

EGYPTIAN TOURISM RISING AFTER YEARS OF STAGNATION



Despite repeated attacks, tourists are returning to Egypt in masses. According to the government's information, the number of visitors in the first seven months increased by 54% to 4.3 million.

The strong growth of Egyptian tourism was influenced especially by the arrivals from Germany and Ukraine.

Compared to 2016, the sector's revenues rose by as much as 170% to 3.5 billion dollars. 75% of tourists come from Europe, while 20% from other Arab countries. **The Egyptian economy is strongly dependent on the number of visitors.**

After general political instability, numerous terror attacks, the number of foreign guests drastically declined. Before the revolution in 2011, the country was visited by 14.7 million tourists in 2010. In 2016, it was only 4.5 million.

However, this year is set to be a year of revival. One of the factors attracting visitors is the weak national currency, while another is the big investment in the security. As a result, Egypt expects to attract from 7 to 9 million tourists to the country this year. This was stated by the country's head of the Tourism Development Committee, Hisham ad-Dumayri.

"Our current goal is to return to the average level of Egyptian tourism in the period from 2011 to 2015. That is, from 7 million to 9 million tourists a year. We hope to achieve this goal this year," he stated. He confirms that the data are showing a significant development of tourism and that the path is leading to a recovery of the sector.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah al-Sisi are both interested in restoring the air travel between both countries. The two leaders met not long ago at the BRICS summit in China and the Russian President expressed his hope that Egypt will solve its security issues in order to guarantee safe air travel.

The Russian Federation decided to interrupt all air communication with Egypt after a Russian passenger plane was shot down in October 2015 flying from Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg. There were 217 Russian tourists on board and seven crew members, all of them were killed. The FSB subsequently qualified the incident as a terrorist attack. Work to determine the causes of the crash has continued to this day.

The head of Russia's Federal Tourism Agency Oleg Safronov confirmed that negotiations are underway to resume air travel between Russia and Egypt. There is allegedly a high degree of probability that the issue will be resolved positively until the end of this year. But the interest of Russian tourists is mainly aimed at the resorts in Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh.

"If Cairo opens for air travel, this will not guarantee a recovery of the Egyptian tourism flow. A maximum of tens of thousands of tourists a year will fly to the capital. However, if Egypt restores the

issues with Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada, then in a couple of weeks serious flows will be redirected there. Only tens of thousands of tourists would fly from Moscow," Victor Topolkaev, General Director of NTK Intourist, added.

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