



Vacation Spending 2014: Austrians want to spend € 4.3 bn. on vacations this year

Every other Austrian plans a summer vacation and intends to spend 1,100 euro on average

72% finance their vacation with savings

Erste Bank currency exchange office app: ordering foreign currency at a branch office of one's choice

54% of Austrians plan to travel in the summer of 2014, with more than 3 overnight stays either in Austria or abroad. The vacation wallet is filled to bursting this year: on average, 1,100 euro are spent on vacations, which is 200 euro more than last year (+22%). "Overall, Austrians are thus spending more than 4.3 bn euro for summer vacations", says Manfred Bartalszky, head of product management at Erste Bank. Where does the money come from? 72% of the summer vacationers break their piggy bank, one quarter use their holiday pay, and 8% ask family or friends to provide financial support. Using account overdrafts to pay for vacations is out of the question for Austrians (1%).

Expert tip: Use a mix of cash and bank cards

At their vacation destination, Austrians continue to prefer paying with cash: 8 out of 10 travel with cash in their luggage, 59% also use "plastic": "A mix of cash and bank cards is best. Small change for taxi fares or food, while it is best to pay larger amounts with a bank card"; Bartalszky advises. The most frequently used currency is the euro for 7 out of 10 vacationers, 44% use the respective local currency, just as many use their ATM card and only every third uses a credit card for payments at the holiday destination. Generally it is important to inform oneself prior to traveling, which currency is used in the vacation destination, what costs may be incurred and how much money should be carried in the form of cash.

Buying foreign currency at the push of a button with the currency exchange office app

If a journey outside of the euro area is planned, 56% of Austrians buy the local currency at home at their house bank. Approximately every third withdraws money from ATMs on the spot, 28% visit a bank at their destination abroad and every fifth exchanges money at currency exchange offices in their vacation destination. With immediate effect, buying foreign exchange is possible at Erste Bank both for customers and non-customers simply at the push of a button: with the currency exchange office app, the required amount can be ordered directly via smart phone at a preselected point in time at a branch office of one's choice. A currency converter is included, which can also be used offline while traveling abroad. "This allows for flexibility when buying foreign currency, and one is able to pick up the required amount whenever and wherever one wants", says Bartalszky. The currency exchange office app is available for download for both iOS and Android in the respective stores for free.

Travel Tips by Erste Bank Experts

If it is necessary to exchange money, one should best still do this in one's homeland at one's house bank, as foreign exchange bureaus often convert at an unfavorable exchange rate and charge high fees.

One must be careful when paying with an ATM card or a credit card in countries outside of the euro area: "In these cases one must definitely make sure that one pays in local currency", Bartalszky advises, "if one pays in euro, the exchange rate will definitely be unfavorable"

For all those who want to take no chances when paying with credit cards: with the new text message service, a message is sent to one's smart phone on occasion of every successful or rejected payment, authorization, or change of the PIN code. Customers can activate the text messaging service in netbanking or at the call center.

If it becomes necessary to make a cash withdrawal in a vacation destination outside of the euro area, the fees are smallest if a classical ATM card (Maestro card) is used at an ATM. Caution: in some cases, the operators of ATMs charge additional withdrawal fees, this must however be pointed out prior to the withdrawal. When withdrawing cash, ATM operators moreover increasingly often offer to right away account for the transaction in local currency terms. It is better not to choose this option, as one must expect conversion fees of up to 6%.

Keeping one's limits in mind: if a journey to a country with a high crime rate is planned, one should check the withdrawal limits of one's bank cards and if necessary adjust them.

Experts of Erste Bank recommend to take both one's ATM and credit card along, in order to cover all payment options. For instance, there are many payment machines that only accept one type of card (Maestro or credit card). Credit cards also have the advantage that they include travel insurance. Tip from the experts: in many countries entering the PIN code is preferred to signatures when paying by credit card. "One should definitely request the credit card's PIN code for one's vacation and memorize it well, so as to have all payment methods at one's disposal", says Bartalszky.

All those who have no good memory for numbers can change the PIN code of their MasterCard or Visa card at the self-service devices of Erste Bank und Sparkassen to a PIN of their choice.

Online backup of one's most important documents: In netbanking of Erste Bank und Sparkassen, 1 gb of storage space is available for uploading documents. In case of an emergency, flight tickets, passport, or other documents are thereby quickly and easily accessible online.

About the survey:

Erste Bank commissioned the market research institute INTEGRAL to conduct a telephone survey regarding means of payment used on vacation. In the time period from 9. to 23. May 2014, 500 persons were asked via telephone about their summer vacation plans – the intended budget, means of payment to be employed, financing of the journey, purchase of foreign exchange. The results are representative for the Austrian population above the age of 14 (approx. 7,300,000 people).