

EGYPTIAN TOURISM IS BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK



Egypt recorded the highest growth rate in tourism since 2019 in the first half of this year, with forecasts of a recovery in the sector.

Travelers are finally back in Egypt. **The land of the pharaohs has recorded a very high tourism growth in the first half of 2022 with the arrival of 4.9 million holidaymakers, an increase of 85.4% compared to 2.6 million visitors recorded in the same period in 2021.**

These figures are presented in the report released by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). "The 2022 figure for Egyptian tourism is not surprising, since it is the result of a firm plan for the development of the sector, based on the diversification of the tourism product and the promotional campaigns launched in different markets and supported by the highest authority in the country. But we must always remember that security and stability remain the keywords for the resumption of tourist flows to Egypt," explains Ahmed Sarwat, a member of the Chamber of Tourism.

He added that there is a clear recovery of the Egyptian tourism sector which he expects to continue during this year. "By the end of 2022, Egypt is expected to attract in a total of about 13 million tourists. It will thus reach the figures recorded in 2019 with 13.1 million travelers visiting the country and revenues that had reached a record level of \$13.03 billion," Sarwat estimates.

As for hotel occupancy in the first half of 2022, the agency said that it amounted to 52.6 million overnight stays, an increase of 63.6% compared to 32.2 million overnight stays in the first half of 2021. CAPMAS also noted that "8 million tourists visited Egypt in 2021, an increase of 117.5% compared to 3.7 million tourists in 2020."

According to experts, the increase in the number of tourists who visited Egypt towards the end of 2021 and the first half of 2022 is a good indication of the post-Covid-19 recovery, which caused a sharp drop in the number of visitors due to the containment policies imposed worldwide. It is also pointed out that the Russian-Ukrainian crisis had a noticeable impact on the Egyptian tourism sector as the two countries were the main sources of tourists visiting Egypt. However, with the start of the winter tourist season in Egypt, Russian airline Aeroflot resumed flights to the cities of Hurghada and Sharm Al-Sheikh on Saturday, October 1.

Aeroflot had suspended its direct flights to Egypt on March 8, due to what it called "unfavorable conditions" caused by the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This is not the first time the Russian airline has suspended flights to the cities of Sharm Al-Sheikh and Hurghada. In October 2015, it had stopped its flights to Egypt after a Russian Metrojet plane crashed over Sinai. It resumed flights to Egyptian tourist destinations in October last year, before suspending them again after about five months.

Many Egyptian tourism experts believe that the return of direct flights between Egypt and Russia will have a significant impact on the next tourist season, especially since Russian tourism represents

between 40 and 50% of tourists coming to Egypt. However, not only the return of Russians is expected this season, but also that of tourists from European countries. The winter tourist season in Egypt this year is different due to several factors, including the energy crisis in Europe, which will push tourists from European countries, especially Italy, Spain, Germany and France, to opt for Egypt, to spend their stays. This winter tourist season will see a revival not only in the resorts of the Red Sea, but also in the cities of Upper Egypt, including Luqсор and Aswan.

According to official figures from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the international airport of Marsa Alam, the Red Sea coastal city, received, on October 1, 30 flights, carrying about 5,000 tourists from Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, and other European countries. This airport is expected to receive about 105 international flights during this week, while Hurghada International Airport received 112 flights carrying 17,000 tourists from different countries in early October.

Tharwat Agamy, president of the Chamber of Tourism in Luxor, said that the tourist numbers in the governorate are picking up with the start of the winter season. "There is an increase in the demand for reservations, **the occupancy rate of hotels has exceeded 50% at present, which is a good indication**, especially since we are still at the beginning of the winter season," Agamy said.

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