

EUROPE REMAINS THE DESTINATION WITH THE BIGGEST NUMBER OF TOURISTS



The latest tourism monitoring carried out by UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) makes it clear that Europe remains the most popular tourism region by far. The 28 EU countries recorded 499 million foreign visitors in 2016. This corresponds to a growth of 4% (21 million) compared to 2015. This has been the seventh consecutive year in which the number of tourists in Europe increased. The last slump occurred during the economic crisis in 2008/09.

Moreover, if Norway, Switzerland and other non-Eu members are counted, the number exceeds 500 million visitors. **This means that Europe receives more than 40% of the world's international tourists.**

The number of tourists however needs to be relativized. The EU is homogenous, but a traveler from UK to Spain is registered as an international traveler. Thus, there is an enormous "transnational single market" that does not exist in large countries such as USA. But it is also important to note that Europe is very attractive to visitors from overseas. Not only because of the cultural and natural treasures, but also because, among other things, the Schengen visa regime makes it easy to visit several European countries during a trip.

Despite many challenges, such as continuous threat of terrorism, the number of tourists heading to Europe continues to grow. **Tourism is therefore seen by the EU as one of the pillars for economic growth and welfare in Europe.** UNWTO and the EU Directorate-General for the internal market, industry and enterprise will run a joint project until February 2018. The aim is the general promotion of tourism in the EU area, the creation of better statistical data bases and the promotion of sustainable development.

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