

## Tourism grows 4pc in 2021, still far behind pre-pandemic levels

A Monitor Report

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### When do you expect international tourism to return to pre-pandemic 2019 levels in your country?



UNWTO conducted a global survey among its UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and the expected time of recovery. Data as collected by UNWTO, January 2022. Published: 18/01/2022

Madrid : Global tourism experienced a 4 per cent upturn in 2021, compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million). However, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) were still 72 per cent below the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to preliminary estimates by UNWTO.

The first 2022 issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer indicates that rising rates of vaccination, combined with easing of travel restrictions due to increased cross-border coordination and protocols, have all helped release pent up demand. The full impact of the Omicron variant and surge in Covid-19 cases is yet to be seen. Slow, uneven recovery

The pace of recovery remains slow and uneven across world regions due to varying degrees of mobility restrictions, vaccination rates and traveller confidence.

Europe and the Americas recorded the strongest results in 2021 compared to 2020 (+19 per cent and +17 per cent respectively), but still both 63 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.

Meanwhile, Africa saw a 12 per cent increase in arrivals in 2021 compared to 2020, though this is still 74 per cent below 2019.

In the Middle East arrivals declined 24 per cent compared to 2020 and 79 per cent over 2019.

In Asia and the Pacific arrivals were still 65 per cent below 2020 levels and 94 per cent when compared to pre-pandemic values as many destinations remained closed to non-essential travel.

#### Outlook for 2022

According to the latest UNWTO Panel of Experts, most tourism professionals (61 per cent) see better prospects for 2022. While 58 per cent expect a rebound in 2022, mostly during the third quarter, a 42 per cent vs point to a potential rebound only in 2023.

A majority of experts (64 per cent) now expect international arrivals to return to 2019 levels only in 2024 or later, up from 45 per cent in the September survey.

UNWTO scenarios indicate that international tourist arrivals could grow by 30 per cent to 78 per cent as compared to 2021, However, this is still 50 per cent to 63 per cent below pre-pandemic levels.

While international tourism bounces back, domestic tourism continues to drive recovery of the sector in an increasing number of destinations, particularly those with large domestic markets.

According to experts, domestic tourism and travel close to home, as well as open-air activities, nature-based products and rural tourism are among the major travel trends that will continue shaping tourism in 2022.