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## Press Release

# Long-haul travellers increasingly prioritise greener, off-beat and locally immersive trips to Europe

*New ETC research shows modest growth in responsible travel behaviours, even as sustainability receives less attention in public media.*

**Brussels, 10 March 2026:** Survey results suggest that long-haul travellers visiting Europe are increasingly open to more responsible travel habits, including choosing greener transport options, engaging with local culture, travelling outside peak seasons and exploring destinations beyond traditional tourism hotspots.

These are the key findings of the latest *Assessment of Responsible Travel Behaviours of Long-haul Travellers to Europe*, published by the European Travel Commission (ETC) and conducted by Kairos Future. The research combines a **survey of 3,000 travellers** across six key overseas markets (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan and the US) with analysis of online travel discussions and editorial media coverage related to travel to Europe.

The study tracks four responsible travel behaviours among long-haul visitors: travelling off-season, going off the beaten track, engaging with local communities and travelling green. **All four indicators improved modestly year-on-year compared with the 2024 baseline** (index = 100).

- **Travel green: 108**
- **Go off the beaten track: 106**
- **Love local: 105**
- **Travel off-season: 102**

The findings are notable because sustainability currently occupies a relatively smaller share of global media attention than in recent years. Despite this, traveller behaviour continues to shift towards more responsible travel patterns.

## Greener mobility and slower travel gaining momentum

The strongest improvement is observed in **green travel choices**, which rose from the 2024 baseline index of 100 to 108 in 2025. Travellers report greater reliance on trains, public transport and other lower-emission mobility options while travelling within Europe.

Transport patterns show a gradual shift towards sustainable mobility. The share of travellers reporting predominantly human-powered or electric mobility options increased from 13% in 2024 to 18% in 2025, while reliance on primarily fossil fuel-based transport declined from 35% to 30%.

## Travellers increasingly seek local and authentic experiences

Engagement with local communities also grew slightly. The **“love local” index** rose to 105, reflecting increasing

interest in experiences such as choosing locally owned accommodation, supporting local businesses and engaging with regional culture, food and traditions during travel.

These trends align with the broader shift toward slower and more immersive travel experiences. Survey responses also suggest that travellers interpret local engagement differently, underlining the need to clearly communicate which activities benefit destinations and communities most.

## Openness to off-season travel and alternative destinations

The research also highlights growing openness to visiting **destinations beyond the main tourism routes**. The index measuring travel to lesser-known places rose to 106.

Meanwhile, travellers are increasingly open to **visiting Europe outside the peak summer season**. While the shift is more gradual, the off-season travel index increased to 102, suggesting a modest redistribution of travel away from the busiest months.

## Practical barriers still shape travel decisions

Despite growing willingness to travel more responsibly, the study also identifies **practical frictions** that can limit travellers' ability to act on these intentions. For example, 53% of respondents say they intended to travel off-season to a high extent, but only 49% report actually doing so, revealing a 4% intention-behaviour gap. For visiting lesser-known destinations, the gap is slightly larger at 5%.

Qualitative analysis of online travel discussions highlights recurring challenges. Travellers frequently mention uncertainty about which periods qualify as off-season in different destinations, fragmented rail booking systems and the complex logistics of planning electric vehicle trips across multiple countries. Price sensitivity also continues to shape travel choices.

As a result, travellers are often most receptive to **small, practical adjustments** that make responsible travel easier, such as choosing locally owned accommodation, planning slower itineraries or using rail where convenient.

Commenting on the findings, **Eduardo Santander, CEO of the European Travel Commission**, said:

*“Long-haul travellers are increasingly seeking experiences that are authentic, locally rooted and environmentally conscious. Europe is uniquely positioned to meet these expectations thanks to its diverse destinations, rich local cultures and extensive rail network. Through initiatives such as ETC’s Unlock the Unexpected Upgrade campaign, we are working with European destinations to promote travel that encourages visitors to explore beyond the obvious, travel throughout the year and connect more deeply with local communities.*

*At the same time, while we continue raising awareness and inspiring travellers to make responsible choices, tourism stakeholders must address practical barriers – from transport planning to infrastructure – so that these intentions can translate into real change.”*

The full report can be downloaded from: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/assessment-of-responsible-travel-behaviours-of-long-haul-travellers-to-europe/>

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## Note to editors

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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 35-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 [europeantravelcommission.com](http://europeantravelcommission.com).

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