

Press Release

While long-haul travel plans ease this autumn, travellers remain committed by booking trips to Europe

- Though long-haul travel intention declines overall, Europe maintains its intention share and confirmed bookings remain stable.
- More than half of prospective visitors to Europe this autumn will be travelling to the region for the first time.
- Only one in three travellers plan to visit a single European country; two-thirds plan multi-country trips.

Brussels, 13 October 2026: The European Travel Commission (ETC) and Interrail have published their Long-Haul Travel Barometer 3/2026, tracking September to December travel intention, preferences and barriers among prospective long-haul travellers. The Barometer examines intention from seven key overseas markets for Europe: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea and the United States.

The autumn edition points to a more cautious outlook for long-haul travel. Half of respondents intend to take an overseas trip between September and December, down from 55% last year, while intention to visit Europe has fallen in parallel from 38% to 34%. With both measures declining at a similar rate, Europe continues to account for around two-thirds of overall long-haul travel intention.

This edition of the Barometer uses a new data collection panel. Long-term trends have been reviewed across all markets and are consistent with previous waves.

Though intention cools, bookings remain stable

Travel sentiment varies considerably across markets. **Interest remains highest in China, with 54% of respondents planning a European trip**, although this is 15% lower than a year ago. This continues a gradual easing recorded over the past two years as the post-pandemic surge normalises.

Brazil follows at 45%, broadly unchanged from last year. South Korea is the only market to record an increase, with intention rising from **33% to 36%**, although the change is not statistically significant.

Travel intentions have softened in Canada, where **30%** are considering a European trip, and Australia, at **27%**. In Australia, part of the decline may reflect a change in sample composition, which is now more evenly distributed across income groups. Intention in the United States also stands at **27%**, while Japan remains the least inclined market, at **12%**.

Despite the softer overall sentiment, travellers who are planning to visit Europe appear increasingly committed. Across the seven surveyed markets, **17% of all respondents have already booked their flights to Europe, unchanged from last year.** Because fewer people are now planning a European trip, **those with a confirmed booking represent a larger part of that group — 52%, against 42% last autumn.** Europe's autumn audience may therefore be smaller, but a greater proportion of prospective visitors already have firm plans in place. This is well illustrated in the Chinese market where 37% have already booked their tickets, compared to 33% last year and 26% in Autumn 2019.

Cost remains the main barrier, but its influence is easing

Affordability remains the leading obstacle to long-haul travel, although its influence has weakened compared to last year. Among respondents not planning a long-haul trip, **44% cite high travel costs as the main reason, down five percentage points.** Among those travelling long-haul but choosing destinations outside Europe, **30% identify cost as a barrier to visiting the region, down 12 points.** In this group, 23% say they prefer another world region, while 16% point to limited holiday time.

Geopolitical concerns remain less prominent. Only **7% cite the war in Ukraine** as a reason for not travelling to Europe, while **6% mention conflict in the Middle East.**

More than half of autumn visitors will experience Europe for the first time

Europe is set to welcome many new visitors this autumn, with **53% of prospective travellers visiting for the first time.** The share is highest among travellers from **China (61%) and the United States (57%).** First-time visitors are more likely to choose **full package trips (52%),** while repeat visitors more often organise their journey independently. Leisure remains the main purpose of travel (73%), with most visitors planning a stay of one to two weeks and the **largest group budgeting €100 to €200 per person per day.**

Many countries, easy to connect

Only **34% of travellers plan to visit a single European country,** while **66% intend to combine two or more.** The average itinerary takes in 2.7 countries, rising to 3.3 among Australians, who plan the widest trips. Southern and Mediterranean Europe remains the main draw, with **67% planning to visit the region.** Within the region, France is mentioned most often (52%), ahead of Italy (35%) and Spain (25%). For travel between countries, **air remains the most popular option** with low-cost airlines mentioned by 45%, and full-service favoured by 44%. However, rail follows closely: **40% plan to use rail passes and 39% point-to-point tickets.**

39% of travellers to Europe, including 43% of first-time visitors, see Europe as a single destination. This image is most strongly held by Japanese (68%) and South Korean (51%) travellers, and is driven by strong connectivity between countries and shared logistical frameworks such as a common currency and visa framework. These findings indicate that **the ease with which travellers can explore multiple countries during one trip is a strong asset to the perspective of a collective European destination.**

In response to the findings, **Miguel Sanz, President of the European Travel Commission,** noted:

Though long-haul travel intention may be cooling, Europe's appeal remains strong. Newcomers and repeat travellers plan to visit in almost equal measure, and most want to explore several countries in one trip. Europe draws people in and keeps them coming back, with good connectivity and common systems contributing most

to an image of a single destination. Collaborative work between destinations therefore stands at the heart of Brand Destination Europe, as ease of travel allows visitors to appreciate the unified diversity of our continent.

The full report can be downloaded from:

<https://etc-corporate.org/reports/long-haul-travel-barometer-3-2026/>

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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 etc-corporate.org.

Interrail B.V. is the organisation dedicated to the management of Interrail Passes. Interrail gives travellers from all over the world the opportunity to experience flexible, borderless travel across Europe. Interrail 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. For more information, visit www.interrail.com and follow [@interrail](https://www.instagram.com/interrail).

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