

Press release

Changing travel habits: Germans are planning more consciously – between budget constraints and the desire for relaxation

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- **YouGov survey for f.re.e 2026 reveals new priorities in vacation planning and types of travel**
- **Desire for nature and tranquility drives vacation choices**
- **Partner region Crete: more diverse than Germans realize**

Vacation remains a central need for Germans, but is being rebalanced: between financial constraints, the desire for peace and nature, and openness to new forms of travel. This is shown by a representative YouGov survey commissioned by the travel and leisure fair f.re.eⁱ, which was conducted in January 2026. The results clearly show how much travel habits are changing – and underline the role of f.re.e as the most important platform for inspiration and guidance for individual leisure and vacation planning.

Wellness and relaxation with the greatest increase in popularity

A closer look at the survey shows that travel preferences are no longer a rigid construct, but are increasingly adapting to individual life situations. Types of vacations that many Germans would have ruled out ten years ago are now gaining in popularity. Wellness and relaxation trips have grown particularly strongly. Twenty-two percent of those who would not have booked such a trip 10 years ago now appreciate them. Cruises (18 percent), camping and van life (17 percent), as well as solo trips and city breaks (15 percent each) are now also appreciated by many who would have ruled out such trips in the past.

"The results clearly show that travel behavior is becoming more individual and is no longer a fixed ritual," say Stefan Rummel and Dr. Reinhard Pfeiffer, Managing

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Directors of Messe München. "People's needs change depending on their life situation. f.re.e offers exactly the guidance and comparison that people are looking for today. As the leading travel and leisure fair, it has been providing real experiences and new ideas for 55 years."

Budget and price trends as key factors

At the same time, growing realism will shape travel decisions in the coming years. For just under 40 percent of those surveyed, budget and price trends are the most important factors influencing their future travel and leisure behavior. But cost awareness is not the only factor: around a quarter cite the desire for more nature and tranquility as a key driver. Travel is thus increasingly caught between financial possibilities and the demand for quality, relaxation, and authentic experiences.

This ambivalence is also evident when looking at the main vacation in 2026. Although 24 percent of respondents say they are not currently planning a main vacation, those who do travel are remarkably open to new experiences: around a third are likely or very likely to visit a new destination. The desire to travel remains – it is simply expressed in a more conscious and considered way today, with higher expectations in terms of inspiration and comparability.

Partner region Crete: Scenic diversity still unknown to many

The example of the partner region of Crete shows how great the need for information and inspiration is for many travel destinations. Although more than half of those surveyed know that Crete is the largest island in Greece, its scenic and climatic diversity is often underestimated. While around a third associate Crete with one of the oldest and healthiest cuisines in Europe, only 29 percent are aware of its different climate zones – from high mountains to the Mediterranean coast. f.re.e 2026 will focus specifically on this diversity and present Crete as a destination that combines active holidays, nature experiences, and enjoyment – making it a perfect fit for the theme worlds of the trade fair.

Further information on the f.re.e highlights is available online at

<https://free-muenchen.de/de/messe/programm/>



Travel and leisure fair f.re.e

With its themes of travel, caravanning & camping, water sports, outdoor & fitness, and cycling, f.re.e is Germany's most active travel and leisure fair. Visitors gain a comprehensive overview of the market in these areas, can book trips directly, and test and purchase products on site. The varied supporting program promises additional information and entertainment.

Messe München

As one of the most important trade fair organizers, Messe München showcases the world of tomorrow at its approximately 90 trade fairs worldwide. Its portfolio includes trade fairs for capital goods and consumer goods as well as for new technologies. These include 14 world-leading trade fairs such as bauma, BAU, IFAT, and electronica, cooperation events such as IAA MOBILITY, and numerous guest events. With an international network of affiliated companies and foreign representatives, Messe München is active worldwide. Together with its approximately 1,200 employees in the group, it organizes trade fairs in China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Thailand, the USA, and Saudi Arabia. Around 150 events per year attract over 50,000 exhibitors and around three million visitors in Germany and abroad. This makes Messe München an important economic driver, generating billions in purchasing power.

ⁱ The data in this survey is based on online interviews with members of the YouGov panel who agreed to participate in advance. A total of 2,110 people were surveyed between January 13 and 15, 2026. The survey was quota-adjusted according to age, gender, and region, and the results were then weighted accordingly. The results are representative of the resident population in Germany aged 18 and over.