

# EGYPT REPORTED 4.4% INCREASE IN TOURIST ARRIVALS



Egypt ended last year with a positive balance and therefore expects "the Land of the Pharaohs" to become once again one of the most visited places in the world by the end of 2015.

"If we continue on the path we have started we will return to normality in the sector by the end of the year," declared the chairman of the Egyptian Tourism Authority, Samy Mahmoud, at a press conference.

According to Mahmud, **there was a 4.4 % increase in tourist arrivals, which means that nearly 10 million people visited the country last year.** In Egypt where tourism accounts for 11.3 % of Gross Domestic Product, restoring tourist confidence is crucial after the decline experienced by the sector following the 2011 revolution that ended with the overthrow of the Hosni Mubarak regime.

The official stressed that Egypt is a safe country where tourists can have a good time with no need to worry. "The Egyptian Government cares about each tourist visiting the country," he stated. "Currently we have high security systems with cameras and police officers who control all the tourist areas, so there is no need to worry," he explained.

Although he acknowledged that they are indeed facing "some problems" in Cairo, the tourism chief said that the jihadi terrorist attacks in France have shown that nowhere in the world is absolutely safe. The Cairo Airport reinforced its security measures after finding two explosive devices in airport terminals last week. No one was arrested.

"There is great improvement in the situation at the borders. We have security challenges, we have economic challenges but we have the will of the Egyptian people and the Egyptian leadership in moving forward," he explained.

"The situation is much better than it looks," he repeated, and to prove it, although he admitted they are still working towards the recovery of cultural tourism, today **hotels in the coastal area - Egypt's sun and beach tourism - are reporting 80% occupancy.**

Mahmud also announced that five direct flights from China will start operating under an agreement that will result in 700,000 more visits annually for Egypt's tourism recovery. This agreement is in addition to the one signed with Spanish operators who, as of March 21 this year, will resume direct flights from Madrid to Aswan, as well as Nile cruises.

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