



'TIS THE SEASON TO PLAY TOURIST

DATE :                    DECEMBER 2013

The countdown is officially on! In a matter of days, less than a month's worth of sleeps, the year-end holiday period will begin. Across the world, millions upon millions of people will be happily stepping back from their places of work, and heading towards the planes, trains, busses, boats and other forms of *'take me there'* transport to join loved ones for some long-awaited time off. The time is almost here!

For people in the travel and tourism industry, this is one of the few times they actually get to practice what they preach.

Throughout the year, the voices of travel industry leaders, both public and private sector, echo the critical role that travel and tourism has to play across the globe. The over 1 billion international tourists, and 5 billion domestic tourists, investing their time, money and dreams into going somewhere else, have become a profound force for global growth, development, unity, prosperity, and peace.

We all know the stats regarding total contribution, namely:

- 1 in 11 jobs worldwide, equating to 260 million jobs
- US\$ 6.6 billion, representing 9.3% of global GDP
- 5.4% total Exports
- 4.7% total Investment

(Source: WTTC 2012)

And we know the truths.

As stated by President Bill Clinton earlier this year when speaking to a rich, diverse collection of industry leaders at the WTTC Global Summit in Abu Dhabi,:

*"I have seen that peace works better than conflict - and one of the best manifestations of this is in Travel and Tourism".*

And as often expressed by Dr. Taleb Rifai when looking inwards at the individual, human benefit of our global mobility,:

*"I am a better person because I travel."*

Now, this time, is the time to become part of the billions enjoying the gift of tourism, wherever unwrapping that gift may be.

### **BECAUSE YOU DESERVE IT, AND NEED IT**

The concept of 'getting away' has as many definitions as there are potential travellers.

For some, getting away means staying close but staying somewhere different. With recent challenging times of economic ache still in people's memories, *staycations* have become a very good alternative to going away or not going anywhere at all.

For others, getting away means going far away to feel truly out of one's routine and regular space.

For some, getting away actually means standing still – not having to head off in different directions for meetings, eatings and whatever else is tugging at one's work schedule.

Whatever the definition may be, the science behind the state of switching off clearly shows that taking a holiday is not just a luxury, it is a necessity.

Tourism Australia went so far as to develop a domestic tourism campaign stressing the importance of taking a holiday to one's physical and mental health. Their *"No Leave, No Life"* campaign

<http://www.tourism.australia.com/campaigns/no-leave-no-life.aspx> focused directly on calling out the bad habit of denying oneself a break, and its risks.

Reflecting on the campaign, Bernard Salt is direct in his expression of support.

*"The No Leave, No Life program is absolutely timely. It is critical to Australian businesses to understand that people are less effective if they don't take their entitled annual leave. There's a great tendency by employees to think that they are indispensable in a downturn. The fact of the matter is you are not indispensable; you do need to take leave. You're a more effective and productive worker if you do take leave."*

*"We have developed a culture over the last few years of deferring our annual leave - just because things were too busy and now because things are slowing down. But once the No Leave, No Life program takes effect, I think that employees will understand that it improves their productivity and it's actually better for business overall if they're refreshed and relaxed."*

### **BECAUSE YOU SHOULD**

With this gift of playing tourist comes the gift of giving back – being able to make a personal contribution to the tourism economy of which is continuously spoken.

This potential to make an impact is magnified even more so in destinations where the tourism sector forms the backbone of the economy, and is critical in national recovery from crisis – natural, political, economic or otherwise. Visiting Egypt now matters more than ever before. The same goes for Tunisia, for Morocco, for Jordan, for the entire MENA region. And for other regions in the world – Asia, the Americas, Africa, Europe. Nowhere has been immune to challenge this year. Nowhere, therefore, can afford to overlook the value of visitors.

A powerful recent example – the Philippines. As the assaulting winds of super-typhoon Haiyan swept through its predicted path across the archipelago and into Southern China, leaving behind a trail of physical devastation, the lives and hearts of a nation were left behind in a completely broken state, with many of the survivors scattered across the 7,000 islands that make up the Philippines.

The UN's latest estimate holds the number of people effected by the typhoon as 12 million. How does one begin to rebuild?

Tourism is part of the solution.

As recently as just a couple of weeks following the calamity, the Philippines tourism board has begun encouraging travellers back to the destination so dependent on tourism, making clear that holiday makers choosing the Philippines will be able to make a direct impact on the nation's efforts to rebuild lives and keep locals working.

Appearing in, inter alia, the UK press, the message from tourism officials such as Richard de Villa at the Philippines embassy in London, is clear:

*"Ninety-seven per cent of the country is unaffected. Tourism accounts for 8% of the GDP and 2.9m jobs, almost 8% of the total employment. If you stop tourism it will have a more negative impact on the local communities because of the role in our overall economy"*  
(Source: Guardian.co.uk)

For all of the glamorous, glossy, 'non-essential activity' perceptions of the concept of travel, the essential value of tourism activity is indisputable. It matters, more now than ever.

### **AS THE YEAR COMES TO A CLOSE**



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'Tis the season to enjoy the blessing of being able to travel, to play tourist. May this be a joyful, restful, playful time for you and yours.

And please don't forget to say '*thank you*' to the person standing at the check-in desk, or the restaurant table, or the tour group stand, or the hotel bar, or the theatre entrance, or any other offering you may come across, the people wearing a uniform and a smile, working while you play.

Happy holidays!

- ENDS -