

TURKEY'S TOURISM INDUSTRY NOT LIKELY TO SEE MANY GERMANS



Just a couple of days ago Turkey was hit by an earthquake. Parallel to that, the country has been going through an “earthquake” of a different matter in the economical and tourism sense.

Turkey's tourism industry has always been an important economic factor for the country. **Traditionally, the industry, which generates about 13 percent of the gross domestic product, was a reliable source of income.** However, this changed, especially in the past year due to terror attacks. Then the failed coup in July as well as the overall political situation with President Erdogan in a leading role.

Turkey's tourism experienced a shock. Overall sales fell by more than 40 percent. For example, almost four million Germans spent their holidays in Turkey in 2016. This is a fall of 2 million compared to 2015. Thus said, 2016 was a year to forget for Turkey's tourism industry and the country was looking to return to the top, safe and appreciated destination.

Russians Returned

Things started off quite smoothly in 2017. Russian president Vladimir Putin lifted his country's charter flight ban to Turkey. As a result, the number of Russian holidaymakers in Turkey jumped abruptly. From 138,000 in the first five months of 2016 to almost one million in the same period this year. The number is also an increase of 20% compared to 2015.

Germans however are the most important source market for Turkey's tourism industry along with Russia. At the beginning of the summer holiday in some of the federal states, German tourists were also increasingly travelling to Turkey. According to Torsten Schäfer, an expert on the matter, a trend towards holidays in Turkey is particularly evident in “short-term decision makers”.

The low cost of vacation in Turkey is also a very significant aspect attracting visitors. However, Erdogan is an aspect that is very much discouraging Germans from travelling to Turkey. According to hoteliers in Antalya, the number of German holidaymakers fell by a quarter in the first months of the year compared to 2016. The collapse is almost 50 percent compared to 2015.

Last Straw for Germany

The situation looks like it is about to get worse. The Federal Government of Germany has launched a new escalation step in relation to Turkey. In reaction to the arrest of the human rights defender Peter Steudtner and other Germans, travel warnings of the Federal Foreign Office to Turkey are tightened, as Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said a couple of days ago. The Foreign Office now advises travelers to Turkey to be “increasingly cautious”.

The Foreign Ministry now states that private and business travelers in Turkey will be “advised to take more care and to stay in the lists for Germans abroad at consulates and embassies”.

The reason for this was that “in some cases Germans were affected by measures which were

detrimental to freedom” and whose “duration was not comprehensible”.

In addition, Germany is examining the state security of Turkey’s business in the German economy with so-called Hermes guarantees. The foreign minister also added that investment loans and economic aid, as well as EU pre-accession aid, should be reconsidered.

“The reorientation of our Turkey policy was coordinated with Chancellor Angela Merkel and SPD chairman Martin Schulz,” Gabriel said. “Anyone who arrests innocent visitors of his country under truly dangerous, even absurd accusations, and investigates them, leaves the ground of European values.”

Germany was previously also accused of Nazi-like activities, terrorist support and of being the mastermind behind the failed July coup by Turkey.

Turkey accuses Germany of a systematic disinformation campaign, but Gabriel is clear. “Again and again, we had patience when there were reproaches, which were unbearable for German ears [Nazi accusations]. Again and again, we insisted on the fact that reason will return, and that we can return to prosperous relationships. Again and again, we have been disappointed,” the foreign minister concluded.

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