

# MARRAKECH TOURISM IS COMPLETELY PARALYZED



After almost two years of health crisis, Marrakech tourism sector is at a standstill. In the absence of tourists, stores, restaurants and hotels in the ochre city are closing one after the other.

The city of Marrakech, a popular Moroccan destination, is still deserted in January. **Tourist activity in the city has been hit hard by the health crisis, and the recent suspension of flights to and from Morocco has made the situation even worse.**

Everything is paralyzed. In the souk, there are still stores open, but people are sitting at the door, doing nothing. Many travel industry workers have been living off their savings for almost two years. Most professionals in the sector survive on the 2,000 dirham (200 euro) subsidy provided by the government, but some do not benefit from this assistance.

Unfortunately, the closure of the borders decreed on November 29 to limit the spread of the Covid-19 variant, Omicron, has ruined all hopes. Marrakech tourism stakeholders are very hopeful that the borders will be reopened on January 31 and that international flights will resume in early February. An extension of the measure would be a great disappointment for the sector.

For Abdessadaq Qadimi, president of the Regional Association of Tourist Guides of Marrakech, they could be temporarily employed in other sectors such as translation or call centers. "Tourism professionals, hotels, travel agencies and transporters are ruined. They can't take it anymore," he said, calling on the state to take a "strong decision to support the sector," either with direct aid or jobs.

Recently, the government announced supporting Moroccan tourism with a subsidy of 2 billion DH. Many professionals rejoiced although **the amount remains far from the 140 billion DH of losses accumulated in 22 months by all the operators in the sector** who are calling above all for the reopening of air borders. Currently, Morocco is the only country in the world to keep its borders closed.

According to experts, Morocco now risks losing its place definitively on the itineraries of the major tour operators. Moreover, Ryanair which operates 102 flights in Marrakech alone, threatens to cancel all of its routes to the Kingdom.

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