

MOROCCO ATTEMPTS TO BOOST CRUISE TOURISM WITH A NEW PORT



The renovated port of Tangier in Morocco, inaugurated recently by Mohammed VI, has very high ambitions for cruise tourism. However, the number of visitors of the country fell by more than a third between

2016 and 2017.

Initiated in March 2010, the aim of the project focusing on the reconstruction of the port area of Tangier City is to boost international cruise tourism in the region.

According to Mohamed Ouanaya, CEO of the redevelopment company for the port area of Tangier (SAPT) **"the objective is to welcome 300,000 cruise passengers in 2020 and 750,000 in 2025"**.

These are very high expectations, when one considers the figures reported by the National Ports Agency (ANP) regarding the number of tourists during two previous seasons: 96,310 in 2016, and 23,590 in 2017. This vertiginous drop of 75.5% in one year can be explained by the increase in the security index, particularly scrutinized by operators, at level 2. Indeed, its reduction to step 1 in 2018 boosted performance for the first two months, with 6,248 passengers recorded in January–February (+111%).

Nationally, cruise arrivals declined 34.4% in 2017. While the quays of Tangier were significantly deserted, those of Casablanca (–37.8% to 105,892) and Safi (–100%, with 1,056 entries in 2016 for 0 in 2017) were also severely affected. **The dedicated infrastructure in Agadir is the only one to have seen an increase, with 93,042 passengers counted, against 71,396 during the previous financial year (+30.3%).**

On the other hand, the cruise tourism indicators went back to green at the beginning of 2018, with a general increase of 51.9% observed during the first two months. The Ministry of Tourism, which aims to reach 300,000 and 550,000 cruise passengers within a year and a half, will soon launch national and local committees to give itself the means of its policy.

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