



# focus

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Your gateway to International Standards

## TRAVEL in depth





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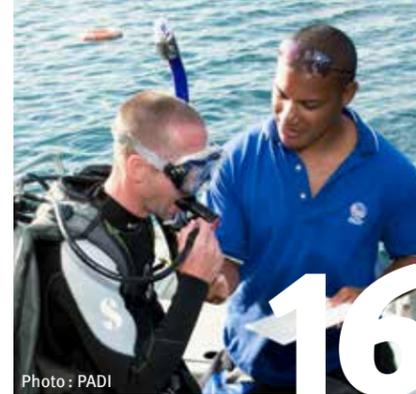


Photo: PADI

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# The new age of tourism

Tourism is older than it might seem to most. Take, for example, the “Grand Tour”, undertaken by young men in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to complete their education, or the water cures, mud and sun baths prescribed by doctors in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After the Second World War, taking a vacation became more mainstream for a variety of reasons, including legal aspects and the advent of increasingly affordable means of transport. From then on, tourism took on global proportions, its development featuring all major activities.

Those three factors helped drive the creation of technical standards that respond to the major challenges faced by the tourism sector in each phase of its development. For example, the creation of International Standards for the safe practice and training of recreational scuba diving showed that, far from being restricted to products, standards also had a use and relevance in services, a sector that today represents more than 70% of the world’s GDP.

ISO’s technical committee ISO/TC 228, *Tourism and related services*, led successfully by UNE (Spain) and INNORPI (Tunisia), and which was the proud recipient of the 2017 LDE Award, features 70 participating members with another 33 as observers, and has been a pioneer in the development of standards for services, with 29 to date. These standards define international best practice in areas such as accommodation, tourist

information offices, management of beaches and basic services for marinas.

Today, tourism standards have evolved into real tools that help organizations better position themselves on the market (ISO 20488, online consumer reviews), increasing their competitiveness (future ISO 22525, medical tourism) and contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations blueprint for a more sustainable world. Standards such as the upcoming ISO 21416 (environmentally sustainable practices in recreational diving), ISO 21401 (sustainability management systems for accommodation establishments) and ISO 20611 (sustainable practices for adventure tourism), are key to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda – most notably SDG 14 (Life below Water), SDG 12 (Responsible Production and Consumption) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). This is because tourism is intimately linked to our enjoyment of nature, yet at the same time it has an environmental impact of such magnitude that it can put at risk the very aspect it holds most dear.

Fortunately, tourists (1.4 billion in 2018) have now realized that tourism will either be sustainable, or it will simply not be. Tourist 4.0 is permanently connected and demands customized services, but he/she is also a responsible traveller, concerned about the use of resources at the point of destination,

Tourism standards have evolved into real tools that help organizations better position themselves on the market.

compensating carbon emissions and connecting with local communities.

Standards can also become indispensable allies with which to successfully address the new challenges and transformations facing the sector: overtourism, the circular economy, new online platforms of the collaborative economy and the digitalization of the sector due to data use and management. By way of example, in accordance with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the future ISO 21902 on accessible tourism for all will serve as a guide to all organizations wanting to offer accessible tourism services, fostering collaboration among all stakeholders in the tourism value chain and delivering a better experience for all concerned: tourists, residents and people with disabilities.

This year’s World Tourism Day, celebrated annually on 27 September, will be dedicated to “Tourism and jobs: a better future for all”, underlining the vital role of tourism as a generator of employment (1 in 10 of the world’s jobs) as well as its contribution to reducing poverty and inequality. Because at the end of the day, tourism, just like ISO standards, is a vehicle for the exchange of culture and values, promoting respect for diversity, contributing to the mutual understanding of communities and fostering security and peace worldwide. ■



**Javier García**, Director General of the Spanish Standardization Association, UNE.

# Reaching out!

Across two days, more than 90 delegates representing 46 national member bodies converged for the ISO Marketing and Communication Forum in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2019. Delegates discussed ways in which a tourism and travel campaign could capitalize on social media to promote ISO standards to a wider international audience.

**Back from the deep**  
Sharing your best dive experiences taken with a GoPro underwater camera!  
Related standards : ISO 24802 series (training scuba instructors) and ISO 24803 (requirements for diving providers)

**Fancy a fun adventure?**  
Featuring a character called "Trusty" doing various activities  
**#TravelwithTrusty**  
Related standards : ISO 20611 (sustainability in adventure tourism) ISO 21101 (safety management in adventure tourism)



**Why not have a classy beach party?**  
Creating a Facebook Live event – from a beach party!  
Related standard : ISO 13009 (beach operations)

Illustrations : Alexane Rosa

An underwater photograph showing a person in a bikini swimming towards the surface. The water is clear and blue-green. A shark is visible in the background, swimming towards the left. The person's reflection is visible on the water's surface.

The colour of  
**SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM**



by Rick Gould

As tourism outpaces other industries – international tourist arrivals increased by 6% in 2018<sup>1)</sup> – the sector is experiencing a revitalization. Adventure, responsible and green travel are reinventing the way communities, ecosystems and economies interact. We examine how ISO standards are supporting this trend.

Tourism creates jobs – lots of them. In fact, 1 person in 10 is employed in a tourism-related job. As travellers become more prosperous, and travel more accessible, it is estimated that the tourism sector could outperform the global economy over the next decade. It's no surprise, therefore, that most destinations seek to expand their tourism sector for a larger slice of the pie. The tourism industry is also important in building a culture of peace between countries and is ideally placed to contribute to many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) working towards a fairer, more equitable world. When it is well managed, tourism provides an incredible economic boost to host communities. Yet negative effects on the environment are inherent to the industry. With increasing numbers of travellers flocking to the same sought-after locations, resulting in overcrowding and stretched facilities, the emission of greenhouse gases, waste generation and degradation of local ecosystems are almost impossible to control. For all the many destinations that have tourism strategies in place to help alleviate poverty and conserve their natural and cultural

1) "International Tourist Arrivals Reach 1.4 billion Two Years Ahead of Forecasts", UNWTO press release, 21 January 2019 [www2.unwto.org/press-release/2019-01-21/international-tourist-arrivals-reach-14-billion-two-years-ahead-forecasts](http://www2.unwto.org/press-release/2019-01-21/international-tourist-arrivals-reach-14-billion-two-years-ahead-forecasts)

The tourism sector could outperform the global economy over the next decade.

heritage, just as many world heritage sites, which are recognized by UNESCO for their outstanding universal value, have no adequate management plan to prevent the adverse impacts of tourism. This begs the question: can tourism ever be sustainable? ISO is working towards that end.

### It all started on a peninsula...

The Sinai Peninsula embodies adventure tourism. Every year, millions of tourists flock to this triangular desert for its sunshine, famous coral reefs, and to trek within its mountainous interior. Martin Denison, a keen scuba diver, first visited the Sinai desert 40 years ago. He aimed for the Red Sea, a haven for divers because of its breathtaking coral reefs and captivating multicoloured fish. Denison made his passion for the deep a profession, as a trainer, instructor and dive leader. His work later led him into standards development, becoming the convenor of the ISO working group that developed 11 ISO standards for diver safety, training and dive centres. These standards have since become the lingua franca for divers and diving centres worldwide.



Scuba diving in the Red Sea on the coast of the island of Tiran is a tourist attraction in Egypt, where instructors are promoting diving techniques that preserve and protect coral reefs.



In recent years, Denison has headed a working group in ISO technical committee ISO/TC 228 for sustainable tourism to develop two new standards focused on sustainable diving. The numbers for Sharm El Sheikh – the small city at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula – vividly explain why we need these standards. “Forty years ago, there were just a handful of buildings there and three diving centres in the whole peninsula,” recalls Denison. Now Sharm El Sheikh is a city with an international airport, dozens of hotels and a population of over 70 000. “About 1.6 million divers and snorkellers visit Egypt every year and now there are around 300 diving centres,” he says. The Sinai alone boasts 141 diving centres, as well as some 130 liveaboard diving boats, to meet the demand for underwater adventures.

### A deep dive into the world of standards

Diving, like any other outdoor activity, can have significant environmental impacts if not

controlled. As the sport has increased in popularity, this in turn has highlighted the need for sustainability, or the diving sector will undermine the aquatic foundations that support it.

With that in mind, under Denison’s convenorship, a dedicated working group in ISO/TC 228, *Tourism and related services*, is busy preparing two standards for sustainable diving. The first standard, ISO 21416, *Recreational diving services – Requirements and guidance on environmentally sustainable practices in recreational diving*, describes what diving centres and services need to do to conserve and even enhance the aquatic environment. The standard includes several examples of best practice, such as how diving centres need to conduct activities (e.g. deterring divers from feeding or removing aquatic life) or how to operate boats in a way that does not damage the environment. For example, ISO 21416 specifies that boat pilots must use moorings instead of anchors, which can damage corals.

The second standard, ISO 21417, *Recreational diving services – Requirements for training on environmental awareness for recreational divers*,

is based on the premise that if divers are aware and understand the environmental impacts of diving activities, then they will be better placed to control them. So the standard describes how divers can either eliminate or minimize both potential and actual negative risks to the environment. It also formalizes the theoretical knowledge that instructors and divers need to receive before and during the dive, and will form the basis of training courses.

Additionally, the standard outlines the positive impacts divers can have on the environment, such as using their diving skills to clean up waste, take part in surveys of aquatic life and create artificial reefs. “We wanted to address activities that other standards did not cover,” explains Denison, “such as proper conduct of diving activities, like operating dive boats. The standard will also describe how to interact with aquatic life; for example, not collecting, hunting or feeding aquatic life,” he adds. Moreover, it will include measures for conserving heritage sites, such as wrecks and artefacts, which are popular with divers.

So how will diving centres and training providers apply ISO 21416 and ISO 21417? The Ministry of Tourism in Egypt, for example, employs a number of inspectors to assist diving centres in meeting the requirements of the many ISO standards for recreational diving. “The new sustainability standards will be no exception, as I am convinced that diving operators are well aware that tourists are much likelier to return to an intact, pristine underwater environment than to one that has suffered from bad practices,” emphasizes Denison.

The working group developing ISO 21416 and ISO 21417 has been widely represented. “We have had representatives from training organizations, diving centres, the consumer protection sector, marine biologists and other scientists. We were also happy to have the professional input of a United Nations Environment Programme group called Reef-World, which developed the Green Fins standard for responsible diving near coral reefs. They were very positive about the final drafts,” he enthuses.

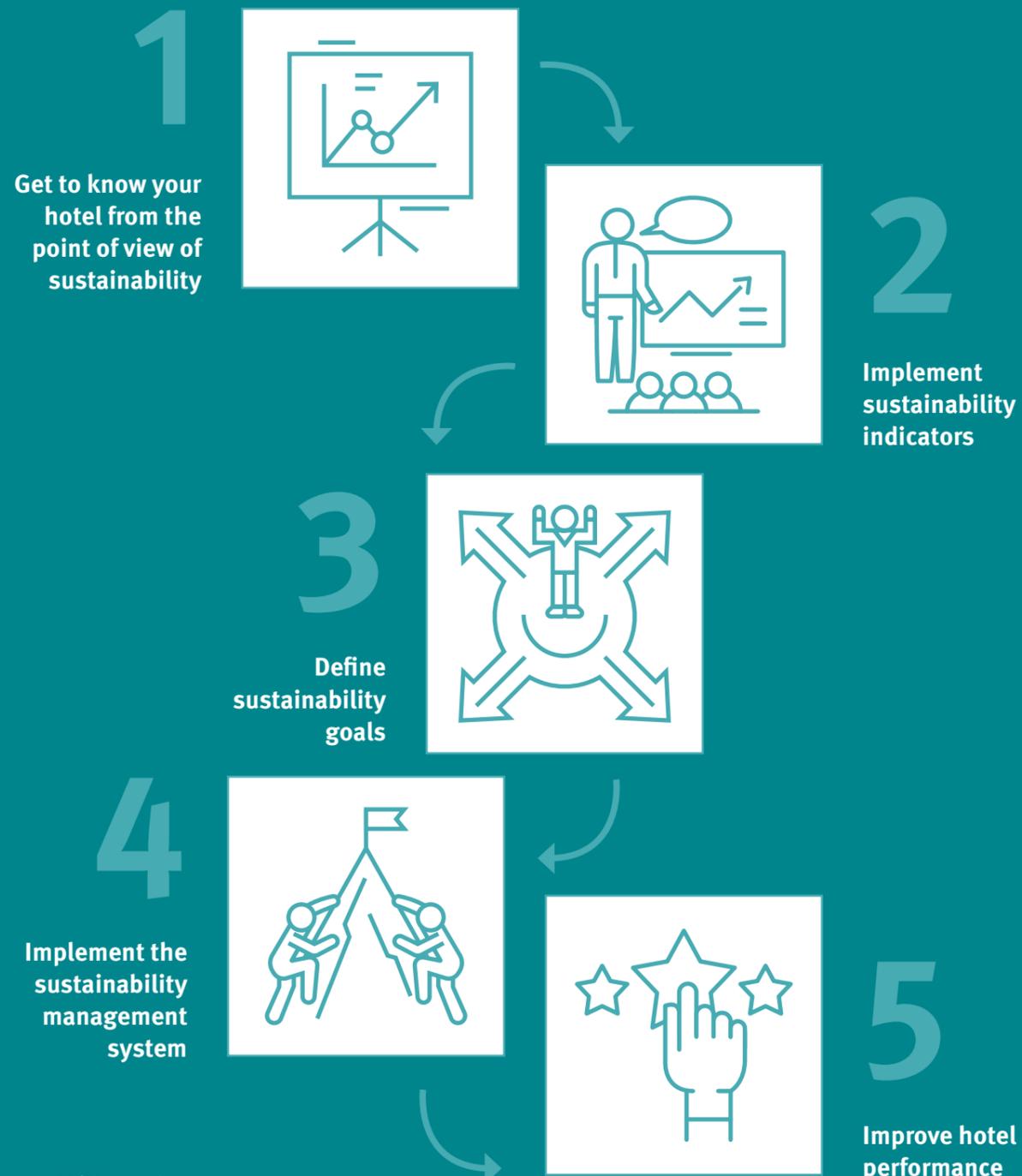
**About 1.6 million divers and snorkellers visit Egypt every year and now there are around 300 diving centres.**



Snorkelling sites in Egypt are famous the world over due to the diversity and abundance of coral reefs.

# FIVE TIPS TO START IMPLEMENTING ISO 21401

The management of the sustainability of an accommodation establishment is the most adequate solution to face current challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities of the market. To start applying the ISO 21401 standard, here are five recommendations.



Source : ISO/TC 228 Website



Tourists and locals enjoying the summer at Ipanema beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

## Eco-friendly retreats

Like many holiday destinations, the settlements of the Sinai Peninsula have grown rapidly into large resorts. All these buildings can have significant environmental, social and economic impacts. For this reason, at the end of 2018, ISO published ISO 21401, *Tourism and related services – Sustainability management system for accommodation establishments – Requirements*, a new International Standard that helps the hospitality industry reduce its impact on the environment, promote social exchange and make positive contributions to local economies. This standard is based on the same High-Level Structure now applied in all ISO management standards, such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, meaning it can be easily integrated into any existing ISO management system. So what prompted its development? The answer lies across a continent and an ocean to the west of Sinai. In the early part of this century, there were growing concerns about the negative impacts that the tourism sector, especially hotels, could have on the environment and society in Brazil. Alexandre Garrido, the Convenor of the working group that developed ISO 21401, takes up the story. “ISO 21401 was built based on Brazilian standard ABNT NBR 15401, which the Brazilian hotel industry has applied since 2006,” he explains.

“In 2003, we launched a project to look at sustainable tourism and decided to start with hotels. We formed a wide-ranging group including travel specialists, representatives from the hotel sector, trade associations, NGOs, communities, government and agencies, deciding to approach sustainability through management systems,” explains Garrido. The working group considered best practices, embedded these within a management system structure and the result was ABNT NBR 15401.

The Brazilian standard was so successful that ISO/TC 228 adopted it as a basis for the new ISO standard. The aspects covered by ISO 21401 include biodiversity, energy efficiency, conservation, waste management, effluents, emissions, water use, resources, work conditions, cultural aspects and the needs of native populations. “ISO 21401 is a specific sustainability management system standard that covers all dimensions of sustainability, providing a modern vision for accommodation management,” concludes Garrido.

## Sustainable adventures

Along with diving, ecotourism and other types of adventure travel have mushroomed. So in 2018, based in a proposal from Portugal, ISO published ISO 20611, *Adventure tourism – Good practices for sustainability – Requirements and recommendations*. This standard describes how adventure tourism organizations can operate sustainably and promote benign practices for both participants and local communities. Environmental sustainability, for example, can be upheld by careful planning and risk assessment, such as using renewable energy sources, having an awareness of waste regulations and areas with fragile ecosystems.

ISO 20611 also demonstrates how communication between the host, participants and local communities can be used to raise awareness of sustainable practices such as recycling, as well as informing the local community as to why adventure tourism is beneficial. For example, operators may wish to educate the local community in skills that enhance the tourism industry, which in turn further strengthens relationships.

So what types of environmental impacts motivated ISO/TC 228 to develop the standard? “In both adventure and ecotourism there is a potential risk to increase the flow of tourists in destinations without the necessary measures in place to mitigate negative impacts in these areas, especially fragile ecosystems. The standard both promotes the conservation of natural habitats as well as developing respect for the communities who receive tourism,” explains Leonardo Persi, who led the working group that developed ISO 20611. In other words, the standard fosters a win-win.

### Pillars of performance

Like ISO 21401 for sustainable accommodation, we can discover the origins of ISO 20611 in Brazil, supported by similar proposals from Portugal’s national standards body. “In 2004, we were having a growing number of accidents, including fatalities. At that time, the Brazilian Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism Association (ABETA), together with the Ministry of Tourism and SEBRAE – the



*Horse-riding in the Pantanal, the world’s largest tropical wetlands ares, located mainly in Brazil, is a popular tourist activity.*



*Boat excursion for wildlife watching in Pantanal, Brazil.*

ISO 21401 is a specific sustainability management system standard that covers all dimensions of sustainability.

Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service – decided to develop new standards in adventure tourism to address these risks. This work is ongoing and, today, we have 38 Brazilian national standards for adventure tourism in the portfolio of ABNT, ISO’s member for the country,” explains Persi.

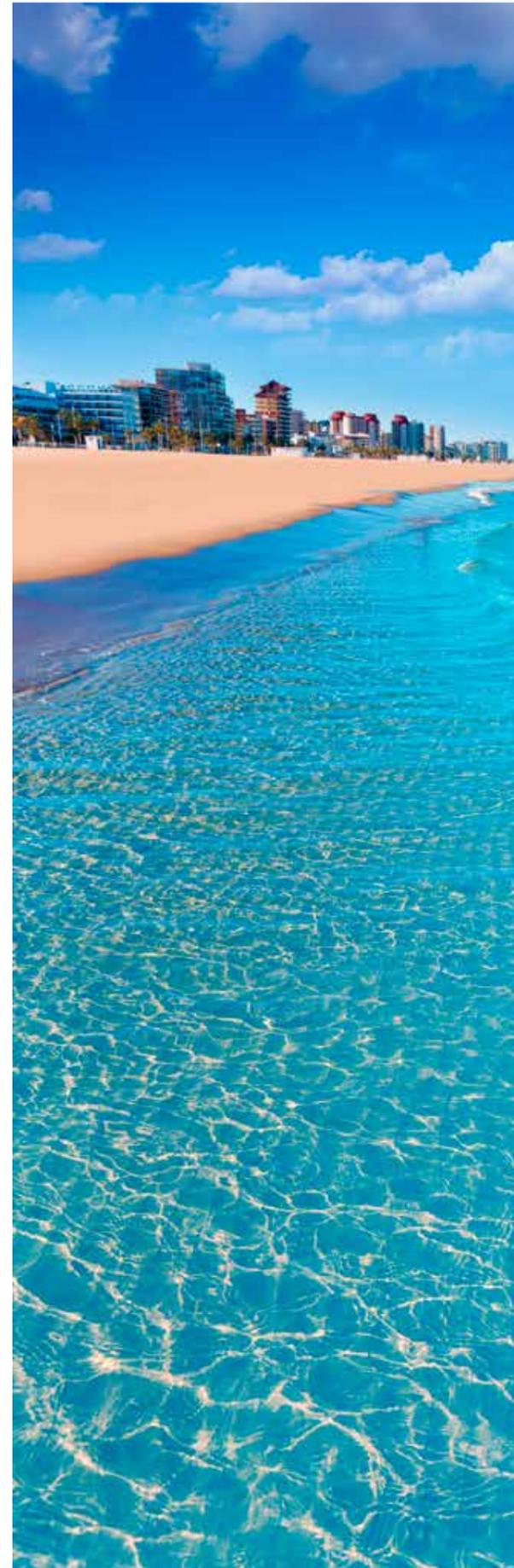
The first standards focused on safety, such as a management system standard for adventure tourism (ISO 21101) and a standard dealing with information to participants (ISO 21103). However, since 2014, sustainability has made an increasingly bigger image on the tourism radar, so Persi and other like-minded people began working on the combined environmental, social and economic theme, the three main pillars of sustainability. The result was ISO 20611.

“This new standard brings good practices for adventure tourism activities, specifies requirements and provides recommendations to apply them,” adds Persi. So how have travel companies received the standard? According to Persi, the

tourism sector and its stakeholders are highly cohesive in Brazil. He reports that travel companies in particular support and apply standards. “The first paradigm was to ensure that small companies – which make up 98% of the sector – could successfully apply the standards,” he explains.

That way, all interested parties had their role in the adventure tourism and ecotourism market, making it possible to offer participants a better service. “Besides that, if all adventure tourism operators conserve the environment, then we can maintain the communities involved and work to improve the social, cultural and biodiversity of the places adventure tourists visit,” he concludes. Exploring the world is a privilege and it needs to be sustainable so we don’t destroy the very things that make it so appealing and rewarding.

By all accounts, tourism has the potential to be sustainable, with the goodwill of all and a little help from ISO standards. ■



# The **TRUST** factor

The act of travelling is based on trust. Yet, over the years, examples of bad practice in the tourism industry have caused us to question its integrity. ISO standards help to restore our faith.

**B**efore you head off on holiday, you want to make sure the service will be good, the accommodation comfortable and the activities provided safe. As a traveller sensitive to your host community, you also hope to make a meaningful contribution to people's lives, while imbibing something of their customs and culture. Trust is a vital component to any business relationship and this is nowhere truer than in the tourism industry.

So how do you get maximum enjoyment while keeping your footprint to a minimum? The answer, it seems, lies in sustainability. The term "sustainable travel" conjures up visions of eco-friendly practices and environmental responsibility. But the human side of sustainability is about fostering community growth, both socially and economically, and is fast gaining traction among travel companies.

Operators across the tourism supply chain are welcoming ISO standards for tourism as a foundation for the creation of a sustainable and competitive business, that also gives their visitors peace of mind. From Egypt to Brazil and Spain, International Standards for tourism represent consensus on the best way to deliver tourist-related services.



The ISO standard enhanced the credibility of PADI courses.



### Diving centres in Egypt

A diver since 1976, Mark Caney has travelled extensively, conducting instructor-level and gas-blending programmes at dive locations internationally. Among the world’s best, Egypt is privileged with the Red Sea, a one-of-a-kind environment that is facing monumental issues. But are we doing what it takes to ensure its long-term sustainability? Mark Caney explains.

**ISOfocus:** Can you explain how ISO 24803 improves recreational diving services as a whole?

**Mark Caney:** Following the adoption of ISO 24803 as the benchmark for dive centre operations, we saw a noticeable improvement in the overall quality of the diving industry in Egypt. It has removed the tendency for any one country to create its own rules for the conduct of diving, which were usually inappropriate and ineffective. They can now simply use the ISO standard as an “off the shelf” solution. It has also avoided protectionism, improved cross-border trade within the industry and reinforced the importance of safety.

**Can you tell us what the main improvements are in the customer/service provider relationship?**

Clients have more confidence in booking a service that meets an ISO standard. They are also able to show that the credentials they receive

Clients have more confidence in booking a service that meets an ISO standard.

### More information

To learn more, read the brochure *Case study: Diving centres in Egypt (ISO 24803:2017, Recreational diving services – Requirements for recreational diving providers)* available on the ISO Website.



have ISO standards backing them up, which makes them more transferable and meaningful. All parties have more clarity about what should be done and what it means.

### Do you feel an increase in loyalty from customers?

The ISO standard enhanced the credibility of PADI courses and made our instructors, dive centres and customers even more secure in the knowledge that the service PADI provides meets the highest standards.

### What about the reputation of your company and the recreational diving profession?

The standard was written by a very experienced team of international experts from the diving world, so it is a practical and meaningful codification of best practices. All of the big international training agencies have aligned their courses and procedures to the standards and so all the instructors and dive masters working in Egypt have credentials aligned with the standards. Many of the agencies state on their diver certification cards that the bearer has been trained according to the ISO standard. PADI issues about a million cards a year. So, this alone has been a very effective way to spread the word about the importance of ISO standards for recreational diving.



Many customers already choose leisure that is sustainable.



### Rede dos Sonhos' star-quality hotels in Brazil

The Rede dos Sonhos Hotel Group in Brazil specializes in adventure tourism and experiences getting people closer to nature. The group has embraced two standards related to sustainability; for example, Rede dos Sonhos has three farm hotels and two of these were the first two companies in the world to gain certification to ISO 21101 for the safe practice of adventure tourism.

The group has also applied ABNT NBR 15401 and now ISO 21401 for sustainability management systems, realizing the benefits that these standards bring to accommodation. “From a market point of view, sustainability today is a must for an enterprise to stay in business,” explains José Fernandes of Rede dos Sonhos. “Many customers already choose leisure that is sustainable – if a business does not recognize this, then it is doomed to failure,” he emphasizes.

Fernandes sees many benefits in the sustainability management system. “The controls established by the system guide the business, so it is better managed, to use resources in a more rational and conscious manner, and contribute to a sustainable growth of the business,” he adds. The other benefits include positive responses from guests and visitors, a higher preference ranking from clients and the means to plan truly sustainable growth.

Although the hotel was familiar with applying many standards over a number of years, sustainability management systems were a new venture and there were some surprises. As the management system delved deeper into the company’s operations, the system demonstrated the importance of the way that the company had managed each activity. “For example, although we followed an update of legal requirements, it was only through the development of the system that we became aware that there were other requirements that we did not know about,” reflects Fernandes.

A high quality of service is essential to attract visitors, and keep them coming back.



Photo : Ajuntament de Gandia



### Gandía flies the flag for quality tourism in Spain

With so many beach resorts competing for business, destinations have to maintain a constant process of regeneration. A high quality of service is essential to attract visitors and keep them coming back. A step ahead of the tourism game, Gandía, in the province of Valencia, Spain, has turned to ISO standards to stand out from the crowd.

The venerable city of Gandía is proud of its heritage. Ideally located between sea and mountains, the small city has preserved much of its historical importance as the seat of the noble Borgia family. But Gandía has many other reasons to rejoice, including one of the finest beaches to be found on the Mediterranean coast. Beaches are affected by different uses and needs and are subjected to considerable seasonal touristic pressure. To safeguard its prized possession, the Gandía Municipality implemented ISO 13009 for beach operations to demonstrate the sustainable management of its beaches to tourists and residents alike, and comply with important quality requirements and safety criteria.

To complete its quality offering, the only thing missing was a formal endorsement of its visitor reception services. Tourist information offices are one of the stalwarts of any destination. In the competitive arena of tourism, it is crucial that visitor centres continuously strive to deliver quality information that is effective and economical. So the Municipality set about getting the city’s three tourist agencies certified to ISO 14785 for tourism information offices. This meant a complete overhaul of its facilities, upgrading office infrastructure, expanding the range of promotional materials and training staff in service delivery, to keep guests happy.

A perfect blend of comfort and hospitality makes Gandía an attractive and popular quality destination. The Municipality’s hard work has paid off and the city now displays the Spanish “Q flag” for quality in tourism – a hallmark of distinction, prestige and excellence of service. ■



When someone travels for medical reasons, they are not tourists, they are patients.

# Heading abroad for health

*by Robert Bartram*

With the current level of income disparity between nations, even those geographically close to one another, it is hardly surprising that the provision of public services can vary a great deal from country to country. This is nowhere more the case than with healthcare, in which the relatively new phenomenon of “medical tourism” is already booming.

Paul Webster, 43, from Highbury, London, is a seasoned medical tourist who has travelled abroad for a variety of procedures over the last five years. These include cosmetic surgery in Thailand, a knee arthroscopy in India following a rugby injury, and a slipped disc in Cape Town, South Africa, where he spent his recovery time relaxing by the pool. Paul opted to go abroad for surgery as he was able to avoid a waiting list at his local hospital and the cost of treatment was around 30 % of the cost of private treatment at home. More recently, having struggled to find a good local dentist, Paul's dental clinic is now in Krakow, Poland – a low-cost flight away.

It's not something most people would choose to do unless they really had to. Illness, short or long term, is unpleasant and painful enough, but to travel whilst ill would, to many people, seem unconscionable. And yet, to many more, it is exactly what must be done. Quite simply, if an individual's home country is unable, for whatever reason, to provide the requisite healthcare, why should they not seek it elsewhere? Medical tourism, as it has become known, is a booming and massive industry. The organization Patients Without Borders estimates that "the market size [for medical tourism] is USD 65 to 87.5 billion, based on approximately 20 to 24 million cross-border patients worldwide spending an average of USD 3410 per visit, including medically-related costs, cross-border and local transport, inpatient stay and accommodations"<sup>1)</sup>. By any consideration, therefore, medical tourism is already a huge market and one that, in the short and medium terms, is only likely to grow.

### Healthcare elsewhere

A word should first be said about what exactly is meant by the phrase "medical tourism". Monica Figuerola Martín has been the Managing Director of Spaincares (the Spanish Health Tourism Cluster) for the last two years, as well as General Director of Tourism in the Government of La Rioja for 12 years; she also holds a PhD in tourism. As Convenor of working group WG 2, *Health tourism services*,

1) "Medical Tourism Statistics & Facts", patientsbeyondborders.com (accessed April 2019)  
<https://patientsbeyondborders.com/medical-tourism-statistics-facts>

If an individual's home country is unable to provide the requisite healthcare, why should they not seek it elsewhere?

of ISO's technical committee on tourism (ISO/TC 228), which is developing the future ISO 22525, an International Standard for medical tourism, she is keen to draw a distinction between "medical tourism" and "touristic medicine". At its simplest, the latter is "when someone is travelling and falls ill or has an accident and has to go to hospital". She prefers the word "travel" because tourism is something more superficial – but when someone travels for medical reasons, they are not tourists, they are patients. The primary motivation is to travel for medical treatment not available in their home countries. Indeed, it is for this reason that Figuerola Martín would prefer to go even further and for the phenomenon to be referred to as "medical travel", for the avoidance of any ambiguity at all.

So what are the most common conditions for which people become medical tourists? The short answer to this seems to be almost anything. Patients Without Borders publishes a long list of illnesses and conditions: from non-life-threatening cosmetic surgery and dentistry to cancer and reproductive care. And it is precisely because there are so many different treatments now on offer for so many different conditions that International Standards are so vital for the world's medical travellers.

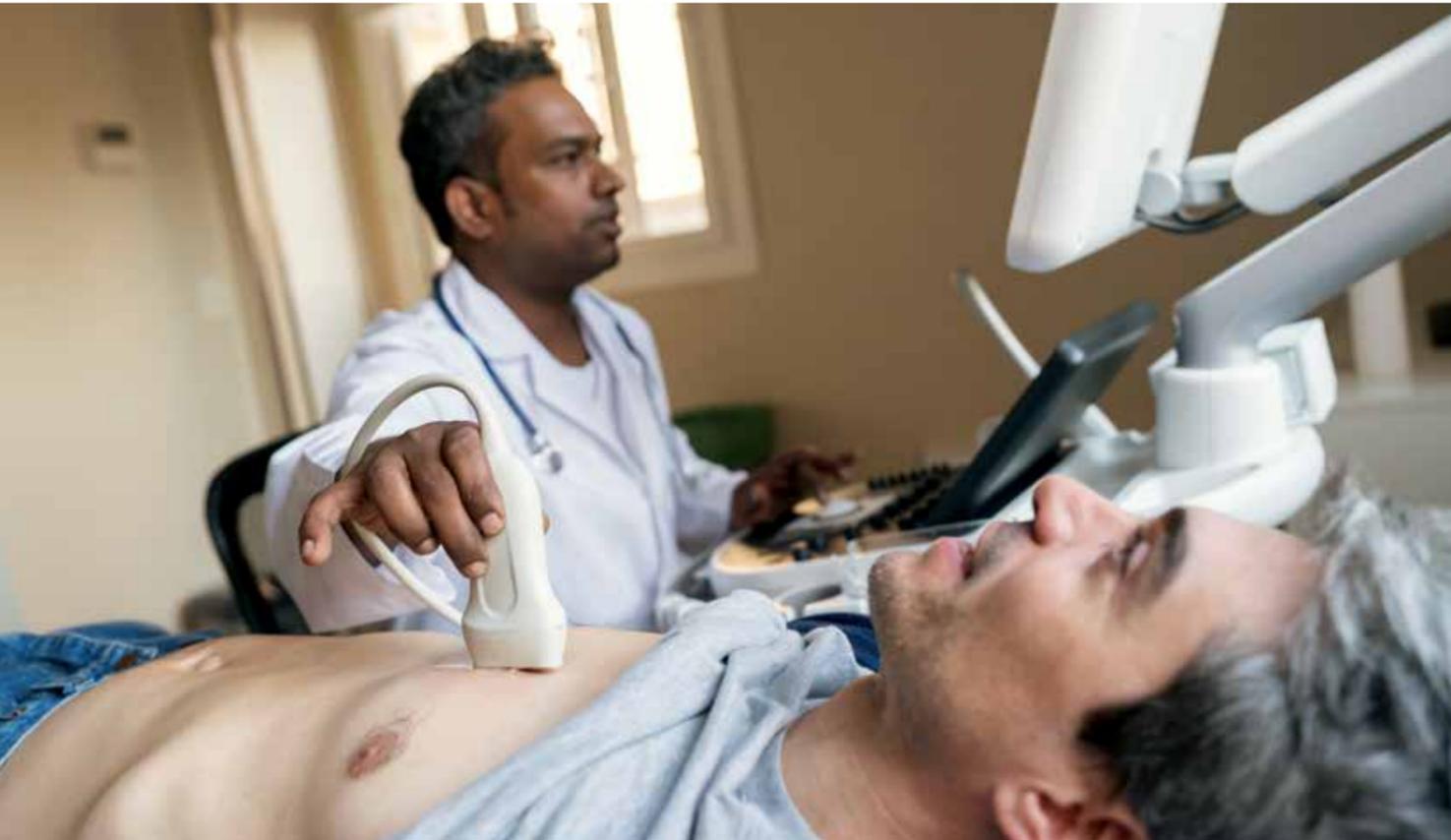
Another question closely related to this, of course, is why do people travel for medical care? The obvious answers are the high costs for treatment and lengthy waiting times for medical procedures in many countries, supported by easier and cheaper international travel. But these are not the only reasons. Some patients value the better quality of the medical infrastructure in certain countries and undergo measures that cannot legally be offered at home, such as fertility treatment for those who want children.

Sometimes, a particular country may have an excellent reputation for treatment of a certain condition and patients may even opt for a medical trial that is not taking place anywhere else in the world, let alone their home country. Sometimes the reason for travelling can be something as seemingly banal as the weather: many people find dialysis, for instance, much more comfortable when they can receive treatment beside the sea and under a sunny blue sky.

### Staying safe

So what challenges does medical tourism face and how can International Standards help? Safety is without doubt the top priority. Most of the treatments under offer are very expensive and many countries propose various and varying medical treatments. However, this does not mean that every country is offering the same, let alone best, treatments. Safety needs to be improved along with protocols because as far as it is possible within the parameters of any given procedure, there needs to be a guarantee that the treatment is going to be successful, that the patient experience is going to be the best it can be.





More broadly, there is a huge number of stakeholders in medical tourism and the value chain for medical tourism is long and often complex. It stretches from the very first moment a company contacts a hospital to request a quotation to post-treatment when the patient goes home. There are very many critical points along the way and it's important for certain countries to develop this kind of business – as long as it is undertaken in a very secure way.

Yosr Nefzaoui, Project Leader of ISO 22525 on medical tourism, is the manager of Tunisia-based travel agency SAFAR – a subsidiary of the Service Medical International Group (SMEDI) which has been operating in Africa since 2007 – as well as holding the presidency of the Medical Tourism Committee at the Tunisian Federation of Travel and Tourism Agencies. She points out that Tunisia is receiving many patients from North and sub-Saharan Africa where the healthcare systems are not meeting the needs of patients.

Tunisia's current stance on healthcare is very impressive, in both the public and private sectors.

A brief look at the statistics says it all: there are 115 health clinics, with 4 700 beds, 100 haemodialysis centres, 150 diagnostic X-ray centres, 232 laboratories for medical analysis, over 5 300 GPs' surgeries, over 1 600 dental offices and nearly as many pharmacies. And yet it is probably fair to suggest that Tunisia does not have the reputation in healthcare in the same way that countries like Germany and Switzerland do. These two countries are renowned for being organized and efficient but there is no real reason why Tunisia, and similar countries, should not receive some recognition and that is where International Standards will bring so much benefit.

### Keeping up with market needs

The first step in the development of an International Standard is to confirm the market demand and it has been long established that the number of people travelling for healthcare has increased dramatically in recent years. As a consequence, there has been a crying need to

develop International Standards which define, at international level, the minimum quality requirements for the whole process. Medical tourism introduces a range of attendant risks and opportunities for patients, along with many stakeholders. ISO 22525, still in draft, but to be published very soon, will focus on intermediaries in the value chain where control is non-existent but where the risk is high.

To avoid any harm to the health of travellers, all players in the value chain should comply with certain requirements in order to limit the risks. International Standards will define the very broad range of requirements for various sectors concerned, from the organization of the stay by travel agencies to the quality of care delivered by the healthcare facilities.

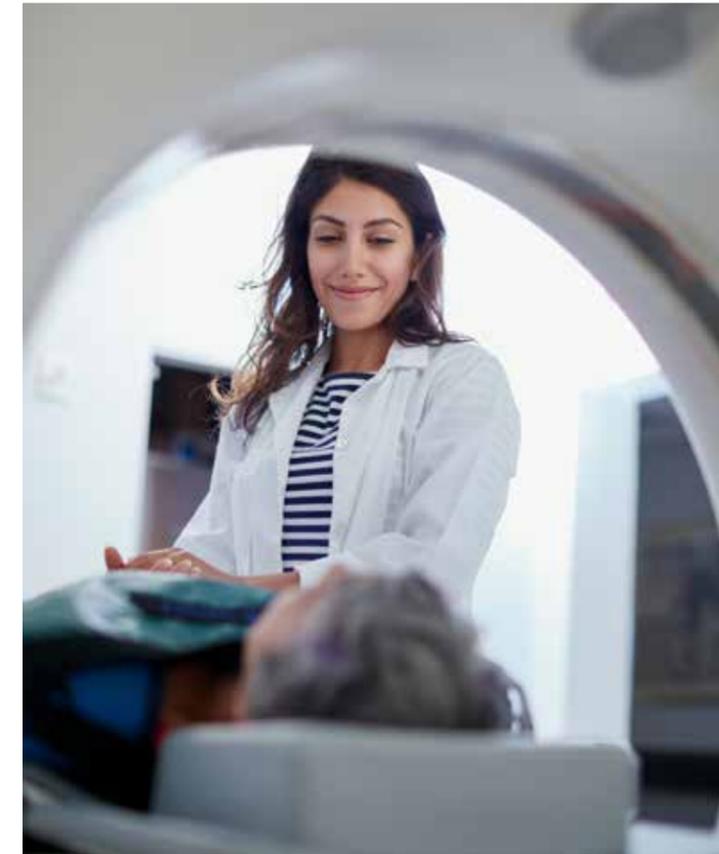
In this case, the International Standards under development are focused on four areas:

- Pre-travel and pre-treatment process
- Treatment process
- Post-treatment process
- Return home and follow-up

### Clinical excellence

For the end users, this standard aims to restrict the healthcare participants who do not respond to these norms, thereby limiting the risks and ensuring better care. Paradoxically perhaps, patients may often have little idea about the concept of “standards” and are probably unaware that they are required by health centres and other stakeholders. But it is for these centres that International Standards are so important because they are taking more and more patients from abroad. Centres of healthcare need certification, otherwise governments will simply refuse to recognize them. Medical excellence along with international accreditation are the key factors fuelling a majority of international patient flows, continually boosting international medical tourism.

Overall, standardization of the patient's experience of medical tourism will improve the quality of care and patient safety as well as the satisfaction of the patient. This can be of great value not just to patients but to all stakeholders, and to all of us. And, as so often, the committees who draft and deliver International Standards are undertaking vital – and in the case of medical tourism, perhaps even life-saving – but invisible work. ■



The number of people travelling for healthcare has increased dramatically in recent years.



# Brazil's big adventure

If you are looking for new sensations on a tourism trip, Brazil offers options you just can't miss. As adventure tourism grows in popularity, we asked Ricardo Fragoso, General Officer at ABNT, ISO's member in Brazil, why the country is fast becoming a world reference for outdoor activities.

**W**hat are the two direct assets of tourism? In addition to physical infrastructure, nature and culture are also key elements when it comes to sustainability in the business, helping to offset poverty in local populations. As regards its tourism industry, Brazil is still proving itself. With an area of 8.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and over 200 million inhabitants, the country is seeking a route to socioeconomic viability and, more recently, for ways to conserve its natural environment. This is an arduous task, but the determination of the government and the Brazilian people has overcome many of the problems by working together to lead the country towards a future of development and prosperity. In this context,

sustainable tourism presents itself as one of the forces capable of contributing to economic development while, at the same time, helping to preserve Brazil's priceless natural heritage.

Adventure tourism is one of the most important markets in international tourism, and Brazil's huge territory and environmental variety means that it is able to offer unique opportunities for nature tourism and open-air leisure activities. According to the Ministry of Tourism, in 2018 the country received almost seven million international visitors, which produced over USD 3.2 billion of foreign currency revenue in the first six months alone. Domestic tourism, for its part, totalled over 200 million travels, although these only refer to around 60 million people.

Today, Brazil's tourism industry generates income for nearly seven million people, mainly in fields related to accommodation, tourism agencies, airlines and other types of transportation, as well as restaurants and leisure facilities. But in order to make Brazilian nature tourism a commercial success, there needs to be investment in quality infrastructure, the training of guides, and in providing safe and efficient services at a fair price. Otherwise, tourists will choose other destinations.

### Leading the way

A great deal has already been done: our technical standard for adventure tourism has been globally recognized by governments worldwide and used as the basis for the first international regulations for safety management in adventure tourism – ISO 21101. It's a source of great national pride that most of the standards for adventure tourism published so far by ISO are based on Brazilian standards developed by ABNT, ISO's member for the country, and the work of the Brazilian Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism Association (ABETA), a not-for-profit civil entity that brings together ecotourism and adventure tourism companies whose main goals are working in a professional, sustainable and innovative way.

Prior to that, in 2008, a partnership between ABNT and the Ministry of Tourism had given the industry free consultation of technical standards. The tourism minister of the day, Marta Suplicy, justified the initiative by explaining that "nowhere in the world can adventure tourism exist without standardization". These International Standards have helped Brazil expand its field of activity by drawing on technical and safety resources for best practice in adventure tourism. In addition to three ISO standards on adventure tourism, Brazil has also adopted 11 ISO standards on recreational diving and plans to incorporate two more in its portfolio.

All this standardization work caught the attention of big players in the adventure tourism market, such as managers of nature reserves and forests, public managers and other stakeholders, who are now interested in implementing sustainable practices. We currently have



Ricardo Fragoso, General Officer at ABNT, ISO's member in Brazil.

Standardization  
has, by all accounts,  
improved the way  
tourism is being  
offered in Brazil.

In 2018, Brazil  
received almost  
7 million  
international  
visitors.

38 Brazilian standards published for this segment, making Brazil a world reference for safety in ecotourism and adventure tourism.

### Big adventures, small footprint

Sustainability is one issue that has been at the centre of our discussions in ISO. The most recent standard published is ISO 20611, *Adventure tourism – Good practices for sustainability – Requirements and recommendations*, which takes a long view of the sector's challenges in order to protect the natural environment by minimizing any potential negative effects and engage local communities through better-paid jobs.

But most of all, sustainability is about strengthening the tourist experience in the place of destination while valuing local communities' culture and customs. To that end, Brazil will soon be endorsing as a national adoption ISO 14785 on tourist information centres, which can be used by tourist offices across the country to deliver better service to visitors with quality information on the Brazilian hotspots most favoured by tourists.



Adventure tourists use well-secured cables to enjoy tree-top views in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil.



Boat trips to the waterfalls of Lagos de Furnas, Minas Gerais, are a popular tourist activity in Brazil.

The national adoption of ISO International Standards has brought considerable added value to Brazil's adventure tourism segment. For instance, the scale and extent of accidents have been significantly reduced and tourists are more aware of the safety protocols for accident prevention, which include the high-quality training of guides involved in outdoor activities, often in very remote locations.

### Putting safety first

The Brazilian government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has put the emphasis on safety. Brazil's Safe Adventure Program is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism in partnership with Sebrae, an organization dedicated to small business empowerment, and ABETA, Brazil's adventure travel tourism association. Under the programme, companies must obtain a safety certificate in adventure tourism to guarantee that visitors can indulge in outdoor activities in a sustainable way and with the most rigorous safety standards. Standards also have an impact on local suppliers and all those working in emergency services. As part of the ABNT safety management system, an emergency service plan has done wonders to enforce the implementation of a management system, mainly among small companies, which account for 98% of businesses in the adventure tourism sector. Tourists are always willing to pay a little more for activities that are carried out to strict safety standards, with skilled professionals and equipment that is subject to regular and stringent maintenance, as they see the added value of the tourism product that is being offered. Since its implementation in 2005, the Safe Adventure Program has helped many companies integrate the good practices of technical standards. These include Campo dos Sonhos and Parque dos Sonhos, two rural retreats in the São Paulo area that boast an integrated system combining both sustainable accommodation and safety in adventure tourism. Today, they are seen as a reference in Brazil in terms of sustainable adventure tourism, with a comprehensive offering that comprises services to disabled visitors or those with limited mobility, as well as a host of activities for children, teenagers, families and the elderly.



The Brazilian government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has put the emphasis on safety.

Nas Alturas, a specialist eco-tour operator in the Chapada Diamantina, also caters for travellers looking for safe and environmentally responsible tours in the area. Offering everything from day hikes to longer overnight excursions to explore the region's unique natural beauty, the company enforces safety standards and disseminates good practices to its entire network of activity providers. Nas Alturas is an impressive example of a sustainable tourism initiative that promotes social inclusion through encouraging local hires, the conservation of natural resources and the respect for cultures and peoples as a means of stimulating local economic development.

Standardization has, by all accounts, improved the way tourism is being offered in Brazil. Our country has earned itself a place in the adventure tourism segment by offering an array of companies that meet international quality requirements. This consolidates a soft adventure circuit capable of attracting and welcoming national and international tourists, all converts to the idea that Brazil is more than just beaches and sun. ■

# How to make the most of your travels

Planning the trip of a lifetime? ISO standards travel with you every step of the way.

**ISO 18065**  
(tourist services in protected areas)



**ISO 13687 series**  
(yacht harbours)



**ISO 21401**  
(sustainable tourist accommodation)



**ISO 20410**  
(bareboat charter)



**ISO 14785**  
(tourist information offices)



**ISO 13810**  
(industrial tourism)



**ISO 22525\***  
(medical tourism)



**ISO 13970**  
(training of snorkelling guides)



**ISO 13009**  
(beach operations)



**ISO 20611**  
(sustainable adventures)



**ISO 21101**  
(safety management in adventure tourism)



**ISO 21103**  
(information for participants in adventure tourism activities)

**ISO 21417\***  
(environmental awareness of divers)



**ISO 20488**  
(online consumer reviews)



\* Under development



# *Trust me, I'm a total stranger...*

by Barnaby Lewis

Put in these terms, most of us would run a mile, whatever the proposition. But the popularity of online reviews, and the trust we place in persons unknown when making major decisions about where to stay, what to eat and how to get the most from a trip, tells a different story.

Online communities have always been a place where people connect with peers: people like us, sharing something in common. Accessible anywhere and generally free to participate, it's little wonder that news groups, forums and chat rooms flourished from the beginning of the internet and prepared the ground for the late 2000's social media explosion.

It's hard to imagine a world without these connections. They've become part of the fabric of our daily lives. They've changed not only the way we socialize and define our friends, they've altered our relationship to information and how we form, and express, our opinions. They've also influenced the way we make our vacationing decisions; many of us now move from idea through research to booking entirely on screen.

## **With the planet at your fingertips, why travel at all?**

The digital world in our pockets fills the gaps once reserved for idle contemplation with wonderfully addictive and immersive experience. Work, relaxation, news, opinion, learning and entertainment bear down in a sensorial tsunami of information. It definitely broadens our horizons and can expose us to new ideas, yet it's also an intrinsic part of the non-stop lifestyle. It comes as no surprise that we tell researchers we're more stressed than ever before. Sometimes, it's good to stop.

Many of us now move  
from idea through  
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entirely on screen.



ISO 20488 has special relevance to those sectors, like tourism, where customer experience is an overwhelming factor in decision making.

Could this be one reason why we travel more than our grandparents did? Perhaps it also explains why we seek increasingly exotic destinations where we can “get away from it all”, “unwind”, “change perspective”, even go “off-the-grid”. A recent ISO standard should help make the process of choosing and booking more reassuring.

But before you get there, you’ll have to navigate the options. These, too, have proliferated to the point of bafflement. It’s OK to be perplexed by a world where air travel is the budget option, your smartphone can almost-but-not-quite translate unknown languages for you, and the world’s largest accommodation provider doesn’t own a single building. Fortunately, there are still professional travel agencies to help you. They didn’t all go bust with price comparison and online booking. Quite the opposite. The ones that survived did so by innovation and specialization.

A new breed of travel agency has emerged, offering experiences that simply weren’t available before, using data-driven marketing to create client-focused packages. The information that these companies collect from us, including the reviews that are written and the opinions that are surveyed, are essential to their business model. In the highly competitive sector dedicated to adventure tourism, innovative companies use analysis and insights to give their customers what they really want: not just holidays, but life-changing journeys into the unknown. In France, one of the best-known operators is Nomade Aventure. It was founded in 1975 but, true to its name, it has never stopped moving and is now an established leader.

### Grasping an opportunity

In between sending 12000 people per year on their dream holiday, managing a team of 60 people and travelling to discover new destinations, Nomade’s General Manager, Fabrice Deltaglia, is constantly on the go. A French national, Deltaglia’s career has carried him on an unusual journey through film distribution in Africa, youth activity holidays and, for almost a decade, to head up a leading travel

company. *ISOfocus* managed to pin him down to ask him about the role of standards in his life and in his company’s success.

“I came to standards by chance. When I was given the opportunity to contribute to a standard for online ratings, I knew how important it could be for our business.” I ask him in what ways: “Nomade has been using online reviews since 2011, as a way of maintaining our presence in the highly competitive online tourism business. We had our own rigorous systems in place, for example, the publication of all reviews, favourable or otherwise, for a minimum of five years, or the fact that our employees are not able to remove or edit customer reviews.”

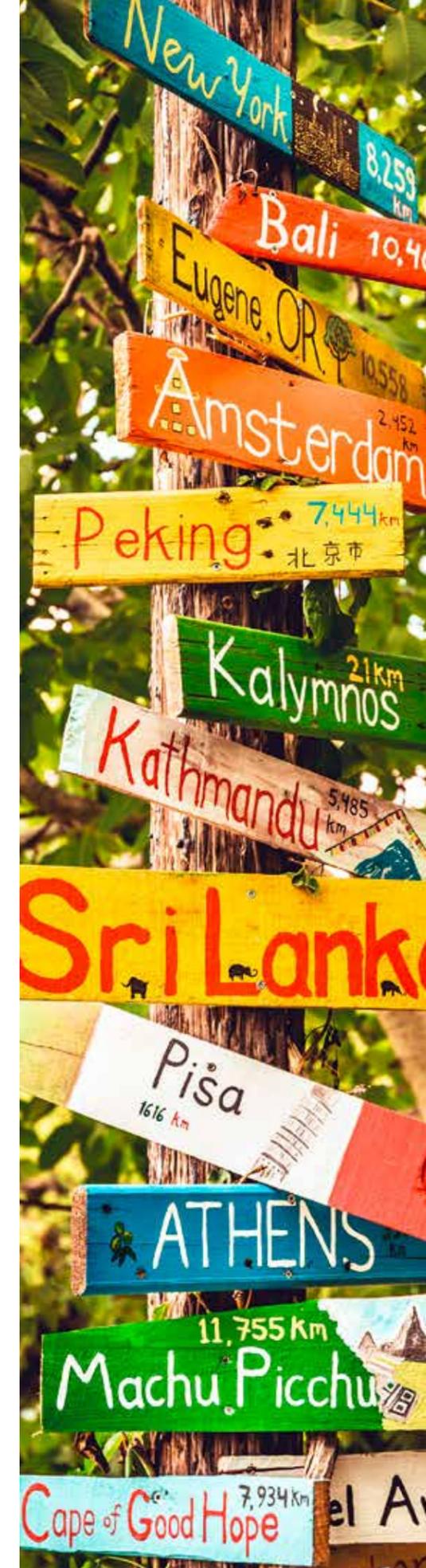
To Deltaglia, it was clear that developing similar guidelines to be applied to all kinds of online businesses would improve transparency and maintain customer confidence in the authenticity of reviews. “It was a mix of personal curiosity as well as the recognition that we could protect our business that led me to accept an offer to participate in standardization,” remarks Deltaglia on how he began his work with the French member for ISO, AFNOR, which was the driving force behind the idea to develop a standard for online review.

### French innovation goes international

In 2014, ISO set up a technical committee on online consumer reports, managed by AFNOR, to begin the development of an International Standard that would give requirements and recommendations for the principles and methods for review administrators to apply in their collection, moderation and publication of online consumer reviews. Published in 2018, ISO 20488 builds on the initial work by AFNOR, whose efforts have resulted in significant uptake by businesses in France.

Applicable to all types of business, ISO 20488, *Online consumer reviews – Principles and requirements for their collection, moderation and publication*, has special relevance to those sectors, like tourism, where customer experience is an overwhelming factor in decision making. It’s also a major influence when it comes to buying products that have to perform in a certain way, such as sporting goods, according to Laurent Petit, Chair of ISO’s technical committee for online reputation (ISO/TC 290), which is managed by AFNOR. With a background in mathematics and marketing, Petit brings substantial experience of business to his ISO job. Having worked in some of the best-known companies in France, from the national lottery to national television, to multinational sports superstore Decathlon, Petit’s latest challenge is with Thailand’s biggest retailer. *ISOfocus* caught up with him during a taxi ride through the busy streets of Singapore.

A lifelong footballer who has worked in Paris, Shanghai, Singapore and recently moved to Bangkok, Petit had some experience of ISO standards from working with a professional football club. His first opportunity as a standards development insider came when he was approached in 2014 by AFNOR. With support from colleagues who recognized, like Petit, the enormous potential of the standard, he set out to take a look “behind the scenes of the standards world”, in his words.



Online review is  
at the heart of  
the decision-making  
process.



Asked about the rationale behind ISO 20488, Petit replies that “online review is too important to be left to chance” and goes on to point out just how central it is to today’s shoppers. “It’s a driver of conversion [moving from browsing to purchase]” citing studies that indicate how credible reviews can boost this rate by a factor of four. “There’s a growing distrust of official sources of information and manufacturers’ claims are perceived as less credible than the voice of a regular user, even if that opinion comes from someone you don’t know personally.”

### Solutions to real-life problems

A final observation from Petit reveals the “there-are-only-solutions” attitude of a true standardizer: “When it comes to online reputation, the important thing is not whether a review is positive or negative, it’s how you react.” According to Petit, responding quickly and sincerely to negative feedback and, importantly, trying to fix the problem, builds more credibility than simply promoting or responding to positive reviews.

The implications go far beyond tourism. Online review is at the heart of the decision-making process, even in cases where the actual purchase may be done in-store. With a standard like ISO 20488, which can be so widely applied to different sectors, the ISO principle of seeking an equally wide range of expertise really pays off. *ISOfocus* spoke with Patrick Harkness, a contributor to ISO 20488 who brought perspectives from outside of both retail and tourism. Currently enjoying a highly active retirement (during which he both founded an emergency planning consultancy and took on a number of ISO jobs), Harkness began his career as a surveyor and specialist on major infrastructural projects in his native British Columbia. It was following this that he began working on province-wide emergency preparedness programmes: taking into account a wide range of opinions, working with multiple stakeholders and creating plans and guidance created a solid foundation for his later work in standards.

### The standardizer’s perspective

Having volunteered substantial time to both national and international standards, in areas as diverse as security and resilience, vulnerable consumers and ageing societies, the ISO member for Canada – the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) – saw Harkness as a natural choice among Canadians to participate in the development of ISO 20488. He recalls: “As my volunteering expanded, SCC asked if I’d like to Chair the Canadian Mirror Committee (CMC) related to [ISO/TC 290] online reputation. I accepted, and the success of our efforts resulted in ISO 20488.”



Since we’re talking about user reviews, I’m curious to find out more about his experience of the ISO process itself. When many at retirement age are winding down their professional life, how did he find the challenge of taking on significant new responsibilities and processes? “My strengths are related to administering and organizing,” Harkness tells me, adding: “it was a natural fit for me to become a working group manager<sup>1)</sup>. Having been successfully balloted into that position, I was fortunate to be sponsored by SCC to attend ISO’s Committee Managers’ Training in 2016. That was something so worthwhile and should be a ‘must-do’ for anyone agreeing to be manager of either a technical committee or working group.”

### “Barnaby’s article changed my life!”

It’s pretty easy to write your own review. In a virtual world, saying what you’d like to hear isn’t exactly the same thing as telling bald-faced lies, but it’s not far off. For the legions of people who

1) Previously known as “secretary”.

make their living from enticing us to browse, click and buy online, the temptation to get over-creative in interpreting data, or paraphrasing testimonials, needs to be reined in. Without the kind of guidance given by ISO 20488, even legitimate operators can get carried away. There is genuine uncertainty of the rules in an online landscape saturated with enhanced images, virtual videos, chat-bots and an imperative to monetize your every move.

The question for online marketers to ask is whether they can make the right decisions without the framework given by ISO’s standard on online consumer reviews? Consumers place trust in standards and are quick to abandon companies that are called out on false claims. Worse, they can publish their own negative reviews and can obliterate in a few characters a reputation that may have taken years to establish. For holidaymakers, and in fact purchasers of any kind of product or service that’s been rated, International Standards now provide an additional level of assurance. That’s lucky, because you can’t always trust advice from your friends, especially when they’re total strangers. ■

## COMING UP IN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM STANDARDS

ISO's management system standards (MSS) are among some of the most widely used and recognized documents that we publish. Regardless of the domain of application, users who are familiar with one MSS will immediately feel at ease with another, even when using it for the first time, thanks to a shared "high-level structure" (HLS).

In addition to being laid-out in the same way, there are some parts of a standard where identical text can be used. These parts are defined in something called Annex SL, which has been in use since 2012. As part of ISO's commitment to keep ISO standards real-world relevant, we surveyed MSS users in 2018 to get their views on how the Annex could be evolved. The agreed plan is to complete a new version in 2020, which will come into effect in 2021. Changes to Annex SL will be announced on ISO.org, where you can also sign up to our newsletter to receive updates straight to your inbox.



## WHAT WE DID IN 2018

In May, we published the ISO 2018 Annual Report. Available now to download on ISO.org, or in printed format, the report details what we achieved in 2018.

"In addition to presenting our member activities, this report summarizes our financial performance and gives an overview of our initiatives in 2018. It also explains how we are evolving and helping others to meet their own challenges" says Sergio Mujica, ISO Secretary General.



Read the report now and join us on our journey:  
[www.iso.org/annual-reports.html](http://www.iso.org/annual-reports.html)

## LUBLIN BECOMES A SMART CITY

The Polish city of Lublin is the latest to become an enthusiastic user of ISO 37120, *Sustainable cities and communities – Indicators for city services and quality of life*. The city received the Smart City certificate for compliance with the standard from PKN, the ISO member for Poland, earlier this year.

ISO 37120 outlines key measurements for evaluating a city's service delivery and quality of life. Its use will help city managers, politicians, researchers, business leaders, planners, designers and other professionals to focus on key issues, and put in place policies for more liveable, tolerant, sustainable, resilient, economically attractive and prosperous cities. The standard also provides guidance to cities on how to assess their performance towards contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the global roadmap for a more sustainable world.

Lublin has improved its residents' quality of life by investing in traffic management systems that monitor traffic hotspots, reducing congestion. The system also means greater safety for road users and pedestrians as well as cutting harmful emissions.



## TOP HONOURS IN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Thirty-two organizations were honoured for both using and promoting effective energy management systems at the recently concluded tenth Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM10) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Awardees include organizations at both ends of the spectrum in energy management experience – from single facilities to enterprise-wide platforms – showing that all organizations can use the ISO 50001 energy management system standard to advantage.

Four organizations received the top honour, the CEM Award of Excellence, and another 28 organizations received Energy Management Insight Awards. Award recipients are for helping to build global insight on the benefits of energy management systems. Collectively, all 32 of these organizations (with facilities in 19 countries or economies) report annual energy cost savings of up to USD 57 million and emissions reductions of up to 554 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of taking seven million passenger vehicles off the road.

The Energy Management Leadership Awards are organized by the CEM Energy Management Working Group (EMWG), which participates in the work of ISO/TC 301, Energy management systems.

Learn about this year's top winners:  
[www.cleanenergyministerial.org](http://www.cleanenergyministerial.org)

## NEW ERA DAWNS FOR BELT AND ROAD

Some 5000 participants from more than 150 countries and 90 international organizations attended the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in Beijing in April 2019.

This is the second conference on the Initiative, which began in 2013 to rebuild ancient trading routes across Eurasia. The three-day forum was dedicated to China's large-scale initiative on trade and transport infrastructure development from Asia to Europe and Africa.

Speaking at the Thematic Forum on Policy Connectivity, ISO President John Walter said that International Standards form the foundations of the BRI and are evidence of the increasing value of cooperation and collaboration across the globe. "Whether it's the way we interact with the physical world, through the extraction and transformation of resources, or the way we interact with each other, through trade and communications, ISO standards provide a shared way of advancing together."

A joint communiqué was issued at the Leaders' Roundtable of the second BRF, calling for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation in the future. "Belt and Road cooperation is a long-term endeavor and a common cause of all its cooperation partners," the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, told assembled reporters.



Photo: BRF  
**John Walter, ISO President at the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) in Beijing, China.**

## ISO FAMILY REUNION IN CAPE TOWN



From 16 to 20 September, participants from National Standards Bodies will get together for ISO Week 2019 to set our Organization on the road to 2030. The event comprises the ISO General Assembly and meetings of the ISO Council as well as special committees. It's here that the decisions are taken that will determine the course of our organization.

Expectations are high for 2019's ISO week. Members will participate in breakout sessions that will work on elements of the ISO strategy, which is due to be renewed next year. In addition to identifying the ways in which International Standards can contribute to realizing the Global Agenda, the event will include lively discussions, thought-provoking presentations and allow participants to discuss their achievements and challenges, bringing together the global ISO family in South Africa's oldest city.



# Better travel for a sustainable world

Tourism shows substantial potential for expansion in coming decades, which translates into millions of additional tourists crossing borders each year. To benefit from this opportunity without compromising their assets, countries will have to shape sustainable policies and practices. As the United Nations agency dedicated to tourism, the UNWTO helps make this a reality.



Photo: UNWTO

**Dr. Dirk Glaesser**, Director, Sustainable Development of Tourism at the UNWTO.

Tourism has been recognized as a force for development at both the national and international level.

**International tourism has been growing at an average rate of 4% for the past 8 years.**

#### What are the current trends in sustainable tourism?

We are currently seeing a rapid shift towards more inclusive and more sustainable tourism around the world. Tourism has been recognized as a force for development at both the national and international level, which also explains the status of the World Tourism Organization as a specialized UN agency. Globally, countries increasingly adopt new legislation and policies mainstreaming tourism policy into general economic policy. This includes measures in support of sustainable tourism development, to promote poverty alleviation through tourism, enhancing the protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage as well as community development. Nations, cities and regions are stepping up investment in infrastructure and facilities to make tourism more inclusive. Destinations are also innovating to face the challenges that come with an ongoing increase in tourist numbers. At the same time, consumer demands are changing. Globally, tourists are increasingly seeking out experiences that promote and safeguard natural and cultural heritage. Tourists are also making stronger efforts to ensure their trips are a force for good. There is a growing sensitivity regarding the importance of responsible tourism and tourists are aware that the choices they make on their trips, from the food they eat to the souvenirs they buy, matter.

Is tourism always good for a country? Every year, millions of people travel to other parts of the world on holiday or for business, spending hard cash as they go. This tourism can create jobs, boost a country's economy and increase awareness of other cultures. Done properly, tourism can be a boon for raising living standards while protecting the best a country has to offer. Badly managed, it can lead to problems such as congestion, littering and destruction of the environment.

According to the UNWTO, over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. As the go-to agency in the field of international tourism, the UNWTO promotes tourism development that supports, in equal measure, the conservation of biodiversity, social welfare and economic security of the host countries and communities, and offers leadership to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism polices worldwide.

Towards this end, the UNWTO cultivates relations with numerous organizations interested in tourism, including ISO through its technical committee for tourism and related services – ISO/TC 228. Compliance with International Standards for hospitality, services, food quality and safety,

as well as environmental and labour regulations, is vital for the competitiveness of the sector and its development. *ISOfocus* asked Dr. Dirk Glaesser, Director, Sustainable Development of Tourism at the UNWTO, how the agency helps communities practice a sustainable form of tourism that visitors can enjoy for years to come.

#### **ISOfocus: What is the tourism industry? How has tourism evolved over the past 50 years?**

**Dr. Dirk Glaesser:** We define international tourists as people travelling across borders and staying in places outside their normal country of residence, whether for business or for leisure, for no more than one year.

International tourism has been growing at an average rate of 4% for the past eight years, a sequence of uninterrupted growth not recorded since the 1960s.

This comes on the back of decades of remarkable growth in the sector. Between 1950 and 1999, the number of international arrivals grew from just 25 million to 664 million, corresponding to an average annual rate of growth of 7%. At one point, the number of international tourists doubled in more than a decade and now UNWTO figures show that 1.4 billion international arrivals were reached in 2018 alone.



A majority of tourism workers are women, making the sector a powerful force for achieving SDG 5, the goal for gender equality.



### How can practising sustainable tourism positively affect our communities?

Tourism is now a key part of the Sustainable Development Agenda. At present, 1 in 10 global jobs are linked either directly or indirectly to tourism, making the sector a key pillar of the eradication of poverty, which is the first of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. A majority of tourism workers are women, making the sector a powerful force for achieving SDG 5, the goal for gender equality. At the same time, tourism can safeguard life below water and life on land, SDGs 14 and 15 respectively.

Managed properly, tourism can help build sustainable cities and regions. Tourism is an effective driver of economic growth, creating more and better jobs. With women around the world finding employment in the tourism sector, it can contribute to the economic empowerment of women. Furthermore, tourism can be a catalyst for innovation and entrepreneurship. This is particularly relevant as UNWTO currently focuses on tourism as a driver for more and better jobs throughout 2019 and recognizes the part innovation can play here.

Aside from the many significant material benefits of tourism, the sector can also promote inclusivity and understanding – by its very nature, tourism brings people together and sets the common ground for getting along. It can, and indeed does, help safeguard biodiversity and celebrates and protects cultural heritage. In short, therefore, sustainable tourism has the power to drive economic growth and social inclusion and build a better future for communities and for the planet.

### What are the main challenges of the tourism industry?

One of the most important challenges is the need to accelerate sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism sector. This requires a good understanding of what is really happening on the ground when tourists are travelling and visiting a destination. On this basis, desired development objectives must be formulated, ideally in a participatory approach, and monitored at regular and timely intervals. Non-traditional data sources are important additions to the traditional ways tourism was studied. They help us deepen our understanding by filling data gaps and better comprehend the interactions that, due to their complexity, unstructured form or simply unknown dependencies wouldn't otherwise be discovered.

Another set of challenges relates to the specifics of the tourism product. Given that it is mostly immaterial – meaning that it is produced both in the future, with a high services component, and away from the place of usual residence or purchase of the product – the tourism product is based on “trust and belief” and therefore difficult to assess. This requires the supplier to, above all, reduce uncertainty and risk in relations with potential customers.

### What is the UNWTO doing to address these challenges?

As the specialized United Nations agency for tourism, the UNWTO promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies, tools and instruments to help Member States and all relevant actors address the aforementioned challenges. The organization has a long tradition in the formulation of statistical recommendations. In the 1990s, it pioneered the development and application of sustainability indicators to tourism. The guidebook *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations*, published in 2004, inspired many other measurement and certification schemes such as the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria.

Through its International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), the UNWTO also welcomes observatories that are committed to monitoring the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism to unlock the power of evidence-based decision making at the destination level, fostering sustainable tourism practices locally and globally. The INSTO initiative is based on the UNWTO's long-standing commitment to the sector's sustainable and resilient growth through measurement and monitoring, supporting the evidence-based management of tourism.

In order to lead and shape new tourism models for the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on innovation, technology, sustainability and accessibility, the UNWTO joined forces with the government of Spain in organizing the UNWTO World Conference on Smart Destinations, now in its second edition since 2017. The conference discussed the opportunities and challenges arising from innovative products and services based on technological solutions. It covered areas such as impact monitoring, smart-destination governance, sustainable development, standardization frameworks, data accessibility and cyber-security, as well as the role of participatory approaches and open platforms.

### What will the state of travel look like in 2030?

Based on current trends, economic prospects and the UNWTO Confidence Index, UNWTO forecasts a growth of 3% to 4% in international tourist arrivals worldwide in 2019, more in line with the historical growth trends.

Tourism is expected to keep growing as a sector over the coming years. The number of international tourist arrivals surpassed 1.4 billion in 2018, with the sector worth USD 1.5 trillion. Asia-Pacific has emerged as the fastest growing of all global tourism regions and is expected to experience further growth in the years ahead.

Against this backdrop, UNWTO estimates international arrivals to reach 1.8 billion in 2030. Therefore, sustainable practices are an imperative and reflect the true potential of tourism to make an effective contribution to achieving the goals laid out in the 2030 Agenda. ■



*This two-volume report examines the role of tourism in each of the five pillars of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and addresses the changes needed in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour.*

