

UN
TOURISM
NEWS



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UNWTO in 2024

Advancing Priorities and Moving Closer to Members

A new year brings new opportunities for global tourism. UNWTO has identified the priorities for the sector: investments, education, youth empowerment, and sustainability. In 2023, with the support of its Members, the Organization successfully laid the foundations for all these priorities to be advanced or realized over the year ahead.

2024 looks set to be the year international tourism returns to pre-pandemic levels, capping a rapid and remarkable comeback. UNWTO has set the direction of travel, evolving its Programme of Work and moving even closer to its Members on the ground. Now, it's time to look ahead and build a sector that offers even more for even more people and communities while also focusing on this year's World Tourism Day Theme: Tourism and Peace.



Resilience and Reliability

The first UNWTO World Barometer of 2024 will be published later this month and provide a consolidated review of 2023 and a first forecast for this year. Once again, it will emphasise both the sector's resilience and the reliability of UNWTO data, showcasing the Organization as the trusted source of insights for Governments, businesses and the media.

UNWTO's forecast to return to **80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023** proved to be right. So too did identifying the reopening of China as the final piece towards full recovery. UNWTO's leadership was there for the [official opening of China's tourism market](#) in February last year - and will continue to be on the ground as our Member States everywhere embrace the power of tourism for growth and renewal.



Spotlight on Investments

With investments identified as a key priority for the sector, UNWTO's [cooperation agreement with the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean \(CAF\)](#) will further promote tourism investments in the Americas region. [Investment Guidelines](#) will continue being released throughout 2024, emphasising opportunities in specific destinations. Last year also saw UNWTO join [the World Investment for Development Alliance](#) (WIDA) to boost effectiveness of investment in the sector and its work towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNWTO will spearhead the “Tourism Investment Segment” during the Annual Investment Meeting (8-10 May, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates).

UNWTO will also continue the momentum built during the [10th Global Tourism Economic Forum](#) in Macau, as the event grows as a platform to advance the work around investments and showcases China's role in this area.

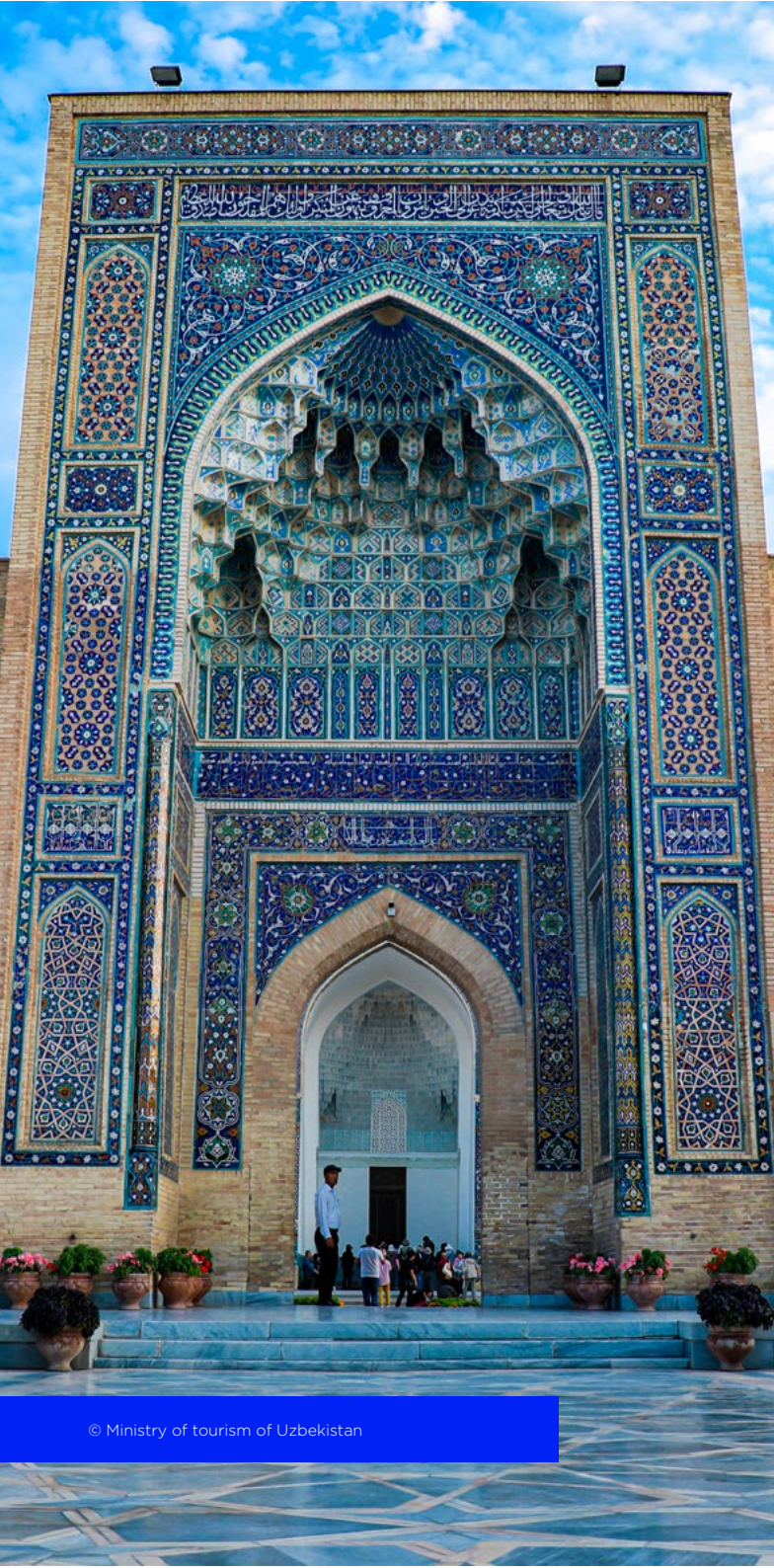
Finally, the legacy of [World Tourism Day](#) 2023 will continue to live on. The biggest celebration so far was held around [‘Tourism and Green Investments’](#) in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, and produced the second **World Tourism Day Report, a resource to help destinations everywhere boost tourism investments for the benefit of People, Planet and Prosperity.**



Education and Youth Empowerment

True sustainable development can only be achieved by investing in people and supporting young talent. Again, the achievements of 2023 lay the foundations for the year ahead. **New Academies in Collaboration with UNWTO opened in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan**, with more to follow. Reflecting UNWTO's work to advance tourism education at every stage, the [Education Toolkit to support the introduction of tourism as a high school subject](#) was launched. Moreover, at **World Travel Market** in London, one of the world's leading tourism trade fairs, UNWTO made [education](#) the theme of its annual **Ministers' Summit**, concluding the year with the final of the [Students' League](#).

2024 will witness the first [BSc in Sustainable Tourism Management](#). Launched last year with the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences of Switzerland, the first students of this Bachelor programme will arrive in Madrid to start their journey.



A stronger, more global Organization

UNWTO is as strong as its Membership. Last October in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the first in-person [General Assembly](#) since the pandemic saw Members endorse UNWTO's leadership and approve the Programme of Work for 2024-25 and [centred key priorities](#) with thematic events on education and investments. Registering unprecedented support from the top of the UN and other agency leaders, the Assembly approved plans to open [new Regional Offices for the Americas \(Brazil\) and Africa \(Morocco\)](#). A further highlight was welcoming **Belize as the newest Member**.

This commitment to working closely with Member States everywhere is reflected in the strong presence of UNWTO on-the-ground in every global region. **Technical Assistance** offered throughout 2023 was deep in expertise and wide in range, covering everything from **data collection** through to **human resource management** and **hotel classification**.

Alongside this, the [UNWTO Agenda for Africa](#) keeps developing as the focus shifts to access to finance for greater sustainability. In 2024, UNWTO will host in Zambia the [2nd UNWTO Regional Conference on Brand Africa](#) under the theme "Promoting Africa to unlock the tourism sector's growth potential".



The global voice of tourism for sustainable development

The year ahead looks set to be a huge test for international governance and order, global security, and coordinated climate action. UNWTO has ensured that tourism will be part of the discussions at the very highest level. It certainly was in 2023, including as the UN held major conferences on [Least Developed Countries](#) and [Water Action](#) in **New York** and on joint efforts to reach Net-Zero emissions by 2050, in **Geneva**. Then at the [UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), UNWTO welcomed leaders to a round table event on tourism's role in driving fair and resilient growth, and at the UN Climate summit **COP28**, UNWTO shared the sector's progress towards the [Glasgow Declaration](#), tourism's most ambitious climate action plan. And to ensure that progress is tracked and transparent, UNWTO has followed a UN process that will culminate in the presentation of the Statistical Framework for [Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism](#) to the United Nations Statistical Commission..

Within the UN system, during 2023 UNWTO strengthened its partnerships with sister agencies including most notably the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN \(FAO\)](#). Meanwhile, outside of its status as the UN agency for tourism, UNWTO built on the ongoing **strong work with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the G20 group of countries** and launched the **Tourism for Rural Development Programme**. The **G20 Tourism Working Group** met for the first time and the world's biggest economies also then welcomed the [Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a Vehicle for Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#).



Diversifying Tourism's Benefits

The UNWTO Regional office for the Middle East, will continue building on the successful work around tourism and rural development, above all through the flagship **Best Tourism Villages** (BTV) initiative. The BTV Network keeps growing as a growing [number of villages were recognized](#) last year, between March in the Saudi site of AlUla up until the General Assembly in October in Samarkand. In 2024, the fourth BTV edition will offer a new opportunity to rural destinations to shine on the global stage.

In 2024, it won't just be rural areas benefitting from UNWTO's work to build a more diverse tourism sector. Over the past year, UNWTO held summits, workshops and more on [wine tourism](#), [gastronomy tourism](#), [sports tourism](#) and [accessible tourism](#), ensuring a more inclusive and resilient sector for years to come. In 2024, the Organization will continue its work in these areas with initiatives such as the 8th Global Conference on Wine Tourism (Armenia), the 9th World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism (Bahrain), the 1st UNWTO Football Tourism Forum (Côte d'Ivoire), as well as advancing tourism intelligence on best practices around accessibility and inclusive tourism development.



Building on a Year of Firsts

Advancing and amplifying the tourism for development message, a first [Workshop on Tourism Communications](#) was held in Zimbabwe in November, gathering participants from over 20 African countries to unite media and officials to shift the tourism narrative in the continent.

Building on this, 2024 will see the first major renewal of the Organization's visual identity and narrative, alongside a digital overhaul.

Also a first, is the [International Code for the Protection of Tourists](#). Adhered to by more than 20 countries since its approval only two years ago, the Code is a landmark tool to generate trust for tourists, destinations, and private operators in the face of disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, in Salamanca, Spain, [a first international seminar](#) charted the Code's integration into national legal systems.

The Tourism Law Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, jointly created by UNWTO and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) will be presented during Fitur, the Madrid International Tourism Trade Fair in January.



TOURISM OPENS MINDS



Building for a Better Future

As we begin 2024, **the foundations are set to not just recover but to transform tourism**, with UNWTO guiding the sector towards a more innovative and inclusive future. The return to pre-pandemic levels is an opportunity to consolidate tourism's contribution to a sustainable transformation, on the back of its vast economic value chain and deep social footprint.

Tourism only works between people. It is a vehicle to raise awareness, educate and transform societies for the better. And it builds bridges of understanding, in a world still in need to come closer, as reflected in the '**Tourism Opens Minds**' initiative. As the devastating impacts of the Russian invasion continued to be felt, UNWTO amplified tourism's voice in solidarity with Ukraine. And as new conflicts and connected humanitarian emergencies emerged in the latter part of last year, the **message of tourism's potential to bridge divisions and help international understanding remains more relevant than ever.** In 2024, this message will take centre stage as the theme of **World Tourism Day 2024: 'Tourism and Peace'**.

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