

THE REOPENING OF BORDERS WILL NOT SAVE TOURISM IN MOROCCO



The summer tourist season in Morocco seems to be in jeopardy, even if the authorities decide to reopen the airspace to international flights. Salvation will come from domestic tourism, but nothing is certain yet.

The example of Tunisia, Egypt, the cheapest destinations around the Mediterranean, shows that the resumption of air traffic is not enough to ensure the revival of tourist activity, which has been hard hit by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ten days after the resumption of air traffic to Tunisia, European tourists are not rushing to spend their summer holidays in this country. The same goes for Egypt, which has authorized its airports to welcome foreign tourists from July 1st.

In Morocco, professionals have come to understand that in order to save the 2020 summer season, they must first - and above all - bet on domestic tourism in Morocco, even if the government gives the green light to the resumption of international flights. A country such as France, the main source market sending tourists to Morocco, encourages its tourists to "consume locally" and to book their holidays in France.

In addition, the main European tour operators (TOs) have expressed concerns, and to date they refuse to renew their agreements with the Moroccan authorities, in the absence of visibility on the development of the epidemiological situation.

For these TOs, it is not possible to improvise an itinerary for a destination without a schedule that requires several months of preparation. In this respect, the head of the German tour operator TUI clearly explained to a senior government official in the Kingdom that there was no question of committing to anything before the end of December.

"The summer season starts in the spring or even in the winter, the time to get organized, to design and print brochures, catalogues, etc. This year, because of Covid-19, the lack of visibility is affecting all the destinations in the Mediterranean basin," explains Fouzi Zemrani, general vice-president of the National Tourism Confederation (CNT).

Fouzi Zemrani is well aware that the reopening of borders is not enough to activate the recovery: "Maintaining the quarantine of travelers entering Morocco could discourage tourists, not to mention the effect of concerns related to a resurgence of outbreaks of contamination," he explains.

Experts predict that the market shares of Morocco as a destination will only start to skyrocket from the 2021 summer season because, tour operators generally sign annual contracts after lengthy negotiations, especially on rates.

Faced with this anxiety-provoking climate imposed by the health crisis, professionals agree that salvation will come from domestic tourism. And even more so! Because even on the local ground alone, the outbreak of new cases of contamination risks upsetting holiday plans, for fear of being

confined again this summer.

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