

Promote a "sensible" tourism tomorrow

COVID-19: the enemy of the century that will change the game!

The "tsunami" of COVID-19 pandemic spared no one and is now evolving in a global space that is still largely confined. This crisis is unprecedented in the scale and impact of its immediate and brutal effects. Even if we compare it historically with other very violent crises, everyone agrees that it is unprecedented since the end of the last world conflict in 1945.

In just a few months, we have seen the virus spread across the globe, with devastating effects on the health and lives of millions of people. Its economic and social consequences are disastrous, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, especially those in developing countries.

This crisis is confusing and disorienting us in all our daily actions. It is already challenging us about our future consumption patterns, about trade that has become global, about our individual freedoms, about levels of solidarity, about the nature of our social relations and, for many of us, about our own jobs and those of our loved ones.

In spite of the remarkable efforts of all healthcare workers around the world, but also of those who work every day to ensure that our daily lives are as undisturbed as possible, this crisis is all the more anxious as we do not yet know the end of it with certainty.

Returning to a so-called "normal" life is probably going to be a long struggle, which will be marked out and forced by economic or social constraints that will vary from country to country. This is why it is likely that the normality sought will be quite different from the one "before".

This crisis will leave deep and lasting scars on our consciences. But, as is often the case in such unfortunate circumstances, it also brings with it the mobilizing and creative hope of a "rebirth" to invent new models of social, environmental and economic behaviour that are more peaceful and more respectful of Man, Cultures and the Environment.

A challenging context for tourism?

In this unprecedented global context, tourism is one of the sectors of activity that is most strongly affected. The mobility of people reduced to a strict minimum all over the world is causing effects that were totally unthinkable just a few months ago! The most striking phenomenon is the almost complete stoppage of world air traffic. Who could have predicted this!

In addition to the almost complete closure of all forms of tourist accommodation, the economic and social impact is also considerable in many areas closely linked to tourist activity. This is particularly true for restaurants, bars, museums, heritage sites and all festive, sporting, discovery and cultural activities and so many others!

The direct consequences of this situation are the endangerment of tens of thousands of actors and millions of jobs in the sector. Social and solidarity tourism is unfortunately not spared either.

However, this crisis, which has been contained, and which will certainly raise even more questions for the world of tourism, will have to provide an effective response to this question: What will the tourist's expectations and behaviour be tomorrow?

Because before this crisis, the development of tourism activity based solely on a quantitative growth target for the number of tourists welcomed, already showed its own limits. All over the world, the impact of tourism development based solely on this quantitative criterion is indeed proving to be increasingly devastating!

Only the term "tourism industry" that essentially defines our activity today is not only a reductive term, it conveys every day a little more the harmful image of an activity that has become purely mercantile and out of control!

Actors and operators in the sector are gradually becoming aware of this and can measure the consequences in concrete terms: over-visiting with its corollary of damage to so-called "tourist" places (cities that have become museums!), rejection and conflicts with local populations, heavy pollution of territories and the environment, significant impact on local health services and on common goods, particularly water and energy. There is even doubt locally about a fair distribution of the economic contribution, since it benefits primarily private investors and financiers.

In this context, we need to rethink tourism and reintegrate it into a much broader societal vision! We need to rehabilitate this essential notion of "holidays". One that prioritises the well-being of each individual, that seeks sustainability in its investments, that respects the environment and the territories, that encourages encounters between hosts and guests, that strives for a fair and equitable distribution of economic growth and that favours local employment.

In short, we need to master and imagine the tourism of tomorrow, so that it becomes "sensible".

ISTO's strategic positioning
Our "DNA" for social, solidarity and responsible tourism!

For several months now, ISTO has mobilized its members and partners to work on what today is the basis of our positioning and strategy for the future.

This new positioning is in line with and fully respects the 2 main objects of our Statutes:

- To promote the development of tourism for all.
- To promote and support the different forms of tourism, giving priority to the service of people, communities and territories and identifying itself in particular under the terms of responsible, solidarity, fair or community-based tourism.

Our work was also based on 2 reference documents:

- The UN World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.
- Our "Montreal" declaration of 1996, entitled " Towards a humanist, social vision of tourism ", which was then voted unanimously by our members.

The result of this work is an asserted strategic positioning. Of course, this positioning respects our own history, but it is fully in line with the perspective of promoting a resolutely modern tourism.

A tourism that is well in tune with the new expectations of all audiences, especially the most fragile. A tourism that is well in tune with all the societal changes that this crisis will impose on us and with respect for our environment.

It is a question of promoting tomorrow this "sensible" tourism, which must guide all our commitments and all our actions.

We have translated this "sensible" positioning into 5 priority axes

1. - Foster accessibility

Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "gives everyone the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay". The aim is to help make holidays accessible to as many people as possible. Social and responsible tourism stakeholders take this objective into account in their offers by seeking to remove the various obstacles to departure, be them social, cultural, physical, psychological or financial.

2. - Demonstrate solidarity

Tourism has a major role to play in tolerance and peace in the world. Solidarity is expressed in respect for local communities and cultures and must contribute to their development. This is particularly true for developing countries or regions for which the contribution of tourism can be a priority for their economic and social development. Tourism must be one of the driving forces to participate in and facilitate local investments of a non-economic nature, such as schools, libraries, sports facilities, etc.

3. - Ensure quality of life

Regardless of the target group: families, youths, children, seniors, the holiday experience is a beneficial contribution to health and personal development. Holidays promote social cohesion in the broadest sense and strengthen the family fabric. While holidays are a source of well-being for everyone, they also offer opportunities to learn new skills in many areas, whether in sports, culture, social life, etc. In this sense, they contribute to the strengthening of self-confidence and encourage the undertaking of initiative.

4. – Promote fair trade

It is about tourism operators playing a leading role in the development of the local economy and beyond. To do this, opportunities for the creation of innovative local products for tourists must be promoted. Products that will contribute to the creation of local employment, while respecting decent and compliant working conditions, thus allowing the reduction of social inequalities. Special attention must also be paid to the creation of non-economic added value for visitors, through accurate and complete information on the quality of the products on offer and their various impacts on the environment and on local communities.

5. - Protect the environment

There are limits to growth and tourism development must seek to take into account the entire life cycle of a resource with the aim of protecting the environment from possible pollution and nuisances and to measure its impacts, particularly CO₂. This is particularly true for: the preservation of natural resources, especially water, and the management of waste treatment, and in particular plastics. It also consists in having the objective of promoting the production and regeneration of food resources, namely fisheries, and in encouraging the development of renewable energies.

This text is an invitation to as many tourism stakeholders as possible to join us and share our ambition of "sensible" tourism. A call for them to put in place, as soon as possible, one or more offers that meet the criteria of our "DNA".

This text is an invitation to all the actors working for a tourism of development, who want to support our action and that of our 160 members in 40 countries, to give us their support to help us to concretize our ambition of a "sensible" tourism, at the service of people, communities and territories.

Finally, we invite you to visit our website (<https://isto.international>). This will be an opportunity for you to send us your comments, observations or ideas. It will also be an opportunity to discover other initiatives, promoted by our members or partners.

ISTO's Executive Committee