

LEBANON'S TOURISM HIT HARD BY THE HAMAS-ISRAEL WAR



Lebanon suffers the consequences of a war it had no part in. Despite hopes that the end of summer and approaching holiday season would boost Lebanon's tourism industry, the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel and concerns about Lebanon's involvement have yet to meet these expectations completely.

Travel cancellations are increasing, and several countries advise their citizens against traveling to Lebanon or recalling them from the country altogether.

More and more countries are advising their citizens to avoid traveling to Lebanon and urging those already there to leave. The conflict in Lebanon is spreading, and there are fears that Beirut International Airport (AIB) may be closed. The plans for a successful late season and the All-Saints' Day holidays have been ruined.

According to Fadi el-Hassan, the director general of Lebanese Civil Aviation, traffic is typical for this time of year, with a 10-15% increase in departures. However, most of the people leaving are foreigners. AIB has implemented a contingency plan to respond to a possible attack on the airport, and the relevant authorities have taken necessary precautions.

Trips Cancellations and Reschedules

The President of the Syndicate of Owners of Travel Agencies, Jean Abboud, has stated that many groups of Lebanese tourists and expatriates have canceled their stays in Lebanon for October and the All-Saints' Day holidays. According to him, arrivals in Beirut have dropped by 26% and departures by about 15% compared to October 2021, starting on October 10. However, Abboud notes that changes in schedules and timing are regular when moving from high season to low season. In other words, an airline that used to fly to a destination five times a day in the high season will do so twice in the low season. Moreover, schedule changes may occur. This year, these schedule changes coincided with tensions in the region. Abboud added that Lufthansa, Swiss, and Eurowings, the airlines that have suspended flights to Lebanon, are expected to resume them on October 23. As for cancellations during the holiday season, he believes it is still too early to say.

The national aviation company MEA has assured that it usually operates and that all scheduled flights take off or land as planned. The MEA explained to Ici Beirut that it decided to keep five aircraft from its fleet of 24 aircraft in Turkey as a precautionary measure instead of parking them in hangars in Lebanon. Despite this regular operation, the MEA has developed a plan in case of escalation.

Hotel Occupancy Rate is down 40%

According to Pierre Achkar, the Federation of Tourist Unions and the Hoteliers' Union president, **the hotel sector will face difficult times in the coming weeks.** The occupancy rate of hotels has already dropped by around 40% due to the off-season, which was expected to continue the summer trend. However, the situation has worsened, with countries advising their nationals to avoid

traveling to Lebanon. Achkar highlighted that the problem is not limited to Lebanon but also affects Egypt and Jordan.

The ongoing conflict in Lebanon is also causing concerns in the restaurant sector, with the union reporting a significant drop in attendance at restaurants, bars, and nightclubs.

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