



**UNWTO**

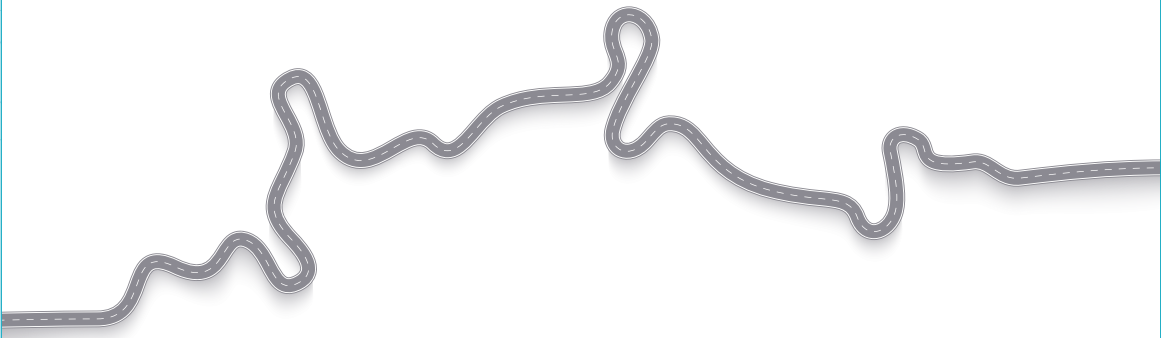
World Tourism Organization

# TOURISM AND **COVID-19**

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13 MARCH 2020

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- The **Coronavirus COVID-19** pandemic presents the global community and the tourism sector with **a major and evolving challenge**.
  - The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** has strengthened its collaboration **with the World Health Organization (WHO)**. The two UN agencies **met in Geneva to further advance a coordinated response to COVID-19**.
  - UNWTO calls for solid international leadership and for **tourism to be included as a priority in future recovery efforts**.
  - UNWTO also calls upon the sector and travelers to address this challenge with **sound judgment and proportionate measures**.
  - **Tourism is currently one of the most affected sectors** and UNWTO has revised its 2020 forecast for international arrivals and receipts, though emphasizes that such any predictions are likely to be further revised.
  - Against a backdrop of travel restrictions being introduced, UNWTO underscores **the importance of international dialogue and cooperation** and emphasizes the COVID-19 challenge also represents an opportunity to show how solidarity can go beyond borders.



The tourism sector, like no other economic activity with social impact, is based on interaction amongst people. UNWTO has been guiding the tourism sector's response on several levels:

- By cooperating closely **with the World Health Organization (WHO)**, the lead UN agency for the management of this outbreak;
- by ensuring with WHO that **health measures are implemented** in ways that minimize unnecessary impact on international travel and trade;
- by standing in **solidarity with affected countries**; and
- by **emphasizing tourism's proven resilience** and by standing ready to support recovery.

UNWTO continues to coordinate closely with WHO and other United Nations agencies, and UNWTO's Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili maintains regular contact with governments and tourism sector leaders.

# PUTTING PEOPLE **FIRST**

The tourism sector is committed to putting people and their wellbeing first.

As the United Nations agency leading tourism's contribution to sustainable development, [UNWTO issued a joint statement with WHO](#), the lead UN agency for the global response to COVID-19.

Both organizations call for **responsibility and heightened coordination** to ensure that health measures are implemented in ways that minimize unnecessary interference with international travel. Furthermore, tourism's **response needs to be measured and consistent**, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment. work alongside Greece in promoting year-round tourism and digital transformation.



Personal responsibility is the most important step that people can take to protect themselves and others. Travelers should familiarize themselves with the basic **prevention practices that apply while travelling** and in daily life ([WHO advice for public](#)). These include:

- regular hand-washing,
- normal cough etiquette,
- postponing travel plans in cases of illness, and
- avoiding contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.

It is **essential to stay informed as the situation evolves**, especially while travelling. Travelers should check regularly with WHO and other reliable resources for the latest updates and information issued by health and travel professionals.

**Travelers are responsible not only for their own well-being but for the well-being of those around them.** They should be aware of the symptoms and take all the recommended steps for personal hygiene.

# IMPACT ON TOURISM

The tourism sector is currently **one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of COVID-19**, with impacts on both travel supply and demand. This represents an **added downside risk** in the context of a weaker world economy, geopolitical, social and trade tensions, as well as uneven performance among major outbound travel markets.

Considering the evolving nature of the situation, **it is too early to estimate the full impact** of the COVID-19 on international tourism. For its initial assessment, UNWTO takes the SARS scenario of 2003 as a benchmark, factoring in the size and dynamics of global travel and current disruptions, the geographic spread of COVID-19 and its potential economic impact:

- As of today, **UNWTO estimates that in 2020 global international tourist arrivals could decline between 1% to 3%**, down from an estimated growth of 3% to 4% forecast in early January 2020.
- This could translate into a loss of US\$ 30 to 50 billion in spending by international visitors (international tourism receipts).

**UNWTO underscores that any estimate must be treated with caution due to the volatile and uncertain evolution of the outbreak which might lead to further revisions.**



# PROMOTING **SOLIDARITY**

UNWTO is observing the introduction of **restrictions on travel**. Where these are introduced, they must be based on the latest expert recommendations and have public health concerns as a main concern.

Within this context, UNWTO has stressed the importance of **international dialogue and cooperation**. This shared challenge also presents the global community, including the tourism sector, to work more closely together and show that solidarity can go beyond national borders.

# SUPPORTING **RECOVERY**



**Small and medium sized enterprises** (which make up around 80% of the tourism sector) **are expected to be particularly impacted**. This might affect **millions of livelihoods across the world**, including vulnerable communities who rely on tourism as a vehicle to spur their development and economic inclusion.

Due to its cross-cutting economic nature and deep social footprint, **tourism is uniquely positioned to help societies and communities** affected return to growth and stability. Over the years, the sector has consistently proven its **resilience** and its ability not only to bounce back as a sector but to **lead the wider economic and social recovery**. This depends on adequate political support and recognition.

Against this backdrop, **UNWTO calls for:**

- **financial and political support for recovery measures** targeting the tourism sector in the most affected countries;
- recovery measures and incentives to be planned and implemented in coordination **with international development and donor organizations;** and
- tourism support to be **included in the wider recovery plans and actions** of affected economies.

As in the past, **UNWTO will provide guidance and support for recovery measures** of its members, the private and public tourism sector, including organizers of tourism events and fairs.

Through its [website](#) and social media channels ([Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#)), UNWTO will continue to share regular updates.

# RELEVANT LINKS

- [UNWTO Impact Assessment](#)
- [Initial UNWTO Statement on the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak](#)
- [UNWTO/WHO Joint Statement on Tourism and COVID-19](#)
- [UNWTO Statement on the Containment of COVID-19](#)
- [WHO: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak](#)
- [WHO: Advice for the Public](#)

