

# SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM: ONLY MOROCCO STAYS AFLOAT



The 2013 summer season was a disastrous time for Egypt, mediocre in Tunisia, and good in Morocco. The three main destinations for tourists in the Southern Mediterranean will experience an extremely contrasting summer in 2014.

The revenues of the tourist Egyptian tourism sector are endlessly falling. The country experienced a decline in the first quarter of 2014 by 43% (€940 million) compared to an already bad 2013 with a decline of 41%. 2014 should remain in the same dark situation. The attack last February against South Korean tourists, the wave of rapes plaguing the country, and political unrest led to 15 governments introducing travel restrictions.

The tourism industry, the third source of income, is affected. Falling attendance of archaeological sites exceeds 70%. Of the 350 ships sailing on the Nile before the revolution, only 30 are currently offering a cruise.

Tunisia is also heavily dependent on tourism; they have limited the damage, but they cannot find a solution to bring her visits back up to the level at which they were before 2010. For example, a number of French tourists choosing to spend their holidays in the country has declined over the last four years by 40%.

The bargain prices are not filling the hotels, but they are keeping the industry afloat. The first quarter of 2014 saw a growth in tourism revenues by 2.1% and the number of tourists by 7.1%. Tunisia received seven million visitors in 2010 which generated 7% of the GDP and was the earnings for 10% of the population. These levels cannot be achieved in 2014, but the season could mark the renewal rate of the Tunisian tourism.

According to the last barometer NATA (National Association of Travel Agents)/Versatile France, French bookings for Tunisia almost doubled between February 2013 and 2014 (+84). The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in recent weeks has relaxed restrictions on tourist areas in the country.

Untouched by revolutions, Morocco continues to attract. In 2013, the tourism sector represented more than 8.6% of GDP (\$9.5 billion). Tourism revenues are expected to grow 8.1% in 2014 according to the World Travel and Tourism, while the Moroccan National Tourist Office plans to host more than 11 million foreign tourists in 2014. Relative peace and social problems of its neighbors make Morocco a popular destination.

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