

# International Tourism Strong Despite Uncertain Economy



International tourist arrivals grew by 4% between January and August 2012 compared to the same period of 2011 according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. The resilience of international tourism in a continuing uncertain economy is further confirmed by the positive data on tourism earnings and expenditure.

The number of international tourists worldwide grew by 4% between January and August 2012 compared to the same eight months of 2011 (28 million more). With a record 705 million tourists up to August 2012, UNWTO remains confident that one billion international tourists will have travelled the world by the end of the year.

“This growth is a very positive result in view of the global economic situation. We must remain cautious, however, as we have also observed some weaker months during the year, a trend that might return in the remainder of the year,” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

Growth slowed down in June (+2.7%) and July (+1.4%) as compared the first five months of the year (average of 5%), yet recovered in August at 4%, a positive result for the month that accounts for the highest volume of international tourism in the year.

UNWTO expects growth of 3% to 4% for the year as a whole, while forecasting a slight slowdown in demand for 2013 (+2% to 4%).

## Emerging economies regain the lead

Emerging economies (+5%) have clearly regained the lead as compared to advanced ones (+4%).

By regions, growth was stronger in Asia and the Pacific and Africa, followed by the Americas and Europe. The Middle East continues to show signs of recovery, with particularly promising results in Egypt.

- **Europe** (+3%) consolidated its record growth of 2011 despite on-going economic volatility in the Eurozone. Results were above average in Central and Eastern Europe (+9%), in line with the average in Western Europe (+3%), yet comparatively weaker in Southern and Mediterranean Europe (+1%) - one of the best performing European sub-regions in 2011 - as well as in Northern Europe (+0.2%).
- South-East Asia and South Asia (both at +8%) led the way in **Asia and the Pacific** (+7%), followed by North-East Asia (+7%), the latter reflecting the clear recovery of the Japanese inbound and outbound markets. Growth was clearly positive in Oceania (+5%) as compared to the full year 2011 (+1%).
- In the **Americas** (+4%), Central (+7%) and South America (+6%) continued to show the strongest performances, with growth in the Caribbean (+5%) also significant. International tourist arrivals grew 3% in North America.
- In **Africa** (+6%), the recovery of Tunisia is clearly reflected in the results of North Africa (+10%), as is the rebound of Egypt in the performance of the **Middle East** (-1% as compared to a decline of 7% in 2011). Destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa (+4%) continued to show very

positive results, consolidating the good growth rates of previous years.

### **Tourism earnings and expenditures also on the rise**

Among the **10 largest international tourism earners**, receipts grew significantly during the first six to nine months of 2012 in Hong Kong (China) (+17%), USA (+8%), Germany (+7%), France (+5%) and the UK (+4%). A number of other major destinations reported double-digit growth in receipts, such as Japan (+48%), Sweden (+26%), South Africa (+26%), Republic of Korea (+26%), India (+23%), Poland (+19%), Thailand (+17%), Russian Federation (+16%), Egypt (+13%), Czech Republic (+13%), Taiwan (pr. of China) (+11%), Singapore (+10%) and Croatia (+10%).

Among the **top 10 international markets by expenditure** on travel abroad, growth was significant during the first six to nine months of 2012 in China (+30%), Russia (+15%), USA (+9%), Canada (+6%), Germany (+5%), and Australia (+4%) as well as in Japan, where a 7% increase confirms the recovery of this important market. Following a decline in recent years, the UK recorded a modest 2% growth in tourism expenditure, while both Italy and France showed declines in the level of expenditure on travel abroad.

Other major advanced economies that showed significant growth in expenditure were Austria (+16%), Belgium (+13%), Switzerland (+11%) and Norway (+11%). Among the emerging economies, in addition to China and Russia double-digit growth in expenditure was posted by Poland (+22%), Malaysia (+18%), Argentina (+16%), Philippines (+14%), India (+11%) and Indonesia (+10%).

### **Note to Editors:**

In 2011, international tourist arrivals reached 990 million (revised due to updated data). With an expected growth of 3% to 4% in 2012, this figure is forecast to reach one billion for the first time by December 2012. The date of 13 December has been designated to symbolically mark the arrival of the one billionth tourist.

In 2011, receipts from international tourism, including international passenger transport, (exports from tourism) totalled US\$ 1.2 trillion or close to 6% of the world's exports of goods and services. For more information on tourism in 2011 see **UNWTO Tourism Highlights**.

The **UNWTO World Tourism Barometer** is a regular publication of UNWTO aimed at monitoring the short-term evolution of tourism and providing the sector with relevant and timely information.

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