

TURKEY: COULD EUROPEAN TRAVELERS REPLACE RUSSIANS AND UKRAINIANS?



Russian and Ukrainian tourists have enjoyed the beaches and landscapes of Turkey with great passion in the last couple of years and have become indispensable for the local tourism industry.

However, in the current tense context of the war in Ukraine, the prospects seem somewhat gloomier and perhaps it is the time for Turkey to start seeking alternative travelers to keep the sector running.

While Russia's invasion is an incredible humanitarian tragedy, the impact of the war might be more far-reaching than one would expect. And the tourism sector in Turkey will very likely be involved.

Russia represented Turkey's most important tourism source market last year with 4.6 million arrivals, while Ukraine occupied a third place with a share of two million people.

In 2022, the Turkish tourism sector expected the arrival of 7 million Russians and 3 million Ukrainians. However, with the current situation, representatives of the industry have begun to look for new possible source markets.

And in this context, it seems that the country has stepped up its promotional activities especially with regards to European travelers to start filling the gap that will be created from the absence of Russians and Ukrainians.

Number of Europeans Already Growing

Judging by the data for the first two months of 2022, the number of European travelers is increasing. Although this figure has not yet reached the pre-pandemic levels, the momentum gained is encouraging for the sector.

For example, British tourists have started to massively buy tours to resorts in Turkey, with full planes arriving in the country already from the end of March. If this tempo continues, then the 2019 record of UK vacationers in Turkey will surely be broken.

This is encouraging for Turkey, but it is still difficult to say whether this will fill the gap that will arise in the Russian and Ukrainian markets. Therefore, from an economic point of view, it is also very important that European travelers with high purchasing power prefer Turkey more.

In terms of the number of tourists, the desired level may perhaps not be reached, but if the income from each tourist increases, this will represent an important success for the Turkish tourism industry.

There are two more points that should not be forgotten. First, there are developments in Turkey's foreign policy. In relation to countries with which there were problems in the past, "white pages" have started to open.

These developments will also have a major positive impact on tourism. And the second question is about domestic tourists. Wouldn't it be right for hoteliers to do more to stimulate domestic tourism that comes to mind in every troubled period?

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