

Can We Keep Chasing Horizons in a Changing World?

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For most Austrians, travel isn't a luxury - it's a way of life. Weekend getaways to neighboring countries, ski trips to the Alps, and long-haul vacations have become the norm. Especially with the rise of budget airlines, making travel more accessible to everyone. But as climate change accelerates, will this love for travel change?

Havas Group surveyed more than 14.000 participants across 32 global markets, focusing on prosumers who seek new experiences and influence trends. Prosumers are important because they influence the brand choices and behaviors of more traditional, mainstream consumers. What prosumers are doing today, mainstream consumers will likely be doing 6 to 8 months from now. The survey results were clear - changing travel habits will take a lot more than alarming forecasts and melting ice caps, especially for prosumers. In this post, we'll zoom into Austria, to see how climate change is (or isn't) influencing the way Austrians travel.

Flying Through the Consequences

In 2024, Vienna Airport welcomed a record-breaking 31.719.836 passengers, with numbers continuing to rise as travelers embark on their "post-Covid revenge" trips⁶. To put the environmental impact of air travel into perspective, the emissions of a single passenger's round-trip flight from Vienna to Berlin are equivalent to heating an Austrian home for an entire month - around 300 kg of CO₂⁴. Regardless of ecological concerns, every prosumer and nearly all mainstream consumers surveyed in Austria believe travel remains an important part in their lives.

Despite the ecological cost, it's important for me to travel

100% PROSUMERS



89% MAINSTREAM

I will never give up flying because the world is too vital for me

65% PROSUMERS



46% MAINSTREAM

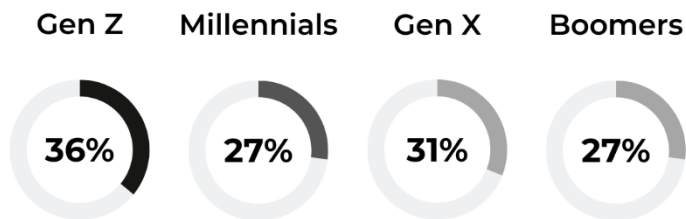
(% agreeing strongly / somewhat)

See the World, or Save the World

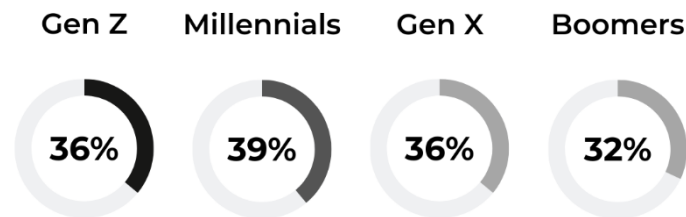
While the vast majority of Austrians still place a high value on travel, nearly a third believe that banning air travel might become necessary at some point. For now, we're at a crossroads where many are still willing to make sacrifices to keep exploring the world.

But as future generations inherit the consequences, will they still be as eager to board a plane? It's hard to say, but it's unlikely to happen anytime soon. While Gen Z is more aware of the future impacts of climate change, 36% of them are still willing to make large sacrifices to keep traveling. As a result, the shift toward action may not be as immediate as expected. The difference between awareness and behavior leaves us questioning how much change this generation is truly ready to embrace.

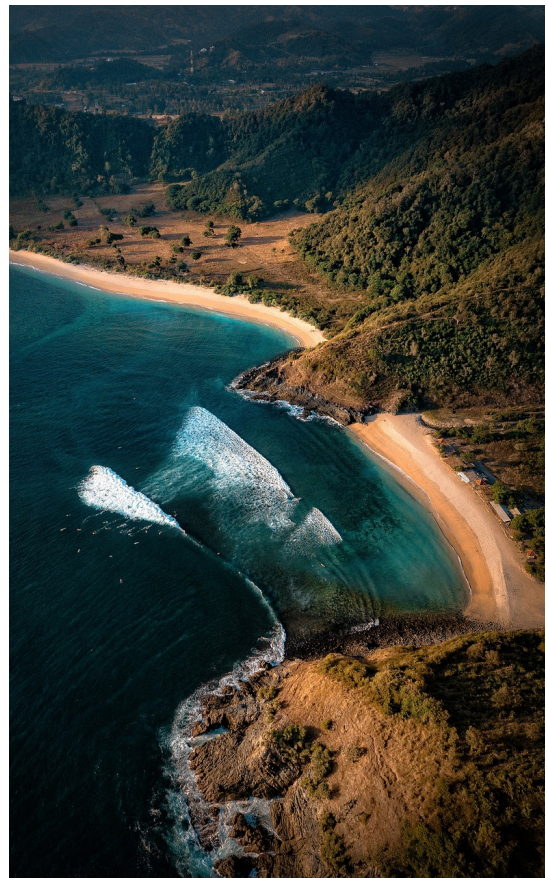
To solve climate change issues, we'll have to ban plane travel at some point



I am willing to sacrifice many things in order to keep traveling



(% agreeing strongly / somewhat)



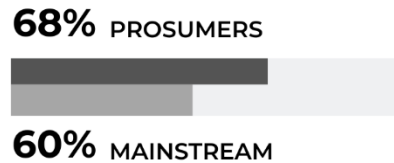
Why We Pack Our Bags

Both mainstream and prosumers want to relax and unwind, but prosumers are even more driven by adventure. For most prosumers, travel is an opportunity for new experiences and personal growth. They approach it with a sense of adventure, seeking destinations that challenge and inspire them.

Discover new places



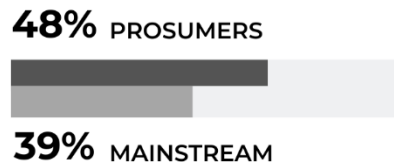
Relax and Unwind



For my own pleasure



Open (me) to other cultures



(% select all that apply)

Instagram vs Reality

For most people, travel is about discovery, but in the age of social media, it often feels like we all share the same destinations. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have turned hidden gems into viral hotspots, making it hard to find places that are truly untouched. In fact, 60% of Gen Z travelers agree that social media has taken away the magic of travel.

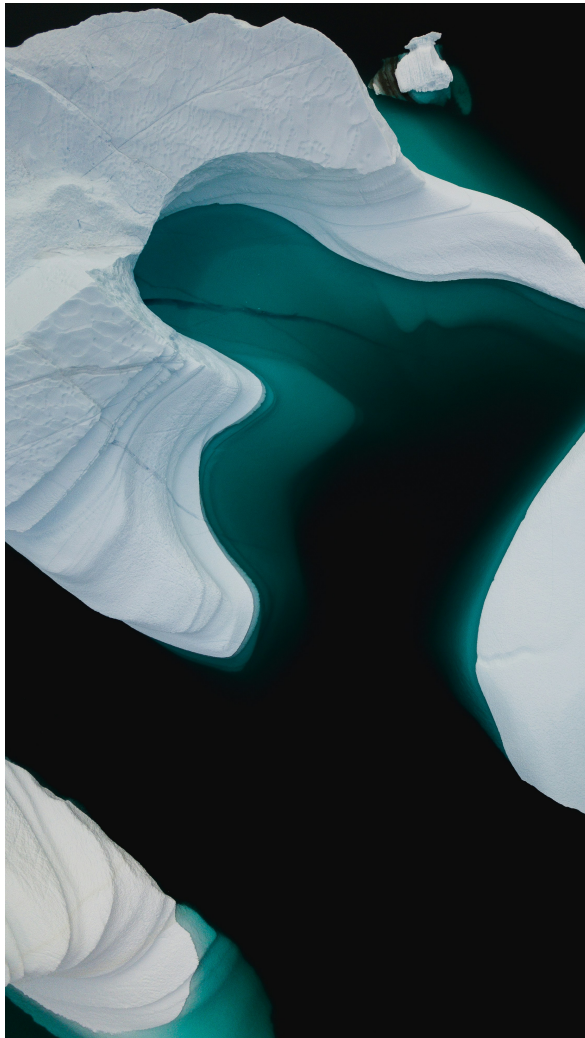
Social media has ruined the experience of traveling because everybody now goes to the same places



(% agreeing strongly / somewhat)

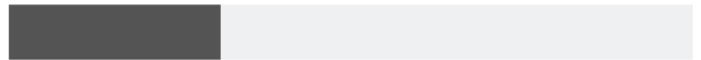
The Blame Game (Taylors Version)

A third of Austrians admit to feeling guilty about their trips, yet many shift the blame elsewhere, whether it's the ultra-wealthy or the airlines themselves. Take Taylor Swift, for example. In 2022, her private jet alone emitted over 8.000 tons of CO₂, while the average Austrian emits just 8 tons per year, including emissions from heating and driving^{3,5}. It's headlines like these that make individual efforts to reduce emissions feel insignificant. But perspective matters. Commercial flights worldwide produce around 600 million tons of CO₂ yearly - proof that responsibility isn't just on a few high-profile travelers². In Austria, 19% of people believe the burden falls primarily on travel and airline brands. So, when it comes to aviation emissions, who really holds the power to make a change?



The environmental impact of each trip makes me feel guilty

31% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



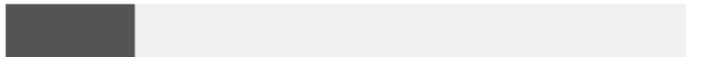
I don't feel guilty when taking a plane, the fault is on the wealthy people

53% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



Travel / airline brands are primarily responsible for climate change

19% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE

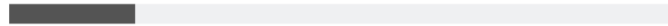


The Key for Sustainable Travel

Many Austrians are calling for more sustainable options, and while some may never fully give up traveling, there's potential for a shift toward greener alternatives. Industry leaders like Airbus are investing heavily in hydrogen powered planes, which emit water vapor instead of CO₂¹. For many, this could be the key to more sustainable air travel. While these options may be more expensive at first, around 19% of Austrians are willing to pay more for sustainable travel options. As technology improves, though, we can hope that prices will drop. The challenge lies in the competition with budget airlines, whose low-cost fares make sustainable alternatives hard to justify. With Ryanair flights often being much cheaper and faster than trains, even the most eco-conscious travelers face a tough decision.

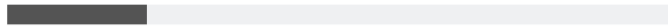
I am willing to pay more for trips that have a lower environmental impact

19% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



I believe hydrogen planes are the only credible solution for a sustainable future

21% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



What if we could explore the world without ever leaving our homes? 36% of Austrians believe that technology will make virtual travel possible in the future. While it's unclear whether it will match the experience of traveling in person, we'll leave that to the visionaries like Mark Zuckerberg to figure out.

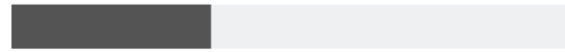
I'm fed up that the most sustainable ways to travel are often the most expensive

74% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



In the future, technology will enable me to travel without leaving my place

36% OF AUSTRIANS AGREE



To Travel, or Not to Travel

As we move into a more sustainable future, travel is changing. While the human sense of adventure will likely always be within us, our decisions will ultimately shape the footprint we leave on the places we visit, determining how future generations will see the world.

Sources:

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