

# A NEW AIRPORT TERMINAL IN NORTHERN CYPRUS DESPERATELY NEEDS TRAVELERS



Flights to and from Turkey are only accommodated at a new airport terminal in Northern Cyprus.

Despite being isolated for almost 50 years, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) has just opened a new airport terminal worth half a billion dollars. The TRNC hopes to welcome international flights, even though their access to the Mediterranean island is limited due to a complex political situation that restricts their connections to Turkey. The island of Cyprus has been divided by a demarcation line controlled by the UN since the Turkish army invaded the northern third in 1974 in response to a coup d'etat by Cypriot-Greek nationalists who wanted to unite the country with Greece. The TRNC is self-proclaimed and only recognized by Turkey. It is home to Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers, while Greek Cypriots populate the Republic of Cyprus in the southern region.

The Nicosia Flight Information Region (FIR) has been divided into two parts, with the RTCN controlling the northern portion. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) does not recognize this control. Additionally, the director of civil aviation in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Moustafa Sofi, has stated that the RTCN also controls a portion of the Flight Information Region (FIR) Ankara, located on Turkey's southern coast.

## **An essential step for TRNC tourism**

The only airline that flies to Ercan Airport, located on the outskirts of the occupied area of Nicosia and not recognized by the international aviation community, is Turkey. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Republic of Cyprus controls airspace in the southern part of the island.

Although there is an international embargo, Northern Cyprus still trades with the island's south through nine crossing points. Tourists are also drawn to the area for its beautiful beaches, turquoise waters, and historic sites. These sites are available at attractive prices, partly due to the decrease in the value of the Turkish lira. The TRNC currency also accepts euros, dollars, and pounds sterling.

According to local media, the Minister of Tourism, Fikri Ataoglu, stated that the new Ercan terminal is a significant development for the country. It is six times larger than the old terminal now closed. The new terminal is expected to boost tourism and stimulate economic growth. The new runway and terminal investment is estimated at around 450 million euros. The new terminal can accommodate up to 10 million passengers annually, comparable to the two airports south of the island, Larnaca and Paphos. These airports saw 9.2 million passengers in 2022, while Ercan could only accommodate four million passengers in recent years.

The Ercan terminal was opened in late July with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in attendance. The departure hall of the spacious and contemporary terminal has a duty-free area, but there are still improvements to be made. Only Turkish cities served by Turkish companies are displayed on the departure boards. TRNC Transport Minister Erhan Arikli anticipates the possibility of international flights within two years.

According to Stefan Talmon, a University of Bonn professor, and Cyprus specialist, international flights to Ercan airport can only be allowed if the international community recognizes only one state of Cyprus and acknowledges the Greek-Cypriot government as the government of the entire island. Mr. Talmon cited a 2009 and 2010 decision by British courts. These counts were approached by a Cypriot-Turkish airline seeking authorization for direct flights between London and Ercan Airport.

### **Avoid a detour for tourists**

The request was denied because the Greek Cypriot government, which does not recognize TRNC, has not designated Ercan as an international airport under the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation. Airlines must comply with the convention, or they risk facing severe penalties. Therefore, direct flights cannot be established at this time.

Above all, the TRNC seeks direct flights from major European cities like Frankfurt, Paris, and London. This would enable tourists to reach northern Cyprus more quickly and economically, bypassing the need to go through Turkey or southern Cyprus. However, Mr. Talmon believes direct flights are only possible with a political solution to Cyprus. Unfortunately, negotiations on the island's reunification have been frozen since 2017.

Date: 2023-08-31

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/new-airport-terminal-northern-cyprus-lacks-travelers-news13597>