

Media at the 2nd General Assembly: Javier Delgado Rivera



Javier Delgado Rivera is a Spanish freelance journalist based in New York. He writes about the United Nations for publications and online platforms worldwide. This is his first UNWTO General Assembly, and here he shares his thoughts with UN Tourism News:

What does tourism mean to you?

Since my first trip abroad some 25 years ago, traveling has become a central part of my identity. To be frank, it makes me feel alive and gives me a singular sense of purpose, helping me to take a break from the daily demands of life and routine.

As a tourist I can fully embrace myself and follow my sense of curiosity to wherever it takes me. Tourism breaks down biases and makes you not only understand diversity but to treasure it. And when I travel I do not forget that I am a visitor, so I carry myself in the same respectful way I would expect a tourist to behave in my beloved hometown.

What do you hope to learn at this UNWTO General Assembly?

I write about the United Nations for several news outlets worldwide, and in recent years I have seen an increasing media interest about the UNWTO's work.

Given the vast importance of tourism – now the world's third largest export category after chemicals and fuels - I flew from New York to get a better understanding about the role that the Organization plays in helping countries and the private sector in addressing the issues preventing the sector from reaching its full potential while it grows in a way that respects the environment and the receiving communities.

How do you think the media can help promote UNWTO's vision for sustainable, accessible and responsible tourism?

To a great extent, the media shapes the way the wider public perceives the UN. The UNWTO does a great job disseminating the organization's work, but the public may not always have either the time or the desire to follow its numerous communications channels. As a consequence, the media can help digest and deliver the key messages resulting from UNWTO's work on these three areas to wide audiences.

Furthermore, we have the flexibility to use a more informal narrative to help the public relate and understand the important of sustainable tourism, and the role the Organization plays in making this a reality.

What do you think are the main challenges tourism faces in the years ahead?

One of the downsides of the steady growth of tourism is so-called "overtourism" and the negative impact this can have on the local host communities. The sustainability of the sector does not only rest on the respect and protection



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of natural resources, but also on the compatibility of increasing number of visitors to the people actually visited.

Another key consideration is the concentration of tourism in traditional destinations, making it harder for other countries to share the benefits of the sector's growth. I have traveled to places that most would never entertain as tourist destinations, yet I have found these places to often be safer, cleaner, friendlier, cheaper and more rewarding than many of the most visited sites.

And finally, how have you found St Petersburg?

Beyond words. This city should be visited by everyone at least once in their lifetime. St Petersburg's streets are full of life, and its gorgeous palaces and astounding religious sites are unique both for their majesty and for their immaculate state of preservation.

And beyond the traditional tourist sites, I did enjoy walking around their clean boulevards, stopping in their tempting shop windows, sipping coffee in their numerous cafés, trying tons of delicious Russian food for very little money, and staring at the superb architecture of their residential buildings. Something that I particularly appreciated has been to visit their residential areas in the suburbs, where the Soviet style of the buildings took me back on a time. And, of course, the people have been wonderfully hospitable, kind and open.



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