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## **Global tourist numbers continue to increase, UN agency reports**



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International tourist numbers surged by nearly 5 per cent in the first half of this year as the industry continues its recovery following the global dip in the wake of the recent financial crisis, new United Nations figures reveal.

The latest [update](#) of the World Tourism Barometer, released today by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), shows there were a record 440 million international tourist arrivals between January and June this year – a jump of 19 million on the same period on 2010.

All regions – aside from North Africa and the Middle East, which have been hit by widespread public unrest since the start of the year – have reported growth in 2011, with South America (up 15 per cent), sub-Saharan Africa (9 per cent) and Central and Eastern Europe (9 per cent) particularly strong.

This year's increase of 4.5 per cent follows an overall rise of 6.6 per cent last year, and UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai said it was an indication of the importance of the tourism sector worldwide.

“Tourism can play a key role in terms of economic growth and development, particularly at a moment when many economies, for the most part in Europe and North America, struggle for recovery and job creation,” he said.

But Mr. Rifai cautioned that growth for the rest of this year may soften given the increased economic uncertainty in recent months.

“Many advanced economies still face risks posed by weak growth, fiscal problems and persistently high unemployment. Simultaneously, signs of overheating have become apparent in some emerging economies. Restoring sustained and balanced economic growth remains a major task.”

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[International tourism continues its steady improvement, UN agency finds](#)