

UNLOCK AN UNEXPECTED UPGRADE

Driving a shift towards more responsible travel

EUROPEAN
TRAVEL
COMMISSION



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Europe flips the script on responsible travel

Europe is the world's most visited continent, a testament to its rich culture, diverse landscapes, and warm hospitality. This remarkable success presents not only opportunities but also a shared responsibility to ensure tourism remains a force for good, enriching local communities while protecting the environment for generations to come.

Guided by this vision, the [European Travel Commission \(ETC\)](#), together with a coalition of leading destinations and travel brands and with the financial support of the European Union, has launched **Unlock an Unexpected Upgrade**, a global movement designed to inspire and empower travellers to embrace more responsible ways of exploring Europe.

The movement demonstrates how small shifts in behaviour can transform the travel experience for the better, for visitors and destinations alike.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL
ELEVATES YOUR STAY IN
WAYS YOU'D NEVER IMAGINE



Responsible travel as a reward

Grounded in behavioural science and nudge theory, the Unlock an Unexpected Upgrade movement reframes responsible travel not as a restriction, but as a value-adding experience.

Travellers are encouraged to make simple yet impactful choices, such as visiting Europe beyond peak season, venturing beyond well-known destinations, opting for low-carbon transport, and supporting local businesses. Each action is presented as an "upgrade", an opportunity to

uncover hidden gems, enjoy quieter moments, and forge genuine connections with local culture.

A growing collection of editorial stories brings the movement to life, from kayaking along the Baltic coast and walking Dubrovnik's historic walls in the quieter months, to experiencing local food and wine festivals through a community lens. This is the unexpected upgrade, a richer, more meaningful way to travel that benefits travellers, local communities, and the places they visit.





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A growing global travel movement

A global awareness-raising campaign is underway across key outbound markets, amplifying the responsible travel message through digital platforms, trade partnerships, and international travel events.

The initiative is showcased on [Visit Europe's website](#) and social media channels under the hashtag **#UnexpectedUpgrade**, and presented at leading international trade events worldwide.



“Unlock an Unexpected Upgrade” invites travelers to discover that Europe’s most rewarding journeys are also the most responsible. The campaign encourages visitors to broaden their perceptions of what Europe has to offer highlighting off-season, offbeat, green, and local experiences as smarter choices that deliver deeper joy, connection, and authenticity.

Facts and Figures

- Europe welcomes over 700 million international arrivals each year, accounting for 50% of global tourism (UN Tourism, 2025).
- One in three stays take place in July and August alone (Eurostat, 2023).
- Some destinations experience tourist-to-local ratios as high as 1,600 to 1.

Since its launch, the campaign has surpassed expectations, significantly exceeding reach and engagement targets. It has generated:

- Over 750,000 flight and hotel searches.
- Nearly 30,000 bookings, and 37,000 overnight stays.
- Over 60,000 rail and bus searches, advancing Europe’s transition towards lower-carbon mobility.

To measure tangible impact, ETC has developed a **Global Responsible Travel Index, tracking** shifts in traveller attitudes towards responsible travel over time. Early research indicates measurable progress across responsible travel behaviours and a narrowing of the intention-behaviour gap.

The campaign will be distributed through a dedicated microsite, social channels, video platforms, and media publications. The microsite will act as the central hub, featuring stories, destination inspiration, and practical tips, with a strong focus on nature, culture, and gastronomy, while driving engagement and traffic to participating partners.



UNLOCK AN UNEXPECTED UPGRADE

Our Partners

The following organisations support the Unlock an Unexpected Upgrade movement through local expertise, outreach, resources, and a shared commitment to responsible travel.



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION*

Adventure Travel
Trade Association



Malta
Tourism Authority

Malta Tourism Authority



L'Agence de développement
Touristique de la France

Atout France



a place to find yourself

MOLDOVA

National Inbound and
Domestic Tourism
Association of Moldova



Canadian Association of
Tour Operators

Canadian Association of
Tour Operators



POLSKA
ORGANIZACJA
TURYSTYCZNA

Polish Tourism
Organisation



Eurail



Rail Europe



Flanders
State of the Art

Visit Flanders



Rome2Rio



A Member of Alibaba Group

Fliggy



Slovenian Tourist Board



Germany
The travel destination

German National Tourist Board



SmartGuide

Smart Guide



Get Your Guide



Tourism Ireland

Tourism Ireland

“We want to unite European destinations behind a shared vision that inspires positive visitor behaviours. This is a collective movement to make travel more meaningful and rewarding for everyone. We invite all travel and tourism partners who share our vision to join us — together, we can make a difference.”

Miguel Sanz, President,
European Travel Commission

“We’re proud to support the ‘Unlock an Unexpected Upgrade’ campaign because it highlights how better access expands opportunity for both travelers and destinations. That clarity helps travelers discover lesser-known regions, supports natural dispersion across Europe, and encourages more sustainable transport choices along the way.”

Myriam Younes, Managing
Director of Advertising, Rome2Rio



UNLOCK AN UNEXPECTED UPGRADE

Be part of the change Join the movement

Do you share our vision for responsible travel? Would you like to demonstrate your commitment and be part of the change?

Contact us at info@visiteurope.com to learn how to become a Supporting Partner.

Access our [toolkit](#) featuring ready-to-use assets and inspiration to help you unlock the full potential of responsible travel.

About us

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 key long-haul markets.

Its 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.

