

TUNISIAN AND EGYPTIAN TOURISM FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL



The attacks against the Bardo Museum in Tunis and the Sousse Marhaba Hotel or the crash of a plane over the Sinai attributed to the Islamic State, not to mention a host of smaller-scale attacks resulted in a simple fact – Egypt and Tunisia had a nightmarish 2015 in the tourism sector. Most tour operators have suspended departures to Tunisia and Sharm el Sheikh until further notice. However, sensing that Foreign Affairs will amend the travel notice by the end of March, bookings re-started a few weeks ago.

However, another attack was perpetrated recently against a bus and a tourist hotel in Cairo, miraculously causing no injuries. Moreover, tourists in Hurghada were targeted in an attack that injured 3 people. **Tunisia and Egypt keep their fingers crossed as, for these two countries, tourism is one of the main economic engines driving their economies.** The toll from recent attacks has been particularly heavy.

In Egypt, all eyes are on Russia and Britain, the two countries representing more than half of Egyptian tourism. The Belgians are also eagerly awaited, especially in winter, a very popular destination which will have been shunned because of the geopolitical context.

The government announced additional steps to enhance security of visitors at key resorts in the country and has already allocated some \$32 million to the matter. The measures include the purchase of new scanners and metal detectors, increasing the number of security staff working in Egyptian tourism, as well as the number of police dogs.

Tunisia hasn't fared much better, with arrivals falling by more than half. Figures from the Ministry of Tourism are unappealing since by the end of November 2015 only 4.9 million tourists were received, compared to 6.71 million in 2014 and 7.33 million in 2010.

For professionals, the loss is enormous. Last year, the decline amounted to more than 33% compared to 2014. **On the eve of the popular uprising, in 2010 the turnover was even twice as high as last year, resulting in a situation which many hoteliers could not cope with.** In fact, about half of them handed in their keys and closed down.

Everyone therefore is relying on the spring and possible recovery if the travel advisory is set back to green. For tourists tempted by Tunisia, this is the time to book since the sales prices easily reach 40%. Tour operators know that they need to spare no expense and give it their all. This will happen via huge bouts of advertising and promotions.

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