

# International tourism to close 2023 almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels



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International tourism is on track to recover almost 90% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of this year. According to the latest data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), an estimated 975 million tourists traveled internationally between January and September 2023, an increase of 38% on the same months of 2022.

The newest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer also shows:

- World destinations welcomed 22% more international tourists in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period last year, reflecting a strong Northern Hemisphere summer season.
- International tourist arrivals hit 91% of pre-pandemic levels in the third quarter, reaching 92% in July, the best month so far since the start of pandemic.
- Overall, tourism recovered 87% of pre-pandemic levels in January-September 2023. That puts the sector on course to recover almost 90% by the end of the year.
- International tourism receipts could reach US\$1.4 billion in 2023, about 93% of the US\$1.5 billion earned by destinations in 2019.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said, “The latest UNWTO data shows that international tourism has almost completely recovered from the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 with many destinations reaching or even exceeding pre-pandemic arrivals and receipts. This is critical for destinations, businesses, and communities where the sector is a major lifeline.”

## **The Middle East, Europe and Africa lead recovery**

The Middle East continues to lead the recovery by regions in relative terms, with arrivals 20% above

pre-pandemic levels in the nine months through September 2023. The Middle East remains the only world region to surpass 2019 levels this period. Visa facilitation measures, the development of new destinations, investments in new tourism-related projects and the hosting of large events, help underpin this remarkable performance.

Europe, the world's largest destination region, welcomed 550 million international tourists over the period, 56% of the global total. That represents 94% of pre-pandemic levels. The rebound was supported by robust intra-regional demand as well as strong demand from the United States.

Africa recovered 92% of pre-pandemic visitors this nine-month period, and arrivals in the Americas reached 88% of 2019 numbers this period, as the region benefitted from strong US demand, in particular to Caribbean destinations.

Asia and the Pacific reached 62% of pre-pandemic levels this period due to slower reopening to international travel. However, performance among subregions is mixed, with South Asia recovering 95% of pre-pandemic levels but North-East Asia only about 50%.

The World Tourism Barometer includes more focused data on regions, as well as sub-regions and individual destinations.

### **Tourism spending strong**

Strong demand for outbound travel was reported by several large source markets this period, with many exceeding 2019 levels. Germany and the United States spent 13% and 11% more respectively on outbound travel than in the same nine months of 2019, while Italy spent 16% more through August.

The sustained recovery is also reflected in the performance of industry indicators. Drawing on data from IATA (the International Air Transport Association) and STR, the UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker details a strong recovery in air passenger numbers and tourist accommodation occupancy levels.

Against this backdrop, international tourism is well on track to fully recover pre-pandemic levels in 2024 despite economic challenges such as high inflation and weaker global output, as well as important geopolitical tensions and conflicts.