

## OBJECTIVES

- A. Reflect on the competitive potential of the religious tourism market;
- B. Increase attractiveness in religious destinations;
- C. Pursue the affirmation of religious tourism in regional, national and international innovation networks;
- D. Share knowledge about the best ways to promote religious destinations.

The congress will look into the following aspects of religious tourism and pilgrimage:

- The policies and strategies for the preservation of religious sites and sacred places;
- The respect for local traditions, values and intangible culture;
- The development of a local economy which benefits of the host communities; and
- The need to ensure a positive and enriching signature visitor's experience.

## Participants

All interested parties and experts, regardless of the religious beliefs, are cordially invited to participate in the congress, which will be an opportunity for a scientific meeting, but also intercultural and ecumenical encounter.

## SESSIONS

The congress will be divided into a Ministerial High-Level Debate and 4 sessions:

1. Preservation of sacred traditions and protection of religious sites
  - a. Preservation and enhancement of religious heritage and sacred sites (protection and congestion management)
  - b. Religious places as accessible and inclusive destinations
2. **Role of religious tourism in sustainable economic growth and social inclusiveness of local communities**
  - a. Challenges for Local and Regional Authorities
  - b. Opportunities to promote values and intangible heritage
  - c. Processes, initiatives and projects to promote the sustainable development of the host territories
3. **Potential synergies for religious tourism development through cultural routes and network of destinations**
  - a. Networks of religious tourism and pilgrimage
  - b. Cross cultural understanding and peace promotion through cultural religious routes
4. **The future of religious tourism: innovative marketing and use of technology**
  - a. Appreciation of the experiential dimension to be given to visitors
  - b. Use of new technologies in the context of religious tourism and pilgrimage
  - c. Sacred places - from the space lived to the virtual space



FÁTIMA  
23  
24 NOV 17

# INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE

THE POTENTIAL OF SACRED  
PLACES AS A TOOL FOR  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT



2017  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM  
FOR DEVELOPMENT



## PRESENTATION

On the occasion of the centenary of the apparitions of Fatima (1917-2017), the International Congress on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage will be organized jointly by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Ministry of Economy of Portugal and the Municipality of Ourém. The Congress will reflect on the potential and the role of religious tourism and sacred places as a tool for socio-economic and cultural development of destinations.

Knowing the motivations that lead millions of peoples to travel to sacred places is an essential condition for the sustainable development of destinations. The visitor of sacred places in general and the one of Fatima in particular, is characterized by a remarkable loyalty to the visited site. Hence, it can be said that tourist's loyalty is in these cases an essential element of the relationship that the religious tourist and the pilgrim establish with the destinations which they are visiting. Thus, a key principle is to preserve the spirit of the destinations, authenticity and integrity in the way that they are managed and promoted while making them accessible for all.

On the other hand, these places of spirituality have the potential to drain part of their tourist flows to other tourist attractions in the region, therefore, with adequate promotion strategies; it is possible to get visitors to lesser known areas and complementary places that are offered in holy places. Additionally, religious tourism destinations are usually less affected by trends and economic crisis.

Taking note of the United Nations (UN) declaring 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the congress will discuss how effective partnerships, in sacred places, can benefit local communities and encourage their sustainable development and socio-economic empowerment in the long run. It will also discuss the need for specific policies for protection and management of religious and sacred sites that take into account the distinct sacred or spiritual value associated with the place, as a key factor for their conservation.

# INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE

## THE POTENTIAL OF SACRED PLACES AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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