

LONG-HAUL TRAVELLERS STILL CAUTIOUS ABOUT PLANNING TRIPS TO EUROPE AS THE EU FINALISES ITS REOPENING FOR SUMMER

- **News of easing pandemic restrictions boosts travellers' hopes for summer 2021; however, overseas trips are not yet the preferred option for many**
- **Coherence and transparency are crucial to restoring confidence in European travel as the EU announces welcome changes to border restrictions**
- **July and August are the most popular months among travellers wishing to visit the region in summer 2021**

Brussels, 8 June 2021: As the EU looks set to open its borders to more countries and vaccinated holidaymakers this summer, coordinated rules on international travel will be crucial to instil confidence in tourists considering a visit to the region. According to the latest [Long-Haul Travel Barometer 2/2021 \(LHTB\)](#), even after a year of strict COVID-19 restrictions, travellers from overseas markets are still hopeful to travel but are also cautious to consider Europe as a destination due to the continuous lack of harmonised rules on travel across the region. Over the coming months, unity and consistency of safety measures will be of key importance if European destinations are to capitalise on recent positive developments.

The LHTB from the European Travel Commission (ETC) and Eurail B.V. anticipates short-term travel intentions in five overseas markets - Brazil, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States every four months. Intention to travel is measured in an index that reflects the dominant sentiment expressed by a market, either positive or negative. Values above 100 indicate a positive evolution, whereas values below 100 indicate negative attitudes towards travel in a given period.

The sentiment index for overseas travel in the US and Russia remains positive, however worryingly, only 2 in 5 respondents from these markets are optimistic about visiting Europe in summer 2021. This is a warning sign for Europe and may lead to the region losing out to domestic and short-haul destinations due to their geographical proximity and openness to travellers from either the US or Russia.

Speaking following the publication of the LHTB, Executive Director of ETC, Eduardo Santander stated: *“With the planned opening of European borders over the coming months, it is imperative that clear and coherent messages are communicated to international travellers wishing to visit Europe. The restart of European tourism in summer 2021 is now a realistic possibility. Still, our research shows that a lack of clarity, coupled with a disjointed and uncoordinated approach, means that travellers are hesitant to consider Europe as a destination right now. However, with progressing vaccination campaigns across the world, we have high expectations for the late summer and strong autumn season. The right investment in travel promotion and in boosting tourism confidence will play a significant role in salvaging this summer and beyond.”*

US, Russia and Brazil are more optimistic about long-haul travel in summer 2021

For US respondents, a positive index value of 110 points was recorded for long-haul travel, a decrease of 17 points from the beginning of the year. However, when asked about travel to Europe, the index score drops to a negative sentiment at 97 points, suggesting that Americans are not yet confident that it will be possible to visit and move freely within the region this summer.

In Russia, the situation is somewhat similar, with higher index values for general overseas trips (119 points) and lower index scores for overseas trips to Europe (93 points). Interestingly, Russian respondents appear not to be especially worried about COVID-19 when travelling, however, they are more cautious about travel-related costs, suggesting that affordability will be a top priority for future trips.

Brazilian respondents demonstrated optimism about travelling overseas (126 points) between May-August 2021, however, the sentiment for travelling to Europe is much lower at 100 index points. It is unlikely that there will be an immediate improvement on this sentiment given that an increasing number of European countries are introducing entry bans on Brazilians due to a more transmissible variant of the COVID-19 virus.

Chinese and Japanese travellers most reluctant to travel far overseas

Results from the Chinese market disclose eagerness for overseas travel to resume with 53% of respondents enthusiastic to travel abroad. Their understanding of current travel restrictions in Europe, however, reveals that only 26% were confident that they will travel to the region if permitted. The evolution of travel demand from China is hard to predict at the moment and will depend on mutual recognition of COVID-19 vaccines, the resumption of air activity between the regions, and the Chinese Government's travel advice.

Across all analysed markets, the sentiment index score for long-haul trips is the weakest in Japan (75 points), where less than 1 in 5 respondents are considering travel to a destination outside East Asia¹ between May-August. When asked about the reason for this decision, 44% of Japanese respondents indicated that they simply do not have plans to visit overseas destinations in the next months, signalling that travelling is not a priority for them at the moment, while another 43% acknowledged COVID-19 related concerns.

August perceived as the most secure option for trips to Europe

While respondents wishing to visit Europe in summer 2021 remain uncertain about the exact timing of their trip due to travel bans and fragmented processes across destinations, results reveal that July and August are the most desired months for holidays to Europe, with 31% of Brazilian, 26% of US, 25% of Chinese and 22% of Russians hoping to visit Europe in August.

The summary report can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/long-haul-travel-barometer-2-2021/>

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The **European Travel Commission (ETC)** represents the national tourism organisations of Europe. Established in 1948, ETC's mission is to strengthen the sustainable development of Europe as a tourist destination and to promote Europe in third markets. Its 32-member tourism boards work together to build the value of tourism for all the diverse European destinations through cooperation in sharing best practice, market intelligence and promotion. For more information, visit www.etc-corporate.org and follow @ETC_Corporate.

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¹ Refers to China, Japan, Hong Kong, Macao, Rep. of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Guam and North Mariana Protectorate, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia Philippines and Singapore.