

# GLOBAL TOURISM SLOWLY RECOVERING



There were clear signs of an upturn in global tourism in June and July 2021, as some destinations eased travel restrictions and the global rollout of vaccinations progressed in many parts of the world.

According to the latest edition of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, an estimated 54 million tourists crossed international borders in July 2021, down 67 percent from the same month in 2019 but the best performance since April 2020. **This compares to an estimated 34 million international arrivals in July 2020**, but well below the 164 million arrivals recorded in 2019.

## Moderate Upswing for Most Destinations

Most destinations reporting data for June and July 2021 saw a modest upswing in international arrivals compared to 2020, but 2021 remains a challenging year for global tourism, with an 80 percent decline in international arrivals from January to July compared to 2019.

Asia and the Pacific continued to post the weakest results from January to July, with a 95 percent decline in international arrivals compared to 2019. The Middle East (-82%) saw the second-biggest decline, followed by Europe and Africa (both -77%). The Americas (-68%) saw a comparatively smaller decline, with the Caribbean showing the best performance among the global sub-regions.

Some small islands in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, as well as some small European destinations, recorded the best results in June and July, with arrivals approaching or exceeding the pre-pandemic levels.

## Slowly Rising Tourism Confidence

This improvement has been underpinned by the reopening of many destinations to international travel, particularly in Europe and the Americas. The easing of travel restrictions for vaccinated travelers and progress in the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines have helped to boost consumer confidence and gradually restore safe travel in Europe and other parts of the world. In contrast, most destinations in Asia remain closed to non-essential travel.

According to UNWTO Secretary-General: "There is clearly a strong demand for international tourism, and many destinations have begun to welcome visitors back safely and responsibly. However, the true reboot of tourism and the benefits it brings remain on hold as inconsistent rules and regulations as well as inconsistent vaccination rates continue to affect travel confidence."

## Tourism Revenue

Although destinations continued to report weak international tourism receipts in the first seven months of 2021, some saw a slight improvement in June and July, and some even surpassed 2019 receipts. Among the larger destinations, Mexico generated roughly the same tourism receipts in June 2021 as in 2019 and saw a 2 percent increase in July compared to 2019.

The same is true for foreign tourism. Among larger markets, France (-35%) and the United States (-49%) saw significant improvement in July, although tourism spending was still well below 2019

levels.

## **A Look to the Future**

The outlook for the September-December 2021 period remains mixed, according to the latest UNWTO Expert Panel survey, with 53 percent of respondents believing the period will be worse than expected. Only 31 percent of experts expect results to be better toward the end of the year. **The survey also shows that most tourism professionals continue to expect an upswing, driven by pent-up demand for international travel in 2022**, mainly in the second and third quarters.

Nearly half of all experts (45%) continue to expect global tourism to return to 2019 levels in 2024 or later, while 43% point to a recovery in 2023. Broken down by region, the largest share of experts expecting a return to 2019 levels in 2024 or later is found in Asia and the Pacific (58%). In Europe, half of the respondents say this could be the case in 2023. The most optimistic region is the Middle East, where a full recovery is expected by 2022.

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