

'WORSE THAN COVID-19': WILDFIRES HIT TOURISM IN TURKEY HARD

Tourism in Turkey is facing yet another crisis - wildfires. Many tourists are cancelling their vacations, causing further trouble to an already devastated industry.

Burning forests and villages, evacuated hotels, and ongoing heat warnings. "It's worse than Covid-19. All of the beautiful nature is gone," a local hotel receptionist in Marmaris said.

The news spreading across the country is having a dramatic impact on tourism in Turkey, which has already been plagued by the pandemic. Authorities have even launched appeals to ask people to spend their holidays in the affected areas to help them get back on track.

Government Not Concerned

Tourism is one of the most important economic sectors in the country. According to 2019 statistics, the sector made up 11% of the GDP before the crisis. Last year, however, tourism in Turkey fell by an astonishing 70%.

Meanwhile, the government does not seem to be concerned about the fires too much. In the beginning, there were cancellations, but now the bookings are increasing again.

Or at least this is what the tourism minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy said recently. This may be true for certain regions; in the Antalya region, for example, the fires never threatened tourist strongholds acutely. However, the country-wide reality is somewhat different.

80% Cancellations for the Rest of the Summer

The situation is not rosy at all for Turkish tourism. Providers of tourism products in Marmaris are complaining that they have 80% cancellations for the rest of the summer season and are labelling the situation as hopeless.

Moreover, many of them themselves have been heavily affected by the fires and have not slept for days, having fought the fire to save their homes as well as tourism facilities. "If we had followed the official evacuation instructions, this place would now be in ruins," a local said.

Tourism in Greece Hardly Affected

While tourism in Turkey is suffering due to natural disasters, the situation is somewhat different in neighboring Greece. **It is true that fires are also raging in this country, but the effects on tourism have not been as devastating.**

In Greece, several campsites on the island of Euboea were evacuated early and fires on the islands of Crete and Rhodes were quickly brought under control.

Date: 2021-08-30

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-tourism-in-turkey-struggling-with-wildfires-across-the-country-article2778>