

WORLD TOURISM DAY 2020: GLOBAL COMMUNITY UNITES TO CELEBRATE “TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT”

Madrid, Spain, 8 September 2020 – *The 2020 edition of World Tourism Day will celebrate the unique role that tourism plays in providing opportunities outside of big cities and preserving cultural and natural heritage all around the world.*

Celebrated on 27 September with the theme of “**Tourism and Rural Development**”, this year’s international day of observation comes at a critical moment, as countries around the world look to tourism to drive recovery, including in rural communities where the sector is a **leading employer and economic pillar**.

The 2020 edition also comes as governments look to the sector to drive recovery from the effects of the pandemic and with the **enhanced recognition of tourism at the highest United Nations level**. This was most notably illustrated with the recent release of a landmark Policy Brief on tourism from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in which he explained that “for rural communities, indigenous peoples and many other historically marginalized populations, **tourism has been a vehicle for integration, empowerment and generating income.**”

Historic International Cooperation

For the first time in the 40-year history of World Tourism Day, the official celebration will not be hosted by a single Member State of the United Nations specialized agency. Instead, **nations from the Mercosur bloc** (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Chile joining with observer status) will serve as **joint hosts**. This co-hosting agreement exemplifies the **spirit of international solidarity** that runs through tourism and which UNWTO has recognized as essential for recovery.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “All around the world, tourism empowers rural communities, providing jobs and opportunity, most notably for women and youth. Tourism also enables rural communities to hold onto their unique cultural heritage and traditions, and the sector is vital for safeguarding habitat and endangered species. This World Tourism Day is a chance to recognize the role tourism plays outside of major cities and its ability to build a better future for all.”

Rural areas hit hard by COVID-19

For countless rural communities around the world, tourism is a leading provider of employment and opportunities. In many places, **it is one of the few viable economic sectors**. Moreover, development through tourism can also keep rural communities alive. It is estimated that by 2050, 68% of the world population will live in urban areas, while 80% of those currently living in 'extreme poverty' live outside of towns and cities.

The situation is particularly hard for youth: young people in rural communities are three times more likely to be unemployed than older adults. **Tourism is a lifeline**, offering young people a chance to earn a living without having to migrate either within their home countries or abroad.

World Tourism Day 2020 will once again be celebrated by UNWTO's Member States in all global regions as well as by cities and other destinations and by private sector organizations and individual tourists. It comes as communities in rural areas also struggle with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These communities are usually much less-prepared to deal with the short and longer-term impacts of the crisis. This is due to a number of factors, including their aging populations, lower income levels and the continuing 'digital divide'. Tourism offers a solution to all of these challenges.

Related Links:

[United Nations Secretary-General Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism](#)

[UNWTO: World Tourism Day](#)

[UNWTO: Sustainable Development](#)