

TUNISIAN TOURISM: SIGNALS OF REVIVAL AHEAD OF 2017 SUMMER SEASON



There are signs of a real recovery for Tunisian tourism. The industry has improved in 2016 thanks to security measures, according to officials. However, cautiousness is needed, because it is necessary to restore the confidence of tour operators and tourists in the destination.

The Tunisian tourism industry used to account for up to 10% of the GDP. This share is now less than 7%, according to official statistics. But hope is reviving, with indicators not yet developed, but bodes well for renewal of tourism activities. Professionals have received the message and many of them are cleaning up their facilities, some of which have been closed for a long time.

The tourism sector is doing better since the end of 2016, with signs of a certain recovery in traditional markets. But even other markets, such as Russia and China, are on the rise.

Statistically speaking, 4.8 million tourists visited Tunisia until the end of October 2016. This is an increase of 3.4% compared to the same period in 2015. However, a decrease of 24.1% compared to 2014. Meanwhile the Tunisian tourism income fell by 7.1%.

Domestic tourism accounted for the lion's share with 30% of the market, according to Tourism and Crafts Minister, Salma Elloumi Rekik. Out of the 5.8 million tourists, 1.5 million people were Algerians and 1 million Libyans. Thus, the government is optimistic and is counting on the improvement of the sector indicators for 2017. The objective is to reach seven million tourists.

High Expectations for 2017

Preparations for 2017 are underway. Russia, France and Algeria will be the priority markets, while China, Gulf countries and African countries are growing source markets.

Concerning the axes of the promotional policy, emphasis was placed on targeting a group of markets, organization of major tourist events, strengthening the digital communication and the consolidation of the commercial approach of the Tunisian tourism product.

To this end, several promotional shows are planned in Tunisia in 2017, including the organization of the 23rd session of the MIT "International Tourist Market" which will be held from Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 April 2017 at the Kram Exhibition Center.

Many Russians to Arrive Again

Recently, the Minister of Tourism took a large delegation to Russia, including artists and industry professionals, to give an overview of the tourism potential of Tunisia. The visit came after a Russian delegation consisting of 440 travel agents arrived in Tunisia in March 2016.

Russia's tourism inflow to Tunisia increased by nearly 800% at the end of September last year. The main reason for this was geopolitical tension between Russia and Turkey or Egypt.

Tunisian tourism attractions are experiencing a renewed interest among French holidaymakers as well. Nearly 500,000 French tourists are expected in 2017. Already in January this year there was an increase of 29.5%, according to the Tunisian National Tourist Office. In December there was a 39% increase. Though it is quite relative, as the recovery remains linked to the adoption of an “aggressive” pricing policy, with very low prices.

Tour operators such as Mondial Tourism, TUI France or Voyamar are optimistic and have seen rises in sales to the Middle Eastern country this year.

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