

FRENCH TRAVELERS SWAPPED TUNISIA AND MOROCCO FOR SPAIN AND GREECE



Over the last ten years, the French outbound tourism has transformed thoroughly as a result of the Arab spring, refugee crisis and terrorism. While Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt were the most popular holiday spots for French travelers just a few years ago, now they prefer the Canary Islands and Greece.

A decade ago, Tunisia was the most favorite destination for French travelers. The Jasmine Revolution that started at the end of 2010, the political unrest that followed, as well as the wave of terrorist attacks had a significant impact on the country's tourism.

According to the data of the French Syndicate of Tour Operators (SETO) based on the sales of package tours, **in 2014 Tunisia was the fourth most popular destination for French travelers.** After the attack in the Bardo museum in 2015, followed by the attack on the beach in Sousse, it fell to the ninth place, before leaving the top 10 completely in 2016.

The development of French tourism in Egypt was similar. The Egyptian revolution, which started in the winter 2011 on the Tahrir Square in Cairo, the resignation of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the departure of his successor, Mohamed Morsi, in 2013, and a number of terrorist attacks resulted in a dramatic decline of tourism numbers. Between 2007 and 2010, Egypt was the third most popular destination for French travelers. However, in 2011, the country was no more on the top 10 list.

Morocco was the second most popular destination ten years ago. Despite the Marrakech bombing in 2011 at a popular tourist spot, which killed 17 people, the local travel industry was not harmed significantly. Today, the country is the sixth most popular destination for French travelers.

Turkey was another country that lost not only the French tourists. The protests in spring 2013, severely repressed by the police, and the attempted state coup in the summer of 2016 harmed the reputation of the country. Turkey is also associated with the refugee crisis as thousands of people flee Syria to Turkey.

While Tunisia, Egypt, and Turkey were deserted by French travelers, tour operators had to find alternative holiday destinations.

"Before 2010, 85% of the turnover of our company was concentrated on four destinations: Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, and Egypt," said Pascal Izaguire, CEO of TUI France. "Today, these countries do not represent more than 15% of the total offer, even though Egypt completely disappeared from the catalog in 2013 and Tunisia is no longer an option since the winter of 2015. Now, 85% of supply is concentrated on European destinations, where the French clientele feels safe: Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Croatia."

Spanish tourism has been skyrocketing, and now it is the first country visited by the French travelers, according to SETO. The Canary Islands are the most popular. Because of the lack of accommodation, continental Italy could not benefit so much from the redistribution of tourists but Sicily and Sardinia reported growing demand.

Continental Greece confirmed that tourism numbers are finally going up after the financial debacle of the country. **Greek islands are the second most popular destination for French travelers after the Canary Islands, despite the refugee crisis.**

“The reduction of the portfolio of destinations poses a serious problem for the tour operators,” said Pascal Izaguirre. “Spain is quite saturated now. Portugal also benefits from the growing amounts of visitors from France - currently it is on the eighth position of popularity. But again, the possibilities of their hospitality industry and tourism services are not infinite.”

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