

TURKEY RETURNING BACK TO THE TOURISM FOREGROUND



After two particularly weak years, tourists are once again returning to Turkey. While more than 37 million people entered Turkey as tourists last year, more than 40 million are expected this year, according to the Tourism and Culture Ministry of the country.

That would be close to the record from 2014 or even above it. And for the coming year, Tourism Minister Mehmet Ersoy expects a further increase. **“We expect a growth of 23% and we hope to welcome 48 million tourists by 2019.** Turkey would be back in the tourism foreground,” he said in November.

Focus on EU and Russia

In the next few years, Ersoy wants to increase the advertising budget, with the focus being on Europe. “We want to bring back especially the guests from Great Britain and Germany,” he said. Guests from Saudi Arabia and Russia are also targeted groups.

The marketing injection is no coincidence. While the overall numbers are developing well, there are still significantly fewer guests coming from, for example, Germany. The country was one of the main source markets of Turkey. In the record year of 2015, 5.6 million Germans arrived in Turkey, while this year there will be a maximum of 5 million. Between January and October 3.57 million German tourists arrived. The leader in this period was Russia with 5.12 million guests, an increase of 16%. 1.89 million people came from the UK.

Hotel prices on a rise again

Hotels can also breathe easier. The booking rate is rising. In September, it rose by 0.8% to 70.8, while the average in the first nine months was 66.8%. Meanwhile, the average daily rate for a hotel room in the same period increased by 5.1% to 72.1 euros per room per night. For Istanbul, average overnight prices rose from 76 to 82.6 euros.

Conflicts not an issue

Another interesting detail is that, although Turkey is currently in conflict with several countries in the region, the number of visitors from these countries does not fall. Between January and October, the number of visitors from Israel increased by almost 15% compared to the same period last year.

From Egypt, whose military government is regularly attacked by Erdogan, the number of visitors increased by 50%. Even from neighboring Armenia there was an increase of 8%, despite the historically bad relations between the two countries.

Benefits from Lira devaluation

The imbalance of the Turkish economy is not considered a problem among travel professionals, quite the contrary. The Turkish lira has lost around 40% of its value against the euro and dollar this year, while inflation has risen to 24% a year. Hotels are benefiting from this as they can continue to declare their rates in euros, pounds or dollars and thanks to the higher exchange rate, they receive significantly more lira per holidaymaker.

Tourism, which is an export product in the economy, is one of the crisis winners. But the most important thing for the country is that it is booming again. Instead of talking about politics, conflicts or crisis, customers are now talking about pools and interesting destinations once again.

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