

GASTRONOMY AND URBAN EXPERIENCES AMONG THE TOP DRIVERS OF EUROPE'S ATTRACTIVENESS

Brussels, 23 July 2019: Interests and hobbies are significant factors when it comes to selecting a travel destination, according to the European Travel Commission's (ETC) latest research on "Tourism Passion Communities". The study aimed to provide a better understanding of the key *passion groups* and their main drivers, travel habits and paths to book a trip. Ultimately, the analysis uncovers the connection between European travel experiences and travellers' interests or hobbies.

In-depth knowledge of visitors' psychographic characteristics (i.e. motivations, aspirations, behaviour, interests, preferences, passions etc.) can support destinations in providing an added value to the overall travel experience. Leveraging the results of a survey targeting more than 3,000 travellers, four interest-related communities were investigated: gastronomy lovers, city life enthusiasts, immersive explorers and explorers of cultural roots and identity.

Speaking following the publication of the report Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of ETC said: "*The competitive analysis reveals that Europe is very well positioned to attract each of the key passion groups identified. Building on a 6% increase in international tourist arrivals to Europe in 2018, these insights will enable European destinations to effectively connect with these communities and successfully promote Europe based on travellers' passions, in line with the fundamental goal of ETC's new passion-based marketing approach*".

Europe tops the list of attractive destinations for gastronomy lovers and city-life enthusiasts

The study found that gastronomy is the primary interest for travel for 15% of the respondents (second only to nature), with 55% listing it as a relevant aspect in their choice of a holiday destination. Gastronomy lovers prefer travelling in spring and autumn, in line with the seasonality of most food and wine products. Local culinary products, food-related events, vineyard trips and fine-dining experiences play a significant role in attracting visitors from China and the United States.

Enjoying city-life was a relevant driver for half of interviewed respondents, with 13% listing it as their most important motivation for travelling. The number, variety and relative proximity of Europe's iconic cities make the continent an extremely attractive destination for worldwide travellers. 63% noted that although they have travelled to Europe previously to enjoy city-life, they would return for the same reason.

As for the most attractive European destinations for these passions, France, Italy and Spain are top of the list.

"Living like a local" experience appeals to one third of travellers

Travel-related activities undertaken by immersive explorers are characterised by a slower pace of events, reflecting a mindset towards learning about selected interests (or destinations) in greater detail. The concept of "*living like a local*" is particularly alluring for this group. This passion is appealing for more than one third of tourists participating in the study, listed as the most important interest for 9% of travellers. Curiously, respondents tend to come from destinations that can be considered hubs for adventure and exploration themselves, such as Canada, Australia, Brazil and the United States.

The **exploration of cultural roots and identity** was indicated as a relevant aspect for the selection of a holiday destination for 43% of interviewed travellers. This passion is particularly relevant for South Americans and Mexicans, while it is less appealing to travellers from China and the United States. Cultural identity explorers are more likely to travel during June and July and have strong preference for Europe with France, Italy, Spain and the UK mentioned as

attractive destinations to fulfil this interest.

Europe is the leading destination for passion-based travel

Overall, the report confirms that interests and passions are key in the choice of holiday destination by consumers together with general needs such as relaxing or the desire to visit specific locations. The competitive assessment suggests that Europe is in general the preferred region for travellers belonging to each of the four passion groups in scope. These insights will enable tourism organisations, stakeholders and relevant authorities to successfully promote Europe as a sum of travel experiences that can be carried out in multiple destinations around the continent.

The complementing infographic can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/tourism-passion-communities/>

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Media contact

Shane Bradley

Hume Brophy Communications

etc@humbrophy.com

Ph: +32 (0)2 234 6860

Note to editors - About the European Travel Commission

The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 33 member NTOs, including 7 from outside the European Union. Europe is the world's no. 1 tourist destination with 712 million international arrivals in 2018 and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism.

For further information: ETC's corporate website <http://www.etc-corporate.org> is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe. Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to ETC's consumer portal <http://www.visiteurope.com>