

1.3M TOURISTS VISITED LEBANON IN 2008



War damaged Lebanon is still attracting tourists. The country has vibrant night life, culture sights as well as skiing opportunities. The WTTC expects the Lebanese tourism industry to grow.

Lebanon seems to be getting back as an attractive tourism destination, at least for some. The country's **tourism image suffered** significantly during the civil war and lately because of the conflict with Israel. The **U.S. State Department warns Americans against traveling to Lebanon** because of safety and security concerns but numbers of international visitors grow anyway. According to government figures, approximately **1.3 million visitors** came to Lebanon in 2008, which is a 30 per cent growth when compared with the year 2007.

The country is still not politically stable but the situation has improved. Most of damage caused in the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah guerillas was repaired and tensions between the religious groups have somehow calmed down.

The country certainly has a lot to offer to tourists. There is vibrant night life in Beirut, clubs, bars as well as excellent cuisine in local restaurants. Lebanon also has a long history and rich cultural heritage. Visitors interested in culture and history may admire local ancient Roman ruins, churches, mosques or crusaders' castles. Those who are not fans of sightseeing may enjoy local beaches, explore caves or go skiing.

Tourism industry is quite an important sector of Lebanese economy. The government wants to make it even bigger and the forecasts for the industry are positive. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the Lebanese tourism industry will both directly and indirectly generate \$7.78 billion, or 28.1 percent, of overall economic activity in the country in 2009. The **WTTC expects the Lebanese tourism industry to grow by 3 per cent** annually between 2010 and 2019.

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