

*****Press Release - March 2007*****

YOUTH TOURISM - THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S BOOM SECTOR

New statistics show that young travellers aged 16-24 are the travel industry's fastest growing sector, representing over 20% of all international visitors. Compared with average tourists, adventurous young backpackers stay longer, spend more, seek out alternative destinations and enjoy a wider mix of travel experiences. Not surprisingly they are increasingly being viewed as the future of global tourism by the travel industry.

The growing significance of this sector was also highlighted recently with the launch of a pioneering partnership between two leading tourism organisations - **The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the World Youth Student & Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation.** Their objective is to promote and develop this multi-billion pound industry by encouraging governments to actively support and develop youth tourism products and services.

A recent study produced by WYSE Travel Confederation and UNWTO shows that surprisingly few countries are currently engaged in developing youth travel, despite the fact that 60% recognise this market as fundamental to the future of their tourism industry. Only a third of the world's tourism authorities have a specific student or youth tourism policy; less than a third collect statistics on this sector; only a quarter have policies for product development; and less than a third have a marketing policy.

"Young travellers of today set travel trends for the future and make a unique contribution to local economies and cultures" says David Jones, Director General of WYSE Travel Confederation. "We look forward to a fruitful partnership with UNWTO in delivering this message to governments and industry worldwide".

Throughout 2007 and beyond, the **UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation will host a series of international seminars and will produce a compendium of research about the positive impact of youth travel.** At the heart of this campaign will be the promotion of responsible travel habits and practices, as well as the sustainable development of tourism. Representing 550 specialist youth travel organisations in 118 countries, the mission of WYSE Travel Confederation is to "increase international understanding through the promotion of travel and educational opportunities for students and youth".

Journalists - To receive the latest research reports on Student and Youth Tourism, send your contact details to stephanie@wysetc.org



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