

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IS UNDERGOING A RECORD-BREAKING YEAR



Between January and August 2017, tourist destinations around the world welcomed 901 million foreign tourists. The demand for international tourism remained high during the peak summer season in the northern hemisphere.

According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, the total number of international tourist arrivals in July and August exceeded the 300 million mark for the first time ever. **Many destinations experienced double-digit growth rates, especially in the Mediterranean area.**

Between January and August 2017, destinations the world over welcomed 901 million international tourists (overnight stays), 56 million more than during the same period in 2016 which represents a 7% increase - much higher than during the previous years.

Given the optimistic outlook for the final months of the year, 2017 is expected to be the eighth consecutive year of strong growth for international tourism. The results show sustained growth for many destinations as well as the recovery of destinations which had recently fallen victim to the security concerns.

In terms of UNWTO regions: growth was higher in Africa (+9%) and in Europe (+8%) than in Asia and the Pacific (+6%) or the Middle East (+5%) and the Americas (+3%).

These good performance results were confirmed by experts from around the world, to whom the UNWTO turned during the course of developing its confidence index which evaluated the May-August period very positively. According to them, the outlook for the last four months of 2017 is also very good.

In Europe (+8%) which experienced a sluggish year in 2016, the number of international tourist arrivals rebounded in the southern and Mediterranean regions (+12%) as well as in Western Europe (+7%). The number of arrivals increased by 6% in Northern Europe and by 4% in Central and Eastern Europe between January and August 2017.

Africa (+9%) experienced the fastest growth of the five regions due to the strong recovery of North Africa (+15%) as well as to the positive performance of sub-Saharan Africa (+5%).

South Asia (+10%) led growth in the Asia-Pacific region (+6%), followed by Southeast Asia (+8%) and Oceania (+7%); results for Northeast Asia (+3%) were quite mixed.

Most destinations in the Americas (+3%) continued to benefit from positive results: South America stands out (+7%), followed by Central America and the Caribbean (+4% each).

In North America (+2%), Mexico's and Canada's solid performance contrasted with the declining performance of the United States - the most important destination in the region.

Results in the Middle East (5%) were mixed - some destinations are recovering after having

experienced a decline in recent years while others reported a continuous decline up to the month of August.

The growth in the number of tourists visiting destinations around the world has been fueled by strong demand from most issuing markets.

Among the top ten markets, international tourism spending rose fastest in China (+19%), in the Republic of Korea (+12%), the United States (+8%) and Canada (+7%). In Germany and the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, and Hong-Kong (China), spending increased by between 3 to 5%; in comparison, spending in France increased by a modest 1%.

It should be noted that outside of the top ten markets, there was a significant recovery in the demand from the Russian Federation (+27%) and Brazil (+35%) after several years of contraction in tourist spending abroad.

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