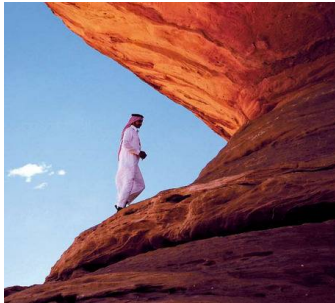


TOURISM ARRIVALS TO THE MIDDLE EAST DROP BY 18 PER CENT



According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Tourism is declining worldwide. Perhaps the most severely hit region is the Middle East with an 18 per cent decline. Not all countries in the region, however, are performing so badly.

The global economic crisis has severely affected the tourism industry worldwide. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international arrivals have dropped 8 per cent globally.

The region that has been hit particularly hard is the Middle East. This region's tourism sector has recorded **18 per cent decline between January and April** this year when compared to 2008. According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, the decline reflects mainly the situation **in Saudi Arabia where the drop was sharp.**

Based on their analyses, the UNWTO expects tourism in the Middle East to witness a negative growth between 5 per cent and 10 per cent until the end of 2009. The drop in arrivals to the Middle East is especially unpleasant after a number of years of fast growth. Nevertheless, at time of publication of the World Tourism Barometer data were still limited and the experts predicted that the estimates might change.

Not all countries in the Middle East, however, experience such negative results. For example the **United Arab Emirates even witnessed a 3 per cent growth.** The government in Dubai is continually supporting the local tourism. As a part of their efforts they launched a new promotional campaign, reduced fares on Emirates Airlines and also pressed hotels to reduce their prices. The crisis has impacted all kinds of people. Companies that provide business jet flights also recorded a drop in demand, meaning that even the super rich are more cautious about their money these days. In the Middle East the demand for business jet flights dropped 20 per cent in the first four months of this year.

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