

# RESUMPTION OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS: A HOPE FOR MOROCCO'S TOURISM



Finally, fresh air for Morocco's tourism sector. After the launch of an emergency plan of 2 billion dirhams, intended to support tourism, the airspace has reopened to international flights starting on Feb 7. A glimmer of hope for operators who must, however, continue to tighten their belts before an effective revival of activities.

Until now, the resumption of international traffic has always been the main demand of operators. It is, naturally, with a certain emotion that **professionals have welcomed the return of foreign travelers after two months of suspension of commercial flights**, out of Morocco and from other countries. Of course, it is still too early to speak of effective resumption of tourism activities, but everything suggests that hope is appropriate, and that operators are well on their way to reduce the damage caused by the severe crisis related to covid-19.

While the stakeholders agree that it will be necessary to fight harder for the tourism economy, hard hit by the pandemic, to finally recover, the chance is now on the side of operators especially since the government has recently announced a battery of measures and provisions to ensure effective implementation of its decision to relaunch international flights, from and to the Kingdom.

Basically, despite the political will, displayed by the government, to revive the tourism sector, operators "will still suffer" before regaining the pre-crisis situation and, to do so, it will be necessary to be proactive on the part of players called to propose aggressive offers if they want to recover the market share and promote the destination more, insists Ahmed Sentissi, the president of ARCVT Fez. He recalls, an old claim of the sector, namely a tax break, to reduce the fixed charges that weigh heavily on the meager cash flow of companies concerned.

In the meantime, the Moroccan National Tourist Office (ONMT) announced that it was starting to work with its foreign partners, particularly from Spain. And it seems like things are starting to take off. Iberia has promised to resume 100% of its capacity on the Madrid-Tangier route, with 7 weekly flights, and 76% on the Madrid-Marrakech route, with 9 flights per week.

This is only the first step, given the great potential of this line, because of its role as interconnection with links from the Americas and other European countries, whose nationals have already constituted 35% of passengers to Marrakech, during the summer of 2021.

Morocco also plans to put the cap on another destination with great potential, Great Britain. In this regard, EasyJet has planned to deploy an offer of 75 flights per week, linking Morocco to 6 European markets, namely the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. The company also plans to increase its capacity, which was set up in the summer of 2019, by 11%, through the programming of 20 air routes for the summer 2022 season.

According to a recent study, the local hotel sector will experience accelerated growth of around 6.40% per year. The hotel market share in Morocco is expected to increase by \$1.87 billion from

2021 to 2026.

As part of its new offensive, **ONMT has organized a tour to European markets issuers**. Led by Adel El Fakir, Director General of the office, this tour, initiated a week ago, on three of the main markets of Morocco (France, United Kingdom, Spain) - in order to accelerate the dynamics of recovery accompanying the reopening of the Moroccan sky- ended on February 7, coinciding with the Madrid stage. It should be noted that the air is, today, our warhorse, according to ONMT, which aims to secure the air capacity of major companies to initiate a rapid recovery of tourism activity in Morocco.

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