

LONG-HAUL TRAVELLERS REMAIN CAUTIOUS ABOUT PLANNING TRIPS TO EUROPE

- **COVID-19 still acts as a deterrent for many long-haul travellers; however, the travel outlook has improved since autumn 2020**
- **Effectiveness in managing COVID-19 will drive travellers' destination choice in the coming months with places with a low number of cases prioritised**
- **As vaccination rates continue to grow, ETC calls for more harmonised travel rules and greater clarity for long-haul travellers**

Brussels, 7 October 2021: According to the latest Long-Haul Travel Barometer 3/2021 (LHTB), intentions to travel to Europe between September and December 2021 remain weak in key overseas markets. Results suggest that as long as COVID-19 safety concerns persist, many will remain cautious about visiting European destinations. However, with vaccination rates continuing to improve across the globe, there is a greater appetite from long-haul travellers to visit Europe than this time last year.

The LHTB from the European Travel Commission (ETC) and Eurail BV anticipates short-term travel intentions in five overseas markets – Canada, 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.

Commenting following the publication of the LHTB, Luís Araújo, ETC's President, said: "*While it is heartening to see some increase in desire to travel internationally and visit Europe, these latest results clearly demonstrate that more work needs to be done to boost tourism to Europe from key overseas markets. Travellers are still hesitant to consider Europe as a destination right now. Looking towards 2022, it is imperative that we strive to implement more harmonised travel rules in Europe and globally and create greater clarity for long-haul travellers. As vaccination campaigns keep progressing, it is time to shift the focus from a risky country to a risky traveller.*"

Chinese travel sentiment improves notably compared to a year ago

Although long-haul travel sentiment remains weak, willingness among Chinese to travel to Europe grew from 69 in September 2020 to 92 in September 2021. However, the state advice on avoiding travel outside of China may well hamper people's confidence and intention to travel in the following months.

Western and Central European countries remain the most popular locations among Chinese tourists planning to visit Europe. As long as these destinations effectively manage the COVID-19 pandemic, those travelling from China will not be deterred by crowds. Meanwhile, there is a continued interest in multi-country trips, highlighting the need for more harmonised travel rules across Europe.

Americans' desire for travel on the rise, but plans for autumn trips to Europe are not as strong

In the US, the long-haul travel sentiment index is positive (125), but Americans are less confident when Europe is the destination (97) due to continued speculation about last-minute changes to travel restrictions. Although some European destinations remain fully open to Americans, the removal of the US from the EU safe travel list has created hesitancy.

US respondents who intend to travel to Europe are likely to choose countries which have demonstrated good management of the pandemic, as well as destinations which are less crowded. November and December are seen

as the more feasible months for materialising travel plans.

Travel restrictions and costs deter Russians

The continuous COVID-19 restrictions on travel and the lack of mutual recognition of the Sputnik V vaccine in many European countries keep hampering Russians' eagerness to travel to the region (100), while interest in travelling to other places increases (151). Compared to the other analysed markets, Russians shared that COVID-19 had not influenced their decision (22% vs 42% in all markets) as much as the travel-related costs (19% vs 11% in all markets) and the availability of services and experiences (9% vs 5% in all markets). When asked about their future plans, Russian respondents were optimistic about visiting Europe in the next two years (39%), with another 38% undecided, showcasing that travel remains on a "stand-by" mode.

Of Russians intending to visit Europe in the last months of 2021, there is a demand for less crowded destinations with milder weather and more affordable services. Turkey and Italy (both 18%); Greece and Cyprus (both 15%); and France (12%) are the top five destinations among Russian respondents.

Japan and Canada are most cautious about travelling to Europe

In Japan, the sentiment index values remain negative with 62 for long-haul travel and 94 for long-haul travel to Europe. The few Japanese respondents (28%) willing to travel to Europe in the next months shared that the affordable services and the availability of popular attractions are of growing importance for the selection of their next holiday spot. Yet, efficient hygiene protocols and the low rates of infection remain the prime criteria.

Similarly, Canadians are also hesitant about long-haul trips as only 28% of respondents expressed a positive intention to travel to Europe between September–December 2021. Nearly half (46%) of those being more pessimistic about travel shared that health and safety concerns are their main worries, while 33% had never intended to travel over autumn.

Canadians heading to Europe prefer city breaks during November and December and are particularly attracted by Europe's historical heritage. Over half of Canadians will consider safety, accessibility, affordability and the destinations' efforts to preserve natural and cultural heritage when choosing their next holiday spot.

The summary report can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/long-haul-travel-barometer-3-2021/>

ENDS

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. For more information, please visit www.etc-corporate.org.

Eurail BV 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 BV 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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