



EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS WITHSTAND SOCIO- ECONOMIC UPHEAVALS

International tourist arrivals to European destinations grew steadily by 5% half way through the year proving exceptional resilience to current geopolitical agitations and slow economic growth in the Eurozone.

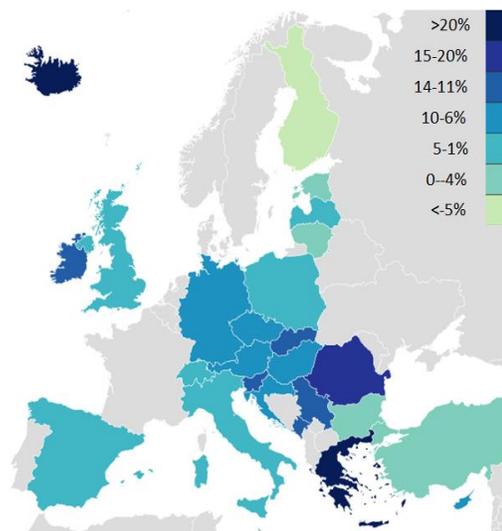
European destinations are called to take advantage of Europe's full potential to cater to long-haul and intra-regional markets by eliminating travel barriers and promoting the sustainable development of tourism.

Brussels, 10th November 2015. European tourism continues to grow steadily and proves resilience to economic woes and geopolitical tensions. According to the European Travel Commission's latest report "European Tourism – Trends & Prospects", the majority of European destinations recorded positive results during the summer period in 2015. Data up to August suggest a 5% increase in tourist arrivals to Europe compared to the same period last year. Far more importantly, the region was able to offset the sag in arrivals from Russia and is expected to follow an upward trend towards the end of the year.

Growth was buoyed by large intra-regional destinations and the ongoing economic recovery of the Eurozone. Standout growth destinations were Iceland (+27%) and Romania (+18%). Double-digit growth was also reported by Slovenia and Serbia (+13% both), Ireland and Montenegro (+12% both). Hot spot Mediterranean destinations Croatia (8%), Italy (+5%), Malta (+5%) and Spain (+4%) also contributed to shape demand in the region during the summer period despite economic uncertainties.

Following the success of European tourism during the summer period, efforts should persist to foster tourism and encourage more tourists from long-haul and intra-regional markets. *"Within Europe, we need to look at our product and our services; we need to share best practice and push deep cooperation between private and public sector"* said Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of the European Travel Commission.

International tourist arrivals by destination
2015 year-to-date, % per year



Source: ETC, TourMIS

Soaring demand from Europe's largest source markets

Growth was also fuelled by established source markets in Europe contributing significantly to the positive performance of several European destinations during the summer period. The United Kingdom benefitted from the strong Pound against the Euro as destinations such as Latvia, Montenegro (+31% both) or Slovakia (+41%) posted double-digit growth from this market. Moreover, the French and the German travel markets also spurred growth in arrivals owing to increased consumer consumption and improved consumer confidence resulting from the region's ongoing economic recovery. Montenegro reported a substantial increase from Germany (+45%), while Cyprus saw the number of arrivals from France up 31%.

European destinations saw robust growth (+30%) from Chinese tourist arrivals in 2015 compared to the same period last year. It is expected that the recent plunge in the Shanghai stock market should have no bearing on tourism demand to Europe. Although, current forecasts suggest that China may endure an economic contraction in the near future, the Chinese increasing middle class keeps travelling internationally. For this market, long-term projections remain upbeat owing to an increase in household income spurring travel demand.

Across the Atlantic, a stronger dollar and encouraging macroeconomic indicators keep boosting travel from the US. This market still remains an important source of tourist arrivals to European destinations with growth estimated at 11% in 2015 compared to the same period a year ago. More importantly, prospects remain optimistic as the country shows signs of a solid rebound owing to robust consumer spending, income growth and a weaker Euro making Europe a more affordable travel destination.

On the other hand, Russian outbound flows saw a weak performance (-18%) the first eight months of the year primarily driven by the country's on-going geopolitical disruptions, the steep drop in oil prices, international sanctions, shrinking wages and the slowdown of the economy. Russian citizens are still travelling although opting for more easily accessible and affordable tourism destinations. European destinations among the Russian travel favourites are Romania, Turkey and Montenegro.

The full report can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: www.etc-corporate.org under the category "Trends Watch in Research".

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 tourism destination to the long-haul markets outside Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 32 member NTOs, including 8 from outside the European Union.

Europe is the world's No. 1 tourist destination with 563 million international arrivals and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism.

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For further information: the ETC's corporate website www.etc-corporate.org is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe. Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to the ETC's consumer portal www.visiteurope.com.