

AFTER A GOOD SUMMER TOURISM SEASON, GREECE MOVES TO WINTER BUSINESS



During the summer season, the Greek tourism industry was able to generate revenues comparable to the previous record year of 2019. Now the Ministry of Tourism is seeking to extend the season to the winter months as well. Meanwhile, more and more vacationers from the USA are coming to Hellas.

The Hellenic accommodation sector managed to generate 1.5 billion euros in turnover in July alone. This is 59.7% more than in the same period of 2019, when the sector reached its previous peak, according to data from ELSTAT, the Hellenic Statistical Authority. According to the Bank of Greece, **only 305 million euros less was collected between January and July than in the record tourism year of 2019.**

More for Families

According to Tourism Minister Vassilis Kikilias, the total revenue of the travel industry in July amounted to 3.7 billion euros. That was even slightly more than in 2019, the minister pointed out.

The ministry is currently working hard to extend the tourist season to winter as well. In addition to beaches and seas, Greece also has high mountains, ski resorts and hiking trails in forests and nature reserves, among other attractions.

Tourists from the USA

In order to attract even more wealthy vacationers to Greece, the number of flights between Greece and the U.S. has increased during the summer season. As a result, Greece has been directly connected to U.S. airports nine times a day in recent months. Minister Kikilias spoke of 500,000 travelers from Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Boston, Washington and Philadelphia. Each traveler from the U.S. would spend about 2,000 euros weekly. 25% of that would be spent on accommodations and 15% on food.

Now, more airlines are to be brought to the international airport of the northern Greek metropolis of Thessaloniki. The airport "Makedonia" could thus become a tourist hub for the entire Balkans, Kikilias estimated.

New Winter Destination

"Greece is the only country in Europe that has registered more flights in the summer months than in 2019." This was stated by Eftychis Vasilakis, president of Aegean Airlines, Greece's largest airline, referring to data from Eurocontrol, the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation. Only the two major metropolises recorded fewer passengers than in 2019, he said. In Athens, the deficit was 6.1% and in Thessaloniki, as much as 15.1%, he said.

"We want to invest in Greece for the long term, not only for this winter, but for all winter months in the future," stated the CEO of the low-cost airline Ryanair Eddie Wilson. Admittedly,

this is somewhat contradictory to earlier statements. At the beginning of September, Wilson had stated that his airline would reduce its activities in Greece by 40%; at Athens International Airport "Eleftherios Venizelos" even by 60%, because of airports' costs.

However, the Ryanair manager continues to criticize the fact that airport costs in Hellas are far too high. This would have to change in order to bring vacationers to the country all year round.

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