



World Tourism Organization

UNWTO

Tourism and Climate Change

Climate change is one of the single greatest challenges facing the world in the 21st century. Melting ice caps, rising sea levels and extreme weather are having devastating and irreversible effects on society, the economy and the environment. As the international community attempts to keep climate change in check under a commonly agreed framework led by the United Nations, the tourism sector has its own important role to play.

Tourism is considered one of the most highly climate-sensitive economic sectors. Many tourism destinations are dependent on climate as their principal attraction, sun-and-sea or winter sports holidays for example,

or on environmental resources such as wildlife and biodiversity. Given that these resources are extremely sensitive to climate variability, a changing climate will have profound consequences on tourism flows and subsequently on the important contribution of tourism to poverty reduction and economic development, especially in developing countries.

At the same time, **tourism also contributes to global warming.** It is estimated that tourism accounts for approximately 5% of global carbon emissions, although the tourism sector has pledged to progressively bring down this figure through partnerships, awareness raising and new technologies.

Did you know?

- Tourism accounts for 5% of global carbon emissions: 4% is attributed to transportation, close to 1% to the accommodation sector and a small amount to other tourism activities.
- The Davos Declaration is the tourism sector's commitment that tourism will be at the forefront of the global response to climate change.

The work of UNWTO

Working with private companies and public organizations, academia and civil society, UNWTO guides the implementation of adaptation and mitigation measures for the tourism sector.

UNWTO assists countries to take proactive measures to mitigate tourism emissions and adapt to the changing climate so that individuals, communities and nations continue to receive the benefits of tourism. The Organization calls for rapid action to reduce energy use, through the use of new technologies, and to secure financial resources to help developing countries do the same.



The **Davos Process on Tourism and Climate Change**, initiated by UNWTO in 2007, is UNWTO's climate change response and engages tourism stakeholders in the climate challenge, outlining a clear commitment for action to adapt to changing climate conditions, mitigate emissions, develop and apply new technologies and secure financing to assist poorer regions and countries.

The **Davos Declaration** calls on:

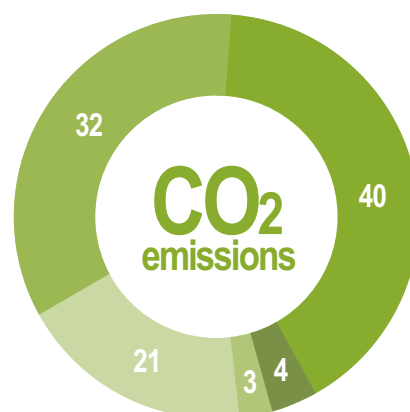
Governments and International Organizations to incorporate tourism in the implementation of existing commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Tourism Sector and Destinations to promote and undertake investments in energy-efficiency tourism programmes and increase their use of renewable energy.

Consumers to opt for environmentally-friendly activities that reduce their carbon footprint as well as contribute to the preservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage.

The UNWTO-initiated **Hotel Energy Solutions** project, Europe's largest hotel energy initiative, aims at increasing energy efficiency in European small and medium hotels by 20% and the use of renewable energy by 10%. Co-funded by the European Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, the project delivers, free of charge, an easy to use software application, the HES E-toolkit, to help hoteliers assess their energy use and decide on the most advantageous technology investment solutions.

Contribution of various tourism sub-sectors to CO₂ emissions (%)



40	Air Transport	4	Activities
32	Car Transport	21	Accommodation
3	Other Transport		

Source: UNWTO/UNEP, Climate Change and Tourism, 2008

UNWTO is conscious of the need to strike a balance between reducing tourism's impact on global warming while not adversely impacting tourism's role in sustainable development and poverty reduction. Tourism is one of the best ways of redistributing wealth from rich to poor nations; yet global mitigation policies for aviation could have considerable negative consequences for destinations which depend on the economic income and job creation from tourism.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

Climate Change and Tourism - sdt.unwto.org/en/content/climate-change-tourism

UNWTO Sustainable Development of Tourism Programme - sdt.unwto.org

Hotel Energy Solutions - hotelenergysolutions.net

From Davos to Copenhagen and Beyond: Advancing Tourism's Response to Climate Change - publications.unwto.org

Climate Change and Tourism: Responding to Global Challenges - publications.unwto.org

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector: Framework, Tools and Practices - publications.unwto.org