

## The Long Road to Low-Carbon Holidays: Exploring Holiday-Making Behaviour of People Living in a Middle-Sized Swiss City

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This study explores the everyday decision-making processes of residents in Lugano, Switzerland, concerning their holiday practices, with the goal of identifying strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of tourism. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 60 participants, the researchers analyze how people choose destinations, transport modes, and leisure activities. The findings reveal that air travel and long-distance holidays remain dominant due to social norms, perceptions of "real vacations," and the desire for adventure and escape. However, the study also identifies promising trends, such as growing interest in regional tourism, train travel, and nature-based experiences. The authors propose that encouraging low-carbon holidays requires not only individual motivation but also structural interventions—such as better rail infrastructure, incentives for eco-tourism, and public awareness campaigns. The research integrates social practice theory to understand how habits, meanings, and material conditions shape holiday behavior, ultimately emphasizing that sustainable transitions in tourism must be co-designed with citizens to align ecological values with lived practices.



### The Long Road to Low-Carbon Holidays: Exploring Holiday-Making Behaviour of People Living in a Middle-Sized Swiss City

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**Abstract:** Decarbonising holiday travel is crucial for climate change mitigation; policy interventions need to encourage less frequent trips, closer destinations, and travelling on the ground. To increase effectiveness, interventions should fit with the specific ways holidays are perceived and performed in each context. We explore the holiday behaviour of people living in a medium-sized city in Southern Switzerland (Lugano, 70,000 inhabitants), with the aim of identifying key intervention strategies for a future "community challenge" encouraging the population to take low-carbon holidays. We combine a literature review with  $n = 15$  qualitative, semi-structured interviews that allow us to understand the reasons for taking a holiday, the favourite destination and activity types, and the transport mode chosen. As Switzerland is characterised by high cultural and linguistic diversity providing the feeling of being abroad even at a short distance from home, it could be a valuable holiday destination for Swiss people themselves. Located at the centre of Europe, it is also well-connected by train with many holiday destinations abroad. Gaps between pro-environmental attitudes and holiday behaviour suggest leveraging digital carbon trackers showing low carbon emissions compare between holiday and everyday life. Also, interventions could leverage social norms via social networks, local influencers, and travel agencies.

**Keywords:** holiday; long-distance; travel; low-carbon holidays; interviews; community challenge



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