

ADVENTURE TRAVELERS TO AVOID MUSLIM COUNTRIES?



After the killing of Hervé Gourdel, the mountain guide abducted in Algeria, agencies specialized in trekking fear that tourists will turn aside from Arabic countries, or from safe Muslim countries.

Even before the killing of the French citizen Hervé Gourdel by terrorists who abducted him in the Kabylie Mountains, hikers and those who enjoy discovering remote areas paid the price. Either the three German trekkers abducted in the Mount Arat (Turkey) or the two tourists captured at Sinai, these people were targets of terrorists who went off the beaten track. **If in most cases these tourists travelled independently, adventure travel specialists still fear that those who enjoy hiking supervised by a travel agency will restrict an increasing number of destinations.**

“People are about to mix up everything,” said Jean-François Rial, CEO of Voyageurs du Monde, “The reinforcement of security measures does not mean anything at all. We keep on applying instructions from the Quai d'Orsay (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) by closing all the destinations that are strongly discouraged to go to.”

This is a policy applied by all the main tour operators working in that segment. Jean-François Rial said that they are constantly in touch with officers of French diplomacy up to the point that he sometimes makes them change their mind or he changes his mind himself about the situation in a particular country.

He recalls that, apart from a few rare cases, Algeria disappeared from his brochures in 1992 and that Kabylie in particular, where Hervé Gourdel was murdered, has been permanently removed. “The area where the abduction took place is still one of the most dangerous places on earth with Afghanistan and some Pakistan tribal areas,” he said. “This is probably the area where is currently hidden the head of Aqmi.”

He particularly fears that tourists get indirectly discouraged to go to all Arabic destinations, even to Muslim countries in their entirety (in particular Indonesia and Malaysia). Even though he admits that he doesn't need to face more than 3% of cancellation, he knows that lots of clients nowadays narrow their horizon. “Some are having doubts about Oman, which is a safe destination. Concerning Morocco, I am not really sure whether it is more dangerous to walk around in Marrakech or in some areas of Paris.”

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