

## Press Release

# European travel sentiment reaches record high for summer 2026, despite shorter stays and tighter budgets

- 82% of Europeans plan to travel this spring and summer, the highest level recorded since 2020.
- Intra-European travel remains dominant, with stronger demand this season for Southern and Mediterranean destinations.
- Travellers are becoming more cautious, planning fewer and shorter trips with more moderate budgets.

**Brussels, 23 April 2026:** Europeans' intention to travel in spring and summer 2026 has reached its highest level since 2020, signalling strong resilience of the tourism sector despite ongoing economic and geopolitical pressures. According to the European Travel Commission's latest *Monitoring Sentiment for Intra-European Travel (Wave 24)*, **82% of Europeans plan to travel between April and September 2026**, up significantly (+10%) compared to last year.

**Younger Europeans** are playing a key role in driving this growth. Travel intentions among 18–34-year-olds have increased markedly, recording the strongest year-on-year rises across all age groups (+21% among 18–24s and +16% among 25–34s).

### High demand, but more cautious consumer behaviour

While travel sentiment is at record levels, Europeans are becoming more deliberate and selective in how they travel. In particular, travellers are planning shorter trips compared to last year. The most common stay is now **4 to 6 nights** (38%, up 3%), while longer stays of **7 to 12 nights have declined** (37%, down 5%).

Budgets are also tightening. A growing share of travellers (+6%\*) plan to dedicate a **moderate budget** of up to €1,000 per trip. At the same time, the proportion of **higher-spending travellers** has declined, with those budgeting €1,500 or more per trip down by 9% compared to last season. This shift reflects increased sensitivity to costs and a stronger focus on value for money.

Travellers are also planning fewer trips. 39% of Europeans intend to **take only one trip in the next six months**, up by 7% compared to last year, while the share planning to travel at least twice has declined to 57%.

### Safety, cost and climate shape destination choices

Geopolitical tensions and rising costs are increasingly influencing travel decisions. **Safety** has strengthened as the leading criterion when choosing a destination, cited by **22% of travellers**, followed by **pleasant and stable weather (15%)** and **attractive deals (14%)**.

Concerns about rising trip costs remain the most prominent overall, affecting **20% of Europeans**, while worries linked to **tensions in the Middle East** have increased sharply, rising by 9 percentage points to 18%.

With tighter budgets, travellers are prioritising spending on accommodation, followed by food and drinks and activities at the destination, while interest in **luxury experiences** has declined by 3% since last year.

## Intra-European travel dominates, with Southern destinations leading

Europeans show a clear preference for travelling within Europe this summer (90%), with a growing share of travellers planning cross-border trips across the region (65%, up 4%). Interest in travelling to more distant European destinations is also increasing (+4%), nearly matching demand for neighbouring countries.

**Southern and Mediterranean Europe** consolidate their position as the top choice for spring and summer holidays, recording a strong surge in demand (+17%) and attracting nearly 60% of travellers. **Spain** (14%) leads the ranking, followed by **Italy** (11%), **France** (8%), **Greece** and **Portugal** (both at 6%). These destinations continue to benefit from strong demand for sun-and-beach holidays, alongside culture and city experiences.

At the same time, travel patterns are shifting, as multi-country trips are becoming less popular. In contrast, more travellers (+5%) are opting to visit **multiple cities** within one destination (42%), reflecting a growing preference for deeper exploration.

## Travel remains strong, but more selective

The findings point to a tourism landscape defined by strong demand alongside more cautious decision-making. While Europeans continue to prioritise travel, they are adapting their behaviour in response to economic pressures and geopolitical uncertainty.

Commenting on the findings, **Miguel Sanz, President of the European Travel Commission**, said:

*“The continued strength in travel intentions for this spring and summer shows that Europeans remain highly motivated to travel, even in a more complex global environment.*

*What is changing is how they travel. We are seeing a more selective, value-driven approach, with travellers opting for shorter stays, more flexible plans, and carefully managed budgets.*

*At the same time, growing interest in exploring multiple destinations within a single country point to a shift towards deeper and more varied experiences. This presents an opportunity for destinations and businesses to create integrated offers and facilitate more seamless journeys, in line with evolving traveller expectations.”*

Discover more at: <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/monitoring-sentiment-for-intra-european-travel-spring-summer-2026/>

**END**

*\*Correction (29 April 2026): This figure has been updated from 4% to 6% following a data verification. All other information remains unchanged.*

## 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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