. These head-to-head rivalries reveal how small shifts in visitor flows can reorder the “bottom table.”

Africa

African nations are over-represented in the lowest ranks, and often compete directly with each other.

- **Nigeria vs. Guinea:** Nigeria recorded the very lowest number in 2021–22 (5 visitors), but Guinea quickly took over in later years. Both countries hovered within the bottom five consistently, trading places as the “least popular.”
- **Somalia vs. Malawi:** These two African nations clustered in the lower-middle of the Bottom 20 across multiple years, rarely shifting far but occasionally overtaking one another in the obscurity stakes.

Eastern Europe

The Balkans and Eastern Europe are also heavily represented near the bottom.

- **Montenegro vs. Georgia:** Both appeared year after year in the Bottom 20, swapping positions repeatedly. Montenegro, once slightly higher, was overtaken by Georgia in 2023–24, before falling back again in 2024–25.
- **Moldova vs. Latvia/Lithuania:** These post-Soviet states have consistently sat in the bottom bracket. Moldova was lower earlier in the series, but by 2024–25 Latvia and Lithuania had joined, pulling the region deeper into obscurity.

Pacific

- **Samoa vs. Micronesia:** Despite being geographically close, both remained at the wrong end of the table. Samoa, a constant bottom-tier name, was occasionally overtaken by Micronesia in 2023–24, showing how even within the Pacific, smaller states are competing for limited attention.
- **Nauru vs. Kiribati:** These microstates jostled for position in 2023–24 and 2024–25, both anchored firmly near the very bottom.

Latin America

- **Uruguay vs. Bolivia/Ecuador:** Uruguay began in the basement in 2021–22 but later saw Bolivia and Ecuador sink lower, swapping places in the obscurity stakes.
- **El Salvador vs. Guatemala:** El Salvador has the dubious honour of being the single least visited overall (just 10 travellers across four years), consistently outperforming no one, though Guatemala was never far away.

Macro-Storylines

Key Insights

- Connectivity is destiny: Countries without direct flights (e.g., **El Salvador, Nauru, Guinea**) are structurally disadvantaged.
- Post-COVID divide: Some destinations (**Poland, Finland**) recovered quickly, while others (**Samoa, Syria, Guinea**) never rebounded.
- Instability and affordability are deterrents: Conflict, cost of access, and weak infrastructure keep many **African nations** and parts of the **Middle East** in the bottom.
- Silence equals obscurity: Countries without tourism board presence in Australia (**Central Asia, small island states**) remain invisible, regardless of their potential appeal.



Looking at the least visited destinations for Australians reveals more than just numbers. These rankings surface structural challenges, from lack of connectivity to geopolitical instability, that keep some countries locked at the margins of Aussie travel.

Connectivity Gaps Hold Countries Back

Many of the destinations consistently trapped at the bottom share one factor: **no direct air links to Australia**. Countries like **El Salvador, Moldova, Guinea, and Nauru** simply lack the infrastructure or airline capacity to support inbound travel. Even when they appear on Australians' radar, multi-leg journeys with high costs make them uncompetitive against closer, better-connected options like Asia-Pacific hubs.

The Post-COVID Divide

The recovery split is stark. Some destinations never returned after the border reopening period. **Samoa, Syria, Montenegro, and Guinea** remained locked in the bottom tier, showing no signs of rebound. By contrast, **Argentina, Poland, and Finland** briefly appeared in the bottom 20 in 2021–22 but then disappeared from the low ranks once global travel patterns normalised. This divide shows which destinations bounced back, and which were permanently left behind.

Cost of Living & Geopolitical Barriers

Affordability and stability play major roles in shaping the bottom of the list. Many of the countries here (**Zimbabwe, Somalia, Syria, Liberia, and Sudan**) face economic or political challenges that deter travel. Even resource-rich states like **Nigeria** have struggled with safety perceptions and high costs of access. Meanwhile, niche luxury destinations like **Seychelles and Reunion** are priced out of reach for mainstream Aussie travellers, limiting their appeal to a very narrow audience.

Marketing Absence Equals Obscurity

A striking feature of the bottom group is the lack of visibility. Destinations like **Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan** are rarely marketed in the Australian tourism ecosystem. Without active regional tourism boards or brand presence, they remain invisible to travellers, regardless of their attractions. In contrast, countries with stronger marketing (such as **Vietnam** or **Japan**) surged up the rankings during the same period.

AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLERS' GHOST DESTINATIONS (2021–2025)

TABLE 11: COUNTRIES WITH <5 OR 0 AUSTRALIAN TOURISTS BETWEEN 2021–2025.

Key:	<5 Visitors	No Visitors
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21-25	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Anguilla	Albania	Armenia	Angola	Albania
Antigua and Barbuda	Algeria	Andorra	Anguilla	Algeria
Aruba	Antigua and Barbuda	Angola	Antigua and Barbuda	Andorra
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	Anguilla	Aruba	Anguilla
Bahamas	Bahrain	Antigua and Barbuda	Azerbaijan	Antigua and Barbuda
Barbados	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Aruba	Bahamas	Aruba
Belarus	Bulgaria	Azerbaijan	Bahrain	Azerbaijan
Belize	Burundi	Bahamas	Barbados	Bahamas
Bermuda	Cameroon	Bahrain	Belarus	Barbados
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	Ecuador	Barbados	Belize	Belarus
Botswana	Ghana	Belarus	Bermuda	Belize
Burkina Faso	Guam	Belize	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	Bermuda
Cameroon	Kiribati	Bermuda	Botswana	Bhutan
Cape Verde	Korea, Democratic People's Republic of North	Bhutan	Burkina Faso	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba

Cayman Islands	Kuwait	Bolivia	Cameroon	Botswana
Chad	Moldova	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	Cape Verde	Burkina Faso
Comoros	Romania	Botswana	Cayman Islands	Burundi
Congo, Democratic Republic of	Seychelles	Burkina Faso	Chad	Cameroon
Cote d'Ivoire	Slovenia	Burundi	Comoros	Cape Verde
Cuba	South Sudan	Cameroon	Congo, Democratic Republic of	Cayman Islands
Curacao	Tonga	Cape Verde	Congo, Republic of	Chad
Djibouti	Tunisia	Cayman Islands	Costa Rica	Comoros
Dominican Republic	Ukraine	Chad	Cote d'Ivoire	Congo, Democratic Republic of
Equatorial Guinea	Wales	Comoros	Cuba	Cote d'Ivoire
Eritrea	Zambia	Congo, Democratic Republic of	Curacao	Cuba
Estonia	Afghanistan	Congo, Republic of	Djibouti	Curacao
Falkland Islands	Andorra	Cote d'Ivoire	Dominica	Djibouti
Gabon	Angola	Cuba	Dominican Republic	Dominica
Gambia	Anguilla	Curacao	El Salvador	Dominican Republic
Gaza Strip and West Bank	Aruba	Djibouti	Equatorial Guinea	Egypt
Greenland	Bahamas	Dominican Republic	Eritrea	El Salvador
Guadeloupe	Barbados	El Salvador	Estonia	Equatorial Guinea
Guinea Bissau	Belarus	Equatorial Guinea	Falkland Islands	Eritrea
Guyana	Belize	Eritrea	Gabon	Estonia

Holy See	Bermuda	Estonia	Gambia	Falkland Islands
Honduras	Bhutan	Falkland Islands	Gaza Strip and West Bank	Gabon
Isle of Man	Bolivia	Gabon	Greenland	Gambia
Jersey	Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba	Gambia	Guadeloupe	Gaza Strip and West Bank
Korea, Democratic People's Republic	Botswana	Gaza Strip and West Bank	Guinea	Greenland
Lesotho	Burkina Faso	Greenland	Guinea Bissau	Guadeloupe
Libya	Cape Verde	Guadeloupe	Guyana	Guam
Madagascar	Cayman Islands	Guam	Holy See	Guatemala
Mali	Chad	Guatemala	Honduras	Guinea
Marshall Islands	Comoros	Guinea Bissau	Isle of Man	Guinea Bissau
Martinique	Congo, Democratic	Guyana	Jamaica	Guyana
Mayotte	Congo, Republic of	Holy See	Jersey	Holy See
Monaco	Cook Islands	Honduras	Kiribati	Honduras
Montserrat	Costa Rica	Isle of Man	Korea, Democratic People's Republic	Isle of Man
Mozambique	Cote d'Ivoire	Jersey	Kyrgyzstan	Jamaica
Namibia	Cuba	Kazakhstan	Latvia	Jersey
Nicaragua	Curacao	Kiribati	Lesotho	Korea, Democratic People's Republic
Niger	Djibouti	Korea, Democratic People's Republic	Libya	Kosovo
Niue	Dominica	Kyrgyzstan	Lithuania	Lesotho
Paraguay	Dominican Republic	Latvia	Luxembourg	Liberia
Puerto Rico	Equatorial Guinea	Lesotho	Macau (SAR of China)	Libya
Queen Maud Land (Norway)	Eritrea	Liberia	Madagascar	Lithuania

Sao Tome & Principe	Estonia	Libya	Malawi	Madagascar
Sierra Leone	Falkland Islands	Luxembourg	Mali	Malawi
St Kitts & Nevis	Gabon	Macau (SAR of China)	Marshall Islands	Mali
Suriname	Gambia	Madagascar	Martinique	Marshall Islands
Tajikistan	Gaza strip and West Bank	Mali	Mauritania	Martinique
Togo	Greenland	Marshall Islands	Mayotte	Mayotte
Trinidad and Tobago	Guadeloupe	Martinique	Moldova	Micronesia, Federal States of
Turks & Caicos Islands	Guatemala	Mauritania	Monaco	Moldova
Tuvalu	Guinea Bissau	Mayotte	Montserrat	Monaco
Ukraine	Guyana	Micronesia, Federal States of	Mozambique	Montserrat
Uzbekistan	Holy See	Monaco	Namibia	Mozambique
Venezuela, Bolivian Republic of	Honduras	Montserrat	Nicaragua	Namibia
Wallis & Futuna	Iceland	Mozambique	Niger	Nicaragua
Yemen	Isle of Man	Namibia	Niue	Niger
	Jamaica	Nicaragua	Northern Ireland	Nigeria
	Jersey	Niger	Paraguay	Niue
	Kazakhstan	Niue	Puerto Rico	Panama
	Kosovo	Panama	Queen Maud Land (Norway)	Paraguay
	Kyrgyzstan	Paraguay	Samoa, American	Puerto Rico
	Laos	Puerto Rico	Sao Tome & Principe	Queen Maud Land (Norway)

	Latvia	Queen Maud Land (Norway)	Senegal	Reunion
	Lesotho	Reunion	Seychelles	Rwanda
	Libya	Rwanda	Sierra Leone	Samoa, American
	Lithuania	Sao Tome & Principe	Slovakia	Sao Tome & Principe
	Luxembourg	Seychelles	Somalia	Senegal
	Macau (SAR of China)	Sierra Leone	St Kitts & Nevis	Sierra Leone
	Madagascar	St Kitts & Nevis	Sudan	Somalia
	Malawi	Suriname	Suriname	St Kitts & Nevis
	Mali	Tajikistan	Tajikistan	Sudan
	Marshall Islands	Togo	Togo	Suriname
	Martinique	Trinidad and Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago	Syria
	Mauritania	Turkmenistan	Turks & Caicos Islands	Tajikistan
	Mayotte	Turks & Caicos Islands	Tuvalu	Togo
	Micronesia, Federal States of	Tuvalu	Ukraine	Trinidad and Tobago
	Monaco	Ukraine	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan
	Mongolia	Uzbekistan	Venezuela, Bolivian Republic	Turks & Caicos Islands
	Montserrat	Venezuela, Bolivian Republic	Wallis & Futuna	Tuvalu
	Mozambique	Wallis & Futuna	Yemen	Ukraine
	Myanmar	Yemen	Zambia	Uzbekistan
	Namibia			Venezuela, Bolivian Republic
	Nicaragua			Wallis & Futuna
	Niger			Yemen
	Niue			Zambia

	Northern Ireland			
	Palau			
	Panama			
	Paraguay			
	Puerto Rico			
	Queen Maud Land (Norway)			
	Reunion			
	Rwanda			
	Samoa, American			
	Sao Tome & Principe			
	Senegal			
	Sierra Leone			
	Slovakia			
	Somalia			
	St Kitts & Nevis			
	Suriname			
	Tajikistan			
	Togo			
	Trinidad and Tobago			
	Turkmenistan			

	Turks & Caicos Islands			
	Tuvalu			
	Uzbekistan			
	Venezuela, Bolivian Republic of			
	Wallis & Futuna			
	Yemen			

Disclaimer: The data in this list has been arranged in alphabetical order.

Momentum & Persistence

Key Insights

- **Dozens of destinations** recorded 0 visitors for four straight years — a structural invisibility defined by distance, instability, or lack of direct flights.
- Near-ghosts like **Tonga, Bosnia, and Armenia** briefly registered <5 travellers, but never reached sustainable visibility.
- One-year curiosities (e.g., **Wales, Bulgaria, Seychelles**) show how fleeting data blips don't translate into long-term travel trends.



At the very bottom of the Overseas Arrivals and Departures data sit the “ghost destinations”: countries and territories that either never recorded an Australian traveller, or barely did. Analysing their persistence, flickers of activity, and one-off appearances reveals the structural barriers that keep them off the travel map.

The Consistently Invisible

A large cohort of destinations registered **0 visitors across all four years**. This includes much of the Caribbean (**Barbados, Aruba, Antigua & Barbuda, Anguilla, Bermuda, Guadeloupe, Turks & Caicos, and others**), parts of **sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and more)**, and politically restricted or war-affected states (**North Korea, West Bank, Libya, Yemen**). Their total invisibility is no accident as distance, lack of air connectivity, conflict, and absence of tourism promotion lock them in a state of permanent obscurity.

The Near-Ghosts

Some destinations showed **occasional <5 visitors**, but never crossed into measurable demand. Examples include **Tonga, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Romania, Ghana, Kuwait, and Ecuador** in 2021–22, and **Armenia** in 2022–23. These “near-ghosts” flickered into the dataset briefly, then quickly slipped back into invisibility. They reflect niche or incidental travel, often diplomatic, familial, or academic rather than tourism-driven.

The One-Year Curiosities

A smaller group appeared **once with minimal numbers, then disappeared again**. For instance, **Wales and Bulgaria** showed up with <5 in 2021–22, before vanishing from the bottom lists in later years. **Albania, South Sudan, and Seychelles** also recorded tiny counts in 2021–22 before falling into zeros. These destinations highlight how, without stable connectivity or marketing, any spark of interest is unsustainable.

Presence Index

Key Insights

- **60+ destinations** never registered a single Australian traveller in four years — permanent invisibility shaped by distance, conflict, or lack of air links.
- **Armenia, Tonga, Bosnia, and Ghana** flickered briefly, then disappeared — unstable absentees that never sustained presence.
- **Kiribati, Seychelles, and Guam** repeatedly shifted between 0 and <5, symbolising “flicker destinations” that hover on the margins of visibility.
- The **Presence Index** highlights how absence is not random but structured by geography, geopolitics, and connectivity gaps.



For destinations that recorded 0 or fewer than five visitors, we built a **Presence Index**.

Each year, destinations were scored based on visibility in the data:

- 0 = total absence (no visitors)
- 1 = flicker of presence (<5 travellers)
- 2 = marginally measurable (just above the cut-off but still negligible)

The **Presence Index** is the average of these scores across 2021–2025.

- A score of **0.0** = total invisibility across all years.
- A score of **0.25–0.5** = “flicker destinations”, those that briefly appeared, then vanished again.
- A score closer to **1** = unstable absentees, present sporadically but never establishing consistent demand.

Absolute Invisibility

Dozens of countries sit at a flat **0.0**, never registering a single Australian traveller in four years. This group includes much of the **Caribbean (e.g. Barbados, Aruba, Antigua & Barbuda)**, **sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Chad)**, and politically restricted states like **North Korea, Libya, and Yemen**. They are the immovably and structurally absent from Australian travel.

The Unstable Absentees

Some destinations flickered briefly into the data, only to vanish again. **Armenia** registered <5 in 2022–23 before dropping back to zero. **Tonga, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Romania, Ghana, and Kuwait** appeared in 2021–22 but then disappeared from the radar. Their Presence Index hovers around 0.25–0.5 — unstable, unsustained blips.

The Flicker Destinations

A handful repeatedly shifted between 0 and <5, marking them as unstable but not entirely absent. **Kiribati, Seychelles, and Guam** are examples: they recorded tiny counts in some years but fell back to 0 in others. Their sporadic appearances reflect incidental travel rather than tourism flows.

Regional & Continental Trends

Key Insights

- **Africa** is the epicentre of invisibility. Even tourism icons like **Botswana** and **Madagascar** recorded no travellers.
- The **Caribbean** is structurally absent, its entire cluster priced out by distance and flight complexity.
- **Pacific microstates** like **Tuvalu** and **Niue** show proximity isn't enough. Without airlift and marketing, they remain invisible.
- **Eastern Europe's** periphery (**Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan**) never bounced back, underlining the uneven recovery across Europe.
- Conflict and instability lock out entire regions, with **Libya, Yemen,** and **Gaza/West Bank** permanently absent.



When looking at the destinations that Australians *never* travelled to between 2021–2025, the patterns aren't random. The absence clusters regionally, pointing to structural barriers: distance, safety, flight access, and even diplomatic ties.

Africa

Africa dominates the 0-visitors list, with countries like **Burkina Faso, Chad, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo** recording no Australian travellers across four years. Even countries with tourism potential (**Botswana, Namibia, and Madagascar**) remained invisible. This reflects a combination of factors: minimal aviation links, high costs, and safety concerns. Only a handful of African nations (e.g. Ghana, South Sudan, Seychelles) ever flickered into the <5 category, and even then, their presence was short-lived.

The Caribbean & Latin America

The **Caribbean** is almost entirely absent, with **Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Anguilla, and the Bahamas** all locked at zero. Similarly, **Central and South American states** like **Belize, Guyana, Suriname, and Paraguay** saw no recorded Australian travellers. The sheer distance from Australia, combined with indirect and costly flight routes, makes these destinations practically unreachable for mainstream travel.

Pacific Microstates

Surprisingly, parts of the Pacific (Australia's backyard) appear on the 0-visitors list. **Tuvalu, Niue, Wallis & Futuna, and the Marshall Islands** never registered travellers. Others like **Kiribati, Guam, and Seychelles** flickered between 0 and <5, but never crossed into measurable demand. These cases highlight that proximity alone doesn't guarantee traffic: without flights, infrastructure, or tourism campaigns, small island states vanish from Australians' travel radar.

Eastern Europe

A cluster of **Eastern European and Balkan states** registered either zero or minimal numbers. **Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Moldova, and Kosovo** all appear repeatedly as absentees. Some, like **Bosnia, Romania, and Slovenia**, briefly appeared with <5 in 2021–22, but quickly dropped back to zero in subsequent years. This illustrates the post-COVID divide: Western Europe bounced back strongly, while its eastern periphery remained absent.

Middle East

Regions affected by political instability are heavily represented: **Libya, Yemen, Syria, Gaza/West Bank** all sat at zero across the years. **Bahrain and Kuwait** briefly flickered into <5 but never moved beyond marginal presence. Here, safety perceptions and closed borders are the decisive barriers.

Patterns of Absence

Key Insights

- Structural zeros dominate. Countries like **Libya, Tuvalu, and Belarus** never recorded a single traveller across four years.
- Intermittent ghosts like **Bosnia, Ghana, Kuwait** show that some destinations *can* flicker into the data, but remain too marginal to sustain presence.
- Latent potential exists in underconnected regions. **Eastern Europe** and the Caribbean could emerge if airlift and awareness improve.
- The distinction between “**locked out**” and “**untapped**” markets reframes the absence story. Some destinations are permanently invisible, while others are simply waiting for the right conditions.

Tracking destinations with no measurable visitors from Australia between 2021 and 2025 reveals two distinct groups: the **structural zeros** (countries that remained at zero across all four years due to geopolitical, economic, or logistical barriers) and the **intermittent ghosts** that flickered into the data with <5 travellers but never built consistent demand.

Structural Zeros

Dozens of destinations (from **Belarus, Cuba, and Libya** to **Tuvalu, Wallis & Futuna, and the Marshall Islands**) remained at a hard zero every year. These cases fall into three broad categories:

- **Conflict & instability:** Nations like **Libya, Yemen, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan** saw no recorded Australian travellers, reflecting both danger on the ground and official travel advisories.
- **Lack of connectivity:** Pacific microstates like **Tuvalu, Niue, and Wallis & Futuna** highlight how absence of direct flights keeps entire countries off the travel map.
- **Diplomatic or visa barriers:** Destinations such as **North Korea** and **Belarus** underscore how politics alone can erase any possibility of leisure or business travel.

These are unlikely to change without systemic shifts in security, aviation or diplomacy.

Intermittent Ghosts

Other destinations occasionally surfaced with <5 visitors before disappearing again. **Bosnia & Herzegovina, Romania, Ghana, Kuwait, Seychelles, and Armenia** are examples. Their brief appearance suggests there *is* a trickle of movement (perhaps expatriates, niche business trips, or one-off family connections), but never enough to establish a measurable flow.

Latent Potential

Some intermittent ghosts belong to regions with untapped potential. **Eastern European states like Slovenia and Bulgaria, or Caribbean islands such as Antigua & Barbuda**, are not inherently unattractive destinations. Their absence is structural, driven by **distance, cost and lack of flight links**, not lack of appeal. Should aviation or tourism boards invest in connections and awareness, these could move from “invisible” to measurable markets.

Relative Positioning

Key Insights

- Even invisibility has rivalries. Countries like **Nigeria** and **Ghana** traded places as Australia's least-visible African destinations.
- Pacific microstates battle structural isolation. **Kiribati** and **Tuvalu** flicker in and out, but flight access keeps them largely absent.
- **Eastern Europe's** ghost entries like **Ukraine**, **Armenia**, and **Moldova** each appeared with token <5 visitors in different years before sliding back into nothingness.
- Conflict-affected states such as **Belarus**, **Cuba**, and **Yemen** never registered any Australians at all.



Even among the world's least-visited destinations by Australians, there is movement, a silent shuffle at the very bottom of the table. Some countries trade places between registering a token handful of visitors (<5) and disappearing completely, while others remain entrenched as perennial zeros.

Head-to-Head Rivalries of Absence

- **Nigeria vs. Ghana:** In 2021–22, Nigeria recorded <5 visitors while Ghana did the same; by 2022–23 Ghana surfaced again with <5 while Nigeria slipped back to zero. They effectively traded the role of West Africa's least-visible destination.
- **Albania vs. Kosovo:** Both Balkan countries hovered in the margins, with Albania showing <5 in 2021–22 before vanishing by 2024–25, while Kosovo didn't appear until 2024–25 (at 0).
- **Kiribati vs. Tuvalu:** These Pacific microstates highlight how limited connectivity suppresses presence. Kiribati flickered into <5 in 2021–22, but by 2024–25 both Kiribati and Tuvalu were back at hard zero.

Destination Swaps

- **Ukraine vs. Armenia:** Ukraine had <5 in 2021–22 before fading to 0 for subsequent years, while Armenia surfaced briefly with <5 in 2022–23 before vanishing again. Both struggled, but not in the same year.
- **Moldova vs. El Salvador:** Moldova managed <5 in 2021–22 but dropped into the permanent zero bracket afterwards, while El Salvador did the reverse, staying at 0 in earlier years but surfacing briefly in 2022–23 before dropping again.
- **Bahrain vs. Luxembourg:** Tiny but globally connected hubs, both briefly recorded <5 travellers in early years before falling back into the structural zero group.

Steady Invisibility

Meanwhile, countries like **Belarus, Cuba, and Yemen** never budged: hard zeros every year, impervious to the small shifts at the margins. These anchors create the backdrop against which the tiny movements of rivals like **Nigeria, Ghana, and Armenia** appear almost competitive.

Macro-Storylines

Key Insights

- The **Pacific** and **Caribbean** vanish from the data because of missing routes, not lack of interest.
- War and sanctions explain zeros for **Ukraine, North Korea, Libya,** and **Syria.**
- Mindshare matters. Destinations like **Estonia** and **Paraguay** are technically accessible but culturally invisible to Australians.
- Without tourism boards actively promoting them, entire countries remain off Australians' radars.



Even in an era of surging outbound travel, dozens of destinations never see Australians. Looking across 2021–2025, the reasons for persistent zeros and <5 counts fall into four powerful storylines.

Connectivity Voids

Some countries are “missing” simply because they lack the aviation links to bring Australians in. Pacific microstates like **Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands** have little or no direct air access from Australia, leaving them almost unreachable for the average traveller. Similarly, **Caribbean islands** such as **Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, and the Bahamas** are too distant, requiring multiple flight changes via the US, an impractical proposition for most.

Geopolitical Blockages

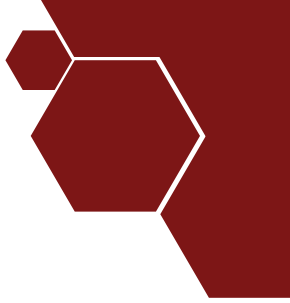
Conflict, sanctions, and collapsed tourism infrastructure render some destinations effectively off-limits. **North Korea, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Belarus**’ absences are driven by political barriers rather than distance. The data also shows a total lack of movement for countries like **Ukraine** post-2022, a stark reflection of war and instability.

Cultural Disconnects

Not every technically accessible country resonates with Australian travellers. Despite being safe and open, **Estonia, Paraguay, and Honduras** recorded no measurable traffic. These absences highlight the role of cultural familiarity, diaspora connections, and established tourism narratives. Countries with little “mindshare” among Australians are ignored, even when flights exist.

Tourism Marketing Silence

Many countries in the **Caribbean, Central Africa, and parts of Eastern Europe** have made no attempt to market themselves in Australia. Without destination campaigns, trade partnerships, or visibility in travel media, they remain invisible. The likes of **Guadeloupe, Suriname, and Equatorial Guinea** are simply not in the Australian travel conversation.

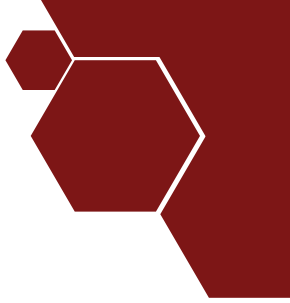


Conclusion

Between 2021 and 2025, we see that the same countries dominate the top ranks year after year, while others, often just as rich in history, wildlife, or culture, languish at the very bottom, or never appear at all. What the data reveals is not only the **momentum of mainstream favourites**, but also the **persistence of invisibility** among destinations cut off by distance, politics, or lack of awareness.

For **Forward Travel**, this isn't a void but an opportunity. The absence of Australians in countries from **Namibia to Nicaragua, Bhutan to Bolivia** reflects untapped potential, not lack of value. By shining a light on the places that fall outside the usual travel corridors, Forward Travel empowers Australians to take the road less travelled, to discover the world beyond Indonesia and Europe's capitals, and to play a role in reshaping the national travel map.

The message is clear: **Australian travel habits are predictable, but they don't have to be.**



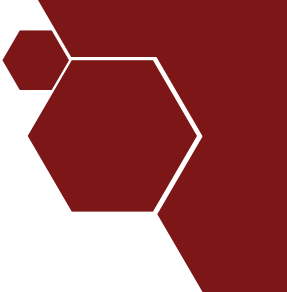
Methodology & Approach

All figures in this report were sourced from the Department of Home Affairs' Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data, covering the years 2021–22 through 2024–25. The data was sorted annually to identify the top 20 most popular destinations, the bottom 20 least visited, and the countries that recorded fewer than five or zero visitors.

To bring the rankings to life, several analytical tools were deployed:

- **Volatility Index:** Measured the average year-to-year movement in rank for each destination in the top and bottom 20, highlighting stability vs. fluctuation.
- **Presence Index:** Applied to the zero/<5 category, tracking how often countries moved between no visitors, near-ghost numbers (<5), and marginal presence.
- **Regional & Macro Analyses:** Grouped countries into continents or regions to detect broader shifts (e.g. Southeast Asia's rise vs. Africa's stagnation).
- **Relative Positioning:** Compared “rival” destinations to identify swaps in popularity or absence (e.g. Japan vs. South Korea in the top; Liberia vs. Sierra Leone at the bottom).
- **Macro-storylines:** Linked the data to wider drivers such as aviation connectivity, conflict, cost of living, tourism marketing, and cultural affinity.

By combining raw visitor counts with these interpretive frameworks, the analysis goes beyond tables and rankings to tell the larger story of how—and just as importantly, where not—Australians are travelling.



Sources

Department of Home Affairs' Overseas Arrivals and Departures (OAD) data

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**THANK
YOU!**