

‘LANGUAGE BARRIERS’ STOP FIVE MILLION UK ADULTS FROM TRAVELLING ABROAD

Newly launched ‘Speak the World’ translator will help open up the world to travellers

- *Perceived language barriers stop five million UK adults (10%) from travelling the world*
- *More than 60% of UK adults wish they were better at languages – mainly to get more deeply emerged in other cultures (38%), visit a particular country (35%) or meet new people (24%)*
- *Japan tops the list of countries most UK adults would travel too if language were no issue*

Not being able to speak foreign languages is stopping almost five million UK adults (4.7M) from travelling overseas.¹

That’s according to an international study from global hostel-booking site [Hostelworld](#) using Google Surveys, which questioned more than 8,000 people in six countries² about how their language skills impact on travel plans. The research reveals that one in 10 UK adults (10%) – the equivalent of 4.7M adults – are put-off traveling because of language barriers, which particularly affects the younger generation (18-24s) where it rises to 15%.

To help travellers overcome language barriers, Hostelworld has developed a ‘Speak the World’ feature on its hostel-booking app, which uses Google Cloud translate technology to instantly translate up to 43 languages³, ‘speak’ the words for you, and translate the response. This free in-app feature will help people to travel without fears of language issues, enabling them to go even further off the beaten track.

Japan is the top country that UK residents would travel to if languages were no issue (12%), followed by Spain (8%), China (7%), Italy (6%), France (5%) and Russia (4%). Japan is also the top destination that residents of Italy, France (where it’s tied with the USA) and Spain would visit, whereas Americans would head to Italy, and Brazilians would go to the USA.

Otto Rosenberger, CMO at Hostelworld, said: *“The ability to speak other languages isn’t essential when travelling and nobody should let it put them off – but it can make a big difference, helping you to fully immerse yourself in the culture in a way you couldn’t otherwise, all of which is enhanced by the amazing people you’ll be able to meet along the way.”*

With only half of UK adults (51%) able to speak a second language, it's perhaps unsurprising that overall more than six in ten UK adults (62%) wish they were better at speaking languages. The main reasons are so that they can get more deeply immersed in a city's culture (38%), go to a country where it's spoken (35%), to meet new people (24%) and to travel even further off the beaten track (21%).

But as well as the positives, others want to be better at languages to avoid 'lost in translation' mishaps. On previous travels abroad, a fifth (21%) say they got lost while travelling because they couldn't speak the language, a similar number found they couldn't order food they wanted (20%), and one in ten (9%) got on the wrong train, plane or other form of transport.

Other language mishaps include buying things they didn't want or not being able to find a toilet (both 9%), or getting into a fight, insulting someone, or accidentally flirting with someone (all 4%). All of these mean that a significant number of travellers (12%) actually get embarrassed even trying to speak another language.

Otto Rosenberger added: *"Travelling the world is one of the most rewarding experiences in life, yet many still worry that their language skills will let them down while abroad. That's why we've added Google Cloud translate technology into our app, so people can not only find incredible affordable accommodation at the touch of a button, but also seamlessly converse in 43 languages in a fun way – helping open up the world and allow travellers to go even further off the beaten track."*

To use the new 'Speak the World' translate feature on the Hostelworld app, users simply select the desired language and speak into the microphone of their device, and it instantly translates and 'speaks' the words for you. What's more, the device will listen to the response and translate it back, enabling a conversation. It can even be set to display a set of comedic lips that move as the words are being said (*a video demonstration with comedian Phil Wang putting it to the test in Indonesia is [available here](#)*).

The Hostelworld app with the 'Speak the World' feature is available to download on iOS and Android from the [Apple AppStore](#) and [Google Play](#).

- ENDS -

For more information contact:

Nick Bain, Third City

T: 020 3657 9767 | M: 07810 355570 | E: nick@thirdcity.co.uk

About the research

The research was conducted via a Google Consumer Survey of 8,481 adults, split evenly across six countries – the UK, USA, Spain, France, Italy and Brazil, in April 2017.

About Hostelworld

Hostelworld Group is the leading global hostel-booking platform with Hostelworld, Hostelbookers and Hostels.com in its portfolio operating in 19 different languages. Connecting young travellers with hostels around the world, Hostelworld has over 8 million reviews across 33,000 properties in more than 170 countries.

Hostelworld's customers aren't your average tourists; they crave experiences not souvenirs and want to be in the heart of the action. They want to Meet The World, and it's the social nature of hostels that facilitates their travel adventures.

The Hostelworld Group went public in November 2015, listing on the main London and Dublin stock exchanges. Headquartered in Dublin, Hostelworld has offices around the world in London, Shanghai, Sydney and Seoul, and was recently recognised as a Best Workplace for 2016 by the Great Place To Work Institute.

¹ Source: Google survey of 8,481 adults split across the UK, USA, Spain, France, Italy and Brazil. 10% of UK adults say that not speaking the language has stopped them from travelling. UK adult population (18+) is 47,358,000, therefore 4.7 million UK adults have been put of travelling because of language barriers.

² The study was conducted in the UK, Spain, France, the USA, Italy and Brazil.

³ The full list of 43 languages is: Afrikaans, Arabic, Basque, Catalan, Chinese (Hong Kong, Standard, Taiwan), Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch (Belgium, Netherlands), English (American, Australian, Ireland, South African, United Kingdom), Filipino, Finnish, French (Canada, France), Galician, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Malay, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian, European), Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish (Castilian, Mexican), Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Zulu.