

BITTER CONCLUSION: CORONA PANDEMIC BRINGS TRAVEL INDUSTRY TO 1990 LEVELS



The Corona pandemic hit the travel industry especially hard in 2020. The border closures and travel warnings made vacations almost impossible.

In addition to border closures in spring, travel warnings and accommodation bans in the fall ensured that the travel industry fell into a deep hole. Current data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) show just how much tourism has declined.

Massive Loss of Revenue in the Tourism Industry

Between January and October 2020, there have been 900 million fewer international tourists than in the same period in 2010, accounting for a loss of US\$935 billion (about €765 billion), **ten times as severe as the impact of the 2009 global economic crisis**. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says in a statement: "Since the beginning of this crisis, UNWTO has provided governments and businesses with trusted data demonstrating the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global tourism. Although news of a vaccine is boosting travelers' confidence, there is still a long road to recovery. We, therefore, need to step up our efforts to open borders safely while supporting tourism jobs and businesses. It is becoming increasingly clear that the travel industry is one of the sectors most affected by this unprecedented crisis."

Calculated for the entire year 2020, the UNWTO expects a decline in international travelers by 70 to 75%. This would return tourism to the levels of 30 years ago - one billion fewer tourists and a loss of 1.1 trillion U.S. dollars (about 900 billion euros) at that time.

When Will the Travel Industry Recover?

Especially in the Asia and Pacific region, where the Corona pandemic started and where the strictest entry rules still prevail today, there were 82% fewer tourists in the first ten months of 2020. The Middle East saw 73% fewer tourists and Africa 69%. **To Europe and America, the figures fell by 68% in each case**. However, despite the continued weak demand that is emerging, major markets such as that of the USA, Germany and France are showing a slight recovery. In addition, demand for domestic tourism is increasing - including in China and Russia.

Thanks to the Corona vaccine, the organization expects the situation for tourism to improve somewhat and travel restrictions to be slowly eased again. But it could be another two and a half to four years before the industry returns to 2019 levels, according to the forecast.

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