About UNWTO

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of **economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability** and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

UNWTO encourages the implementation of the **Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**, to maximize tourism’s socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the **United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development.

Our Priorities

**Mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda:** Advocating the value of tourism as a driver of socio-economic growth and development, its inclusion as a priority in national and international policies and the need to create a level playing field for the sector to develop and prosper.

**Improving tourism competitiveness:** Improving UNWTO Members’ competitiveness through knowledge creation and exchange, human resources development and the promotion of excellence in areas such as policy and planning, statistics and market trends, sustainable tourism development, marketing and promotion, product development and risk and crisis management.

**Promoting sustainable tourism development:** Supporting sustainable tourism policies and practices which make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide socio-economic benefits for all.

**Advancing tourism’s contribution to poverty reduction and development:** Maximizing the contribution of tourism to poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs by making tourism work as a tool for development and promoting the inclusion of tourism in the development agenda.

Did you know?

- Tourism represents 9% of global GDP – direct, indirect and induced impact
- Tourism is responsible for one in every eleven jobs worldwide – direct, indirect and induced impacts
- Tourism is the fifth largest export sector in the world, after fuels, chemicals and automotive products, generating over US$ 1.3 trillion a year in exports.
- Tourism accounts for 56% of the exports of services of Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
- In 2012, over one billion international tourists travelled the globe, by 2030 the number of international tourists is expected to reach 1.8 billion.
Fostering knowledge, education and capacity building:
Supporting countries to assess and address their needs in
education and training, as well as providing networks for
knowledge creation and exchange.

Building partnerships: Engaging with the private sector,
regional and local tourism organizations, academia and
research institutions, civil society and the UN system to build a
more sustainable, responsible and competitive tourism sector.

Our Structure

Members: An intergovernmental organization, UNWTO has
156 Member States, 6 Associate Members, 2 Permanent
Observers and over 400 Affiliate Members.

Organs: The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the
Organization. The Executive Council takes all measures, in
consultation with the Secretary-General, for the implementation
of the decisions and recommendations of the General
Assembly and reports to the Assembly.

Secretariat: UNWTO headquarters are based in Madrid, Spain.
The Secretariat is led by the Secretary-General and organized
into programmes covering issues such as sustainability,
education, tourism trends and marketing, sustainable
development, statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA),
destination management, ethics and risk and crisis management.
The Technical Cooperation and Services Programme carries out
development projects in over 100 countries worldwide, while the
Regional Programmes for Africa, the Americas, Asia and the
Pacific, Europe and the Middle East serve as the link between
UNWTO and its 156 Member States. The Affiliate Members
Programme represents UNWTO’s 400 plus members from the
private sector.

“When approached in a sustainable manner, tourism can
help drive economic growth and alleviate poverty. In fact,
tourism has proved to be one of the leading ways for least
developed countries to increase their participation in the
global economy.”

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

UNWTO: A SHORT HISTORY

1970
The Statutes of the World Tourism Organization (WTO)
are adopted on 27 September, known from 1979 onwards as World Tourism Day.

1975
The first WTO Secretary-General is appointed and the General
Assembly establishes WTO headquarters in Madrid, Spain.

1998
The WTO Themis Foundation is created in Andorra to promote
quality and efficiency in tourism education and training.

2000
The United Nations Statistics Commission approves the
international standards included in the Tourism Satellite
Account (TSA).

2001
The UN General Assembly officially recognizes the
Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

2002
2002 is declared the International Year of Ecotourism.

2003
WTO joins the UN system, becoming UNWTO, the UN
specialized agency for tourism.

2007
UNWTO presents the Davos Declaration, the tourism
sector’s response to the challenge of climate change.

2009
The 18th UNWTO General Assembly approves the
Roadmap for Recovery to see the tourism sector through
the 2008-2009 global economic crisis.

2012
For the first time in history over 1 billion international
tourists travel around the globe in one single year.

Tourism is included for the first time, in RIO+20, in the
Outcome Document of a UN Decadal Conference on
Sustainable Development, as well for the first time,
tourism is part of the Declaration of the G20 Leaders.