

Press Release

International Travellers Eye Europe for Cultural Immersion, but Cost Remains a Key Barrier

- **58%** of respondents **plan to travel long-haul** in September - December 2024, and **40% intend to visit Europe**.
- **83%** of surveyed **Chinese** travellers express a desire to visit Europe, up 9% from last year.
- **Affordability** remains the most important barrier to travel to Europe.
- **Safety, iconic landmarks** and **quality infrastructure** are the top three criteria for selecting a European holiday destination.
- Travellers are increasingly drawn to **authentic travel experiences** as they seek a **deeper understanding** of the local culture.

Brussels, 8 October 2024: International travellers are **showing increased caution about planning trips to Europe** between September and December this year. This is according to the latest **Long-Haul Travel Barometer (LHTB) 3/2024** published today by the European Travel Commission (ETC) and Eurail BV, which explores the sentiment and preferences of travellers regarding long-haul travel to Europe.

The report reveals that **58% of respondents¹ plan to travel long-haul** in the last four months of the year, with **40%** anticipating a **visit to Europe**. This represents a 4% decline compared to the same period last year. Affordability is a primary barrier to travel to Europe, cited by nearly half of respondents (44%). This figure is on the rise across all key markets, excluding Australia which has seen a minor decrease.

Notable rise in Chinese travel aspirations

The study reveals a significant year-on-year increase in the intention for overseas travel from **China**, with 83% of respondents expressing interest in visiting Europe, a 9% rise from last year. This surge is supported by several factors, including the reintroduction of flights between China and Europe, which has made travel more accessible. Additionally, the Golden Week holiday from 1-7 October provides a convenient travel window for many visitors.

Travel intentions from **Brazilians** closely mirror those seen last autumn, with nearly 48% of respondents planning to visit Europe in the last four months of the year, driven primarily by younger and more affluent travellers. Despite the growing consumer confidence, the high costs remain a major deterrent to travel for people in this market.

Travellers from **Canada** and **Australia** are more cautious, with 39% and 33% of respondents planning a trip to Europe until the end of the year, closely aligning with the figures from previous years. Similarly, the desire to visit Europe among **South Korean** and **US** respondents is quite modest, at 27% and 23%, respectively. Sentiment for overseas travel from the US appears to be particularly weak, registering a considerable decline from last year's 41%, mainly due to high travel costs (40%), an interest in exploring other regions (23%) and insufficient vacation time (17%).

¹ Excluding the intention for the South Korean market, which was not included in the 2023 autumn research wave

Safety and budget constraints influence travel plans

Safety remains the top criterion when choosing a holiday destination in Europe (52%) – with significant year-on-year growth among travellers from Australia, Japan, China, Canada and the US – followed by **must-see sites** (41%) and **quality tourism infrastructure** (39%).

Inflation for tourism products and services is beginning to decline, yet the lasting impacts of recent years continue to affect travel habits. Most respondents (66%) plan to spend between **€100 and €200 per day**², similar to autumn 2023. However, some markets are tightening their budgets as European holidays become less affordable. Notably, there has been a year-on-year 30% drop in **Chinese travellers** expecting to spend over €200 per day. Additionally, in **Australia and Canada**, there are increases of 6% and 8%, respectively, in travellers anticipating spending less than €100 per day.

Culture remains a key pull to visit Europe

Leisure is the top reason for travel to Europe, with 78% responding that it was the main motive for their visit. **Culture and history** remain the leading attractions for future trips, with 44% of respondents citing them as a priority. This growing interest benefits Europe's historic centres and cultural hotspots. Notably, interest in exploring Europe's rich culture and history has surged in China (+13%), Japan (+11%), and the US (+14%) when compared to last year. Prospective travellers have also cited **gastronomic experiences** as a particular draw for visiting Europe (39%), followed by **city life** (33%).

Featured for the first time in this study, the survey reveals that respondents planning trips to Europe have a strong interest in **engaging with locals**. Some 40% indicated they would occasionally interact with locals to enhance their trips. Additionally, 36% would seek deeper cultural experiences by learning about local life and traditions, while 15% aspire to build meaningful relationships with locals.

Commenting on the findings, **Miguel Sanz, President of ETC**, said: “Travellers planning to visit Europe show a keen interest in connecting with locals, highlighting a broader shift towards more meaningful and authentic experiences. The barometer results underscore that locals are a key asset in shaping overseas visitors' perceptions of European destinations, through their hospitality, culture, and daily life. By involving locals in tourism decision-making, empowering them to create their own tourism initiatives, and investing in authentic spaces like markets, cultural hubs, and events, destinations can cultivate sustainable relationships that benefit both travellers and residents. This approach is what can make Europe an even more culturally vibrant and welcoming destination.”

The full summary report can be downloaded from: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/long-haul-travel-barometer-3-2024/>

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Note to editors

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 36-member tourism boards work together to build the value of tourism for all the diverse European destinations through cooperation in sharing best practices, market intelligence and promotion. For more information, visit www.etc-corporate.org and follow [@ETC_Corporate](https://twitter.com/ETC_Corporate).

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

² Expenditure is per person and includes accommodation, food, and other activities, excluding flight tickets to Europe.

additional special benefits to all Pass holders. The company is owned by over 35 European railway and shipping companies. For more information, visit www.eurail.com and follow [@Eurail](https://twitter.com/Eurail).

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