

# TODAY'S TOURISM

MARCH 5-9, 2008

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## ITB 2008 to invigorate Turkish tourism

KRISTINA KAMP, ISTANBUL

The International Tourism Bourse (ITB), opening its doors this week from March 5-9 at Berlin's fairgrounds, cannot be done without Turkey, a country which has been one of the world's most important travel destinations as well as a long-established and renowned guest of the fair. Expectations of Turkish businessmen are high!

What began with five participating countries in the context of an overseas-import trade show in 1966

has become the "world's leading travel trade show." With more than 180,000 visitors, among these 108,000 trade visitors and over 10,000 exhibitors from all sectors related to the tourism industry worldwide. Professionals come from tour operators, booking companies, destinations, airlines, hotels and car rental companies -- a diverse array of businesses will have a booth at the ITB.

Among the participants are many Turkish representatives, which all agree that the ITB, with

its combination of trade exhibition, public exhibition and the professional convention, is an excellent opportunity to meet business partners from all over the world and do business.

Turkish Hoteliers' Association (TUROB) Chairman Timur Bayındır underlines the importance of the ITB to successfully conduct business. "We will meet with most of our tour operators. This will give us a glimpse of the initial reservation numbers and a change to discuss possible developments of the upcoming year. The ITB is a

platform that simply helps to better calculate the next season," he says. Beyond this, Bayındır sees the ITB as a good opportunity to meet business partners, both Turkish and foreign, old and new. This year he plans to talk with representatives of long-time partners from Germany and Russia and hopes on new input and incentives from meetings with, for instance, Polish and British representatives. "In short, the ITB has for a long time served as a venue where we can meet a wide range of professionals from the sector." *CONTINUED ON PAGE 04*

PHOTOFARUK ÖZTÜRK



Culture and Tourism Minister Ertuğrul Günay

### 'Tourism is serious business, and we've got strategies'

AYŞE KARABAT, ANKARA

Ertuğrul Günay was once a tourist with an interest in archaeology, but now he is the minister of culture and tourism. His priority for the ministry is to diversify Turkey's tourist destinations. He also wants to introduce an interactive format into Turkey's museums. He would like to see janissaries walking around Topkapı Place to make visitors feel the history, for example. Günay says Turkey is ready to cooperate with other countries in the field of tourism. "I was a tourist who was interested in archeology. I used to visit archeological sites with my family. Wherever I saw a yellow sign [indicating an archaeological site], I drove the car over there," Günay says. Recalling those days makes him smile. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 07*

### Foreign airliners eager for further investment in Turkey

MUSTAFA GÜN, ISTANBUL

The progress in the Turkish civil aviation sector has attracted the attention of foreign airliners, and many are now considering increasing their investments in the Turkish market. Turkish civil aviation made substantial progress in the last few years owing to the Transportation Ministry's efforts to allow involvement of private airliners in the domestic passenger carriage take. Turkey had already attained the 2015 estimate by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) of 55 million passengers per year in 2005; the international and domestic airliners carried 62 million passengers last year. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 10*



### Turkish tourism on safe track for growth

In seeking foreign investment, the government in Ankara has designated four key sectors: energy, infrastructure, real estate -- and tourism. Note that tourism is the only sector that affects all the others, an indicator of tourism's almost unique multiplier effect on the economy. If one builds a new resort, that means real estate development, which in turn requires infrastructure investment on the part of the municipal, provincial or national government, and also energy planning to make sure there is enough power to run the facility. *By MICHAEL KUSER CONTINUED ON PAGE 08*

### Turkey strives to rise as tourism magnet

KATE CLOW, ISTANBUL

Turkey's position in the southeastern corner of the European Union once made it turn to Europe for visiting tourists. Now, with cheap flights turning remote corners of the globe into cut-price competitors, Turkey looks elsewhere -- along with the Germans and the Dutch, the Brits and the Russians feature high on the list of arrivals and are being joined by Eastern Europeans, the Japanese and Australians. To all these corners, Turkey offers beach holidays in comfortable hotels with a sprinkling of culture and adventure. Other offerings, mainly yacht tourism, cultural and city tours, appeal to the older, richer clientele of the English-speaking world.

So what about Turkey's competitors? Who are they, where is their market and how do they promote themselves? Several are well-established in the cultural tourism scene -- India (\$5 million per year), Egypt (\$7.4 million per year), Italy (\$35 million per year), Spain (\$49 million per year) and Greece (\$14 million per year) are firmly entrenched market leaders with several million foreign tourists each per year. Their history has left well-preserved monuments whose images have been broadcast all around the world; in addition, some have excellent beach resorts. Israel (\$3 million per year) is on the periphery of this group, with religious symbolism attracting visitors to Jerusalem; however, Israel exports more tourists than it receives; the number of young Israelis in Turkey is evidence of this. *CONTINUED ON PAGE 06*

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# İSTANBUL EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2010: CITY OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

## RÜMEYSA ÖZEL İSTANBUL

As Turkey moves toward its goal of EU accession its largest city, İstanbul, once the seat of empires that ruled land on three continents, has been named a European Capital of Culture 2010, along with Pécs in Hungary and Essen in Germany.

The European Capital of Culture scheme was initiated in 1985 by the then-European Community (now EU) Council of Ministers. Since the year 2000 cities in EU candidate countries have been allowed to participate, enabling İstanbul to apply.

The name of the city's European Capital of Culture project, "İstanbul: City of the Four Elements," comes from a theory developed by three ancient philosophers: Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes, who all lived in the western Anatolian city of Miletus. According to their theory, which was enhanced by the great philosopher Aristotle, every existence in the universe is formed by various combinations of the four elements of earth, air, water and fire. Throughout history, İstanbul has captured many societies and culture's attention as capital of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires.

One of the members of the artistic committee for the project, Korhan Gümüş, emphasizes that the cosmopolitan character of the city could be an inspiration for the EU in its efforts to building a society in harmony with its diversity. "İstanbul is a city that was once an initiator of modernity. Centuries before the EU, İstanbul was pioneer multicultural city in the Ottoman Empire, with its juridical ordinance. This is usually kept in the background," said Gümüş in an interview with Today's Zaman, adding that their aim is to highlight this aspect of the city.

The general purpose of the project has been divided into three major targets: introducing more into İstanbul, emphasizing its rich cultural heritage and urban regeneration. Since the continuation of artistic events has been greatly affected by a lack of basic facilities, the access of the city residents to cultural activities will be one of the project's main foci. Secondly, as the only metropolis in the world linking two continents, the preservation and restoration of the heritage from the Roman, Byzantium and Ottoman empires will be another goal. Finally, the urban transformation of the city is another essential element of the project, which hopes to show the city's dynamics and energy in the cultural and artistic arena.

The İstanbul 2010 project aims to increase the individual contributions of İstanbul residents in a competitive atmosphere, explains Gümüş. "Our aim is to enable İstanbul, as one of the biggest global metropolitan cities, to reveal its potential through a new governing model comprising various state and private organizations," he says.

According to Gümüş the most fundamental benefit of this project is the experience different institutions will gain through collaboration between the public sector, municipal government bodies, civil society organizations, educational institutions and independent arts organizations. In addition, new museums, libraries and concert halls will be established and historical buildings will be renovated, given new roles and opened to the public. İstanbulites will have the opportunity to become more closely involved in artistic creativity and young talented people will be encouraged and given the opportunity to embrace new artistic disciplines.

The year 2010 will be divided between the four elements: Jan. 1 to March 20 will see Earth dominate, with activities focusing on tradition and the transformation of traditional arts. Cultural heritage will be interpreted with a fresh perspective during the winter months. March 21 to June 21 marks the turn of Air, with religions that bloomed and lived together in İstanbul to be examined through art. Activities will focus on cultural dialogue inspired by the minarets and church steeples reaching to the sky side by side in the city. In the third phase, Water, which will fall between June 22 and Sept. 22, the shores of the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus will feature important artistic happenings about the cultures that flourished with the help of these waters. Finally, between Sept. 23 and Dec. 31, the most transformative of the elements, Fire, will be the theme. Inspired by fire's power to reinvent sand as glass, modernism will be questioned through contemporary art.

The group behind İstanbul's European Capital of Culture project consists of NGOs, cultural and artistic communities and academics. With the support of the Prime Ministry, Foreign Ministry, Culture and Tourism Ministry, İstanbul Governorate and Greater İstanbul Municipality Mayor's Office, the initiative group presented the project to the Council of Europe General Directorate for Education and Culture in 2005.



PHOTOMUSTAFA KIRAZLI

A grandiose scene of the Bosphorus lays behind Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque. Religion has always been the cradle of İstanbul's civilizations.

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# Study: 2008 to be record year for Turkish tourism

PHOTO © CHIAN



KRISTINA KAMP ISTANBUL

Travel agencies and tourism companies expect an average rise of 20 percent in the number of visitors to Turkey this year, pushing the total number of tourists beyond the 25 million mark, according to Tourism Report 2008, released by the German Center for Turkish Studies (TAM) in February.

Last year Germans remained the most numerous visitors to Turkey, with a share of 18 percent (4 million), followed by those from Russia, with 10.6 percent (2.5 million), Bulgaria, Georgia and Ukraine, which all together make up 21.1 percent (5 million).

The number of Germans alone expected to visit Turkey in 2008 is estimated to exceed 5 million. The figures suggest the turmoil around the imprisonment last year of a 17-year-old German boy accused of having abused an underage British girl has not put a dampener on German enthusiasm for Turkey.

Just the opposite, "targeted and well-applied public relation works and advertisement measures may bring this remarkable number up as far as 5.5 million," forecasts TAM analyst Yunus Ulusoy, underlining the important role German tourists in particular play in the Turkish tourism sector.

## Could China resolve revenue worries?

Though the number of visitors from Eastern Europe and Russia to Turkey is rising remarkably, attracting tourists from Middle or Western European countries is more important for Turkey in terms of revenue, the report states.

Despite continuously increasing tourist numbers, revenues in the Turkish tourism sector are still lagging behind -- an effect of the relatively limited spending capacity of Russian and Eastern European visitors in comparison to those from Middle and Western Europe. This year revenues are set to rise disproportionately slowly to visitor figures, the report states.

"To avoid not getting lost in a vicious circle of low-cost offers and corresponding cutbacks in quality, Turkish tourism should concentrate on those groups having more spending power," Ulusoy recommends. As a medium-term strategy, Chinese tourists could start to play a more important role. Not only are they showing an increased interest in vacationing in Turkey, but they also spend a remarkable amount of money on their holidays.

## Untapped potential: EXPO 2015

Favorite destinations for longer stays in 2007 included the Marmara region (9 million visitors), Mediterranean (7 million) and the Aegean (4 million). Istanbul, although it attracted 10 million visitors in 2007, is less attractive for longer stays. Rather like Ankara it tends to receive mostly daytrippers and excursionists.

Meanwhile, Izmir -- currently pursuing a bid to host the international EXPO fair in 2015 -- draws only 4 percent of tourists. However it has much to offer in historical, cultural as well as in geographical regard and its EXPO application is expected to tap this potential. If Izmir is successful some 40 million visitors, will visit the

region. In the course of the necessary preparations for the event, improvements to infrastructure are expected, which will include the betterment of connections between Aegean cities.

In addition, central, eastern and southern Anatolia should be advertised more in terms of cultural tourism, while the Black Sea region could be made attractive with appropriate offers in the fields of sports and activity, proposes Ulusoy. "A broad and varied product portfolio makes Turkey more attractive -- especially for tourists with good spending capacity. That would also make Turkey more independent of its competition with other countries fighting it out in the low-cost market segment, namely Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania," he added.

The objectives of TAM are to promote German-Turkish relations and the level of knowledge and information about Turkey and Turkish migrants in Europe; to advance cooperation between Turkey, Germany and other European countries; and also to support research and public relations. Since 2000 the center has published tourism reports annually, aiming to mirror changes and developments in the sector.

TAM regards Germans visits to Turkey as an important pre-condition for German-Turkish relations. "Getting to know the country of origin of Germany's biggest immigrant group is of the highest importance for the togetherness and understanding of both parts of the population, as well as being an essential element for acceptance and tolerance of Germans towards Turks," the report states.

## UNDP works to develop East Anatolia tourism

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Ankara are cooperating to develop tourism in the eastern Black Sea region of Turkey; the three-year project is scheduled to be completed in 2009.

Although Turkey is a middle-income country with an approximate per capita GDP of over \$5,000, there are significant disparities in terms of socioeconomic development between geographical regions. The level of socioeconomic development in eastern provinces is consistently behind that of western regions.

Of the 12 designated regions in Turkey, the northeastern and eastern Anatolia regions rate the lowest. These areas are characterized by lower per capita GDP, a higher ratio of agriculture in regional economy, a lower urbanization ratio and high emigration rates. Employment, health, education and infrastructure-related indicators also contribute to the lower socioeconomic development. Such regions are usually also far from industrial regions and lack the human resource capacity and infrastructure to develop local industry.

The northeastern Anatolia region heavily relies on the agricultural sector and shows relatively low capacity for efficient farming practices and a low level of competitive power. Therefore both the local stakeholders and the central government with its regional and national level development strategies promote development of new, non-agricultural sectors as a means to provide alternative income generation lines. One of these alternative sectors is community-based tourism, considered globally to be a sector for pro-poor economic growth.

The Coruh region, covering the districts of Ispir, Uzundere, Narman, Olur, Tortum and Yusufeli, has a strong potential for tourism by means of its natural beauties. The Coruh valley, with its high potential for summer tourism activities, could bring new economic life and new opportunities to the region in the long run, despite the seasonal nature of such an industry.

The Coruh River originates in the Mesit Mountains (3,225 meters) and flows 466 kilometers before reaching the Black Sea in Georgia. It is one of the fastest flowing rivers in the world. The

small towns and villages located along the river are impressively authentic and historically interesting. The area as a whole represents the synthesis of the cultures of eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea, and the Kaçkar Mountains offer highly attractive possibilities for canoeing, rafting and trekking.

### Project mission

Combining UNDP experience on local economic development with its own expertise on community-based tourism, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism aims to strengthen the institutional structures as well as individual capacities. UNDP support both promotes the region and improves the response capacity of local stakeholders to make maximum and sustainable use of tourism potential.

First, the organizational capacity in the Coruh region is strengthened through established local tourism boards, which will act as the planning and monitoring mechanism at the local level. The action plans will be developed by these boards with the support of the UNDP. The tourism potential is promoted both in the region as a potential income source, and to the outside partners, which will organize trips to the region. This will be done through preparation of tourism products and promotional materials.

Specific training programs are being designed for the local stakeholders to improve their awareness of the potential and their business capacities to make income out of the tourism sector. The UNDP partners with Ministry of Culture and Tourism at the central level, and district governors/mayors/civil society organizations at the local level. The project is financially supported by Efes Pilsen. The Efes Group also provides assistance in terms of public relations and promotion of the region/project.

This project aims to build a demonstrative model for regional/rural development strategies in Turkey. The eastern Anatolia region, specifically the Coruh Valley, receives support to develop income-generating sectors, alternatives to agriculture which will ultimately increase the income of the residents. **Istanbul** Today's Tourism

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# ITB 2008 TO INVIGORATE TURKISH TOURISM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Antalya's Washington Resort and Spa Hotel Assistant General Manager Nurettin Tiren has participated in the ITB three times. This year his focus is on making more contacts with German business partners. "The Germans are still our most important visitor group and I want them to feel comfortable in our hotels." The ITB, Tiren finds, is a very good opportunity to make contacts with German tour operators and therewith have a feel for German tourists' demands and wishes. This year he is already looking forward to meeting with his established business partner Neckermann and Alltours. He also says German-Turkish travel operator Öger Tours is an important partner.

Masum İlaslan, speaking for the Association of Turkish Travel Businesses in Berlin (BETÜSAB), is "especially glad" for the opportunity to meet his Turkish business friends. The structure of the exhibition halls, which are divided by geographic segments as well as by thematically ordered market segments, will be helpful for that, with Turkey participating in the Europe section in Hall 3.2.

İlaslan underlines that his organization is continuously working on making the Turkish tourism sector more accessible than it already is, which is "important for us, as the representative of the Turkish travel operators in Germany, but also for our partners in Turkey," he says, stressing that Germans have always been and still are the most important visitor group for Turkey. "The ITB, as a platform for everyone related to the tourism business, is a very good possibility to strengthen existing business relations and make new contacts. It is very important for us to promote our members as reliable partners that companies in Turkey can work with."

Foreign investors have also underlined the importance of the ITB for Turkey. Paul Schwaiger, managing director of SunExpress, an Antalya-based joint venture between Turkish Airlines (THY) and Lufthansa, calls the fair a "golden opportunity" in terms of advertising and marketing. "Turkey has almost every type of tourism facilities -- summer, winter, nature, historical and religious. There are wonderful hotels in a unique geography, which offer high-quality service with reasonable prices," he explains, saying that for promoting these advantages to worldwide tourism professionals he sees the ITB as one of the "most important international stages." For his company in particular, Schwaiger believes that the ITB Berlin will be a perfect place to learn about new trends and concepts in aviation, to analyze competitors' business models, to expand new market and of course to increase the number of its passengers."

Last but not least, the ITB is also a chance to sign contracts. Indeed, exhibitor sales of about 5 billion euros and an exhibitor satisfaction rate of 92 percent are evidence enough that supply and demand meet at the right place.

## High-ranking speakers will share their experience

ITB Berlin is not only a perfect place to deepen existing business relations and evaluate new cooperation possibilities; it is also well designed to learn about new trends, concepts and developments of the sector. With 70 events and more than 200 speakers, the convention presents itself as the leading think tank of the global tourism industry.

A respective number of international high-ranking speakers, valuable presentations and exciting discussions on the latest topics of the global tourism industry are scheduled over the five days. Among them are also renowned Turkish experts.

On March 6, Koray Yetik, secretary general of the Turkish Tourism Investors Association (TYD), will talk about "Strategies for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean," taking into account past experiences as well as strategic actions for the future and focusing on economic and environmental aspects. The event will take place on March 6 at 1 p.m. in the New York 1 Auditorium in Hall 7.1.

In addition, the "Turkey Forum" will assess the topic "Istanbul, Cultural Capital Europe 2010, as a destination for city trips" on March 7 at noon in the London 1 Auditorium in Hall 7.1. A kind of embedding program for the events is given by thematically specific days which are scheduled over the days, with "Future Day" on March 3 portraying the future in the fields of economy, society and travel patterns, "Hospitality Day," with international experts discussing the challenges in the hotel industry and "Aviation Day," where executives will address key issues with airlines, airports and the aircraft industry. Three interesting offers will provide a special stage centered on business travel. The "Travel Partner Program," the "Travel Forum" and the "Travel Lounge" provide travel managers and organizers with special contacts and knowledge and give them an excellent opportunity to network in a relaxing atmosphere.

Lastly, Turkey has not neglected paying attention to youth. This year Turkey took over the special role as a partner for ITB's section "RockITB," a program sponsored together with the German youth tour operator RUF, which will allow young visitors to explore the ITB in their own way. One full day, March 8, has been set aside for apprentices in the tourism sector as well as young visitors interested in traveling.



PHOTO: REUTERS

World's leading travel trade show, ITB, turns whole Berlin into a festival place with different cultures from across world.

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# CAR RENTAL BUSINESS ACCELERATING IN TURKEY

The economic volume of the car rental and leasing sector hit \$1 billion in Turkey alone last year and the expected amount for 2008 is \$1.3 billion -- a 30 percent rise -- according to figures from the All Car Rental Entities Association (TOKKDER).

Car rental and leasing has rapidly grown in Turkey in recent years with around 650 firms operating in the business. The number of cars for rent is around 122,000. TOKKDER President İlhan Yılmaz said there were 14,000 cars available for day rental and 108,000 cars for long-term fleet leasing. He said every one car in 10

sold in Turkey last year was bought by car rental and leasing firms. He added that by the end of 2007 the money invested in these cars in Turkey was approximately \$5 billion.

According to Yılmaz, the car rental sector made great contributions to the improvement of the automotive sector in Turkey. He said 594,000 cars were sold across Turkey last year; 55,000 of which were purchased by the car rental sector. "We expect this rate to go up to 12 percent," he said. The greatest shares in the cars used by car rental firms belong to Fiat, Ford and Renault. Cenk Cimen, general manager of Avis Turkey,

said the sector had significantly grown both in long-term (over 12 months) leases for operational purposes and in short-term leisure rentals. He said the increase in long-term leases was down to companies choosing rent cars to use in their operations rather than buying them. The advantage to such a system is the avoidance or reduction of many costs such as insurance, taxes and maintenance, allowing the company to focus on their main business.

Short-term rentals increased in parallel to the rising number of people traveling by plane as airfares continue to drop, said Cimen. He added

as having offices in all of the airports in Turkey meant they have increased their turnover among these domestic and foreign travelers. He added that cooperation with aviation firms to provide special offers and services to their passengers had also boosted business. Avis Turkey's fleet is strong in terms of both short-term rentals, reaching as many as 2,400 cars in high season, and long-term leasing. He added that it was important to have a large fleet and diversified services to keep up with seasonal variation in the sector and to provide the same level of service all year round. **Istanbul Today's Tourism**



PHOTO: DOĞAN BALCI, ÇİHAN

## Antalya's Belek: Europe's best golf destination

Turkey, a new attraction for golf players around the world with its golf courses in the famous holiday resort town of Antalya's Belek district, has been chosen the best golf destination of Europe by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO). With this title, Turkey has moved ahead of Spain, Scotland and England in the race to take a greater share from the billion-dollar cake of golf tourism, and has become the focal point of the golf world. Belek Tourism Center, Europe's best golf destination, held a celebration ceremony at the Cornelia Golf Club in Antalya on Feb.25. Under Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism İsmet Yılmaz, Antalya Governor Alaaddin Yüksel, IAGTO President Peter Walton, President of Turkish Golf Federation Ahmet

Agaoglu and Director General of Cornelia Golf Club Ali Şahin were present at the ceremony.

Under Secretary İsmet Yılmaz emphasized that the award given to Turkey was a very important development for the Turkish tourism, noting, "Turkey's tomorrow will be brighter than its today. The steps that are

PHOTO: AHMET TEKİN  
Ahmet Agaoglu

being taken are right, nobody should doubt this."

Ahmet Agaoglu said that the share of the gold tourism in the Turkish tourism revenues next year would be around \$250 million, recalling that the tourists who came to enjoy Turkey's golf resorts spent at least seven or eight times as much as other tourists who simply came for the sea and the sand.

Belek's natural beauties and hotels played a big role on its selection as the best golf resort of Europe, IAGTO President Peter Walton emphasized. "About 50 million people play golf in the world. European golf players travel to different countries to play. A \$3-billion-euro market is in question here. The countries better at investing and advertising have greater shares from this cake," he said.

Governor Yüksel, on the other hand, noted that some people were trying to form a public opinion around pieces of misinformation about the trees cut to open up golf fields. "I have never been interested in the number of the trees that have been cut. That's the responsibility of the Ministry of Forestry. I'm more interested in planting," Yüksel said, adding that they planted millions of trees with the residents of Antalya in the last five years.

Under Secretary Yılmaz stressed that one of the necessities of having healthy forests was cutting old trees and planting new ones. "According to the information we have been provided, the number of the trees that have been cut is around 115,000. However, the number of the planted ones is very much greater than that," he said.

The 2008 Best Golf Destination Award which was received by IAGTO Turkey's President Ali Şahin in December 2007 at a ceremony held in Mexico, was given to İsmet Yılmaz at the end of the ceremony. **Nurullah Kaya Antalya**

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### TODAY'S TOURISM

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All of these countries are seeing tourism growing at less than the national average rate of growth; tourism is a declining sector. Why? Almost all EU countries have declining tourism markets. Some, such as Italy, by up to 3 percent per year in dollars; measured in euros, this is more like 10 percent. The pattern seems to be that countries entering the EU with a thriving, if disordered, tourism industry, reach a rapid peak, then fall into gentle decline. Why? Firstly, traditional sun-sea-sand tourism depends on a supply of young, seasonal, low-paid workers. When those workers discover better-paid work with more long-term opportunities, they of course move on. As real-estate prices (and thus hotel prices) rise, the local population becomes rich enough to go on holiday overseas and both domestic and international markets dry up. In Western Europe, France is maintaining tourism growth in line with growing gross national product (GNP), largely due to both a steady domestic market and restraints on coastal and countryside development. Indeed, France's policy of limiting rural and coastal building and preserving its architectural heritage means that it is still an up-market, desirable destination for independent tourists.

**The countries that draw most of their tourists from Turkey's market**

What about non-European countries? India (\$5 million per year) and Egypt (\$7.5 million per year) have slick, efficient marketing machines, government-led but with the added professionalism of state airlines, five-star hotels and international advertising agencies. The problem with selling history is that it doesn't attract repeat visitors -- once you've seen the pyramids, what next? Both have diversified, adding beach and diving tourism; India has also added mountain tourism. Still their rate of growth has not kept pace with growth in other sectors; effectively, their tourism sector is in decline. Competing with them is Dubai -- the new kid on the block growing at an impressive rate (\$2.5 million per year, grown by 54 percent in the last four years). With negligible ancient culture to attract visitors, it's making it up as it goes, with monumental buildings, latest technology and, most of all, consumerism and accessibility.

These countries draw most of their tourists from Turkey's traditional market -- Western Europe. But as the EU's population ages, this market is diversifying. A core of European families are still looking for low-end beach holidays, but with flights still fairly cheap, they are able to fly far afield to take them. This was illustrated by the presence of Cuba at the East Mediterranean International Tourism and Travel Fair (EMITT) in Istanbul, drawn by its direct competition with Turkey for this family market. Turkey's more obvious direct competitors in the sun, sea and sand market fringe the Mediterranean, offering easy access to Europeans. Once, Spain led these countries on a path of rapid and destructive development followed by price-cutting frenzies as they struggled against newer competitors to retain market share. To capture the EU's older tourists, Spain has now diversified to city, rural and specialized tourism -- especially golf -- and maintained its income from foreigners by selling them real estate. Income from tourism has not declined as its European competitors but the market is growing at 1 percent less than the average growth in gross domestic product (GDP).

Does this sound familiar? Turkey (\$21 million per year) pursued exactly the same course and, in spite of vowing never to become a second Spain, made the same mistakes. Its coastal resorts have been saved in the nick of time by the break-up of the communist block and a rush of the new oil-rich from Russia and her former satellites. Since 2004, in dollar terms, Turkey's tourism sector has grown at 7-8 percent per year, comfortably above the GNP growth of 5-6 percent; however, if measured in YTL, growth disappeared in 2006 (when the dollar started its decline) and finished with a loss of 7 percent. Can long-term growth last? Lessons of the Gulf War, plus first signs of reluctance due to the situation in northern Iraq, suggest not. Current competitors in beach tourism include Bulgaria (\$2.6 million per year), Malta, Morocco (\$4.8 million per year) and Tunisia (\$2.1 million per year). These countries' tourism market is growing by between 2 percent and 6 percent per year, on a par or just above their GNP growth. While affected by minor terrorism incidents, none are at risk from the volatility of the Middle East. Yet, despite extensive promotion (Morocco's is especially good), growth is not impressive.

Due to their war-torn histories, many countries of the Middle East have not had the chance to build up consistent tourism industries. However, starting from a very low base (only 10 million arrivals in 2000), regional tourism increased by over 9 percent per year in the following six years. This is largely due to two factors -- the massive growth in Dubai and the new trend for travel within the Arab world. Lebanon, where Beirut was once known as the Paris of the East, is just beginning to build up visitor numbers again, leading with its casino and using the



# TURKEY'S RACE TO RISE AS TOURISM MAGNET



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much of the country and the climate is wonderful at times when Europe is miserable. Behzad Pournaghi represents Iran's cultural heritage and tourism organization at several fairs, mainly, he says, with the object of countering Iran's negative image in the West. He also says that the attitude of the population to the West in general and the US in particular is far from negative; anyone who has Iranian friends knows how charming they are. My prediction is that northern Europeans will shortly discover Iran; indeed, an article on skiing in Iran appeared in the British Observer newspaper last weekend.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has decided that tourism, which is growing overall at 6.5 percent but much faster in developing countries than in developed ones, has much to offer in "trickle-down" income generation. The evidence for this is limited and further studies are needed to bear this out but meanwhile, many of their poverty-alleviation programs have a tourism element. This has helped another group of countries which have recently lost their regular Russian customers and, after the upheavals of independence, are looking for new markets. Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Macedonia are all countries taking their first steps towards Western-style tourism. They are also prompted along this development path by a desire to join the EU. All of them promise to learn by the mistakes of their predecessors and to use their cultural and ecological assets to the best advantage.

**What do others offer?**

Many of these countries were the subject of Michael Palin's BBC series on Eastern Europe and the interest generated has given a spur to, especially, city tourism. Local wines or other drinks supplement attractions. Moldova can probably claim to be the country with the smallest number of tourists -- about 15,000 foreigners visit annually -- but the wine is a good reason to go. Macedonia has a rich gastronomic heritage, partly due to centuries of Ottoman rule, partly due to a climate which allows it to produce a wide range of fruit and vegetables. Georgia's attractions include its wine and food -- and its cultural links with Turkey. Many Turks, especially in Turkey's northeast and Bursa, have their origins in the Caucasus and it's these former compatriots that Georgia hopes to attract first. Georgia's rural heritage and magnificent churches are in a much better state of preservation than those on the Turkish side of the border, and with impressive mountains as a backdrop, tourists should be flooding in. With a new National Park adjoining the Turkish border in the Macerhal, and with the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline project taking a keen interest in wildlife protection on both sides of the border, Turkey should be planning some joint eco-tourism projects.

Unfortunately, several of these countries want to use casinos as a quick-start to their tourism program; this leads (especially in countries which have not fully democratized) to black market and money-laundering problems.

**What can Turkey learn from its competitors?**

Naturally, at travel shows their stands are not as modern or luxurious as those of their bigger competitors, but rely on displays of handicrafts, folk music and photographs of their lovely countryside to attract interest. Difficulties of access may prevent a quick expansion, but those visitors who do persevere are sure of a warm welcome and reasonable prices.

So what can Turkey learn from its competitors? Firstly, as a whole, Turkey's tourism sector is doing remarkably well, but, as she approaches the EU, this is unlikely to continue. In the current sun-sand-sea sector, Turkey has to learn from other countries' presentation, improve co-ordination between the state and private sector and market the destination better. If the state is serious about accession to the EU, it should stop this sector's growth and concentrate on maintaining markets and improving quality. Climate change, including potential water shortages, makes this urgent -- golf tourism and new ski resorts, for example, are unsustainable. Antalya Chamber of Commerce is currently talking to the EU about the implementation of the acquis on hotel accommodation, food, transport and safety.

Secondly, it has to diversify without ecological and cultural damage to attract richer, mature tourists seeking personalized experiences and willing to spend money to achieve them. The UNDP is funding several programs in eastern Turkey which aim to bring ecotourism or cultural tourism to rural areas. The aim of the EU's aid programs is largely to equalize wealth and eliminate huge income differences between east and west Turkey. If the ministry is to work actively in cooperation with international sponsors, it must be able to supply experienced personnel.

If Turkey can learn from its competitors' experiences now, she could make an easy and relatively painless transition from mass tourism to a more selective, richer market bringing in the same income with less ecological cost.

famous Cedars of Lebanon as its symbol. Palestine is bidding against Israel for more adventurous, or maybe more devout, religious tourists. The Sudan, hardly part of the Middle East but with a similar war-torn history, has just started investing in improving facilities at Khartoum airport and has constructed an extraordinary hotel and commercial complex in the center of Khartoum (Alfateh Tower). Its attractions include the Dunder National Park, the largest wildlife park in Africa, plus several smaller parks, and the long Red Sea coastline, where diving development is planned. Sudan also has

an attractive collection of religious buildings dating from its 10 centuries as a Christian society.

Others not directly affected by war have been affected by a downturn in Western visitors; anecdotal evidence suggests that Arab visitors are replacing them. Syria, with a more romantic history than Turkey packed into a smaller space, is selling the mysterious east -- the souks of Damascus, the water wheels of Aleppo, the desert ruins of Palmyra, the crusader castles of Crac des Chevaliers. It is also promoting business tourism through development fairs. Jordan's main visitor attraction is the ruin of Petra, in the southern

desert, and practically all visitors make straight for the ruined desert capital of the Nabateans; diving at Aqaba is a secondary market. Iran (\$1 billion per year) has a tourism market declining as a proportion of GDP -- not surprising, in view of sanctions exerted against it by the US and EU. Once on the overland trail to India, Iran is now mainly a religious tourism destination for Asians. With the marvelous cities of Yazd, Esfahan and Shiraz, the mountains, the Caspian coasts and its wildlife and the Arabian sea, Iran has a huge variety of experiences to offer tourists. Internal travel and accommodation is cheap, domestic airlines cover

# MINISTER GÜNAY: TOURISM IS SERIOUS BUSINESS, AND WE'VE GOT STRATEGIES

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"Most of our family pictures are taken at those yellow sign places. But the kids are grown up now," he adds. Günay thinks his interest in archeology as a tourist was very helpful for him after he was appointed to the ministry.

"I was interested in the historical and cultural parts of tourism, and I still am. I benefited from this interest. After many years, when I became minister, I was a minister who knew the situation in many yellow sign locations," he says. According to Günay there is something lacking in the "cultural angle" of Turkish tourism. He says that although tourism starts with sea, sun and sand, success depends on diversification. This is why the main target of his ministry is to expand tourism to include all 12 months of the year. He adds that this goal was shared by the ministers before him, too, but that budget problems have created obstacles. "Our budget is not one of the largest, with less than [0.5 percent] of the national budget. It's not easy to do much with limited funds. This is why we have to be productive. In years past, a part of the surplus from tourism revenue was transferred to local administrations ... but we will not be able to do this. We will try to invest in those fields that will bring more direct returns in shorter periods," he says. His ministry is planning to pay special attention to places like Mt. Nemrut: "Some of our archeological sites have great importance not only for us but also for the world. We are trying to prioritize and improve them. Nemrut is one of them. It is a wonder of the world. There is no place else like it. But it is left in the hands of nature, visitors and even people with bad intentions. We are planning to improve and preserve it. This is our one of main targets. Also, we are planning some projects in the center of the Hittite lands: Alacahöyük, Ortaköy and Boğazköy."

Minister Günay complains about the attitude that holds that anyone who wanted to touch ruins was able to do so, so there is nothing wrong with it. But he says he is determined to take measures to protect such ruins and adds: "We should take protective measures as soon as possible. This is one of my priorities." Günay has a similar approach to Istanbul as well. "Istanbul is something very special.

Everything in Istanbul -- the archeological sites, the Ottoman heritage, the examples of Turkish architecture before modernization -- all of them require harmony, and they await our attention. There are very serious works under the coordination of the municipalities, the ministry and the provincial administrations. I am trying to monitor all these works step by step, street by street," he emphasizes.

Günay stresses that archaeological ruins alone are not enough to make a place interesting. "There must be transportation, accommodation and security. While we are trying to continue our restoration and renovation efforts, we are also trying to move other resources to those places frequented by tourists. There are inspiring examples: The number of boutique hotels in Anatolia is increasing. I think the bed capacity in Anatolia will double by the end of this year," he notes.

There are some other potential areas that Minister Günay wants to mobilize, including thermal springs. "Turkey is first in Europe in terms of [the potential of its] thermal springs, but revenue from this sector has been very low. Turkey has thermal springs from Izmir to Erzurum. The hotels in these places to accommodate the middle class, but we need new places that will meet the needs of wealthy people from around the world. There have been developments in this field, too. There are investments in Afyon and Denizli in thermal spring tourism. Thermal springs are one of the areas in which Turkey can really take off," he says.

Günay says there are other areas of high potential in the tourism sector that his ministry is looking to pursue. "There are projects aiming to create new destinations. The Vatican decided to dedicate this year to St. Paul, who was from Tarsus. We have Şanlıurfa, which is an important site for different religions. We have Mardin with its interesting architecture. We have Cappadocia with its naturally designed architecture. For example, Cappadocia can be a place for extended stays if it is connected to the surrounding areas. Visitors currently come and stay only a couple of days, but if it is connected to the skiing center in Kayseri and archeological sites in Corum, the duration of stays can be longer," he explains.

"If we can create new destinations in different fields, those places will be preferred by people who are coming from higher income groups. Our

projects are not only aiming at more tourists but also more revenue. Last year we had 23,341,000 tourists -- and this is a record, by the way. The year before it was less than 20 million. I believe that if we can create diversity, if we can improve transportation, security and overall maintenance, our visitor numbers can easily reach 40 million."

Günay says this year they made a change in their advertising strategy and prepared various films about Turkey's destinations. "We are trying to enter into all fields, from street advertisements to television ads. Public relations are also very important. We are inviting members of the press, artists and opinion makers. We are planning to invite 5,000 opinion makers this year. I think this is very effective. Think about an opinion maker who has a picture in front of a tourist site or writes something about it. It is more effective. The advertisement on the wall is important in general, but you should do something interactive," he says.

Another area that is important for Günay is the circulation of Turkish exhibitions throughout the world. The ministry has plans for this, too, he says, and notes: "Our agendas for this and next year are full. We will open 'Turkish Year' in Russia in April ... İbber Ortaylı [head of the Topkapı Museum] had once envisioned a 'Kremlin in Topkapı, Topkapı in Kremlin' exhibition. I hope we will hold something like that. In October there will be the Frankfurt Book Fair at which we will exhibit some original manuscripts and calligraphy. We are currently working to organize Turkish years in France and China for next year. We will also try to exhibit the musical and historical wealth of Turkey in a music festival in Berlin before the book fair and at a fair in Leipzig. There are also projects geared toward the Arab world."



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# TURKISH TOURISM ON SAFE TRACK FOR GROWTH



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Turkey has grown with the global economy in recent years, and its burgeoning tourism industry has benefited from more people having more disposable income to devote to travel and leisure.

The growth in Turkey's tourism revenues mirrors that in the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) the country has attracted, increasing from less than a billion dollars in the early 1990s to nearly \$20 billion in 2007, and from a few million visitors to nearly 30 million a year.

The industry achieved this growth in Turkey without many of the tax and investment incentives offered by the governments of competitor destinations -- real benefits to motivate them to develop projects in those countries. This situation may be changing, as Turkey faces growing competition for tourist dollars from new developments in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as from more mature markets such as Italy, Spain and Greece.

Turkey is of Europe but not quite in Europe. Nevertheless, according to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data, Turkey has benefited from growth in the European Union and neighboring economies as more and more people can afford to take holidays abroad.

Germany still sends more visitors to Turkey than any other country, but Russia has risen fast and the country also is pulling in

travelers from as far off as Korea and Japan.

The UN tourism agency says its data prove that tourism offers more growth potential to emerging markets and the developing world than to the more developed countries, with double-digit growth spilling over into many other sectors and providing better lives for millions of people. While the United States still pulls in more tourist income than any other single country -- some \$80 billion last year -- the weight of the revenue to total economic activity is greater in emerging markets.

With major political and structural reforms, Turkey's overall economy has grown more resilient to external shocks and so has its tourism industry.

At the time of the first Gulf War in 1991, the conflict practically shut down Turkey's hotels. Even with the war over by March, many of Turkey's beaches that summer were strangely empty.

Now Turkey's tourism industry has grown right through five years of war in Iraq, as people accept it as a safe and discrete destination. This year hoteliers and travel agents quietly worry whether the business will slide off as a result of the Turkish military's incursion into northern Iraq, but analysts say the market takes comfort from the operation being conducted in close cooperation with the US.

Rather than shying away from the Gulf region, Turkey even looks to the Gulf for capital investment.

In a late February trip to Dubai, Turkish Economy Minister Mehmet Simsek promised investors a "good return on their investment" and said that Turkey offered great potential as the sixth-largest economy in Europe. The minister also visited Qatar and Kuwait, where he reiterated the government's four key sectors plan.

Of course, rich Arabs have been investing in Turkey for years, but what started out as springing for personal villas on the Bosphorus turned into major investments in hotels and resorts. Now awash in uncountable billions of petrodollars, the Gulf states are a key stop for anyone organizing an investors' road trip.

Simsek also comforted potential tourism investors with a defense of Turkey's still-high inflation, which at 8 percent is running several points beyond target. He said that one-off shocks from oil and food price increases account for most of the inflation and that the real rate without them would be closer to 3 percent.

As trade drives economic growth, the minister said that a free trade agreement could help bind Turkey's economy closer to those in the greater Middle East. In fact, in effect the EU customs union has for more than a decade seen strong growth in both general trade and tourism.

Turkey's government and private sector are working every possible angle to see that the tourism industry in Turkey reaches its goal of \$40 billion in tourism income within the next five years.

## Campaign launched to draw more health tourism to Turkey

HASAN BOZKURT ANKARA

Turkey, which derives significant revenue from "sea, sand and sun" tourism, is not yet meeting its potential in health-related tourism, but now has plans to develop this sector.

Despite the presence of developed health facilities, Turkey's intake from this aspect of tourism is only \$500 million annually, when in fact health-related tourism represents a \$35 billion industry globally.

An estimated 1 million tourists a year head to the small island nation of Singapore for health services, while in comparison, only around 250,000 foreigners seek health services at Turkey's many thermal spas and hospitals annually.

It has been determined that not enough is known internationally about Turkey's hospitals, thermal spas, hotels and tourism companies. But this is all about to change; the Health Tourism Development Association has plans to prepare a guide for foreigners on the subject, which it will distribute to embassies, consulates and tourism bureaus. The goal is to increase the number of foreigners coming to Turkey in search of various health-related services to 1 million annually.

The vast majority of health tourists currently head to Far Eastern nations, with an estimated 70 percent of the total of this kind of tourism taking place there. The huge popularity of nations such as South Korea, Singapore, Bahrain and Malaysia in the area of health tourism, despite having fewer thermal baths, facilities and hospitals than Turkey, is explained by the success in their marketing strategies as well as encouragement given to this sector by those nations' governments. Malaysia, for example, guarantees easy visas and cheap plane fares for foreigners coming into the country for health services, while Bahrain lifted all taxation on new hospitals being opened in the country.

In the meantime though, recent years have seen a significant increase in the potential of Turkey's health-related tourism activities, with newly opened private hospitals and special thermal bath facilities. Dursun Aydin, the head of the Health Tourism Development Association, says: "In terms of potential,



we are number one; but in terms of the share of total revenue, we are in last place. If we would do more work marketing our hospitals and mineral-thermal facilities, we would see an increase to \$10 billion annual income in this sector over the next five years." Aydin explains why it is that tourists are still choosing Far Eastern countries for health tourism despite Turkey's proximity to Europe, the Middle East and the Caucasus, saying, "For example, every year Thailand advertises and distributes information on its health services facilities to other countries around the world, which is why European tourists, who could actually reach Turkey in just two hours, wind up going on 15-hour journeys to Thailand."

Aydin noted that his group's plan was, with the support of the Health Ministry, to prepare and distribute booklets and guides aimed at reversing this trend. He commented: "We don't currently have any guides that list all of our various health-related institutions. But now we are planning on printing such guides every year. These guides will be 200 pages long and will be distributed to many different countries."

The Health Ministry and the Culture and Tourism Ministry have declared 2008 the year of health-related tourism and are currently working on a number of different initiatives in this area. During the month of March, Antalya will host the First International Health Tourism Congress, with investors from 65 nations around the world participating and hopefully signing agreements. Clinics, private hospitals, cosmetic surgery centers and thermal bath facilities are waiting anxiously for what is hoped to be a flood of foreign investors.

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# Turkish hotelier's forecast: smooth sailing ahead

KRISTINA KAMP ISTANBUL

Following a problematic year in 2006, Turkey's hotel tourism recovered in 2007 and today appears stronger than ever, a condition that one of Turkey's tourism experts is predicting will last throughout the year.

"We expect a successful year," says Timur Bayındır, chairman of the Turkish Hoteliers' Association (TUROB), in an interview with Today's Zaman. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Turkey is among the 10 most popular tourist destinations worldwide. With an increase of about 18 percent

in tourists visiting Turkey in 2007, the country's tourism market is growing at a rate above the world average.

Indeed, the current Turkish hotel business situation is currently "very, very good," Bayındır confirms. The year 2007 was "extraordinarily good," he says, adding, "But in 2008, we will surpass those results and grow further."

Especially Istanbul will develop rapidly, Bayındır says. The most important segment of Istanbul's tourism is still made up of business trips. Indeed, an immense number of international but also domestic guests have begun to use Istanbul an epicenter for business and are in-

creasingly organizing or participating in congresses, seminars and meetings in the city.

## New segment: health tourism

A relatively new segment that recently emerged in the city is what Bayındır calls "health and medical tourism." He cites the growing number of patients coming to Turkey to receive high quality medical treatment for comparatively low prices. "Health and medical tourism is a very rapidly developing kind of tourism in the cities," he states.

However, the typical holiday tourism with its popular destinations on the Turkish Riviera, namely Antalya and Antalya, is also blossoming in Turkey.

The biggest group of vacationers in Turkey is from Russia, while Germans are the second largest group. Still, Bayındır sees an "especially big potential" for more tourists from Russia. "This year there will again be 150,000 more Russians coming to Turkey," he estimates. Yet now there are also tourists from countries like India, formerly not very interested in Turkey, starting to visit Turkey.

Indeed, Turkey is currently one of the fastest growing tourism destinations among the countries in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, southeastern Europe and Asia. But though it has -- with 23 million visitors last year -- outperformed the major European destinations like

Italy and Spain in terms of the numbers of visitors, it is still lagging behind in revenues.

Asked what has to be done to improve the situation, Bayındır answers: "Well, 23 million tourists per year is still not enough," and he explains that the sector is currently facing fierce competition amongst the countries' hotels. "Capacities are higher than the number of visitors," he points out. "First, we simply have to stop building hotels," he says. "And second, we have to diversify our offers." He notes that Turkey has to find more specific and creative ways to use Turkey's multiple tourism options. "Turkey is a varied and multi-colored country," he states, adding that it has clean seas, signifi-

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Timur Bayındır

cant cultural heritage and a terrific landscape. "Turkey has also a lot of positive features to offer and can easily keep up with the competition from other holiday destinations in the Mediterranean region. We simply have reasonable prices and our wide range of all-inclusive offers is now looking attractive to many people, especially families benefited from this system," he says.

And does the chairman also see the paradox of all-inclusive tourism, packaged tours in which lodging, food and drinks are all included? "Well, it has its shortcomings," he admits, like the fact that these people don't leave their hotel areas. "They don't get to know Turkey," he laments. But environmental problems will be addressed, he promises. "And in any case, this all-inclusive sector is still one of our main pillars," he emphasizes.

## Decrease of VAT a 'big success,' infrastructure problematic

So, all in all, the tourism sector in Turkey is well set up, Bayındır says, but he raises several concerns. He cites high energy prices and the weakening dollar as perpetual issues. Additionally, he blames a new fee that requires hotels to pay royalties for music they use in their facilities. "Since this regulation was introduced two or three years ago, many establishments did away with music altogether," he says. Another one of Turkey's problems is infrastructure, he notes. Traffic in Turkey is a growing problem as is getting to the country. More regular flights are needed, he insists.

On the other hand, a decrease in the value-added tax (VAT) by the government has already become an incentive to help the tourism business, he says, adding that this decision was considered a success by his organization. "Decreasing VAT has always been one of our members' biggest demands -- and we have succeeded in lowering it," he says, confirming that it has already produced positive results. "If there had been no decrease, we would have been forced to increase prices," he states, adding, "and the prices still remain our primary incentive."

This also shows increased demand by foreign investors, who show growing interest in southern Anatolia, namely Konya, Mersin and Kayseri. Istanbul remains the focal point for most foreign investment, however. "In the near future, 20,000 beds will be available in Istanbul, all of which will be at high-end hotels. With this new addition, Istanbul's total capacity will increase to 70,000 beds," Bayındır says.

"These investments are very good for Turkey," he underlines. International corporations bring not only their own clients with them but usually seek ways to integrate with Turkish companies. "Administration and organization are usually carried out by the investor, while the whole operational aspect of the business is done by Turks," Bayındır explains. "To sum it up, Turkey's hotel sector is organized well, and we look optimistically at the year ahead of us," he concludes.

# İZMİR GEARS UP FOR EXPO 2015 RACE



Will EXPO 2015 be in İzmir or Milan? İzmir seems to be more advantageous than its rival, owing to its larger investment potential, and would attain its goals set for 2040 25 years ahead of plan, in 2015, if it wins the bid. In such a case, the pearl of the Aegean would attract a great number of domestic and foreign investors. Sixteen million visitors are expected to attend the EXPO 2015 İzmir universal exhibition, for which the government has allotted \$1.3 billion.

İzmir is entering the last stage of the race with Milan to host the EXPO event, also known as the world's history, culture and education Olympics. If it becomes the winner in the voting, to be held in the Bureau of International Exhibitions (BIE) general meeting in Paris, İzmir will be able to make 32 years of investments in seven years. In other words, it will attain its 2040 goals 25 years ahead of the expected time. For the city, EXPO will serve as a facilitator to achieve its goal to become a center for fairs and conventions. İzmir will become a renowned city in the field of health, owing to its proposed theme for the EXPO: "New Ways for a Better World and Health for Everyone."

The İzmir Metropolitan Municipality has reported that the city has undertaken lobbying activities abroad to promote İzmir's candidacy for EXPO 2015; municipality authorities expect remarkable growth in the city's economy as a return on the 15 million euro budget. Estimates underline that the project will increase the business capacity of the city; current predictions run from \$15-25 billion. The expected number of visitors to the organization for a six-month period is 16-20 million. This implies that 40 million visits will be made during the event. The average daily number of visitors to the EXPO site is expected to be around 300-360,000.

The exhibition site in İnciraltı will include an amphitheater, an EXPO lake and tower, an outdoor theater hall, 94 pavilions, 103 restaurants, 30 stores and public areas and sites reserved for general services and visitors. Seventy-six of the pavilions will be reserved for participant countries. The site will be arranged to host 35,000 shows with 75,000 actors, actresses and artists. The number of people to be employed on-site for the six-month period is 1,200.

The circulation in the number of visitors will positively affect transportation, infrastructure and tourism activities in the city. Experts estimate that the city's thermal tourism potential will attract a large number of visitors to Cesme, Karaburun and Seferihisar.

Amid the preparations for EXPO in the city, the Metropolitan Municipality is sponsoring a number of projects; the municipality has made a total investment of \$1 billion in the last three years, paying careful attention to prestigious projects that will create synergy owing to EXPO. To this end, city authorities reserved a large area called "New İzmir" for skyscrapers, residences and business centers. With the adoption of new development plans that will dramatically change the outlook of the city by the Municipal Assembly, the project will be transformed into the Manhattan of İzmir.

On the project, İzmir Mayor Aziz Kocaoglu says: "The tourism and service sectors are known for their contribution to the generation of employment. This project will attract great sums of investments to the city and resolve the unemployment problem. It will meet the city's need for skyscrapers. At least \$10 billion in investments will be made. There will be no unemployment problem in İzmir. In the early stages, about a dozen land owners showed interest in making investments. There are a lot of options and alternatives for this project. There are many who are interested in building hotels, business centers or malls. Our goal in the project is to prepare a portfolio of investments for investors. Let us assume that an investor comes from China or the US to İzmir. He seeks to build a hotel, but there is no previously reserved area for this purpose; he seeks to build a hospital but finds no appropriate place to erect it. The same also applies to industrial zones, fair area and convention centers. There is no infrastructure or foundation for this. We are trying to remove this deficit. We have determined the future of the city via the development plans. Investors will be able to make sound decisions when they arrive in the city, owing to the new development plan."

The EXPO 2015 İzmir Secretariat says that the total budget allocated to the organization is 1.3 billion euros, whereas the total amount of investments to be made in relation to EXPO will be 461.1 million euros. Of the total figure, 75.6 million euros will be reserved for investments related to urbanization and infrastructural services. A total of 14,000 people will work in the fair zone. The infrastructure investments in relation to the EXPO event in İzmir in the following seven years will include the following:

**High-speed train:** The project will reduce the travel time between İzmir and Ankara to three hours. The train will follow the route that includes stops and stations in İzmir, Manisa, Balıkesir, Bandırma, İstanbul, Eskişehir, Ankara, Aydın, Denizli and Isparta.

**Marine transportation:** In addition to the already available docks in Alsancak, Bostanlı, Karsiyaka, Bayraklı, Pasaport, Konak, Göztepe and Üçkuyular, a new ferry dock will be constructed in İnciraltı. Eight additional ferry docks and two public ferry landing stages will be built as part of the project.

**Land transportation:** Additional highways will be constructed as part of preparation for EXPO. Owing to the projected İzmir-Istanbul highway, the traveling time between these two cities will be reduced to six hours. The traveling time between Ankara and İzmir will also be reduced to six hours following completion of the highway. The road construction projects also include highways in the direction of Antalya and Konya.

İzmir or Milan? The host city for the high-profile EXPO 2015 will be picked in voting scheduled to take place on March 31



**Air transportation:** Domestic and international flights depart from Adnan Menderes Airport. In addition to this, the Çiğli airport will also be used in international flights. The investments will also expand the sphere of transportation opportunities; the city will be improved in architectural terms and become more prosperous owing to employment opportunities in connection with the event. Enhancements in transportation and accommodation will contribute to the city's tourism potential and commerce. İzmir will become a global name in the field of health with the help of EXPO.

## İzmir vs. Milan

The EXPO universal exhibition that may be held in İzmir, an eastern Mediterranean city, will attract the world's attention to this geography. If İzmir is selected as the EXPO venue for 2015, it will be the first time the exhibition is held in a predominantly Muslim country. Italy has held the exhibition four times, and Milan hosted two of those four.

If EXPO 2015 is held in İzmir, it will be the first time Turkey hosts such a comprehensive event. İzmir is known for its mild weather conditions. The number of sunny days throughout the year is about 300. Because EXPO will be held in spring and summer, the good weather conditions in the region will provide enjoyable opportunities.

İzmir has made a more appropriate theme choice than Milan. The theme "New routes to a better world and health for all" picked for EXPO 2015 İzmir makes references to the social, economic and technological dimensions of health. Moreover, if EXPO 2015 is held in İzmir, it will be a great opportunity to discuss the current topic promoted by the UN as part of its millennium development goals, which put a strong emphasis on health. The deadline for the attainment of these goals and the scheduled time of EXPO 2015 will coincide. Viewed from this perspective, it will be fair to say that İzmir's motto looks better than that of Milan.

İzmir has transport advantages over Milan. It is possible to get there via a short flight from major cities in different parts of the world. The exhibition site that İzmir reserved for the event is far larger than the area that Milan considers allotting to the organization.

Italy, a founding member of the EU, currently enjoys being located in a more politically and economically stable geography. Milan is a more popular city than İzmir. Milan is more experienced because it has held the same exhibition twice in the past. But İzmir gained experience holding international events with Universiade 2005 and the Mediterranean Olympics. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül's particular emphasis on İzmir's bid to win the race is another factor that increases the city's chances of holding the EXPO event. More recently, President Gül met with delegates in İzmir and the eagerness of the İzmir residents is being cited as another important reason for the increased chances of the city. Most of the delegates expressed their support for İzmir's candidacy.

## Delegates from 140 countries will hold election

EXPO events, which may be basically described as a cultural, historical and educational Olympics of the world, call on countries to share their visions and experiences to make the world a better place. The goal of the EXPOs is not to promote the marketing of particular products of the countries but to encourage them to present their cultural, historical and national characteristics. This aims to promote expression of new ideas and development for a better world. The EXPOs, which have been held for 150 years, receive tens of millions of people in every event. The EXPO Universal Exhibition, which is held in a larger area than that of the Olympics and Soccer World Cups and lasts longer than these events, has been held in 63 different countries so far, attracting 800 million visitors.

The Paris-based BIE includes 140 member countries. The delegates from these countries vote to pick a city to become an EXPO center. İzmir will have to finish the race ahead of its rival Milan in the voting session, scheduled to take place on March 31.

That 22 million people visited the EXPO event held in Aichi, Japan, and 70 million visitors are expected in the upcoming 2010 Shanghai EXPO gives a clue about the magnitude and prominence of the event. Experts note that Turkey will be able to attract a greater number of visitors owing to its unique geography. The theme that Shanghai picked is "a better city, a better life." The theme that İzmir has picked is a continuation of that concept.

İzmir's competitor, Milan, held the Grand EXPO in 1906. Milan is expecting 25 million visitors for EXPO 2015. The number of visitors that İzmir plans to attract is far larger than Milan's estimates. In reliance on its unique geographical advantages, İzmir seeks to host 50 million visitors.

## Schröder supports İzmir's candidacy

The city hosted 222 BIE delegates from 104 countries last week in the Second International Symposium for EXPO 2015 İzmir. Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who attended the symposium in support of İzmir's candidacy, said: "I hope I will be here for the opening of the 2015 exhibition." This remark shocked the other delegates. Schröder, who expressed open support for İzmir's bid, further said: "İzmir's candidacy for the EXPO is appropriate. I wish them success despite the strong rival they have to deal with. I believe they will succeed. İzmir will demonstrate that it holds the potential to serve as a bridge between Europe and Asia. EXPO will make İzmir, Europe and Turkey stronger."



# Ahmet Barut: 2007 sees tourist numbers rise, revenues decline



Ahmet Barut

ILHAN BASMACI ISTANBUL

Türkish Federation of Hotel Enterprises (TÜROFED) Chairman Ahmet Barut has said the tourism sector has become a giant industry with a total contribution to the economy of \$20 billion, but added that tourism revenues have declined in 2007, despite an increase in the number of tourists, due to an overvalued Turkish lira.

Barut underlined that hotel occupancy rates in the July-August term in 2007 were very high but the overvalued Turkish lira and a low foreign currency rate had negatively affected the tourism sector. "Our revenue has declined despite the increased number of tourists. ... Our profits have declined in comparison to last year," he said.

Noting that domestic tourism plays the greatest role in the overall success of a country's tourism industry, Barut also recalled that a revival in domestic tourism is relevant to the economic progress of the country. "Per capita income in Turkey is about \$5,000-\$6,000. When this rises to \$10,000, domestic tourism will revive. The share of domestic tourism at resorts is 10 percent at present; it is 30 percent in Istanbul and 50 percent in city hotels. As long as the economic situation of the country continues to improve, the idea of going on vacation will also develop and spread. This will trigger domestic tourism. Today, a family trying to survive under minimum wage cannot go on vacation in Kusadas. People will tend to spend money for vacations only if they secure their future. Domestic tourism has revived more recently; private airlines contributed to this. I think domestic tourism will develop fur-

ther and in parallel with increased welfare levels," Barut explained.

Despite some difficulties it is possible to extend sea and sun tourism throughout the year, Barut noted, adding: "Our country sees an influx of 22 million tourists [annually]. This is something very significant. People would not come if they thought they would be unable to find what they expected. We need to convince them that Turkey is spectacular in the winter as well. For this reason, additional facilities like golf resorts and [sports] fields, convention centers and thermal spas should be built in regions known for their attractive sun and seashores. Most Europeans are not aware that skiing is possible in Turkey during the winter. We need work more to effectively promote these possibilities. We have so far failed to explain the quality of resort hotels and spa centers to visitors. We must pay more attention to the promotion of winter tourism and make all necessary arrangements."

Dismissing concerns of a potentially "excessive" number of tourism facilities, Barut underlined that additional facilities are required in Mersin, Tarsus, Marmaris, the northern Aegean and Istanbul. "It is impossible to attract 40-50 million tourists to Turkey with [only] two dominant tourism centers, Istanbul and Antalya. You cannot host 30 million people in Antalya. You have to build additional tourism facilities to be able to host additional tourists. The Aegean should get involved in the game. This region should be able to host at least 10 million people. Izmir should use its potential and the EXPO convention it will soon host [in 2015] will be a huge contribution. Cappadocia and east Anatolia also have

potential. This region should be reinvigorated by resort hotels. In other words, additional centers of attraction should be opened in other areas. Otherwise, we will be unable to host 40 million tourists," he stressed.

Forecast tourist figures for 2008 are 25 million, expected to spend in the region of \$20 billion, Barut noted. "Although 22 million people [have] come to this country simply because they like it, we have to make progress in terms of investment. We have to improve the infrastructure. Our hotels are five-star hotels, but when tourists venture outside, they are treated as two-star customers. Tourists seek quality food and quality shopping. They want to walk over orderly pavements and spend time in dignified entertainment spots. It is a shame that we do not have a facility to purify [a potable tap] water [supply] in Bodrum. The same also applies to other resort centers," he added.

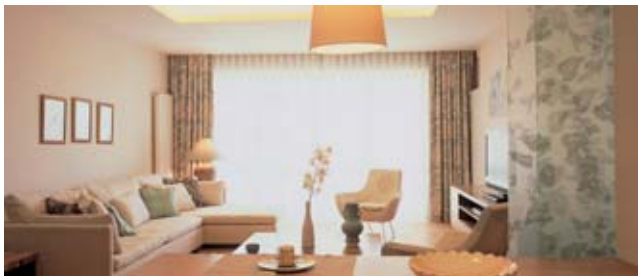
Commenting on the International Tourism Bourse (ITB), he said it was the most significant tourism fair in the world. He added that ITB Berlin 2008 offers the opportunity to explore current world tendencies in the field of tourism during a time of globalization and increased mobilization. "Another important aspect of the fair, considered an important event for professionals, is its ability to offer visitors information on other participant countries," he said. He pointed out that the fair is a place where professionals get together and where the newest developments to shape the sector are discussed thoroughly. It is also very important for Turkish entrepreneurs to assess the potential and opportunities of investment in Germany.

## TÜROFED: Turkish Federation of Hotel Enterprises

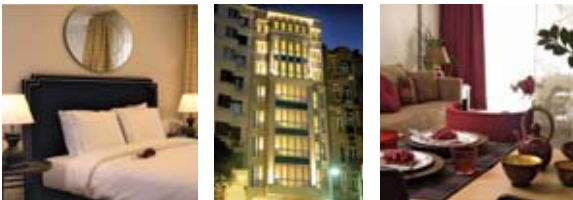
An umbrella organization of tourism hotels in Turkey, TÜROFED represents 1,890 facilities with a 350,000-bed capacity. The federation's facilities have brought 12 regional associations together and provide employment opportunities for 300,000 people.

### Associations represented in TÜROFED

**ATİD:** Anatolia Tourist Administrators Association  
**AKTOB:** Mediterranean Tourist Hoteliers Association  
**ALTİD:** Alanya Tourist Administrators Association  
**BODER:** Bodrum Tourist Hoteliers, Administrators and Investors Association  
**ÇUKTOB:** Cukurova Tourist Hoteliers Association  
**ETİK:** Aegean Tourist Administrators Association  
**GETOB:** South Aegean Tourist Hoteliers and Administrators Association  
**GÜMTOB:** South Marmara Hoteliers and Administrators Association  
**FETOB:** Fethiye Hoteliers Association  
**KAPTİD:** Cappadocia Hoteliers and Administrators Association  
**KODER:** Kuşadası Hoteliers and Administrators Association  
**TUROB:** Tourist Hoteliers, Administrators and Investors Association



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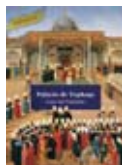
  
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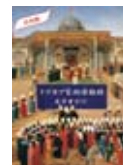
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## FOREIGN AIRLINERS EAGER TO MAKE FURTHER INVESTMENT IN TURKISH MARKET

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Privatization and the subsequent modernization of the airports are being cited as the primary reasons behind foreign airlines making investments in the Turkish market. Foreign airlines, including Lufthansa, British Airlines, Emirates, Singapore, Gulf Air, Iberia and KLM, now use larger aircraft and operate more frequent flights, particularly in the summer.

Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa's jointly owned company SunExpress carried 2 million passengers to Turkey last year. It also launched domestic flights and carried 1 million passengers from Izmir and Antalya.

The company aims to increase its turnover by 20 percent to 365 million euros and the number of passengers to 3.6 million in 2008. SunExpress started flights from Antalya to Basel, Berlin, Bremen, Dortmund, Frankfurt, Friedrichshafen, Hanover, Karlsruhe, Köln, Leipzig, Luxembourg, Munich, Nuremberg, Saarbrücken, Salzburg, Vienna and Zurich; and from Izmir to Amsterdam, Basel, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hanover, Köln, Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Zurich in the 2007-2008 winter season. It will also start flights from Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport along with new destinations from Izmir and Antalya.

The Dubai-based Emirates Airlines, which has been operating in the Turkish market for two decades, has grown by 700 percent in this period. The airliner has transported 515,000 passengers on the routes to and from Turkey. The company, which attained a 90 percent occupancy rate on its Istanbul flights last year, now seeks to increase its number of passengers from 140,000 in 2007 to 118,000 in 2008. Emirates, which launched Dubai-Istanbul flights with a connection in Frankfurt twice a week in 1987, has made direct flights on the same route with state-of-the-art aircraft since March 1, 2006.

Lufthansa Airlines, which makes regular flights from Germany to Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, carried 865,737 passengers on the Germany-Turkey route last year. The company seeks to increase its revenue in the Turkish market by 5 percent this year. The company currently has 64 flights to Turkey with its Airbus A319, A320 and A300 type aircraft. Lufthansa will launch two direct flights from Berlin and Cologne starting March 15 and will schedule four additional flights from Istanbul to Munich in July.

Saudi Arabian Airlines doubled the number of passengers it carries during hajj in the last four years. Saudi Arabian Airlines General Manager for Turkey Fahad H. al-Sheibani said they have had flights to Turkey for four decades and that they had no significant problems during this period. Al-Sheibani noted that they are estimating a number of 150,000 passengers for hajj this year. The Saudi airline, which took its first flight to Turkey in November of 1967, surpassed its regular annual carriage capacity in 2006 and 2007. The company's fleet includes 150 aircraft. It has return flights from Istanbul to Medina on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

EasyJet, a low cost airline that entered the air transport business in Britain 12 years ago, has flights to Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport. The company moved up to the sixth place in the European market, surpassing Britain's national airliner, British Airways. EasyJet is also about to finalize a deal with British Airways to acquire its low cost affiliate GB Airways. Peter Voets, marketing director of EasyJet, which started its operations in Turkey in mid-2006, said they had carried 162,000 passengers on the Istanbul-London and Istanbul-Basel routes in 2007, further noting that their goal for this year is to attain a figure of 200,000.

German airliner Germanwings is very influential in the Turkish market owing to its competitive prices starting from 19 euros. The company's PR director, Andreas Engel, said they were pleased by the Turkish market, where they have been operating for five years. Engel further noted that Turkish passengers also preferred their flights because of reliability and competitive offers. The company carried 350,000 passengers in 2007 and has a new goal to transport 400,000 passengers in 2008.

British Airways will increase its two flights a day from London Heathrow Airport to Istanbul Atatürk Airport to three in the summer season. The company will also launch flights from London Gatwick Airport to Antalya in addition to its current flights from London to Izmir.

British Midland Airways (BMD) from Great Britain entered the Turkish market when it acquired the British Mediterranean, an affiliate of British Airways, in October of 2007. The company's commercial development director for Turkey, Gail Holden, noted that they gained access to 16 additional destinations including Ankara following the acquisition. Recalling that they had 71 aircrafts, Holden underlined that their annual turnover is expected to reach \$2.1 billion in 2007. Holden, noting that they will start daily return flights between Ankara and London, also said their number one goal in Turkey is to continue these flights.



PHOTO © NEHMET DEMIRCI

## Family holiday fun all year round

The Sah Inn Paradise hotel broadens the holiday season to a full 12 months with its five pools for women and four for men, 40,000-square-meter recreation area, 1,022-square-meter convention hall, Turkish bath, spa and 400-meter-long beach.

In a favorable location on the Mediterranean coast, just 90 kilometers from Antalya's city center and 105 kilometers from its airport, the Sah Inn Paradise is ready to welcome more treasured in 2008.

The Sah Inn Paradise offers visitors a unique combination of Mediterranean shores, beauty and nature, with accommodation including both luxury and standard rooms as well as special facilities for disabled guests; the hotel has a total of 1,400 beds.

Besides leisure activities, the Sah Inn Paradise also offers a

great opportunity for business meetings in the greatest comfort. It has a 1,100-person capacity convention hall and two smaller 450-capacity halls as well as fully equipped meeting rooms for special business gatherings. In its main restaurant, which is ready to serve 1,500 guests simultaneously, traditional Turkish cuisine and world flavors abound.

Özer Severcan, chairman of Sah Inn parent company Kamer Holding, told Today's Tourism that they aimed to continue to provide their guests with the best. The group offers Turkish culture and hospitality at the highest level, he noted. More information is available through the Sah Inn offices in Istanbul and Ankara and their sole authorized agency in Europe, Suay Tour. **Istanbul Today's Tourism**

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# RIXOS' \$1.5 BILLION GOLDEN FORMULA: DESIGN, CONSTRUCT AND MANAGE

TURHAN BOZKURT ISTANBUL

The Rixos Group, attracting worldwide attention for its fast growth in the tourism and construction sectors, is currently signing off on billion dollar projects in Croatia, Kazakhstan and Dubai.

The Rixos Group is currently building a 420-room, 38-villa luxury holiday village on Dubai's Palm Island. The Ottoman Palace, as it is to be named, is projected to cost \$700 million, making it one of the region's three most expensive hotels after the famous Burj El Arab. The financing for the project, which will also include a health and beauty center on the total 10,000 square meter play, is being provided by the Dubai-based Zabeel Investments. Rixos Group CEO Fethah Tamince has said this project's model is similar to that of the group's other construction projects. "Our principle is this: Design, construct and manage. We are preparing the blueprints for the project. One of our partners, Sembol Construction, is undertaking the construction. In the end though, it will be the Rixos flag flying outside the hotel." Tamince noted that in only a short time the Rixos name had become an important brand on a local level in Dubai, commenting: "With the courage this success has given us, we are turning our attentions to other areas of the world. Our goal now is to become a global name in tourism."

The annual turnover of the Rixos Group surpassed \$1.5 billion last year, with \$1.3 billion in construction, \$220 million in tourism and \$30 million from the Lidyon jewelry stores in 2007 alone. Tamince, speaking to a group of economy editors from various newspapers, made some noteworthy statements on subjects ranging from tourism to the troubled global economic climate, even touching on the Galataport and the Larapark bidding tenders.

Tamince said his group's goal was to change the image of Turkey as solely a cheap tourism location, noting that perpetuating this image was not necessary for companies that do their jobs well. As an example, he pointed to hotel prices in Antalya's Belek region, noting that an average room price at Rixos Premium in Belek is \$600, and that the daily prices for villas next to the hotel start at \$10,000. Tamince noted that the occupancy rate last season was an average of 90 percent and

The Rixos Group's annual turnover surpassed \$1.5 billion last year, \$1.3 billion of which came from construction activities. The group earned \$220 million from tourism and \$30 million from the Lidyon jewelry stores

that his group wants to continue this same level of success outside of Turkey. It is within this framework that the Rixos Group acquired the Libertas Hotel in Dubrovnik, on Croatia's Adriatic coastline, which went up for sale in a privatization effort by the Croatian government. The hotel, badly damaged during regional conflict in the '90s, was renovated by Rixos in an effort that cost 100 million euros. The hotel is now set to open up in May, and has already been filled to capacity. The average price for rooms at this hotel is 350 euros a day. "We are even more expensive than the Hilton," Tamince quipped.

The Rixos Group head noted that many new products and services from Germany, England and Russia will make their European debuts at the Rixos Libertas, including brands like Range Rover and Microsoft. This hotel, which has 320 rooms, will also include health and beauty centers. "In the end, the Ottoman hamam has arrived in Croatia," Tamince commented.

**We may sell holdings, but our flag stays**

Noting that his group receives many offers for purchases or partnerships, Tamince says: "We may sell some of our holdings or take on partners. But the management of these sites and the brand name stays with us. We want to see the Rixos flag waving out front. We want to be known for our management. We stand behind our promise of 1,000

hotels, and we are moving step by step toward this goal."

In the meantime the Rixos Group continues to grow in Dubai, one of the seven emirates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Rixos Group will conclude its first prestigious project there this year when the Rixos Ottoman Palace opens up on Dubai's Palm Island. From the marble to the rugs used in this project, many items have come from Turkey for the Rixos Ottoman Palace, where the average nightly price for a room will be \$1,300. He believes brands not available in Dubai will be unable to move to the forefront of the global league, Tamince explained: "We've come here with our families. We have focused all of our attention and experience on this geography, which has become such a point of interest these days on a global level." Rixos has a 100-strong team at the Ottoman Palace in Dubai.

Tamince also underlines that the Rixos Group will either pull out of or renew project investments that are currently inactive or don't overlap with well-known brands. "Included in these sorts of investments are Beldibi, Labada and Konya. We are planning on renovating our facilities in Tekirova to bring it up to our own standard. We are also planning a variety of different activities at this hotel for the eight straight weeks that make up the foundation of the season. This will be an international promotion for both our hotel and for Bodrum, as we are planning to bring in well-known world stars for this promotion."

**Rixos in Dubai luxury settlement 'The World'**

The Rixos Group has also purchased the "Falkland Islands" section of the "The World" island project in Dubai, formed of man-made islands. The group's plan is to build a 180-room, 85 villa hotel here, set for completion in December 2008. When asked whether the Rixos Group has any plans to purchase the Turkey Island in the project, he replies that it could happen, for the moment they would wait and see.

In addition the Rixos Group will complete a \$100 million hotel investment project in the Kazakhstan city of Almaty in November 2008. Its construction of the Han Cadrir (Khan Tent) project in Kazakhstan, which has been designed by renowned architect Norman Foster and is expected to cost a total of \$250 million, is also continuing.



Rixos Group CEO Fethah Tamince

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# TOURISM ENTERPRISES FACE DIFFICULT TIMES DUE TO LOW CURRENCY RATES

Despite the fact that the number of tourists increased by 10 percent, there was no increase in the total revenue. While the per capita profit was \$650 in 2005, it declined to \$600 in 2007

ILHAN BASMACI ISTANBUL

Turkish Association for Tourism Investors (TYD) Chairman Murat Dedeman has said the tourism sector may have difficult times ahead due to low currency rates and the accompanying high costs for inputs. Dedeman noted in an interview with Today's Tourism that the substantial reduction in the value-added tax (VAT) seemed to be an advantage for the tourism sector, while also noting that increased electricity, natural gas, fuel oil and water prices had created a heavy economic burden for investors.

Can you give us an assessment of the tourism sector in 2007?

When assessing the tourism sector in 2007, it is necessary to use some comparisons to 2005 and 2006. The number of tourists visiting Turkey in 2007 was 23.3 million; this is 18 percent more than in 2006 and 10 percent more than 2005. The number of German tourists, who have always made up the backbone of the sector, fell below the figure in 2005. The number of tourists from Austria, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries was also below 2005 figures. The number of tourists from the EU countries was equal to the total number from those countries in 2005, owing to an increase in the number of tourists from England, Spain, Italy and France. Substantial increases were seen in the



Murat Dedeman

number of tourists from Russia, Ukraine and other former Soviet satellite countries. The tourism sector was also successful in attracting tourists from the US, Japan, South Korea and Canada.

What is the current condition of the traditionally popular tourist spots?

A general review would reveal that Istanbul's star is in ascendancy and Antalya has slightly increased its share, whereas Bodrum, Marmaris and Fethiye fell 10 percent below their performance in 2007. The decline in the Dutch and Scandinavian markets caused a decline in the number of tourists to the southern Aegean region. The positive developments in cruise tourism increased the number of tourists in Kusadasi and Izmir. In the region, Cesme attracts attention as a resort destination and Ephesus as a culture destination.

How are tourism revenues doing?

The 2007 tourism revenues were below the expected figure at \$18.5 billion. Three-fourths of the figure announced as tourism revenue, or \$14 billion, came from international tourists and the remaining \$4.5

**Turkish Association for Tourism Investors (TYD):** Founded in 1988, the TYD is a civil society organization that represents entrepreneurs who invest in the tourism sector. The members' operations range from yachting tours to tourist transportation and entertainment. The association members, who employ 400,000 people, represent an investment portfolio of \$22 billion, two-thirds of total investment in the tourism sector.

billion from expats. It is also debatable whether all of the spending by expats in Turkey can be considered tourism revenue.

Is it true that the per capita spending is in decline?

Yes, this is true. Despite the fact that the number of tourists increased by 10 percent, there was no increase in the total revenue. While the per capita profit was \$650 in 2005, it declined to \$600 in 2007.

What was the reason for the decline?

Above all, the stagnation in 2006 forced the tourism enterprises to reduce their prices in 2007. On the other

hand, the number of days spent on vacation also declined in parallel with the current global trends. People travel more frequently and stay for shorter periods at their destinations. This reduces the per capita profit. The current situation is further exacerbated by the low currency rate and the expanding gap between incomes and expenses.

How was the sector affected by this?

The dollar lost value against the lira by a rate of 18 percent in 2007. The value loss was 7 percent for the euro; the inflation rate in 2007 was 8.5 percent. In this case, dollar-based enterprises had to face a loss of revenue amounting to 27 percent and euro-based ones 17 percent. It is impossible for the sector to survive under these conditions. The current state of affairs has forced the enterprises to compromise on quality and customer satisfaction. This is so important that it may jeopardize the future of Turkish tourism.

How was 2007 in terms of tourism investments?

After a brief review of the 2007 tourism investments, we can conclude that there was a slight decline in investment in comparison to the last few years. According to Treasury data, investment incentives had been granted for 25,000 additional beds in 2007. This was 35,000 in 2006. Moreover, there was a decline in the accommodation investments for Antalya. Antalya will not need additional bed investments for a few more years. Instead, there is a growing need for investment in Antalya to revive golf, health and yachting tourism.

Do the Anatolian regions receive a substantial amount of tourism investment?

We have been witnessing a rise in tourism investments in Anatolian cities. The local investors in Anatolia allocates its resources to the tourism sector. However, these individual investments make only small contributions to the development of Anatolia's tourism potential. Anatolia needs well-planned and larger investments backed by special incentives. Yet Turkey opted to resort to restrictions in the current incentive system instead of special incentives. The corporate tax has been reduced from 30 to 20 percent while the investment incentive was abolished two years ago. It is evident that the reduction in the corporate tax did not compensate for losses caused by the abolishment of the incentive scheme.

Are you optimistic about the year 2008?

Of course, our expectations for 2008 are high and quite positive. It will not be difficult to attain the goal of 25-26 million foreign tourists. However, continuation of the current state -- low currency rates and increases in the input prices -- may bring the sector to the edge of a crisis.

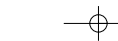
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## Fighting with the white water under Roman bridges

TERRY RICHARDSON

There are many places in the world where you can spend an exhilarating day white-water rafting. Between the bleak moors of northern England and sun-kissed North Africa and the Middle East, there is a wealth of fascinating Roman sites you can spend a few hours exploring. But there are surely few places like Köprülü Canyon National Park, where you can combine the two in a single day. Throw in a 500-meter-deep canyon, a 2,500-meter-high peak, swathes of beautiful, endemic forest and a trout lunch and you can see why this park is such a popular destination.

Established in 1973, Köprülü Canyon National Park is one of Turkey's largest -- 36,614 hectares -- and most varied national parks. Some 70 kilometers northeast of Antalya, the lower southern fringes of the park nudge the fertile Pamphylian plain below. The upper reaches include the 2,550 summit of Bozburun Dağı (Gray Nose Mountain), snow-capped from November to May and one of the highest peaks in the western Toros range. The park is noted for its mixed forest, with stands of Mediterranean cypress, black pine, towering chestnut, carob, olive and, higher up, cedar. Wild boar, badgers, porcupines and martens rustle amongst the undergrowth, and the forest is filled with the

songs of birds ranging from crossbills to somber tits. Wildflowers grow in profusion, from snowdrops lining damp lower gullies to grape hyacinths peeping from the melting snows on the upper slopes. The park also contains 16 villages, whose inhabitants combine traditional small-scale farming with tourism.

The rafting begins at Beskonak (Five Mansions), a straggling village running parallel to the river. If you have never been white-water rafting, the Köprülü River is a great place to start, as the rapid and white-water sections are turbulent enough to excite but not so much as to intimidate. As you castoff and drift across the initially turbid, lazily flowing waters, with the roar of the approaching rapid ringing in your ears and spray from its churning waters beating against your face, you may disagree.

Your white-water rafting adventure over (until the next time -- it's strangely addictive, and if you've got kids they'll insist you take them again) it's time for a little culture. Unless you are an historian, you will probably not have realized that the river you have just rafted down was famous in antiquity as the Eurymedon. In 469 B.C. the Greek general Cimon of Athens won a famous victory against the Persians, 50 kilometers to the south where the river spills into the Mediterranean. Upstream of Beskonak a delightful single-arch stone bridge spans the

swirling waters of the river.

The hardy Freya Stark traveled this same route in the 1950s -- by mule. She reports seeing bands of the semi-nomadic Yörük people with their flocks and dogs as she wound her way up the old track above the canyon. Fascinated as ever by links with antiquity, Stark fancied she saw stryx growing in the forest. This shrub, whose aromatic gum was and still is used in incense and perfume, was much sought after in ancient times.

Although the site of Selge was "discovered" in 1842 by the German Schönborn, it has not yet been excavated. As with many of the sites in this part of the world, most of what remains dates from the Roman period. The theater, its stage building toppled by a lightning strike in the 1950s, is impressive and the 45 rows of seats could accommodate up to 10,000 spectators. There are cisterns, a market place, tumbled temple buildings, a necropolis and a stadium scattered over the hillside, often partially hidden by goat-nibbled vegetation. Of course the history of the site predates the Romans. The city prospered until Byzantine times, but was then abandoned, possibly because the aqueducts bringing water into the city were destroyed by an earthquake. The village is still short of water and it's hard to believe that this was once a flourishing settlement of over 20,000 inhabitants.



PHOTO: SABAN GUNDUZ



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