1.5 billion travelers a year: new global index measures which destinations are ready

- **The Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2026, released by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group, scores 110 economies not on how popular they are with visitors, but on how well their infrastructure, systems, workforce and policies support tourism growth – and how resilient they are when disruption strikes.**
- **Japan leads the 2026 rankings. Albania is the most improved economy, and seven of the 10 fastest improvers are in Asia-Pacific.**
- **A record 1.5 billion people traveled internationally in 2025,[1] contributing USD 11.6 trillion to the global economy[2] – but costs are rising faster than inflation, crowding is worse than before the pandemic, and the sector faces a shortfall of 43 million workers by 2035.[3]**

It's not a travel guide – it's a readiness check

When most people think about what makes a great destination, they think about food, culture, scenery, the quality of a flight or the charm of a hotel. Those things matter, but they are part of the experience of travel, not the foundation that holds it together.

Released today by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group, the *Travel & Tourism Development Index 2026* measures the conditions that allow tourism to grow and keep working when things go wrong. It scores 110 economies across 17 pillars spanning five dimensions: enabling environment, tourism policy, infrastructure and services, tourism resources, and sustainability.

The index does not rank countries by visitor numbers, spending, or traveler satisfaction. Instead, it asks: how well is this economy set up for tourism to create lasting value for visitors, for businesses and for local communities?

For most destinations, the challenge is no longer how to attract more visitors. It is how to manage that growth, share the benefits more widely, and make sure the systems underpinning tourism can absorb the shocks that an uncertain world keeps delivering.

Familiar names still lead – but the momentum is with emerging destinations

Japan is the world's best-placed economy for travel and tourism, ahead of the United States and Spain. Advanced economies hold nine of the top 10 positions, with China the sole exception, and Europe remains the highest-performing region overall with six economies in the top 10.

Japan leads for the familiar reasons – its culture, its cities, its trains – and some less obvious ones. It has made itself easier to visit, with fewer barriers for international travelers. And it has become better at drawing visitors beyond its busiest cities and outside peak season, so the same few places are not overwhelmed in the same few months.

Top 10 economies by TTDI 2026 score

1.	Japan	5.27	6.	Germany	5.09
2.	United States	5.23	7.	United Kingdom	5.08
3.	Spain	5.22	8.	China	5.00
4.	Australia	5.18	9.	Switzerland	4.97
5.	France	5.17	10.	Italy	4.93

Conditions have improved almost everywhere. Some 92% of economies raised their score between 2024 and 2026, and average scores were up 2.1% – the fastest improvement since 2019.

But the fastest gains are happening further down the ranking. Albania improved the most since 2024, lifting its score by 7.0%, followed by Viet Nam (+6.3%) and Laos (+6.1%). Asia-Pacific holds seven of the 10 most-improved spots, with South-East Asia advancing faster than any other subregion.

What happens when something goes wrong

Tourism is being interrupted more often by geopolitical tension, economic volatility, climate stress and digital outages. Aviation disruption linked to the conflict in Iran, and heatwaves and wildfires across Europe and North America, show how quickly destinations can come under pressure.

That is why the report argues resilience now sets destinations apart. Strong attractions are no longer enough. Resilience is the ability to keep operating when something breaks: keeping people moving, informing travelers about what is happening, protecting the critical infrastructure everything else depends on, and restoring confidence quickly afterwards. It is built in advance, through planning and coordination – not assembled once disruption has started.

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The best destinations are still those with the most to see. But today, it is also about whether they can absorb a shock and keep going, when flights are grounded, when a heatwave hits, when the systems people rely on go down. We see it across the industry: the places that plan for disruption recover faster and maintain travelers’ trust. That’s not just good risk management. It’s how you stay competitive.

Cara Morton, CEO Global Businesses and Operations, Zurich Insurance Group

Busier, but not always better off

Travel and tourism is now close to a tenth of the world economy, worth USD 11.6 trillion in 2025 and supporting 366 million jobs – one in nine worldwide.[2] But more visitors do not automatically mean more benefit. Crowding is harder to manage than it was before the pandemic, and as tourism expands, destinations face growing pressure on public services, local resources, transport and housing.

Cost is now one of the biggest brakes on travel. Tourism prices rose faster than inflation in many economies, and 75% of economies became less affordable for travelers. Investment has not kept pace with demand since 2022, and the gap is expected to persist into the 2030s.

Then there is the workforce. The sector is on track to be short of 43 million workers by 2035 – around 16% fewer people than it needs. The report identifies workforce capacity as one of the clearest constraints on growth, with shortages making it harder to maintain service quality.

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Recovery is no longer the central story. The challenge now is ensuring tourism growth creates lasting value. The destinations that will thrive are those that spread the benefits of tourism more widely while continuing to invest in the people, infrastructure and systems that support long-term success.

Ramya Krishnaswamy, Head, Center for Urban Transformation, World Economic Forum

Five priorities for more resilient tourism

The report sets out five priorities for governments, destination authorities and businesses:

1) **Spread demand more widely** across more source markets, more types of traveler and more of the year, so no single market or season carries too much weight.
2) **Stay open, visible and reachable** by keeping transport, information and digital systems running when disruption hits.
3) **Compete on value, not price** through service quality, trusted experiences and long-term investment.
4) **Create and communicate prosperity for local communities** by easing pressure on residents, strengthening local benefits and clearly showing how tourism supports them.
5) **Build workforce capacity** by investing in skills, retention, productivity and coordination.

None of these works in isolation. A destination cannot compete on value without the people to deliver it, manage growth without the trust of residents, or protect access without coordination between airlines, hotels, regulators and destination managers.

The next phase of tourism will not be decided by demand alone. The destinations that manage growth, prepare for disruption and share the gains more widely will create lasting value for visitors, businesses and communities.

[1] UN Tourism. (2025). UN tourism data dashboard. https://www.untourism.int/tourism-data/un-tourism-tourism-dashboard
[2] World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). (2026). Travel & tourism economic impact research 2026. https://wttc.org/research/economic-impact
[3] WTTC. (2025, September 29). The future of work in travel & tourism workforce. https://researchhub.wttc.org/product/the-future-of-work-in-travel-tourism-the-key-trends-shaping-workforce-strategies

About the research

The Travel & Tourism Development Index 2026 benchmarks 110 economies across 17 pillars, grouped into five dimensions: the Enabling Environment; Travel and Tourism Policy and Enabling Conditions; Infrastructure and Services; Travel and Tourism Resources; and Travel and Tourism Sustainability. It is produced by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group. Zurich contributed industry expertise and insights on resilience, risk and destination preparedness through its role as one of the world's largest travel insurers.

Further Information

The full Travel & Tourism Development Index 2026 report is available at http://www.zurich.com/ttdi2026

Learn about the world’s most nature-rich destinations as measured by the TTDI 2026 here

Learn about the world’s most culturally-rich destinations as measured by the TTDI 2026 here

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