

# TOURISM IN TUNISIA ENDANGERED DESPITE A RECORD YEAR



From January 1 to the end of August this year tourism in Tunisia generated over 2646 million dinars; the equivalent of 870 million euros. In the national currency this was an increase of 46% compared to the same period last year. Meanwhile, in euros, the increase represented a 26% growth.

In terms of visitors, during the same period, Tunisia welcomed 5.48 million tourists. This includes 1.7 million Europeans and 2.6 million North Africans. **The trend in this respect signifies a 17% increase over 2017.**

Regarding the source markets, data show that the European market is on an upward trajectory. It has registered an increase of 49% compared to 2017. Among the neighboring markets Algeria remained, as expected, the main provider of tourists with 1.6 million arrivals.

According to official forecasts, tourism in Tunisia should welcome 8 million tourists since the beginning of the season. A significant increase is expected in reservations from Europe and new markets such as China and Russia.

However, there is an issue that could endanger this tourism growth. The crime rate is increasing in the country and will inevitably impact the tourists who encounter theft, robberies and other crimes.

As a result of the Arab Spring and political unrest, the economic situation worsened and crime rate. Tunisia is slipping from a resort country to one of the world's main criminal destinations.

For example, only on September 4, an unknown person robbed a family of tourists and a pickpocket was detained, taking away expensive jeweler from women. A little earlier in Mahdia, a group was exposed of stealing smartphones.

At the same time, police do not always manage to cope with crime. In Susse, unknown attackers attacked law enforcement officers, beaten and robbed them. This indicates a loss of control over the situation on the part of officials.

**As of now, Tunisia is full of criminal groups that are not friendly towards tourists.** These tendencies, according to experts, led to the fact that Tunisia left the rating of the best tourism destinations in North Africa and the Middle East.

Thus said, if the situation stays the same, Tunisia will be immersed in a vicious circle that will create many more problems. Increasing crime rate will lead to fewer tourists arriving in the country and at the same time loss of revenues and closing down of businesses. This would result in fewer jobs and increase in unemployment which would again lead only to the same increase in criminality.

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