

TUNISIA STRUGGLES TO INCREASE THE TOURISM REVENUES



While the Tunisian tourism landscape is witnessing a growth in the numbers of both visitors and tourism revenues, attracting these visitors is no longer a key priority. The objective now is to give tourists the tools to spend more once they arrive. According to experts, there are many ways to enhance the destination's ability to

generate a higher value with regard to tourism: transport, accessibility, entertainment, events or even regulations.

Professionals have long expressed concern that despite its success in attracting millions of tourists, the capacity of Tunisian tourism to generate higher added value remains relatively low. **This issue is becoming more and more relevant now that the key indicators are showing a positive trend.**

While in 2019 there were 9.4 million visitors, in 2025 Tunisia crossed the threshold of eleven million for the first time, well above the 9.4 million recorded in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic. A positive trend that continued into 2026. Indeed, by the end of July, the country welcomed 5,828,000 visitors (up 2.6 percent compared to the previous year), and total tourism revenues came to a cumulative total of nearly 5.82 billion dinars by 10 September 2026 (up 4.9 percent compared to 5.55 billion dinars a year previously).

Behind the race for quantity lies an even more crucial question: what is the spending power of a tourist in Tunisia and what do they offer to encourage him/her to spend more?

Moving Beyond the Hotel-Beach-All-Inclusive Model

Experts believe that it won't be enough for a tourist to declare that they want to spend more in the country. This change cannot be triggered solely by an administrative or ministerial decision, but requires a fundamental and lengthy shift in the destination.

The traditional Tunisian model centered around hotels and beach resorts has reached its limits. A tourist arrives, goes to his hotel, enjoys the beach and the all-inclusive, and has few opportunities or incentives to spend money outside. Other destinations offer a much broader range of consumption: transport, visits, events or shows, or even cultural or leisure activities.

An illustrative example is that of a tourist walking in Tunis during Ramadan. Most commercial activity grinds to a halt, leaving few opportunities for a tourist to spend money. Turkey, also predominantly Muslim, takes a very different approach, offering much more regular and accessible opportunities for consumption. Visitors must first have opportunities to spend their money before they can afford to pay more.

Internationally, comparisons are not always easy since methods and units of measurement vary from one country to another, but the general idea nevertheless remains relevant. So, in 2025, the average expenditure per tourist in Egypt was around 112 dollars per night. In Morocco, the average spending per visitor was estimated at around 7,000 dirhams. And in Greece it was 545 euros per trip in 2025, compared with 530 euros the previous year. Of course, the various ways of expressing these figures must be taken into account, but it nevertheless underlines how far Tunisia has to go.

Better Data and a Clearer Picture of Visitor Behavior

Tunisia needs to take advantage of more precise data on the specificities of its visitors. Experts recommend using tourism satellite accounts to their maximum capacity, and regular opinion surveys asking tourists where and how they have spent their money. Aggregated statistics are not detailed enough to capture consumption patterns. It is now important to understand different customer needs, behaviors and expectations in order to adapt the offer.

Tunisia already has a Tourism Satellite Account. In January 2026, the National Institute of Statistics released results for 2023 and 2024. In 2024, the account estimates domestic tourism demand at 16.12 billion dinars, of which 11.82 billion dinars (or 73.3 percent) are allocated to international visitors. The distribution of spending among foreign tourists is also interesting: accommodation accounts for 40.1 percent, transport for 21.1 percent, non-specific products (shopping and medical services) for 19.3 percent, and food and beverages for 12.4 percent.

Transport, Events and Accessibility: The Destination's Blind Spots

To attract tourists willing to spend more, it is necessary to consider a complete revision of the offer, to meet in particular the expectations of young people for whom the traditional seaside model is no longer attractive. Often, these people are looking for a short stay focused on a particular event (concert, festival, etc.), going out at night, or a whole series of activities. They can easily choose another destination (Spain, Morocco, Egypt, etc.) if the accessibility conditions and leisure offers are more adapted.

First and foremost, access to Tunisia is difficult to guarantee at certain times of the year or in certain conditions. This discourages certain categories of tourists. Once on site, young people in particular may have difficulties in getting around or visiting certain places because of the lack of internal transport. Cultural and leisure facilities that could enrich the visit are also lacking. In short, diversifying tourism cannot be confined to promoting heritage, the desert or interior regions. People must also be able to get there easily and have interesting things to do when they get there. One of the constraints to be considered is also the administrative burden. Organizing an event risks becoming a lengthy process with multiple authorizations required, pushing organizers to turn to more accommodating countries, such as Morocco.

The improvement of the attractiveness of a destination is a commitment that goes well beyond the Ministry of Tourism. It is a coordinated state and stakeholder effort that also involves adapting the accommodation offer. **There is a need to provide youth hostels, and other less costly and more adapted formulas for solo travelers or groups of friends.** A young person coming to a concert may only need a bed for one or two nights, rather than a hotel room.

With more than eleven million visitors, Tunisia has passed a critical threshold. It now faces a new challenge: no longer attracting more tourists, but achieving higher tourism revenues for each tourist. Attracting more visitors will no longer generate significant benefits if, once there, the capacity to move around, enjoy leisure activities, explore the country, and therefore spend money, is limited.

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