

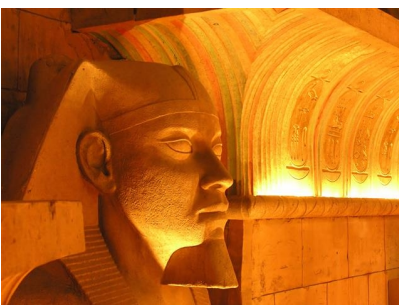
Egypt: Political Unrest and Absent Tourists

A series of revolutions have served to destabilize what was otherwise pristine, stable Egypt. The maiden revolution came in 2011. This saw Hosni Mubarak toppled. Subsequently, president Mohammed Morsi was ousted in 2013. The latter was deposed by the army, plunging the country into a deadly violence and a deadlock. The tourism sector, once accounting for 10 % of Egypt's GDP, has received a major blow as a result of these revolutions.



Countries have continued to issue travel advisories to their citizens against traveling to Egypt. The number of international tourists visiting the country to enjoy such features as unique Giza Pyramids is on the decline. The souvenir merchants whose business used to boom not long ago can't help but restlessly watch for the relentless few tourists who still make their way along the deserted street to the once busy, active and noisy landmark. Tour coaches that once lined the streets around the scenic pyramids have vanished. Horseback tours are no more.

The dependents on the local tourism economy are however optimistic that normalcy will return. They can only hope. The souvenir shops here are empty. Few tourists come by to view the pictures of Egyptian pharaohs and gods that cover the walls. The few who make their way down here are crowded by souvenir vendors. It is a classic example of supply in excess of demand.



When asked, they opined that security and stability is necessary to restore the golden days. Some are happy that Morsi was toppled. They say that the government was doing more harm than good to the tourism industry.

The few tourists who are ignorant of the situation in Egypt are of the lofty conviction that as long as you travel smart and safe, all will be well. Majority however are nowhere to be seen. In the past, you could find them at Khan el Khalili bazaar, Cairo, bargaining for the souvenirs and relaxing in cafes enjoying

mint tea and sheesha (water pipe). They have since disappeared and this place is now often crowded by the locals. It's Ramadhan, and after dark sets in, the area will be crowded by Egyptians strolling after breaking the fast. No foreigners can be spotted.



The tourism ministry however is keen to resuscitate the industry. Hisham Zaazoue, the tourism minister, says he is more focused on convincing countries to lift travel advisories issued. He is adamant that fresh PR abroad will help revive the industry. He even confirmed that talks are underway with the European world to lift travel warnings in certain areas that are otherwise considered safe like Red Sea Resorts. He believes to attract 13 million tourists in the country this year.

Date: 2013-08-26

Article link:

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