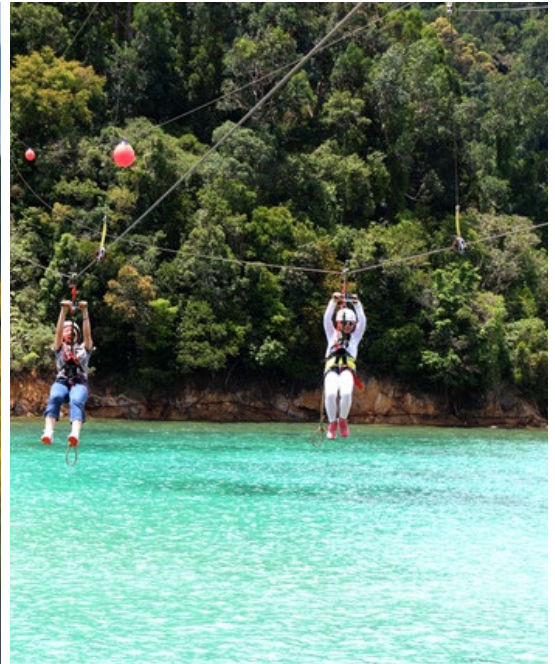




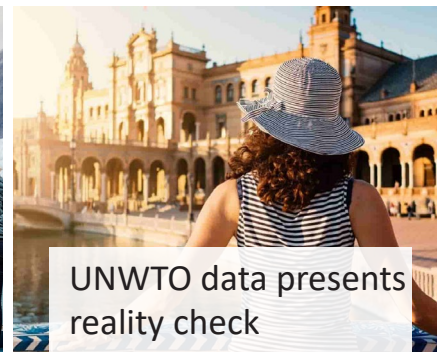
## Gearing up for tourism recovery



## Tourism trickle saves three destinations



## Alaska cruises set sail from Seattle



## UNWTO data presents reality check



# Tourism trickle saves three destinations

The Asia Pacific region has gone from being the top dog in the travel and tourism sector to being put in the doghouse due to errors handling the pandemic, see-saw Covid19 case numbers and at times even complacency.

However, ForwardKeys, in a recent assessment, says a "few risk-taking destinations are daring to try some new approaches to compensate for the collateral loss of international arrivals."

The report suggests there are still a few things travel partners in the region can do to keep a steady trickle of tourism dollars until the promised full recovery in 2024.

"The world has changed, like it or not. That means what you once knew is no longer valid, and past historical data is not useful," says ForwardKeys director of APAC for Tourism & Hospitality Jameson Wong.

"Take this period as a time for reinvention as the data is pointing out that this is a glaringly obvious thing to do. We can count three clear examples where destinations can still seize new business if they act promptly, backed by data. Let's examine Phuket, Jeju Island and the Maldives."

## Phuket Sandbox

What is surprising is the strength of the Israel market this summer in Phuket. For the first time, Israel, a relative newcomer, ties with the UK as the top source for Phuket in July-September, with Germany as the second biggest source. El Al started operating a daily direct flight from Tel Aviv to Phuket on 1 July.

"This shows the industry needs to look at other factors, beyond travel restrictions, that will shape travel decisions and change traditional market sources and segments.

These factors include airline connectivity, currency and safety perceptions such as anti-Chinese sentiment," says Wong.

Europe (including Israel) is the dominant source for Phuket this summer, accounting for 78% of issued tickets, followed by Americas at 12% and Africa/Middle East at 6% (see chart). In a reversal, Asia/Oceania is only 4% per cent, a significant drop from 59% in 2019, due to travel restrictions and/or quarantines upon return.

## Jeju Island

The flight path between Seoul-Busan is the busiest route in the world (in terms of domestic travel). Not only are the urbanites from South Korea's capital in a rush to escape to its nearest patch of paradise, but the passenger profile has changed too.

Seoul's Incheon Airport has also seen an important shift in its relevance as

a regional hub. In 2021 it doubles its share in connecting international travellers, up from 10% in 2019 to 20% in 2021, neck-to-neck with Singapore's Changi Airport.

## The Maldives

The Maldives is demonstrating that acting swiftly and making sage business decisions based on data can make a difference.

"It is with great contentment I note that the Russian market is now the top market in terms of arrivals to the destination since we had reopened our borders in July 2020," says Visit Maldives, managing director Thoyyib Mohamed.

"Our marketing promotions in the past year has had an impact in increasing the demand for the destination, and also the increased connectivity has positively helped the boost in arrivals from Russia," he adds.

[Full story](#)

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# Gearing up for tourism recovery

Sabah Tourism Board spearheads discussions to fast track vaccinations for travel and hospitality frontliners.

The Sabah Tourism Board is discussing with the federal tourism ministry's office the need to fast-track Covid-19 vaccinations for

vaccinated, it will enhance interstate travel," said Bangkuai when chairing the Board's Tourism Committee meeting conducted virtually yesterday.

The Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment said the meeting recognised that a safe reopening of the tourism

industry is crucial in complying with strict health protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

STB is discussing with stakeholders how to create an independent external Green Tourism certification and introducing a Covid-19 insurance policy to build visitor

the first meeting of the committee late last year.

"Once the pandemic is under control, STB will embark into more aggressive marketing and promotions to tap into business and leisure travel segment," he added.

Noting the announcement by the federal ministry of Tourism that Kuching, Langkawi, Pangkor Island, and Fraser Hills have been identified as Malaysia pilot projects on travel bubble, Bangkuai called for Kota Kinabalu to be included.

It was decided at the meeting that STB would be supporting high-impact events like the national MATTA fair in Kuala Lumpur on 20 November, in which Sabah is featured as the preferred domestic destination for Malaysia, and the two-week SATTA Virtual Tourism Mart starting 16 September.

Among the matters discussed at the meeting was Sabah's proposed action plan to gear up for the reopening of the State's tourism industry which has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was also highlighted at the meeting that destination awareness is still important to constantly remind people of Sabah as a destination during this period where travel is limited.

Hence, STB has been resilient in crafting marketing reach in spite of the changes in SOP and the inability to travel.

STB has continuously reached out to partners in key markets around the globe to keep close rapport as well as to understand the preparedness of outbound from these destinations. Recent campaigns include the **#EnchantingSabahLive** Sessions, which showcases tourist attractions in Sabah.



tourism-related workers in Sabah.

STB chairman Datuk Joniston Bangkuai said it was a priority to hasten the programme that would hasten the reopening of the State's tourism industry.

"It has been brought to our attention that the number of vaccinated tourism workers and frontline staff is still very low, and this could hamper the safe reopening of Sabah's tourism industry," he said.

Such a need is in tandem with Chief Minister Datuk Seri Hajiji Noor's assurance of ramping up vaccination with a target of about 60% vaccination rate in Sabah by October to achieve herd immunity by the end of this year.

The vaccination for tourism should include, among others, hotel staff, tour operators, boatmen, rural tourism workers, rafting guides, tour bus drivers, and divers.

"Once tourism workers are



confidence.

Bangkuai also said STB is mindful of the need for regular and constant public-private sector engagement and supporting tourism Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) during these hard times as well as supporting tourism infrastructure by giving grants for refurbishment works.

He said the State Tourism Recovery Committee, which comprised of captains of industries, would be meeting next week to deliberate and revisit the Tourism Recovery Road Map drawn up after



# Be Enchanted!

Bajau-Sama or West coast Bajau are known for their unique heritage that is authentic only to the district of **Kota Belud** in Sabah, the traditional horse culture.



# Alaska cruises set sail from Seattle



Princess Cruises and Holland America Line set sail to relaunch US cruises from the Port of Seattle.

To kick off their return to service in the US, Princess Cruises and Holland America Line held a celebration at the Port of Seattle on 23 July.

Princess Cruises president Jan Swartz and Holland America Line president Gus Antorcha spoke about the positive multidimensional impact the resumption of cruising means to Seattle, the local community and Alaska.

Holland America Line kicked off its Alaska season with Nieuw Amsterdam sailing 24 July, and Princess Cruises followed with Majestic Princess sailing 25 July.

Each line will operate 10 cruises sailing out of Seattle through September. This marks the return to cruising and Alaska for both lines, combined with more than 125 years



of experience bringing cruisers to The Great Land. Historically, one in two guests who cruise to Alaska sail on Princess or Holland America.

Both cruise lines have been homeporting out of the Port of Seattle for more than 20 years. Operationally, each ship visit directly contributes more than USD364,000 to the local economy in provisioning (fuel, food, flowers, piano tuning, supplies), port taxes, and spending during a full season.

Princess Cruises is the world's

leading international premium cruise line and tour company operating a fleet of 14 modern cruise ships to 380 destinations around the globe. Princess celebrates more than 50 years of sailing to Alaska, bringing more guests to the Great Land than any other cruise line.

## ***Discover the wonders of Alaska with Princess***

Holland America Line has been exploring the world since 1873 and was the first cruise line to offer adventures to Alaska and the Yukon nearly 75 years ago. Its fleet of premium ships visits more than 400 ports in 98 countries around the world, offering an ideal mid-sized ship experience.

[Holland America Alaska cruise tours](#)



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# UNWTO data presents a Covid-19 reality check

The latest travel tourism update from the UNWTO paints a depressing picture as the data shows the biggest crisis in the history of tourism continues into a second year with no end in sight.

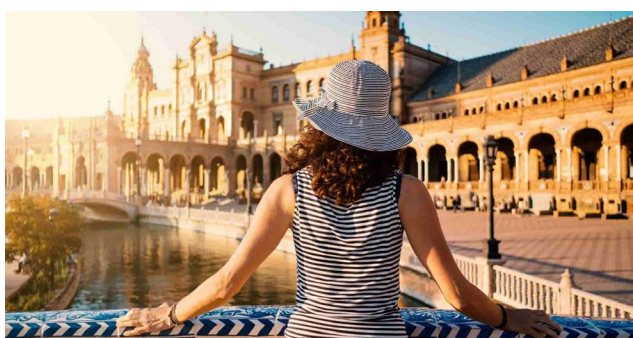


Photo: <https://juliatravel.com>

Between January and May, international tourist arrivals were 85% below 2019 levels (or a 65% drop when compared with 2020), UNWTO data shows.

Despite a small uptick in May, the emergence of COVID-19 variants and the continued imposition of restrictions are weighing on the recovery of international travel. The only bright spot is the survival of domestic travel in many parts of the world.

The latest UNWTO data shows that over the first five months of the year, world destinations recorded 147 million fewer international arrivals (overnight visitors) compared to the same period of 2020, or 460 million less than the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

However, the data did reveal a relatively small upturn in May, with arrivals declining by 82% (versus

May 2019), after falling by 86% in April. This slight upward trend emerged as some destinations started to ease restrictions and consumer confidence rose slightly.

UNWTO looks on the bright side of a depressing picture suggesting that the accelerating pace of vaccination worldwide, with the exception of Southeast Asian nations

that are still dragging their feet to get citizens vaccine jabs, offers a lifeline for a return to normal for international tourism in 2022.

"Accelerating the pace of vaccination worldwide, working on effective coordination and communication on ever-changing

largest decline with a 95% drop in international arrivals in the first five months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2019.

Europe (-85%) recorded the second-largest decline in arrivals, followed by the Middle East (-83%) and Africa (-81%).

The Americas (-72%) saw a comparatively smaller decrease. In June, the number of destinations with complete closure of borders decreased to 63, from 69 in February.

Of these, 33 were in Asia and the Pacific, while just seven were in Europe, the region with the fewest restrictions on travel currently in place.

## Mixed outlook for rest of the year

International tourism is slowly picking up, though the recovery remains very fragile and uneven. Rising concerns over the Delta variant of the virus have led several countries to reimpose restrictive measures. In addition, the volatility and lack of clear information on entry requirements could continue to weigh on the resumption of international travel during the Northern

Hemisphere's summer season. However, vaccination programmes around the world, together with softer restrictions for vaccinated travellers and the use of digital tools such as the EU Digital Covid Certificate, are all contributing to the gradual normalization of travel.



travel restrictions while advancing digital tools to facilitate mobility will be critical to rebuild trust in travel and restart tourism," says UNWTO secretary-general Zurab Pololikashvili.

By regions, Asia and the Pacific continued to suffer the



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