

## Tourism on Track for Full Recovery as New Data Shows Strong Start to 2023

*Madrid, Spain 9 May 2023* - International tourism is well on its way to returning to pre-pandemic levels, with twice as many people travelling during the first quarter of 2023 than in the same period of 2022.

### New Data from UNWTO: What We've Learned

The second UNWTO World Tourism Barometer of the year shows that the sector's swift recovery has continued into 2023. It shows that:

- Overall, international arrivals reached **80% of pre-pandemic levels** in the first quarter of 2023
- An estimated **235 million tourists travelled internationally** in the first three months, **more than double** the same period of 2022.
- Tourism has continued to show its resilience. Revised data for 2022 shows over 960 million tourists travelling internationally last year, meaning two-thirds (66%) of pre-pandemic numbers were recovered.

### Recovery by Region in Q1 2023:

The **Middle East** saw the strongest performance as the only region exceeding 2019 arrivals (+15%) and the first to recover pre-pandemic numbers in a full quarter.

**Europe** reached 90% of pre-pandemic levels, driven by strong intra-regional demand.

**Africa** reached 88% and the **Americas** about 85% of 2019 levels

**Asia and the Pacific** accelerated its recovery with 54% of pre-pandemic levels, but this upward trend is set to accelerate now that most destinations, **particularly China**, have re-opened.

The UNWTO data also analyses recovery by sub-region and by destination: Southern Mediterranean Europe and North Africa have also recovered pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2023, while Western Europe, Northern Europe, Central America and the Caribbean all came close to reaching those levels.

### What it Means:

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "The start of the year has shown again tourism's unique ability to bounce back. In many places, we are close to or even above pre-pandemic levels of arrivals. However, we must remain alert to challenges ranging from geopolitical insecurity, staffing shortages, and the potential impact of the cost-of-living crisis on tourism, and we must ensure tourism's return delivers on its responsibilities as a solution to the climate emergency and as a driver of inclusive development."

International tourism receipts grew back to hit the USD1 trillion mark in 2022, growing 50% in real terms compared to 2021, driven by the important rebound in international travel. International visitor spending reached 64% of pre-pandemic levels (-36% compared to 2019, measured in real terms). By regions, Europe enjoyed the best results in 2022 with nearly USD 550 billion in tourism receipts (EUR 520 billion), or 87% of pre-pandemic levels. Africa recovered 75% of its pre-pandemic receipts, the Middle East 70% and the Americas 68%. Due to prolonged border shutdowns, Asian destinations earned about 28%.

### Looking Ahead: What's in Store?

The Q1 2023 results are in line with UNWTO's forward-looking scenarios for the year which project international arrivals to recover 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels. UNWTO's Panel of Experts expressed their confidence in a strong peak season (May-August) in the Northern Hemisphere, reflected in the latest UNWTO Confidence Index which indicates performance for the period is on track to be even better than 2022.

However, **tourism's recovery also faces some challenges**. According to the UNWTO Panel of Experts, the economic situation remains the main factor weighing on the effective recovery of international tourism in 2023, with high inflation and rising oil prices translating into higher transport and accommodations costs. As a result, tourists are expected to increasingly seek value for money and travel closer to home. Uncertainty derived from the Russian aggression against Ukraine and other mounting geopolitical tensions, also continue to represent downside risks.

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