

ARAB TOURISM SAVED THE SUMMER SEASON IN ISTANBUL

The glass can look half full or half empty for Turkish tourism, but one thing is certain. The gigantic Istanbul airport, untimely inaugurated nine months before the pandemic, was visibly designed for a different volume of passengers.

Nevertheless, the situation is slightly improving, and tourists are returning to the country. **5.8 million foreigners arrived to Turkey in the first six months of the year, which is 27.1 % more than in the same period last year.**

However, it is obviously impossible to speak of the masses of Russians and Germans who traveled to Turkey before the pandemic. This year there was a different savior - Arab tourism.

Domestic and Arab Tourism

Firstly, domestic tourism has greatly contributed to the recovery of the industry, with Turks eager to explore their country beyond Istanbul and Ankara. Secondly, tourism from Arab countries and the Middle East, in general, has had a positive effect on the recovery of the industry.

And although not every stakeholder in the industry has reopened, the situation is now better. Local hoteliers in Istanbul say that revenues have increased during the summer and some even speak of an 80 % occupancy rate in contrast to 30 % two months ago.

Increased Inflow to Istanbul

As stated, there is a general increase in the tourism inflow from abroad. This is mainly the case of the main metropolis of the country - Istanbul - which has welcomed 2.7 million foreign tourists during the first 6 months of the year.

June was especially active, with almost 700 thousand people visiting the city - the highest number in the last 16 months. By nationality, the Germans were the most important group of foreign tourists (71 thousand).

They were followed by Iranians (54 thousand), Americans (39.5 thousand), Ukrainians (31 thousand), Iraqis (29 600 thousand), French (28 thousand) and Russians (21 thousand). But official data show that at least one visitor from 190 different countries visited Istanbul from January to June this year.

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