

TOURISTS FINALLY COME BACK TO EGYPT



During the third quarter of 2014, tourism authorities reported a 70 percent increase in the number of foreign tourist arrivals in Egypt. Cairo recorded a 50 percent rise in hotel occupancy regarding foreign tourists.

The massive increase in tourism in the country has been brought forth by Egypt's recovering economy, which serves as the country's economy backbone. In essence, the economy recovery started during the second half of the year. According to the Egypt Operations for Hilton Hotels vice president, Mr. Christian Muhr, the recovery was attributed to the immense beach resort bookings over the holiday seasons. **In addition, the recovery can be as well attributed to the lifting of travel advisories by a majority of the European countries, such as Germany, Belgium and Italy.**

Tourist arrivals increased nearly 70 per cent in the third quarter of 2014 compared with the same period last year. Arrivals in September increased 193 percent compared with the same month in 2013, with 884,000 arrivals compared with 301,000.

Although these numbers are nowhere close to where they were in 2010 - before the revolution, this is the best they have been since 2011. This fact is backed by reports from tour operators, tour guides and tourism analysts. As such, if the trend is sustained, UK based Capital Economics consultancy approximates that \$3.3 billion will be generated over the course of the next year. This is equivalent to 1.2% of the total gross domestic product.

Despite the positivity, it is worth noting that this isn't the first time that tourism numbers have fluctuated. In 2012, after the parliamentary elections, there was a brief increase in the numbers of foreign tourists in Cairo. The same happened in 2013 after Mohamed Morsi was elected the President. Mr. Hisham Zazou, who is the minister of tourism points out that despite the trend, this time, the case is different. Basically, this is because President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi leadership has shown lots of promises in regards to consistent stability over the next couple of years.

While some countries are still issuing travel advisories against Egypt, **the ministry of tourism has launched several strategies and marketing campaigns aimed towards luring tourists from the Arabian Peninsula as well as Italy, UK, Russia and Germany.** The attractions being used to lure them include Egypt's beautiful weather, the capital's laid back culture and the beaches at the Red Sea resorts. Also, the government has been doing it's very best to downplay the risks to the visitors.

One notable strategy was to have President al-Sisi sit in with international tour operators to address the matter. The meeting, which took place in summer, addressed the fact that all tourist areas in the country are always under protection, irrespective of whether there is an ongoing political violence or not.

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