

TOURISM 2007: INDUSTRY ON THE RISE



The tourism industry is a very important sector for many economies. In some countries it generates the majority of GDP. Latest surveys show that the global tourism industry continues to grow.

From January through April, international tourist arrivals worldwide rose by over 6% to 252 million, representing an additional 15 million arrivals as against the same period in 2006, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.

The strongest growth could be seen in Asia and the Pacific (+9%). These two regions have witnessed the world's biggest growth in the first four months of 2007. South Asia in particular was the best performing region from this group, recording the highest increase in arrivals which has grown by 12%.

The second best performing region is Africa with 8% growth. Then comes the Middle East (+8%) and Europe (+6%). Especially Egypt (+14%) has witnessed a significant growth. Europe on the other hand remains the world's most visited and most mature destination. In Americas (+4%), the tourism industry didn't grow as strongly as in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the 2007 forecast for this regions said it will rise only +2%.

The tourism industry growth is connected with the growing global prosperity. More and more people now have disposable income. Another factor that has a positive impact on the growth of global tourism is the rise of low cost airlines, which makes international traveling easier than ever before.

According to Francesco Frangiali, secretary general of UNWTO, the strong growth underscores the increasingly important relation between tourism, climate change and poverty alleviation. He has also said: "Responsible and sustainable growth of the tourism sector will provide exports and jobs for the world economy generally and the poorest countries specifically, but this must be balanced with firm action to reduce the industry's carbon footprint."

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