

TUNISIA IS DIVERSIFYING ITS TOURISM



Tunisia wants to expand its tourism industry. This sector is a very important source of foreign currency for the country's economy. It has also generated some 7.5% of Tunisia's GDP in 2005. "We are not interested in the number of tourist arrivals but how to increase our tourism revenues," stressed Mr. Khelil Lajimi, Tunisia's Minister of Tourism. According to the minister the country is going to diversify its tourism portfolio. Nowadays most visitors come to this northern African country because of sun and sea. The summer tourism and especially the sun and sea model is responsible for the 80% - 90% of Tunisia's tourism today. However Mr. Khelil Lajimi says that the industry should move towards alternative forms of tourism and added value tourism services.

Tunisian new tourism strategic plan should include special forms of tourism that should lure different kind of tourists. Among the special forms is e.g. Sahara dessert tourism or thalassotherapy stays (sea water treatment). The government also supports the foreign investments. The officials want to develop the industry away from mass tourism and they hope that e.g. eco-tourism and military tourism will develop. Golf tourism is also expected to grow as there are five new courses going to be built in the next five years. The development of these kinds of tourism should help the country to diversify its tourism industry from its competitors in Eastern Mediterranean such as Egypt, Turkey, Greece and Croatia.

In past Tunisia experienced a considerable drop in the numbers of visitors. It was after the terrorist attacks of 2001 and 2002. The country has lost many visitors from its traditional markets of France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain. Estimates speak e.g. about the loss of 500 000 German tourists. This loss gradually balanced from the new European markets and especially from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary.

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