

TURKEY: ROLE OF TOURISM REMAINS CRUCIAL



After the record year of 2019 and the collapse during the pandemic, a massive recovery began last year in Turkey where the role of tourism remains highly important.

Tourism is one of the main pillars of the Turkish economy and a powerful stimulator of economic dynamics since the 1980s. **In 2019, Turkey broke an all-time record with 51.86 million registered tourists, an increase of 12.2% compared to 2018.** In 2020, the number of tourists dropped to 15.97 million.

Role of Tourism - 3% of GDP

In 2021, tourism recovered strongly after the drop due to the pandemic. During the whole year, 30.04 million tourists visited Turkey, which is an increase of 85.5%. Most tourists visited Turkey for leisure, sports and cultural travel purposes.

A part of them came to Turkey to visit relatives and friends, shop and get medical treatment. The annual tourism revenue increased by 103% in 2021 to reach 24.48 billion US dollars. This represents about 3.04% of Turkey's gross domestic product (802.67 billion dollars).

In 2020, Turkey ranked 5th in terms of international tourist arrivals and 11th in terms of tourism revenues.

Health Tourism, A Significant Market

Turkey is a destination of choice for many Europeans seeking less expensive treatments. Last year, Turkish health tourism was very successful. **In 2021, 642,444 people traveled to Turkey for medical care or treatment, just slightly less than in 2019 (662,087).** In 2020, the number of health tourists dropped to 388,150 due to the pandemic.

In 2021, health tourism revenues amounted to nearly US\$1.05 billion. This represents 4.29% of Turkish tourism receipts.

Recovery in Istanbul

In February, the number of tourists coming to explore the Turkish capital increased by 173% compared to February 2021. There were 956,482 visitors in total. The biggest number of visitors in February came from Russia - 80,628 people. Russia was followed by Germany with 74,056 people, Iran with 68,940, France with 43,560, Kuwait with 39,000, England with 38,169, Israel with 30,614, Iraq with 26,985 and Ukraine with 26,000.

Top source markets in 2021:

1. Russia - 4.69 million visitors / 15.61% of the total
2. Germany - 3.09 million / 10.29% of the total

3. Ukraine - 2.06 million visitors / 6.86% of the total
4. Bulgaria - 1.4 million visitors / 4.66 of the total
5. Iran - 1.15 million visitors / 3.83% of the total

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