

MOST EUROPEANS LOOK FORWARD TO SUMMER VACATIONS



54% of Europeans are expected to travel in the next six months, either domestically or to other European country, which reveals the strong pent-up demand to resume travel, says the European Travel Commission (ETC), ensuring that increasing vaccination campaigns is still crucial for recovering travel within Europe.

European airports lost 1.72 billion passengers in 2020 compared to the previous year, representing a drop of 70.4%, according to data published by the European airport sector association (ACI Europe).

"With just 728 million passengers in 2020, compared to 2.4 billion the previous year, **European airports returned to their 1995 traffic levels**," lamented ACI Europe CEO Olivier Jankovec.

The desire to travel in Europe maintains an upward trajectory however, according to the report 'Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel - Wave 5' published by the ETC.

Spain (10.2%), Italy (7.8%), France (6.5%), Greece (6.1%) and Germany (5.2%) are the five most popular European destinations for this spring and summer vacations, with leisure being the main reason for these trips (64%), a sought-after activity ever since the coronavirus pandemic began.

This monthly report, which provides updated information on the impact of COVID-19 on Europeans' travel plans and preferences, shows that after the introduction of stricter travel restrictions in Europe, the possibility of being quarantined during a trip and the rising COVID-19 cases continue to worry Europeans (15%).

The majority (69%) say they will feel safer and more relaxed if destinations have strict health and safety protocols, while 21% of respondents say that protocols may spoil the travel experience to some degree, and 10% say it makes no difference.

At the same time, COVID-19 vaccines remain the main driver to resume travel, raising hope that a massive rollout in Europe will contribute to the recovery in tourism.

11% of Europeans said that the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines remains the key factor for travel decision-making, tied with the effectiveness of destinations in managing COVID-19 (11%) and pre-travel COVID-19 testing (10%).

The possibility of being quarantined during a trip (16%) followed by rising COVID-19 cases (14%) and getting ill (13%) continue to be the most frequent travel concerns, while economic factors are currently less important.

Europeans' interest in sun-and-beach experiences is increasing as the warmer months approach, although they still show interest in urban destinations (16%). Meanwhile, 14% opt for cultural identity and roots trips.

According to the survey, more than a third of Europeans (34%) are optimistic about traveling between May and July 2021.

Travelers from the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria are most excited about planning a trip to the beach. However, the **top five markets most likely to travel in the next 6 months are Poland (80.2%), Italy (60.7%), Austria (55.4%), Belgium (55.3%) and Spain (51.8%).**

The desire for Intra-European travel is also steadily increasing. 41% of respondents say they want to travel to another European country, the highest figure since the monitoring began. On the other hand, 35% still prefer domestic trips.

Confidence in air travel is also gradually improving, which also supports the hope that intra-European travel will rebound.

The number of European travelers planning to travel by plane has progressively increased from 49% in September 2020 to 54% in January 2021, while only 16% of Europeans consider flying as a health risk.

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