

JANUARY BOMBINGS AFFECT THE CRIPPLED ISTANBUL TOURISM



On January 12, Istanbul was once again the target of terrorist bombings, and the result was, as to be predicted, a drop in the expected net bookings, when compared to the same month in the previous year.

A recent report by ForwardKeys revealed that while international bookings have stabilized at about 10,000-12,000 per day, this number is still a lot lower than the 16,000-18,000 observed in the same period last year, and it comes after a sharp decline period, during which bookings were even as low as 4,000 per day. **Over the days after the attack, local authorities recorded -32% of net bookings of international tourists (Jan 12-Jan19).**

In the attack, 11 people died, all foreigners ten were German tourists, and one was Peruvian. Consequently, Germany, one of the main markets for Istanbul tourism, has seen one of the biggest declines in demand, with 39% fewer bookings than in the previous period. Other Western countries like the USA and the UK present a similar scenario, while Italy registered a record drop of 50%.

On the other hand, several Middle Eastern countries have seen an increase in demand for Istanbul-bound trips. Lebanon is, interestingly, not among such countries, and has actually registered a decrease in bookings, like the Western and European countries.

While the drop in net bookings can be observed across the board, it is easy to tell that leisure visits to the Turkey's capital are the most affected. Mid-length trips (3-5 nights, -50%) are the most affected, as are those which are booked through retail and agencies. Online bookings have, however, taken less of a hit than corporate trips, while larger groups clearly feel discouraged from visiting Turkey, seeing as there is a 70% drop in bookings for 10+ people groups, according to the report.

The impact on Germany, as an important source market for Istanbul tourism, is quite easily visible when comparing the number of cancellations and new bookings in January 2016 and in the same period last year. Like a mirror image, a sharp rise in cancellations was registered from the 14th, two days after the attack, while new bookings took a tumble of similar proportions during the same period.

Interestingly enough, the German market doesn't behave like the others, however. While there is a decrease in new bookings for all group sizes, certain kinds of trips have seen a small increase in the number of new bookings. Overnight trips, for instance, have seen a 23% increase in bookings, as did those which are meant to last 14 to 21 nights.

It is important to note that this negative trend in Turkey's tourism was already taking place before the attacks, and has only been worsened by them. The number of new bookings has been constantly dropping, but it hadn't reached 20% before the attacks, where the latest data depicts a 21% drop.

While Western countries have been the largest contributors to the decline in bookings, the situation wasn't much better in early 2016, as most of these countries had already registered a large drop in bookings then. Some markets, however, are emerging with large increases in bookings, like the

Ukraine or Algeria. As for Western countries, Italy and the Netherlands still hold the boat, even if the number of bookings is modest for these markets.

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