

Major report by World Travel & Tourism Council reveals global medical tourism growth of 358%

- ✓ *US named number one tourism market for both inbound and outbound spending*
- ✓ *Kuwait named second largest source market for outbound medical tourism*
- ✓ *Turkey, Thailand, Jordan, Costa Rica and Mexico revealed as some of the leading emerging economies for medical tourism inbound spending*

The World Travel & Tourism Council [[WTTC](#)], which represents the global Travel & Tourism private sector, has released its latest piece of major research, which reveals the staggering growth of global medical tourism, with the US leading the way in terms of both inbound and outbound spending.

The report, 'A Prescription for a Healthier Economy', shows international spending on medical tourism products and services grew by 358% in nominal terms between 2000 and 2017, increasing from \$2.4 billion to \$11 billion. This growth resulted in spending on medical tourism reaching 1.2% of international visitor spending in 2017, compared to just 0.6% in 2000.

According to the report, the US is the world's leading outbound medical tourism market, representing 20% of the market, with US citizens spending \$2.3bn on medical tourism services abroad in 2017.

Kuwait is the second largest source market for outbound medical tourism, spending over \$1.5bn in 2015, largely due to its government policy of supporting and financing medical procedures abroad.

Nigeria is the third largest outbound source market, spending \$783mn on medical tourism in 2017, representing 13.5% of total outbound spend.

Notably, of the top 10 largest markets for outbound spend, five are European countries, with the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Austria and Germany, spending between \$300mn to \$678mn.

The US is also the largest destination market for inbound medical tourists, with spending reaching almost \$4bn in 2017, and representing nearly 36% of global medical tourism spending.

In second and third respectively in terms of inbound medical tourism are France (\$800mn) and Turkey (\$763mn), with the latter being home to 43 JCI accredited healthcare institutions.

The Joint Commission International (JCI), is one of the leading international healthcare accreditation organisations that promotes rigorous standards of healthcare.

Emerging economies for medical tourism include Thailand, where \$589 million (1.0% of overall inbound tourism spending), Costa Rica, where \$451 million (12.1% of overall inbound tourism spending), and Mexico with \$315 million (1.5% of overall inbound tourism spending) was attributed to medical tourism.

As mentioned, of the top 10 largest markets for inbound spend, five are European countries, with Belgium, the UK and Hungary joining France and Turkey, spending between \$417mn to \$636mn.

As destinations work towards developing their medical tourism sub-sector, WTTC recommend the following elements should be considered as governments develop their strategies and policies:

- Establishing smart regulation and recognised accreditation/certification of medical practitioners and facilities
- Developing enabling visa facilitation policies which support the development of this sub-sector
- Defining the skills gap and developing trainings to enhance the talent
- Designing and implementing targeted marketing strategies
- Creating the financial incentives to attract investment into the sub-sector

Gloria Guevara, President & CEO of WTTC said:

“As we can see from our latest research, medical tourism is an important and emerging area of interest for the Travel & Tourism sector. It is important that we continue to understand the reasons that people travel, and in many cases work to support policies that enhance the ability for travellers to seek treatment abroad.”

To download the report in full, please click [here](#).

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About the World Travel & Tourism Council

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) represents the Travel & Tourism private sector globally. Members include 200 CEOs, Chairs and Presidents of the world's leading Travel & Tourism companies from all geographies covering all industries. WTTC works to raise awareness of Travel & Tourism as one of the world's largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (319 million) worldwide and generating 10.4% of world GDP. WTTC conducts research on the Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism in 185 countries for the past 30 years. In 2018, the Travel & Tourism industry experienced 3.9% growth, compared to the global economy (3.2%).