

World Tourism Day

World Tourism Day on 27 September is about deciding the tourism we want for the future. That means thinking not just about the economy but also about the impact on people and the planet.

Every year on 27 September the United Nations World Tourism Day is celebrated. It began in 1980, and the event is hosted by a different country or group of countries every year. On World Tourism Day, the United Nations calls for investments in people and the planet, not just economic productivity.

It may seem curious that tourism has its own special day, but maybe it's not so surprising when you think of the enormous number of people employed in this sector. Tourism and travel is one of the world's biggest industries. According to 2019 research, over 333 million people – that's about one in ten working people worldwide – were employed in tourism and travel. Now, this huge global industry is growing again after the pandemic, creating serious issues for people and the planet.

With mass tourism, fascinating places are becoming overwhelmed by millions of tourists. Enormous tour buses block roads and make getting to school or work difficult for residents. International chains take over from local businesses, tourist apartments take over from ordinary housing, and rising prices force local people out of their homes.

Barcelona in Spain and Venice in Italy are two examples of places where the local population have demanded that tourism is controlled more tightly. In Barcelona, regulations related to short-term rental accommodation were introduced to help local people have access to flats. In Venice, the number of large cruise liners entering the port is now controlled to protect the historic city and its natural environment from further damage. Locals also complained about the huge crowds of cruise passengers, who were putting pressure on the city's resources but contributing little to the economy. Maybe tourism in the 21st century will continue to be regulated to protect people and local environments.