

FRENCH TOURISM - A VICTIM OF THE NICE ATTACK



The recent attack in Nice, the city in the world famous Cote d'Azur popular with wealthy travelers, represents yet another serious hit for the French tourism, which has been struggling to recover after the Paris attacks.

After the French capital, **Nice is the city that receives the most visitors in the country.** Its airport is the second busiest one (after Paris airport) with nearly 12 million passengers; more than half of them are foreign travelers. Furthermore, the Nice urban area welcomes 5 million visitors a year, and is thus second most popular holiday destination in the country. The attack will naturally impact French tourism as well.

The place where the truck crashed into the crowd gathered to watch fireworks was symbolic - the Promenade des Anglais is one of the main sights for all tourists, French and foreign, who vacation in the area. The date, the day of the celebrations of 14 July, right in the tourist season, is also emblematic.

According to Georges Panayotis, president of the consulting firm MKG, the attacker waited for the end of the European football cup when the tourists returned to the coast. Also, since the end of Ramadan wealthy Arabs have been coming to the area to spend their holidays. In his view, however, it is mainly the effect of repeated attacks that could undermine French tourism industry, one of the main sources of income for the country.

"We are not under a classic terrorist attack where after a few months the economic activity is restored," he noted. "The succession of several attacks - in January and November 2015 in Paris, and now in July in Nice - which all have a considerable number of victims, is however likely to deter tourists for some time," suggested Mr. Panayotis.

The president of the Nice hoteliers and a member of the main hotel union (Umih), Denis Cippoloni, reported that since the attack, there have been mass cancellations in local hotels. However, he noted that it was difficult to make any exact assessment since the hotels were focusing on providing support to the victims and their families.

The German tour operator TUI already offered its customers who booked their stays in Nice until July 31 to change or cancel their stay for free. Several important cultural events have been postponed due to the attack including the Rihanna concert planned for Friday and the Jazz Festival which was to begin on Saturday.

The impact of the attack on French tourism is expected to be quite serious since Côte d'Azur, nicknamed "French Riviera" abroad, attracts many tourists with high purchasing power that spend their time in the villas or yachts in the region.

The industry accounts for 7% of the country's GDP and represents 2 million direct and indirect jobs. Thanks to the previous attacks however French tourism has been struggling. Last week, the foreign minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault, called for a "general mobilization" for France to remain the world's top tourist destination. Since January, the tourist arrivals to France dropped by

5.8% and arrivals to Paris went down by 11%.

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