

IRAN TO BENEFIT FROM THE WORLD CUP IN QATAR



Iran - a country of many unknowns - is aiming to take advantage of the upcoming FIFA World Cup in Qatar to boost its tourism industry.

In 2019, Iran was considered the third tourist destination worldwide in terms of growth pace. Then, however, the Covid-19 pandemic came.

Drastic Fall and Mild Recovery

According to official data, **the Iranian tourism sector lost more than \$230 million due to the pandemic and related restrictions.**

A generally relevant indicator of Iranian tourism performance is the Nowruz holidays, also known as the Persian New Year. In 2019, 74 million overnight stays were registered during the holidays (between March 21 and April 2).

However, this number fell so drastically in 2020 that there is no available data, while in 2021 overnight stays decreased by an astonishing 96 % to just 2.5 million.

But this year the situation is much brighter. According to preliminary statistics, over 50 million overnight stays were registered across the country during the Nowruz holidays. Thus, clearly, a significant improvement compared to the Covid-19 era.

World Cup as another Boost?

Iran wants to build on this improvement also in the coming months in terms of international tourism. And perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the World Cup in Qatar at the end of the year could be an important boost for an industry in need of every tourist.

The government plans to simplify the visa procedures to attract tourists to the country during the month of the World Cup in Qatar from November 21 to December 18.

As per local reports, free visas are to be handed out to nationals whose national teams qualified for the tournament upon presentation of a ticket for a match in Qatar. Experts believe that this could encourage fans to make a stop in Iran during their stay in Qatar due to the proximity of both states.

At the same time, local officials insist they want to take advantage of the event to tackle the so-called "Iranophobia" as well as Western propaganda "aimed at frightening potential travelers".

The Iranian government's aim in 2014 was to surge the number of foreign arrivals in the country to 20 million in 2025. It is difficult to say if that is a realistic target after the pandemic, but the intentions are clear - to present Iran as a destination to the global tourism audience.

Date: 2022-04-19

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/world-cup-in-qatar-as-a-surprising-boost-for-iranian-tourism-news12491>