



# The School Trip Index Report

Welcome to the first School Trip Index Report: exploring the latest trends in school trips and their power to shape young lives

PGL  
Beyond  
THE BREAKTHROUGH NETWORK





## Section 1

# A welcome from our CEO

Young people are at the **heart of everything we do** at PGL Beyond and have been since 1957, when our founder Peter Gordon Lawrence first led canoeing trips along the River Wye. Young people inspire our work, guide our decisions and shape the experiences we create.

Opportunities to learn outside the classroom have evolved over the years and are now seen by both teachers and guardians as a **great opportunity to give young people a balance of skills** that complement a classroom education. As a leader in this sector, we've been lucky enough to not only be at the centre of this transformation but play a huge role in supporting the impact this has had on young people's lives.

Through school tours we're able to open students to the possibilities available to them in life, **allowing them to build confidence** as they travel without their family for the first time, gain new skills, practice different languages and explore new cities and cultures.

In developing the School Trip Index Report we are able to utilise our position as market leader to **share insights into the educational travel industry** and, in doing so, explore the importance of these experiences for young people – especially those who might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience them. We also look to the future to identify the trends likely to impact school tours, and you'll be able to hear from some of our knowledgeable experts on the importance of learning outside the classroom.

School travel can not only unlock a new love for learning, but also **complement classroom education by letting students see the curriculum in action**, or put their learning into practice, all while building vital personal skills such as team building, problem solving and independence.

I'm incredibly proud of the experiences we provide for students and teachers, with an offering that has expanded considerably over the years and continues to evolve. And so, **I'm delighted to be able to share these insights** into this exciting sector and how we play our part in continuing to enrich young people's lives.

Thank you

Anthony Jones  
CEO, PGL Beyond

**Each year, 450,000+ students embark on an experience with PGL Beyond, exploring 160+ destinations across 56 countries – with 16 sites in the UK, three in France and three in Australia.**



**450,000+**  
students



**160+ destinations**  
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**16 sites**

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## Section 2

# Meet the PGL Beyond Team

### **Dr John Allan, Head of Impact & Breakthrough Learning, PGL Beyond**

Dr John Allan is a leading academic in Sports Pedagogy, Psychology and Adventure Education, with a PhD in Positive Psychology and Building Psychological Resilience through Outdoor Adventure. He brings years of research and practical experience to his new role as Head of Impact & Breakthrough Learning at PGL Beyond. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Dr John is passionate about creating meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom.



### **Linda Green, Head of Product Portfolio, PGL Beyond**

Linda Green began her career in educational travel over three decades ago with PGL Beyond sub-brand European Study Tours, and is now the organisation's Head of Product Portfolio, overseeing all brands within the network. During her time with PGL Beyond, Linda launched the successful student LIVE! Conferences at Disneyland Paris and, most recently, in New York.





## Section 3

# The evolution of the school tour

### Introducing Dr John Allan, Head of Impact and Breakthrough Learning at PGL Beyond

At a time when young people seem to be cocooned in virtual worlds, opportunities to see the wider world are a vital part of a healthy upbringing, opening up real experiences that deliver personal growth. I distinctly remember my first school residential trip to the Yorkshire Dales. A teacher called Mr Hall had arranged it in his own time. Over three days, which seemed to last forever, we explored limestone rock formations like professional climbers, played in streams looking for freshwater crayfish, gazed at star-filled skies, and laughed as we got rained on. The most memorable part of the trip was **replaying the experiences as we chatted in the dark** in our makeshift bunk barn. I have since revisited the location with my own kids, and their children.

**These moments have stayed with me for life – they showed me that there was a wider world to explore, helped me bond with my peers outside of the playground and gave me the confidence to try new things.**





As the leading outdoor education provider, we have spent **decades creating memorable experiences that give young people across the UK and beyond these same foundations.**

And while some things remain the same – bunkbeds, campfires and the fight to sit at the back of the bus – a lot has changed.

Although in today's climate, school trips may require more systematic planning and risk assessment, the spirit of adventure, inclusivity and inspiration shines bright through out-of-classroom learning. Here, **children are able to form deep connections** with their surroundings and each other, through a combination of shared excitement and vulnerability.

Authentic challenges on school trips, at home or abroad, enable children to reflect and gain perspective – **to see beyond the immediacy of their personal experience and to focus on the wider world around them.** Importantly, they build the resilience needed for them to adapt to present difficulties and build capacity for their future.





# Trends driving the school tours experience

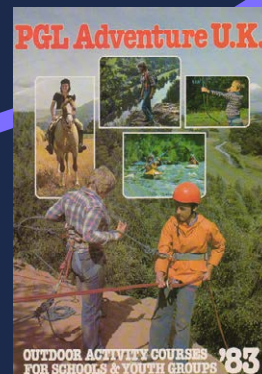
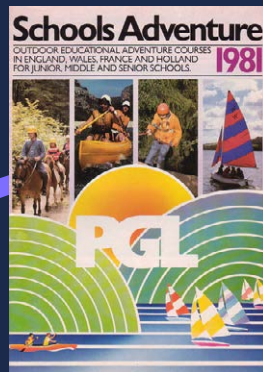
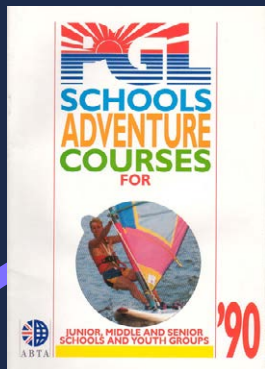
**Flying further afield:** 80% of trips through PGL Beyond tour brands now take place overseas showing a massive trend towards broadening horizons through international experiences. As a result, these opportunities provide more young people with their first time travelling by plane (16%) compared to their parents when they were young (8%).

**Adrenaline levels are up:** Activities have got more adventurous, with young people today much **more likely to engage in adrenaline-inducing experiences** than their parents, whether it's trying a zip wire (15% vs 9%) or braving the high ropes (14% vs 9%). PGL Beyond has even introduced new adrenaline fuelled activities including Quick Jump, allowing dare devils to experience the sensation of freefalling before being safely and gently returned to the ground with ropes!

**Over half (54%)** of parents went on a school trip within their local area, while only **30% visited a European country.**

The most common activities included **visiting a museum (51%), visiting a zoo/animal park (38%)** and **swimming (35%)** – all still popular with schools today.

The fondest memories are of news and exciting experiences, such as **sharing a room with classmates (36%), visiting new cities (36%)** and **taking part in new activities (35%).**



## Section 4

# Transformative new experiences

There's nothing more powerful than seeing how **school trips can transform students and offer them breakthrough moments** through experiences that go beyond the classroom. From cultural experiences to opportunities to see new places, these visits spark children's curiosity and introduce them to new ideas and new possibilities they might not otherwise discover.

### Top activities kids want to take part in on school trips<sup>1</sup>



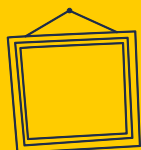
**41%**

Swimming



**37%**

Visiting a zoo  
or animal park



**32%**

Visiting a  
museum



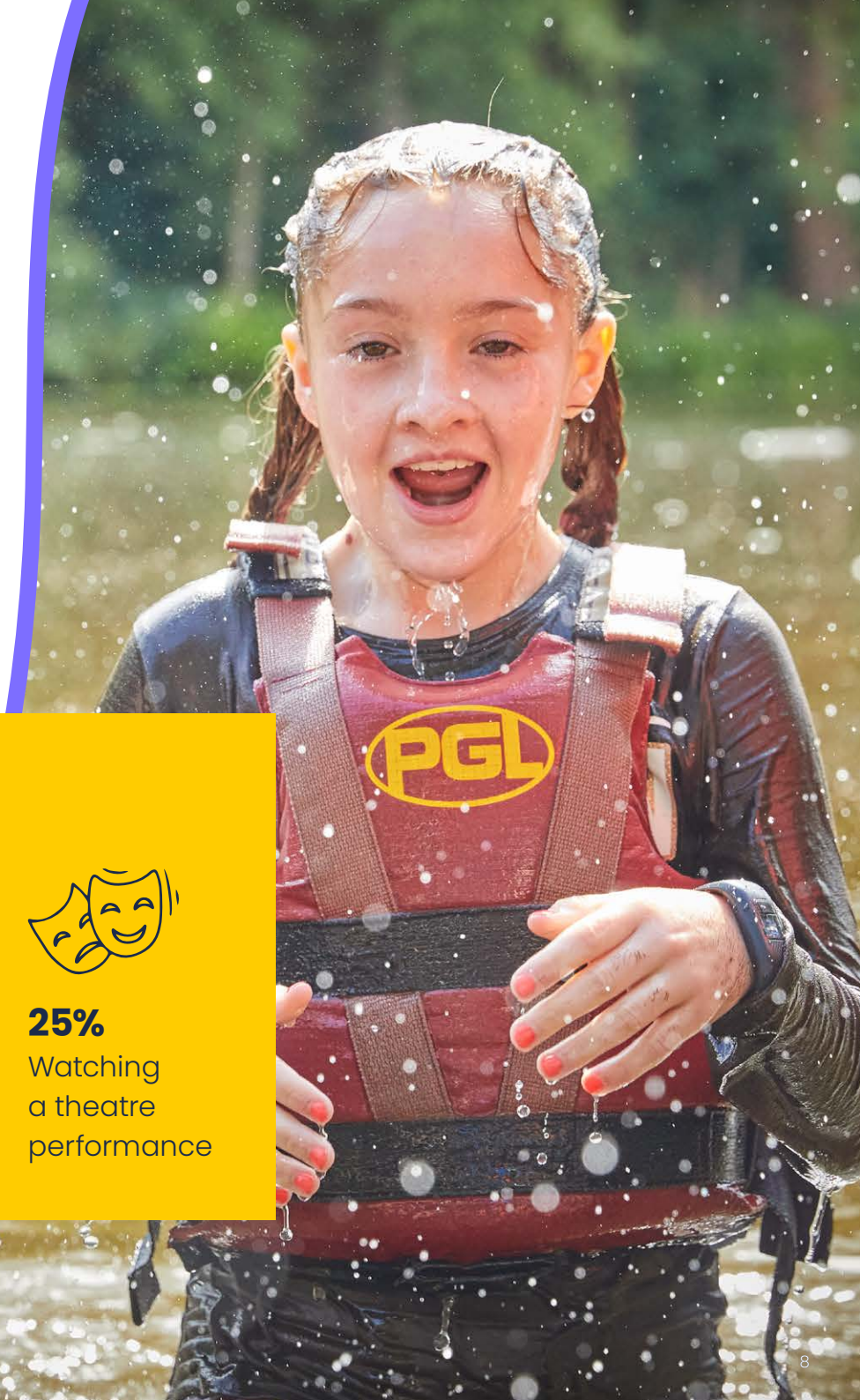
**26%**

Attending a  
theatre trip e.g.  
tour or workshop



**25%**

Watching  
a theatre  
performance







## Swimming

Swimming is understood to be an important life skill by parents and pupils alike, but it's also a personal challenge which can be a **stepping stone to other experiences**. Plucking up the courage to get in the pool and facing your fears to venture out of your depth, encouraged by confidence in your skills and the safe environment of a supervised pool, is a profound moment of self-discovery and belief for many children. It is this type of breakthrough we seek to recreate as often as possible through a child's development.

## Up on stage

Going to see a play or theatre performance is always a popular school trip, from the magic of Wicked to the romance of Moulin Rouge. Whether it's for the gritty drama, historical reimagining or showstopping showtunes, **theatre trips and plays offer fantastic cultural experiences** and can inspire a passion for performing arts.







PGL Beyond hosts a **number of theatre trips**, with the top locations including London, New York and Stratford-Upon-Avon.

### Top school trip theatre shows 2024<sup>2</sup>:

#### How many have you seen?

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ Wicked             | ✓ Hamilton        |
| ✓ Lion King          | ✓ Six the Musical |
| ✓ Matilda            | ✓ Mamma Mia       |
| ✓ Back to the Future | ✓ Moulin Rouge    |
| ✓ Mrs Doubtfire      | ✓ Frozen          |

**“All the workshops we attended were fantastic. The learners particularly enjoyed seeing the props/set designs up close at the Warner Bros studios and also loved the stage combat workshop! Overall, our learners had a fantastic time. We’re already talking about planning the next one!”**

Teacher talking about a trip to see Matilda and theatre workshops in October 2024



## Did you know?



The percentage of young people taking school trips to see Wicked increased following the release of the motion picture. Sounds like school trips are really Defying Gravity this year.

**"26 out of 40 pupils had never been to London before so this was fantastic for them to see two shows and all the sight-seeing. Everything worked out perfectly thanks to the meticulous timing."**

Teacher talking about their school trip to see Back to the Future and Wicked in October 2024

The percentage of school trips to see Mamma Mia almost doubled between 2024 and 2025... schools are clearly saying **Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! when it comes to ABBA!**





## Section 5

# Opening up the world

PGL Beyond reveals the countries topping the list for school tours and the must-see landmarks teens are keen to visit.

One of the big changes we've seen in school trips in recent years is a widening of destinations for international tours. It's no longer just a coach and ferry to Paris to practice French – many teachers programme visits that **profoundly impress and inspire their pupils**, including the War Graves of Northern France and Auschwitz-Birkenau, near Krakow.

These trips are usually subsidised by schools, giving pupils more affordable ways to see the world beyond the UK.

While we offer trips across the globe, **European counties continue to be the most popular for school visits** including France (24% of school trips take place here), the UK (20%), Spain (13%), Germany (13%) and Belgium (9%)<sup>2</sup>.

**“Having spent over 20 years as a teacher who led many international trips to all corners of the world, I was hugely impressed with the service that I received. The speed of response and helpfulness was beyond anything I had experienced before and made the planning of a trip of this nature much easier for me as a teacher.”**

Teacher reflecting on a school trip to Iceland in October 2024.







**Paris is back in the top-spot for 2025**, following the 2024 Summer Games which saw it fall into second place. Of the destinations further afield, **New York** and **Iceland** are also gaining in popularity with the rise of Geography based trips.

#### 2024 Top 10 regions

1. London
2. Paris
3. Berlin
4. Artois Province
5. Ypres
6. Barcelona
7. New York
8. Krakow
9. Rhine and Moselle
10. Rome

#### 2025 Top 10 regions

1. Paris
2. London
3. Artois Province
4. Berlin
5. Ypres
6. New York
7. Barcelona
8. Krakow
9. Iceland
10. Rhine and Moselle



These findings are hugely important considering increasing reports about children's over-reliance on solitary, social media experiences at the expense of first-hand, shared, authentic learning. **The locations on the top of the list are not surprising, given their accessibility** and how much they feature prominently in the lives of youngsters from a cultural and educational standpoint. Nonetheless, unlike more uniform, familiar settings, all travel provides multiple cues for different senses providing a greater potential for positive learning.

That said, the shift to more exotic, far flung destinations is encouraging. Here, new, novel challenges with a sense of awe are presented, igniting curiosity and more creative ways of thinking. **These experiences provide opportunities to thrive**, allow access to existing memories but, most importantly, **creates new ones with vigour and sustained meaning**. A learned repertoire of social, emotional and cognitive skills can be built in these settings. Such learned resilient behaviour, that helps young people deal successfully with life's challenges, can then be replicated elsewhere.

Did you know?



A quarter (27%) of young people say they are inspired to travel when they're older because of school trips!<sup>1</sup>

A PGL Beyond study of **715 city-based parents** found the cost-of-living crisis was reducing children's opportunities to travel:

- **Seven in 10 urban** parents admitted the cost-of-living crisis was stopping them taking their kids on trips and excursions outside of their local area.
- Because of financial pressures, **24 per cent** curtailed trips abroad, and 19 per cent did the same for staycations.
- But children and families want to do more – **93 per cent** of parents say their children are eager to visit new places further away.<sup>3</sup>

PGL Beyond launched The Breakthrough Fund to support schools with parents who need it the most, and to enable children, no matter what their family's financial situation, a chance to benefit from a residential trip away from home.



## Section 6

# It's all subject-ive

School trips have a profound impact on pupils' interest in academic subjects by providing immersive, real-world experiences that bring learning to life. Our study-based and language courses are **specifically designed to align with the curriculum**, combining adventure activities with cultural excursions or classroom-based teaching. This approach not only **inspires a passion for learning** but also **improves motivation** when children return to school.

There are more **opportunities than ever to immerse students in the subjects they are studying outside of the classroom**, which is why we work so closely with schools and teachers to ensure we are offering trips that are going to complement and build upon the lessons they are teaching. On the right here are a taster of the top travel locations based on a selection of subjects<sup>2</sup>.







By stepping outside the traditional classroom setting, **students can engage with subjects in a tangible way**, deepening their understanding and retention of information. Such experiences can ignite a newfound enthusiasm for topics that may have previously seemed abstract or unengaging, ultimately fostering a more profound and lasting interest in their studies.

**30% of young people** have chosen a subject because of a specific school trip, with the top subjects chosen based on the trip including



**36%**  
History



**31%**  
Geography



**23%**  
Art<sup>1</sup>

Did you know?



31% say they learn better on a school trip than they do in the classroom<sup>1</sup>.



## What's top of the list when it comes to the landmarks and historical places young people would most like to visit?¹



Eiffel Tower

Big Ben



Statue of Liberty



Great Wall of China

Empire State Building

The White House

Sydney Opera House

Iceland  
(Eyjafjallajökull volcano or Blue Lagoon)

Grand Canyon

Buckingham Palace

PGL Beyond offers a range of activities on all its trips, with **Flanders Fields Museum**, the **Statue of Liberty** and the **Roman Colosseum** among the most popular ticketed trips.



## Section 7

# Building skills for life

Dr John Allan explains why these school experiences are so crucial for our children's development.

School trips are about more than the journeys, friendships and telling jokes at the back of the bus. A key element of every PGL Beyond tour is the **mix of high-energy** and **educational activities** – designed to get kids moving, thinking, having fun and learning skills that have real world value. For many children, a primary school trip to an activity centre will be the first time they have stayed away from their parents. The independence they discover, and the bond they form with their peers in this time, **help develop the confidence and self-reliance** that are essential to adult life.

**“He’s come back a more confident and independent boy within a few short days! Incredible range of activities, great staff and a robust safeguarding process. He’s itching to go back already. Seems it’s only got better since I went as a child!”**

Parent speaking about their son's first experience with PGL Beyond.







## A golden thread

Whether a primary residential in the UK or the first trip abroad in secondary, the school trip is an essential rite of passage. Yet learning outside the classroom should not be confined to one transition or year group. **The skills that young people need develop throughout their educational journey** – to establishing the foundations of teamwork and communication that are vital to the workplace and first job interviews.

For schools that are able to plan pupil's development over time, such as **Multi Academy Trusts**, these touchpoints join together to create a golden thread of learning and resilience-building throughout a child's education.



## Overnight stays and independence

PGL, part of PGL Beyond, is the UK's leading provider of **outdoor adventure education residentials**. These trips are seen as vital opportunities for children and young people to develop skills that set them up for life

# REACH

FRAMEWORK



## The REACH framework

When it comes to learning outside the classroom, we've listened to what outcomes matter to schools and pupils. Our new REACH framework has been designed to provide outdoor adventures that spark breakthroughs, weighted towards the development priority for any given class or year group, whether that be: **Relationships, (new) Experiences, Abilities, Character** or **Health** and **Wellbeing**.

## Did you know?



53% of students said going on a trip helped them learn confidence, 52% gained independence and 50% improved teamwork<sup>1</sup>.

## What teachers say

**Three in five** teachers say that children respond well to a non-academic setting (65%) and learning outside the classroom encourages curiosity (63%), provides opportunities for practical skills and problem solving (62%), for communication and teamwork (61%) and confidence building (61%).<sup>4</sup>

**"It is important that pupils have a variety of experiences during their time at school and that schools aren't just all exam focused"**

said a year 8 teacher at a local authority secondary. "It is vital for a child's development: providing social opportunities, challenging pupils, working as part of a team, building confidence and resilience."

**"It's a fantastic experience that all pupils should experience at least once a year"**

said one senior Year 9 teacher at a large multi academy trust, speaking about their trip to a PGL centre, **"You get to see them push themselves out of their comfort zones when they are outside the classroom."**



## Section 8

# Towards wellbeing

Whether on residential trips or international tours, teachers are increasingly seeking activities that will help their pupils to improve their mental health and navigate the pressures of digital life.

### Building resilience

Resilience is the learned capability to adapt positively in the presence of, or even as a result of, adversity. Although resilience is not a panacea for all of society's ills, it comprises a broad set of **personal assets (self-confidence) and external resources (caring relationships) which protect against stress (bounce-back ability) and provide a focus for growth (bounce-beyond ability)**. It is recognised in school-based education as an effective policy for developing adaptive capabilities and future academic success.

**Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE)** offers a unique classroom without walls, an environment where the unpredictability of adventure in natural settings serves as the perfect backdrop for life's real lessons. Here, **young people engage with authentic challenges** that enable the development of skills akin to resilience needed for them to adapt to present difficulties and build capacity for their future.





## The benefits of learning outside

With screen time more tempting than ever, it's no surprise that many young people are craving the thrill of the outdoors and physical activity. When immersed in nature, **children are able to form deep connections with their surroundings, sparking their innate creativity and fostering a profound care for the environment.** Nature encourages learners to pause, reflect and gain perspective – to see beyond the immediacy of their personal experience and to focus on the wider world around them.

Contact with nature, including through educational activities, is **positively associated with better mental health outcomes in children and teenagers.** As little as five minutes of exercise undertaken in an urban green space such as a park or nature trail may be sufficient to boost physical and mental well-being through 'biophilia' described as an innate connection to nature, especially in the young and those suffering from mental illness.



## THRIVE!

In 2024 PGL Beyond developed THRIVE!, as part of the REACH framework, to provide children with a digital detox space, which currently combines **traditional PGL outdoor challenges** with **offline wellbeing activities**. The holistic approach includes yoga, mindfulness, meditation and forest bathing to help children build better connections, improve their resilience and learn to relax.

**“My son is 12 years old and he had a fantastic time. The two-day adventure camp he took part in was wholly inclusive and supportive for him. Particular activities pushed him outside of his comfort zone, but he felt proud and accomplished afterwards.”**

Another parent reflecting on their son's PGL Beyond experience, April 2025



# What teachers say

**Nine in 10 teachers** (95%) say that learning outside of the classroom is important to their pupils' development. **Three in five** (62%) rate this as very important. Whilst almost **two thirds** of teachers surveyed (61%) felt that children were given sufficient opportunities to learn outside the classroom at primary school, **over two thirds** (69%) did not agree with this statement for secondary school age children and 26% said that children did not have enough opportunities at any level.<sup>4</sup>

# What parents say

A PGL Beyond survey in 2023 found that **44 per cent** of parents agree that outdoor learning can help develop resilience and self-confidence.





## Section 9

# Future gazing

**Linda Green talks about the evolution of school trips and educational travel.**

When I joined the educational travel industry in 1992, we were working within very different parameters. Globalisation was not yet the norm and destinations were less accessible, with low cost airlines just starting up and the Eurotunnel still two years away from completion.

**At the time, school trip transport was done almost exclusively by coach and, with those limitations, Paris was by far the most popular overseas destination.**

In the landscape of today, with a wider range of destinations available to schools, the biggest influences we see on demand are: affordability, curriculum links and appeal.

When it comes to affordability, this doesn't necessarily mean the lowest price, but value for money, which comes by balancing these factors to create something impactful and accessible. So, while Paris still accounts for roughly 1:10 school trips, close behind it in popularity are Berlin, New York, Krakow, Barcelona and Iceland.





These latter two locations are great examples of the changing market. We've seen a big increase in demand for **Geography trips to Iceland** because it offers something unique with specific curriculum ties, and has become much more affordable in recent years. In the case of **Barcelona, which has always drawn big crowds for cultural excursions**, the destination has seen increased demand for Spanish language trips, as more and more schools shift their Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) offering from traditional French and German.

Another big change has been the emphasis on employability, both **culturally and in educational initiatives, such as the Gatsby Benchmarks**. What we saw was teachers asking for visits to workplaces and opportunities for students to learn more about careers. **Our solution was the LIVE! Conferences at Disneyland Paris.**

We saw a demand in the market for a product that combined career inspiration with the benefits of an overseas cultural experience and had the appeal of a much-loved, trusted holiday destination.

Our **LIVE! Conferences bring the experts to KS4 & KS5 student audiences**, allowing them to hear firsthand accounts and have their curiosity encouraged through Q&A sessions.

Beginning with just two subjects in 2003 – **Business LIVE! and ICT LIVE!** – we found that the format was incredibly popular, and since then we've added a host of extra subjects, extra dates and two LIVE! Conferences in New York.



## Section 10

# A final word from our CEO

As you can see, as the market leaders in school tours, we understand that outdoor education isn't just a trip – **it's a catalyst for breakthrough moments.** These are the experiences that **spark confidence, build independence** and create **memories that go far beyond the classroom.**

From the thrill of Los Angeles to the chill of Iceland, we offer trips across a range of destinations, and by collaborating with schools, trusts and education leaders, we stay in tune with what makes a school trip not just educational, but unforgettable.

We welcome you to find out more about PGL Beyond and our school trips by emailing **[hello@pglbeyond.com](mailto:hello@pglbeyond.com)**

Thank you  
Anthony Jones  
CEO, PGL Beyond





# PGL Beyond

THE BREAKTHROUGH NETWORK

## References:

1. Research conducted by PGL Beyond and OnePoll in April 2025 with 1,000 UK parents of children in school years 7-13 and their children.
2. PGL Beyond Customer Data, 2024 - 2025
3. Research conducted by PGL Beyond and OnePoll in August 2023 with 715 city-based UK parents of children in school years 6-16
4. Research conducted by Mortar on behalf of PGL, to mark the launch of REACH. A total of 503 teachers of primary (335) and secondary (188) school children were surveyed nationwide

