

TRAVELLERS REVEAL THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THEIR PLANS TO VISIT EUROPE IN SUMMER 2020

- *Sentiment for travelling to Europe in the summer months is weak across the six key long-haul markets monitored*
- *Chinese and Indian respondents are the most optimistic about resuming travel*
- *Travellers show increasing interest towards less crowded destinations and more affordable trip experiences*

Brussels, 11 June 2020: To better understand and respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on overseas travel, the European Travel Commission (ETC), the European Tourism Association (ETOA), Eurail B.V. and the European Commission continue to monitor the shifts and trends in travel sentiment in Europe's key overseas source markets – Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia¹ and the U.S.

Results of the latest Long-Haul Travel Barometer (LHTB) indicate that confidence for travel to Europe in summer 2020 is weak across all six markets monitored. What is significant, however, is that after more than two months of confinement, citizens in some of the markets are finally starting to dream of resuming travel. Whether their plans will become a reality will ultimately depend on the development of the COVID-19 outbreak over the coming months, and the travel restrictions in place.

Key Findings:

- **China:** In China, people have started showing enthusiasm about resuming overseas travel in the next months. More than 1 in 2 surveyed respondents shared that they have tentative plans to visit a European destination between May-August 2020. However, the low value of the travel sentiment index (101p)², reflects their uncertainty about the feasibility of such a trip. Along with China's emergence from virus restrictions, consumer confidence has started improving, and more people have begun to consider travel. Among those who wish to travel to Europe, 41% considered changing the dates and their trip itinerary, while 36% have considered changing the date only.
- **India:** Optimism for travel to Europe also exists amongst those surveyed from India, with 55% of respondents indicating their hopes to visit the region in the next months. Interestingly, among those respondents who now do not intend to travel to Europe, 53% noted that they had an actual trip planned for the summer before restrictions were put in place.
- **Japan:** In Japan, the travel sentiment index slumped to its lowest level (94p) since 2015, with only 9% of those surveyed expressing an intention to visit Europe between May-August 2020. Consumer optimism in Japan has been very low over recent months, and, understandably, many have chosen to curtail non-essential spending plans, which may include overseas travel. Indeed, a significant number of Japanese respondents (85%) indicated that they had no plans to travel long-haul in summer 2020, regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating the implications of a weakened economy.
- **Brazil, Russia and the U.S.:** The low values of the sentiment index in Brazil (91p)³, Russia (89p) and the U.S. (93p), indicate that travellers from these markets are not yet ready to seriously consider a trip to Europe in the next months. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, worries about job security and personal income rose drastically amongst consumers in these countries. Economic concerns such as these mean that

¹ In all markets, the survey monitors respondents' intention to travel outside the region of residence (e.g. North America for the USA). The only exception is the Russian Federation, where intention to travel outside the Commonwealth of Independent States is measured.

² Intention to travel is measured in an index that reflects the dominant sentiment expressed by a market, either a positive or negative one. The index is tied to a base of 100. Values above 100 indicate a positive evolution, whereas values below 100 indicate negative attitudes towards travel in a given time period.

³ Ibid

immediate priorities may shift towards work and away from leisure activities.

What impacts travel decisions amid the COVID-19 crisis?

While safety and security concerns remain one of the top priorities for travellers when selecting holiday destinations in Europe, there was an expected shift in what matters for tourists when making decisions about which places to visit in the post-COVID 19 world. Visiting destinations that are less-crowded and affordable has overtaken the presence of world-famous attractions, which was traditionally the main driver of destination-choice.

As for particular destinations in Europe, the spread of COVID-19 and the negative media coverage which goes with it, has inevitably led to decrease in potential travellers' intentions to visit some of the most attractive European destinations, among which are France, Spain, Italy and Germany. It is important to note, however, that despite this downward trend, these destinations are still leading the ranking of "must travel to" European countries for all respondents.

In terms of experiences, learning about Europe's rich cultural and historical heritage, enjoying the natural diversity and landscapes, tasting the unique gastronomic offerings and immersing into the European city-life, continue to be at the front-of-mind for overseas travellers hoping to visit the region in summer.

ENDS

The complementing infographic, illustrating detailed results, can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/long-haul-travel-barometer-2-2020/>

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Note to editors

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 743 million international arrivals in 2019 and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism. For more information, please visit www.etc-corporate.org.

The **European Tourism Association (ETOA)** is the trade association for tour operators and suppliers with business in European destinations. Over 1000 members contribute more than €12bn of business within Europe and include tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers; European tourist boards, hotels, attractions and other tourism suppliers. Please visit www.etoa.org for more information

Eurail B.V. is the organisation dedicated to the management of Eurail and Interrail Passes. Eurail gives travellers from all over the world the opportunity to experience flexible, borderless travel across Europe. Eurail B.V. has over 100 travel partners across Europe, including accommodation providers, transport operators and attractions, offering additional special benefits to all Pass holders. The company is owned by over 35 European railway and shipping companies.

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