

Economy

Tourism in Turkey: Where Are We Headed?

Turkey on its Way to Becoming a Year-Round Destination

by Simone Meier



The tourism industry is -in addition to Turkey's textile industry, the automotive industry, and the electronics industry- one of the most important economic sectors for Turkey. Turkey is, moreover, one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world.

In 2010, the number of foreign visitors to Turkey increased by 6%. For 2011, a growth rate from 2.2% to

2.5% was forecast. After positive results from the year 2010, Turkey now expects this initial forecast will be surpassed in 2011. Despite global economic crises, the number of visitors to Turkey increased in 2009. In particular, package tours, that previously had been blamed by many for the ails of the Turkish tourism industry mid-decade, boosted the tourism industry in 2009. While

individual travel declined due in part to the general economic situation, the number of package tourists increased. This trend has continued in 2010.

Compared to other industries, the tourism industry in Turkey appears in past and present to be less affected by the crisis. While in other industries employment has been drastically reduced, the number employed in the tourism industry has increased.

Business in Focus for International Investors

Looking at data from 2010, it is striking that tourism investments are no longer limited only to traditional tourist areas. 81% of the 2010 planned hotel and tourism projects are in cities. This development is not surprising. Turkey is the fastest growing economy in Europe and, thanks to the rapid growth of business and commercial activities in Turkey, the country has become consequently the focus of international investors.

Guests from the Gulf Region: Welcome

In addition to leisure travelers from Western countries, business travelers from the Gulf countries are becoming increasingly important. Looking at the consumption patterns of visitors from the Arab region, it becomes clear why Turkey is becoming increasingly popular for this clientele. While the general trend internationally in tourist consumption is in decline, one can observe the opposite of guests from the Gulf region. "It's not uncommon for an Arab from the Gulf to spend more in a day than a European for an entire vacation," says the industry. In addition, Arab guests often travel as extended families and choose to host luxurious celebrations such as weddings and other celebrations.

Visitors from Arab countries are not much interested in the sun and beach, and Turkey compares favorably to their countries' pleasant summer temperatures; they are also familiar with Islamic culture. The fact that Turkey has removed the visa requirement for some Arab countries has also served to shore up the tourist trade and to elevate the

status of the Turkish Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, who has become popular in the Arab world almost to the point of cult status. The popularity of Turkey as a destination for visitors from the Arab Gulf states has been increased also by such acts as France's decision, a formerly popular destination, to legally prohibit the wearing of the burqa.

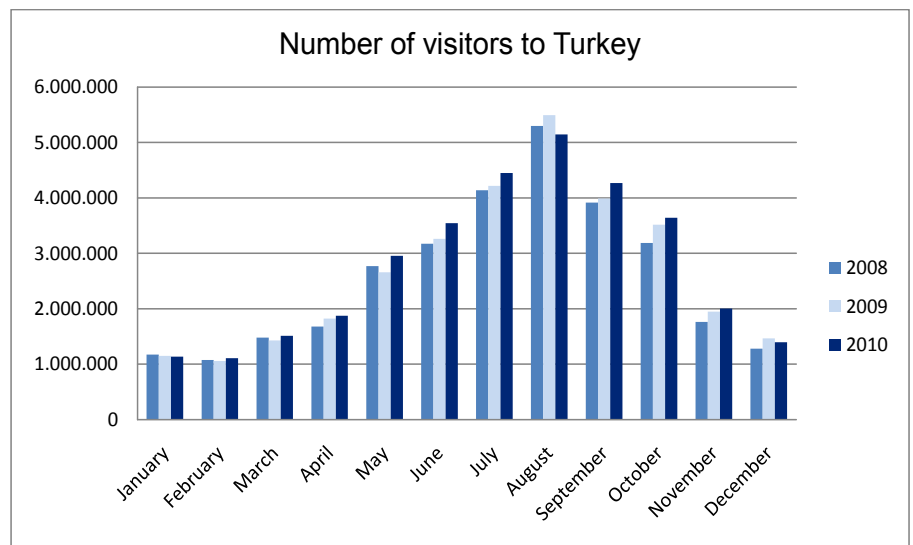
Silver: The Market of the Future

Demographic changes in Europe will have an impact on the tourist trade in Turkey in the years to come. While Turkey is a country with an average age of under 30 years, making it one of the youngsters of Europe, the rest of Europe is aging - and rapidly. In Germany alone, in the next 15 years there will be an increase of over 46% of 65 year-olds. Demographic shifts and increased life expectancy lead to increased health-consciousness -and a necessary re-thinking in the tourism industry. The consumption and the supply of health services are going to increase and thus also the need for

treatment and rehabilitation facilities. Just the potential of hot springs, of which there are over 1000 in Turkey, makes this nascent health-care market in Turkey interesting to investors.

Golf Destination Turkey: Handicap Vacations

Alongside spa and wellness tourism is the increasing active tourist market. With the construction of over a dozen new golf courses one can find in this emerging Gulf country of Turkey, tourism has increased also for the spring and fall season. The year 1995 saw the first golf course in the region of Belek, Turkey's Riviera. Presently, this region enjoys 18 immaculate and challenging athletic facilities with stunning views of the sea and the foothills of the Taurus Mountains, and has become popular with golfers from both Europe and Asia. Besides the year-round mild climate and the wide range of hotels, short journey times and the many green fee packages made available contribute to Turkey's golf tourism.



Source: TurkStat



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Skiing in Turkey

For most tourists, Turkey is known only as a holiday destination for “Summer, sun, beach and sea.” If left to the President of the Turkish Ski Federation (TKF), Dr. Ozer Ayık, however, this impression will soon change.

There are over 3,000 mountain ranges in Turkey. 62% of the country, and thus about 505 038 km², is located in mountainous regions, extending from the North Anatolian mountain chain (2,587 m - 3932 m) to the Taurus Mountains (3,086 m- 4136 m).

Among the largest and most popular ski resorts in Turkey are Erciyes (Kayseri province), Kartalkaya (Bolu province), Sarikamis (Kars province),

Palandöken (Erzurum province), and Uludag (Bursa province), with Palandöken hosting the longest ski run and Uludag considered the best-known ski resort in Turkey.

The Universiade 2011 in Palandöken

Following the Summer Universiade hosted by Izmir in 2005, Palandöken’s successful bid to host the Winter Universiade in the period of 27 January to 06 February 2011 attracted much international attention, as well as publicity for ski tourism in Turkey. More than EUR 300 million was invested in the project. And, with over 3,000 participants from 58 nations, Palandöken has set a new attendance record for the Winter Universiade.

A market with enormous growth potential

Overall, winter tourism in Turkey accounts for only 3 to 4% of total tourism receipts at present. This should change in the near future. With ten existing, and another 31 ski resorts to be completed in 2011, Turkey’s ski industry will appeal not only to local skiers - of which about 200,000 in 2010 alone were skiing in France -, but also to a part of the 32 million European ski tourists. Who knows what will shape the contours of this success story of the fastest growing country in Europe, though we suspect that Turkey’s ambitious targets are potentially realistic.