

THE WAR IN UKRAINE RUINS THE TOURIST SEASON IN TURKEY



The Turkish tourism sector, which accounts for 5% of the country's GDP, has been hit hard by the war on the other side of the Black Sea. Russia and Ukraine are among the main source countries of its tourists. As such the tourist season seems lost.

The Turkish economy is suffering from record inflation of more than 50% one year. This is one of the reasons why Turkey, while supporting Ukraine, did not join the Western sanctions against Russia, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. **In particular, it refuses to ban Russian aircraft from its airspace.**

Turkey is counting on the Russians and Ukrainians to revive the tourism sector. Last year, four and a half million Russians flocked to the beaches of the south of the country, in Antalya or Mugla, despite the pandemic. Russia is the first source market of tourists in Turkey, ahead of Germany and ... Ukraine. Last year, 2 million Ukrainians visited Anatolia. The two nationalities represented a quarter of all foreign tourists last year. For travel agencies that work mainly with these two countries, the war is synonymous with a ruined tourist season.

For tourism professionals, the 2022 season seemed promising. But the war has compromised the hopes of the sector. "We can forget about the two and a half million Ukrainian tourists we had hoped for this year," laments Tolga Gencer, a leading member of the Union of Turkish Travel Agencies (Türsab).

He explains that all those who live from tourism have had to recalculate: "For the Russians, because of the economic sanctions, we will certainly not have the 6 or 7 million expected. Even if a ceasefire were signed tomorrow, there would be 2 or 3 million Russians maximum. **And if the sanctions last, we won't even get that.**"

Travel professionals also fear that they will have fewer customers from Western Europe who would avoid Turkey because of its geographical proximity to Ukraine and Russia.

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