



WORLD TOURISM DAY MESSAGE
by Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

Tourism – linking cultures
27 September 2011

With 940 million tourists crossing international borders in 2010, never have the world's peoples and cultures been drawn together as now. Through tourism, millions of people are brought closer every day.

World Tourism Day (WTD) 2011 is taking place under the theme **Tourism – linking cultures** and is a celebration of tourism's role in breaking down barriers across cultures and fostering tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. In our often divided world, these values represent the stepping stones towards a more peaceful future.

Promoting and developing tourism with a view to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all is at the heart of UNWTO's mandate. Every people and every place possess a unique culture. Experiencing different ways of life, discovering new food and customs and visiting cultural sites have become leading motivations for travel, and as a result, a crucial source of revenue and job creation, particularly for developing countries. Income from tourism is often redirected towards the safeguarding of these sites and even the revitalization of cultures.

Yet tourism growth brings serious responsibilities to minimize any potentially negative impacts on the cultural assets and heritage of mankind. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a set of universal values, principles and standards, guides tourism's development so that it is sustainable, ethical and responsible.

Ultimately, tourism is an economic sector based on human interaction, exchange and dialogue. WTD 2011 is a call to all those involved in tourism to act in a way that is conscious and respectful of culture, which promotes intercultural dialogue and ensures that local communities fully participate in, and benefit from, the development opportunities of tourism.

We look forward to celebrating the cultures of the world with you.

Taleb Rifai
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