

TURKISH TOURISM ABOUT TO FACE A DIFFICULT YEAR



Expensive liquor licenses, increasing European fear of terror and a massive drop of bookings by Russian tourists startle the Turkish tourism industry. Some regions close to the Mediterranean Sea apprehend declines of up to 40 percent. Critics find fault with the lack of a concrete tourism strategy.

As if the new liquor license prices weren't enough for hoteliers, several regional administrations at the Turkish coast also raised their water and electricity prices at the start of the season. **According to Turkish media, many local tourism agents raise their voices against this wave of price increases.**

At the start of this summer season, the Turkish regulatory authority for alcohol and tobacco (TAPDK) has raised the liquor license costs for hotels by 300 percent. The authority also cracked down on small stores at the same time.

In Turkey, more than 26,000 restaurants and bars have a liquor license. Most of the alcohol gets distributed by 157,000 small businesses. Supposedly 54,000 of these have now lost their licenses on April 1st. Newspapers report 3,400 lost licenses in the tourism center of Antalya alone.

Ali Nail Kilic, head of Antalya's Tourism association Kemer, demands a postponement of all price increases until the end of the current Tourism crisis. The tourism industry stakeholders at the South coast expect a decline of 35 to 40 percent for the upcoming summer season.

One of the main reasons for this decrease is the lack of Russian tourists due to the bad economy. Russia is the second main group of tourists who enjoy their leisure time on the gold coast, outnumbering even the visitors from Germany and Great Britain. This crisis could even last for a while, as the World Bank predicts a long-ranging recession for Russia.

Turkish hoteliers association TÜROFED estimates up to 1.5 million fewer Russian tourists for the upcoming season. For damage control, the government plans to slacken entry requirements and gifts of money for Russian tourists.

Moreover, political unrests in Middle Eastern regions negatively affect the country and directly damage the cruise industry. Syria, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt all get avoided by this branch of tourism. In an interview with daily newspaper "Dünya", Numan Olcar, the CEO of a tourism platform in South Mersin, stated that these harbors can't be deemed safe anymore. This also affects Antalya and Cyprus.

The tourism industry is one of the biggest sources of revenue for the Turkish government. In the past year, Turkey has gained roughly 34 billion USD (31.44 billion Euros) from tourism. The ongoing wars in neighboring countries raise fears of terror attacks on tourism centers. This negatively affects European bookings and has been made worse by the catastrophic assault in Tunisia. A recently published market survey shows that only ten percent of all Austrian participants categorize Turkey as a safe holiday destination.

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