

“Tourism Opens Minds” Initiative Launched in Riyadh to Transform Travel Habits

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 28 September 2023 – UNWTO has launched a new global initiative designed to unite and encourage nations, tourism sector leaders and consumers to be more open-minded when choosing a travel destination.

Announced during the World Tourism Day celebrations in Riyadh, “Tourism Opens Minds” will showcase the powerful role that tourism plays in bridging cultures and promoting a more interconnected and harmonious world. To mark the launch, delegates gathered in Riyadh were presented with a special Pledge calling on them to actively work to promote new and under-appreciated destinations.

Tourism Recovering – But Old Patterns Remain

World Tourism Day 2023 was held as new data from UNWTO underscored the sector’s recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. At the same time, however, research suggests that only a minority of tourists intend to seek out new or different destinations as they start travelling again.

- According the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, global tourism is on track to recover 80% and 95% international arrival numbers by the end of 2023.
- Notably, however, a recent YouGov survey found that 66% of tourists believe that travelling to a place that provides familiarity is important. Just under half of respondents feel uncomfortable travelling to places they know little about.
- This is despite the fact that, of those that do travel to new destinations, 83% agree that they come back with a changed or broadened perspective.

The data shows the need for initiatives such as ‘Tourism Open Minds’ to encourage consumers to diversify their travel habits, with UNWTO uniting the global sector behind this aim. The initiative also aims at allowing government officials, sector leaders and consumers help to mitigate the impacts of over-tourism, foster mutual understanding, conserve the environment and ensure equitable growth of the sector.

“A Unifying Force” For Good

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: “To ensure true global prosperity, we must work together to ensure that every country can harness the potential of a thriving tourism industry. The sector serves as a unifying force, fostering cultural understanding, strengthening bonds between societies, and championing environmental preservation.

“The ‘Tourism Opens Minds’ initiative extends a compelling invitation for travelers to broaden their horizons and explore the uncharted corners of our world. By doing so, it not only reveals the beauty of diverse destinations but also nurtures an appreciation for the cultures and people who call these places home.”

His Excellency Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, said: “Since embarking on our tourism journey, Saudi Arabia has been committed to enhancing the sector and generating an impact extends beyond borders. Our contributions including pivotal partnerships such as the establishment of the UNWTO Middle East office in Riyadh, the creation of the Riyadh School for Travel and Hospitality and hosting record-breaking editions of the WTTC Global Forum and UNWTO World Tourism Day, underscore the immense potential of the sector when people from across the globe are united and connected.

“The UNWTO ‘Tourism Opens Minds’ Initiative is another important milestone for the tourism sector, and its launch at World Tourism Day in Riyadh is a continuation of our many previous commitments to the global tourism sector.”

Tourism Leaders Pledge to Act

In Riyadh, high-level guests at the World Tourism Day celebrations were invited to agree to a Pledge, representing their shared commitment to work together to:

- Make lesser-known destinations more welcoming and accessible;
- Help to cater to, and foster, an environment that compliments trips to lesser-known destinations;
- To be more open-minded to new cultures and destinations.

A new symbol to represent the initiative was also unveiled. Inspired by the colors of the flags of every country in the world, the symbol acts as a visual representation of working together to recognize the power of tourism in fostering cultural connections and sustainable growth for all.

Related links:

<https://www.unwto.org/the-tourism-opens-minds>