

TUNISIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY INCREASINGLY RELYING ON DOMESTIC TOURISM



The Tunisian Federation of Hotels (FTH) is pleased by the resumption of hotel activity in Tunisia. During the first half of 2017 there was a 20.3% increase in the number of nights spent by Tunisian clients compared to the same period during the previous year - some 2 007 674 overnight stays versus 1 669 560 in the first half of 2016 and 1 916 303 in 2014. Domestic tourism is thus growing in importance for Tunisian hotel industry.

In total, the number of overnight stays by Tunisian clients (non-residents and foreign residents) was 6 420 327 by the end of June 2017, versus 5 338 375 by the end of June 2016 and 11 052 985 during the same period in 2014, which translates into a 20.3% increase compared to 2016 and a 41.9% decrease relative to 2014.

According to the FTH, **this year's increase reflects the satisfaction of Tunisian clients with their hotel stays.** Moreover, the results of a study carried out in April 2016, based on a survey of 1 500 people throughout Tunisia, indicated that 84% of respondents were satisfied with their hotel experience.

This prompted the Tunisian hotel industry to rely more heavily on domestic tourism, a trend which has helped to rescue the sector ever since the revolution, and especially after the terrorist attacks.

In this respect, the Tunisian hotel industry is required to present a product which conforms to international standards and to the expectations of clients as much for the benefit of Tunisian tourists as for foreign visitors. In light of the fact that these classification standards date back to 2005 and due to the fact that they mainly concern material criteria rather than service criteria, the FTH has reiterated its request for the revision of these standards and recommends that holidaymakers be vigilant before making their reservations and that they verify beforehand any comments which may have been posted on the Internet about their chosen hotel.

The FTH also called for the elaboration of a national strategy, with the participation of all stakeholders, in order to develop the quality of the industry's services.

With regard to foreign tourists, officials pointed out that performance in traditional markets, particularly the European market, is below expected levels - some 2 860 373 overnight stays from the beginning of the year until June 30th 2016, versus 7 848 367 overnight stays during the same period in 2014. In the first half of 2017, the number of overnight stays reached 3 331 961, which represents a 16.5% increase. However, this number still falls short of the one recorded in 2014 (a 57.5% decrease).

Another aspect, mentioned by Khaled Fakhfakh, President of the FTH, was that **the "open skies" agreement, which will only come into effect in Tunisia in 2018 / 2019, is one of the solutions to reviving Tunisian tourism.** According to Khaled Fakhfakh, it responds to the evolution of freedom in the country, specifying that FTH encourages the opening up of all of the

country's airports to foreign airlines - except that of Tunis and that of Carthage, for a 3 year period, pending the restructuring of the country's national airline: Tunisair.

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