

MEDICAL TOURISM IN JORDAN HIT BY ARAB SPRING



Continued political turmoil in North Africa has had an impact on tourism in the Middle East, particularly on medical tourism in Jordan.

According to the UNWTO world tourism barometer, Middle Eastern countries lost 5 million tourists in 2011. The main reason for this loss involved political uprising in North African countries.

In light of the Arab spring, tourists began to think twice about visiting Arab countries despite the fact that the Middle East is not responsible for the problems in North Africa.

UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman recorded successful periods in the history of their tourism, yet many of their Middle Eastern counterparts suffered as a result of problems elsewhere.

Conflicts in Libya have hit the medical tourism industry in Jordan. **Around 40% of medical tourists came from Libya, meaning that internal problems in Libya left the Jordanians a bit short.**

In 2010, Jordan welcomed 220,000 medical tourists, yet the figure plummeted to 180,000 in 2011, meaning a drop of almost 20%. It is, naturally, difficult to replace such a large market share because of geographical and economical reasons.

Whereas the situation in Libya is looking less bleak, even more turmoil is on the horizon in Syria and Egypt. Jordan may not be the victim of losing tourists from these countries but somebody in the Middle East is very likely to be.

The biggest victims are, of course, the countries themselves. Egypt has already lost a lot of its diving trade due to the upheaval. However, it is necessary to remember the effect such events have on nearby countries.

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