

GLOBAL TOURISM INDUSTRY WILL TAKE TWO TO FOUR YEARS TO RECOVER



The third quarter of 2021 could spell the beginning of the recovery for international tourism, according to forecasts of the UNWTO Working Group of Experts. So far in 2020, the economic losses suffered by the global tourism industry as a result of the coronavirus pandemic are 8 times more those registered in the global financial crisis of 2009.

70% Drop So Far This Year

In the first eight months of 2020, the number of international trips has dropped by 70% compared to the same period last year. According to UNWTO data for July and August, the falls in international arrivals during this period by world regions were as follows:

Asia and the Pacific: -79%

Africa: -69%

Europe: -68%

Americas: -65%

Middle East: -69%

According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, **“international arrivals plunged 81% in July and 79% in August, traditionally the two busiest months of the year and the peak of the Northern Hemisphere summer season,”** explains the organization.

Millions of Jobs and Businesses at Risk

The decline in January-August 2020 represents 700 million fewer international tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019, and “translates into a loss of US\$ 730 billion in export revenues from international tourism, more than 8 times the loss in 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis,” highlights the UNWTO.

Summer Recovery Was Short-lived

According to the UNWTO, when the gradual reopening of international borders was introduced at the beginning of the summer, “Europe recorded comparatively smaller declines of 72% and 69%. The slight recovery was short-lived, however, as travel restrictions and advisories were reintroduced amid an increase in contagions.”

On the other hand, Asia and the Pacific recorded the largest declines with -96% in both months, “reflecting continued closure of borders in China and other major destinations in the region.”

For the organization, the demand for international travel remains subdued over the constant uncertainty about the pandemic and the lack of confidence. For these reasons, the UNWTO “estimates a drop of close to 70% in international arrivals for the whole of 2020”.

When a Recovery Can Be Expected?

According to the Executive Director of the UNWTO, Manuel Butler, “pre-pandemic 2019 levels will

be reached in between two and a half and four years, depending on different scenarios.”

But at what point could the recovery of international tourism begin? When would we start to see the first growth figures?

The UNWTO’s Working Group of Experts expects “a rebound in international tourism in 2021, especially in the third quarter. However, around 20% of the experts suggest that the rebound would not happen until 2022.”

What Is Slowing down the Recovery?

For the organization, tourism is currently facing five major obstacles:

- Travel restrictions
- Slow virus containment
- Low consumer confidence
- Lack of coordinated response among countries
- Economic deterioration

In this sense, **“travel restrictions are considered the main barrier to the recovery of international tourism, along with the slow response to contain the virus and low consumer confidence.”**

Furthermore, “the lack of a coordinated response among countries to guarantee harmonized protocols and coordinated restrictions, as well as the deterioration of the economic environment, have also been aspects pointed out by experts as important obstacles to recovery,” explains the UNWTO.

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