

Tunisia : New Medical Tourism Destination



Tunisia is a country which offers beautiful scenery and many attractions for visitors in general, but now the Government would like the country to become a hub for medical tourists. Currently, the Republic of South Africa is the biggest supplier of medical care for foreign patients, but, according to Slim Ben Yeder, Manager of the Soukra Clinic in Tunis, "There is a growing European fad for plastic surgery in Tunisia. It could become a hub for medical tourism." He also reports that: "A traditional tourist spends between 300 and 400 euros during his stay", whereas "a medical tourist spends 2,500 to 4,000 euros at least."

Medical tourism in the Tunisian Republic is still in its infancy. In 2005, only some 500 international tourists arrived for surgery - mainly cosmetic procedures. This is no match for well established medical tourism destinations like Thailand, India, or Singapore, but the industry is gradually developing. As Tunisia's medical infrastructure and personnel are said to be very good, there is great potential for this kind of business. Needless to say, prices are much lower here than in the UK or in the USA.

Tunisia also offers Thalassotherapy, a sort of homeopathic treatment involving seawater, which was developed in France in the 19th century. This can be taken in the form of showers of warmed seawater, or application of mud or algae-derived paste, or even as inhalation of sea fog. Spas in Tunisia make hot seawater and provide mud and seaweed wrappings. It is said that the therapy helps against hypertension, bronchitis, muscle atrophy, and arthritic symptoms. However, there is no scientific proof for this. But if nothing else, the treatment is very relaxing.

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