



**27 September 2016—“with almost 1.2 billion people travelling abroad each year, tourism has become a powerful economic sector, a passport to prosperity and peace, and a transformative force improving millions of lives”- Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.**

The theme of this year's [World Tourism Day](#) is promoting universal accessibility.

Accessibility can be defined as being able to reach or obtain, underlining the equal right for all the world's citizens to experience the incredible diversity of our planet and the beauty of the world we live in.

Since its inception, World Tourism Day is celebrated to foster awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic value.

The celebration seeks to highlight tourism potential to contribute to reaching the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), addressing some of the most pressing challenges society is facing today.

Capturing voices of tourism employees from across the globe, United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Tourism Stories allow you to gain insight into how people and communities are shaped by the sector, highlighting how an individual's work has the ability to unlock community value chains, inspire empowerment and revitalize traditions of the past to set the foundations for the future:

This year's official World Tourism Day 2016 celebrations will be held in Bangkok, Thailand. To mark this day there will be events, festivities, tours and excursions across Europe and the rest of the world. [Follow this link to see what's happening near you.&nbsp;](#)

International tourist arrivals in Europe grew by 5% in 2015 to reach a total of 608 million, just over half the world's total (51%). Europe was the fastest growing region in absolute terms, with 27 million more tourists than in 2014, according to the UNWTO.

Tourism in Europe, and accessible tourism has come to the forefront in the last year, as the European Parliament of the Written Declaration 015/2015 on accessible tourism was adopted. The declaration has been signed by more than 380 MEPs, showing Parliament's strong commitment to persons with disabilities in Europe, to their right to mobility and equal access to tourism, leisure, transports and information.

Accessible Tourism for all is about the creation of environments that can cater for the needs of all of us, whether we are traveling or staying at home. May that be due to a disability, even temporary, families with small children, or the ageing population, at some point in our lives, sooner or later, we all benefit from universal accessibility in tourism.

Ban Ki-moon reminds us on this World Tourism Day to recognize that all people can and should

be able to participate in tourism and enjoy unforgettable travel experiences.