

# DESPITE THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN TOURISM KEEPS GROWING



Experts from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) expect the tourism industry to continue in its growth this year. The June Edition of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer suggests that in spite of the global economy's uncertainty the tourism industry was doing well between January and April this year. The international tourism arrivals grew 5 per cent during these four months, which is 1 per cent above the long-term trend.

The tourism sector is continuing in its strong growth of past years. Between 2004 and 2007 the international tourism grew by 7 per cent annually. The global economic downturn has naturally affected the tourism industry and its negative influence will undoubtedly continue. The rising prices of food and fuels burdens households' budgets and thus influences consumers' travel spending. Nevertheless, despite these negative influences, the global travel keeps growing. Especially good results were recorded in the Middle East, North-East and South Asia, and Central and South America. Other regions were also doing well. For example the USA witnessed a strong inbound travel. Caribbean tourism has improved its growth as well. Southern and Mediterranean destinations were the best performers in Europe. Some countries even recorded a double digit growth rate, among them for example: China, Republic of Korea or Vietnam.

The UNWTO is monitoring the situation closely and according to the UNWTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangiali, they remain positive for the overall industry perspective in 2008. According to the experts the positive expectations for the tourism industry development outnumber the negative ones. This positive opinion was also confirmed by the 280 members of the UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts. The further development of tourism will depend on the performance of local economies, their respective labor markets as well as on consumer confidence.

Do you expect any changes in the travelers' spending? Add your comment.

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