

ALGERIA'S TOURISM TO COPY THE SUCCESS OF NEIGHBORS WITH E-VISA



Electronic visas have been introduced by the authorities to boost Algeria's tourism while the industry faces several problems including the security situation.

Algeria is a country that everything it needs to be successful in tourism: **beaches on the Mediterranean, mountainous areas, vast desert areas, ancient Roman cities, modern Arab culture** and, perhaps the greatest asset of all, a great deal of development potential and a very high level of awareness, which in times of overtourism should actually generate enormous interest.

Unfortunately, unlike its neighbors Morocco or Tunisia, the former French colony was always preoccupied with itself, i.e. with civil war and internal squabbles, and the elite consistently relied on oil for far too long. Black gold accounts for 20 percent of Algeria's GDP and 85 percent of its exports. In contrast, the tourism industry has been criminally neglected. Moreover, Algeria remains the only 103rd (out of 180) on the list of the world's safest countries.

With the weakness of the oil price and the medium-term trend away from a global dependence on fossil fuels, however, a rethink seems to be taking place in Algiers. The Algerian government has adopted a "Plan destination Algérie", at the heart of which is the introduction of electronic visa issuance.

At present, issuing visas for a trip to Algeria is anything but inviting. First of all, one must have a passport that is still valid for at least six months. In addition, a valid hotel reservation or a certificate from an Algerian travel company must be presented, as well as a valid travel insurance policy. A visa for 90 days costs the equivalent of about US\$100 and takes up to two weeks to be issued.

Now, Algeria wants to copy the success achieved by up-and-coming tourism countries such as Laos, Myanmar or Cambodia with the e-visa, but is also orienting itself towards the "OPEC brother" **Saudi Arabia, which has been promoting tourism as a new source of income with growing success for some time now and initially also started with simpler visa procedures.**

Algeria undoubtedly has its potential. Now it remains to be seen whether the government is really willing to tap this potential and proceed with similar consistency and success as Saudi Arabia.

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