

# turizm aktüel



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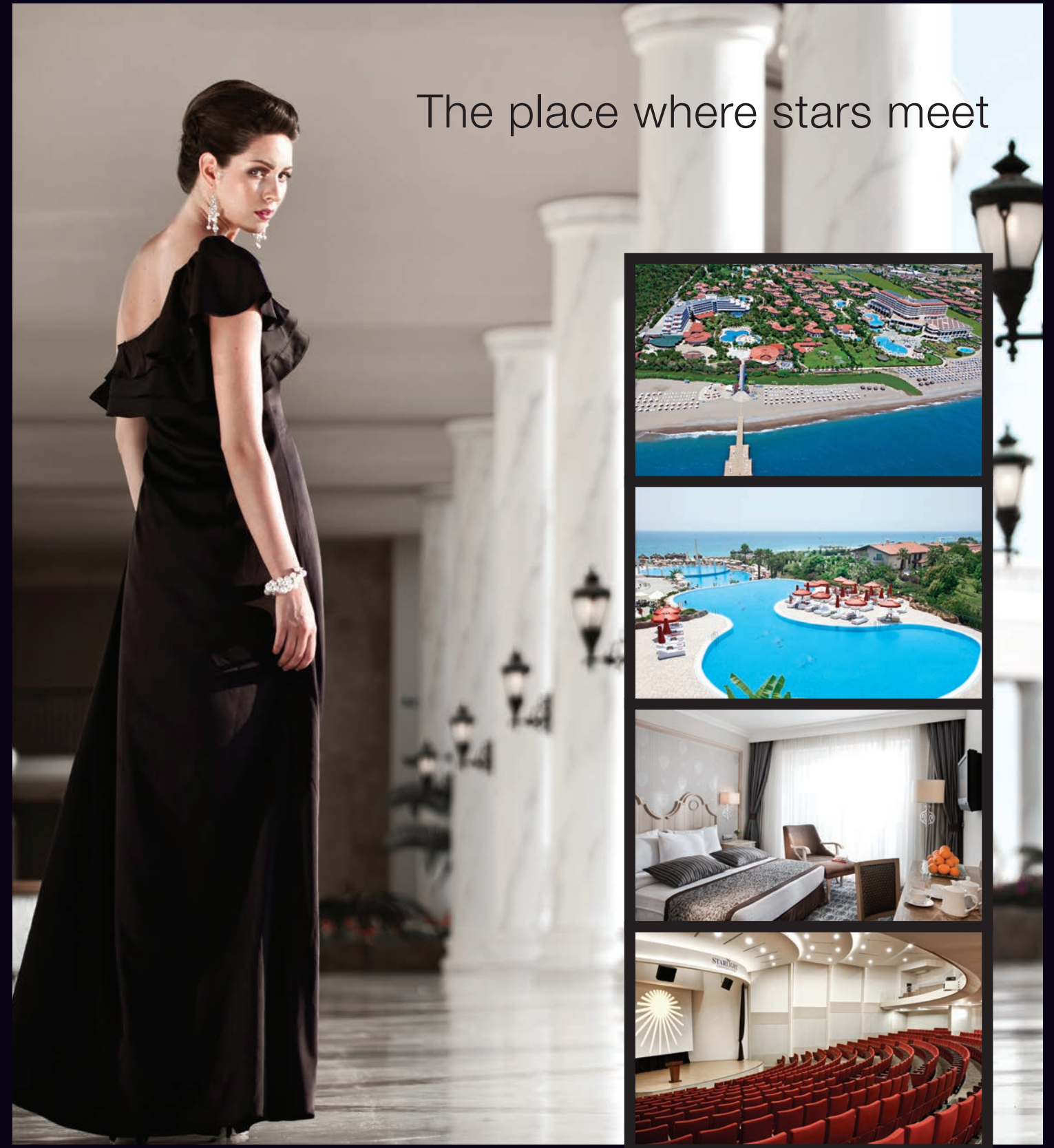


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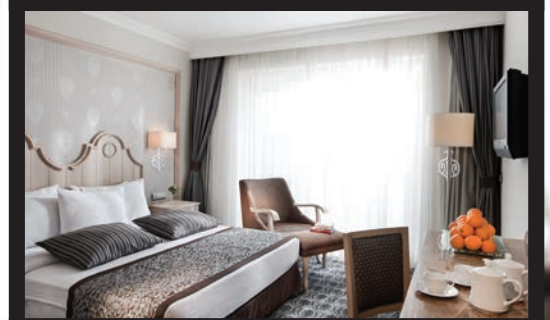
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# TURKISH TOURISM IS READY FOR 2016

**A**warm welcome from Turizm Aktüel Magazine, Netherlands Utrecht Exhibition special edition...

The Utrecht Exhibition, where Turkish tourism both showed itself and sounded the atmosphere in the international arena, started joyfully this year. Again we are at the fair with the same excitement, hope and energy. Tourism professionals are enjoying the pleasure of having achieved their targets for 2015. Achieving these targets, however, was not that easy. But neither the crisis in Russia, nor the civil war in Syria managed to obstruct the advance of Turkish tourism. New strategies were produced against these developments and the problems were examined to offer solutions. As a result tourism professionals completed 2015 successfully.

We are in the winter season and now all preparations and expectations are for 2016. By each passing day the tourism habits in the world are changing and the variety of tourism is increasing. In fact, tourism is a chess game. Those setting accurate targets and determining their strategies by taking the developments that took place around the world in foreign policy in 2016 into consideration will close the year with profit.

Turkish tourism professionals have vast experience that has succeeded in overcoming problems for years. They even successfully solve problems in the arising of which they played no part. And the sector grows stably by day. For this reason hotel investments reached a peak last year, especially in Istanbul. Service quality increases by year.

We have been following foreign exhibitions for nearly 16 years. This year we prepared a special edition for the Dutch Utrecht Vakantiebeurs Tourism Exhibition. In our new edition containing up-to-date news on the sector and interviews with those who have left important marks on the sector, we are enjoying the deserved pride of having brought Turkish tourism to the Netherlands. With the support the sector lends it, the Turizm Aktüel magazine continues to be the voice of Turkish tourism abroad. This year a vast press army will follow the Utrecht Vakantiebeurs Tourism Exhibition attended by 1500 corporations from 150 countries and visited by an average of 150 thousand visitors every year. And Turkey prepares to leave its mark on Utrecht, the Netherlands this year. In the meanwhile we wish to wish everyone a happy New Year through our new issue as the Turizm Aktüel family. We wish Turkish and world tourism much luck and profit in 2016...

Our next special edition will be prepared for the EMITT Tourism Exhibition. Hoping to meet you again soon...

**Hasan Arslan**

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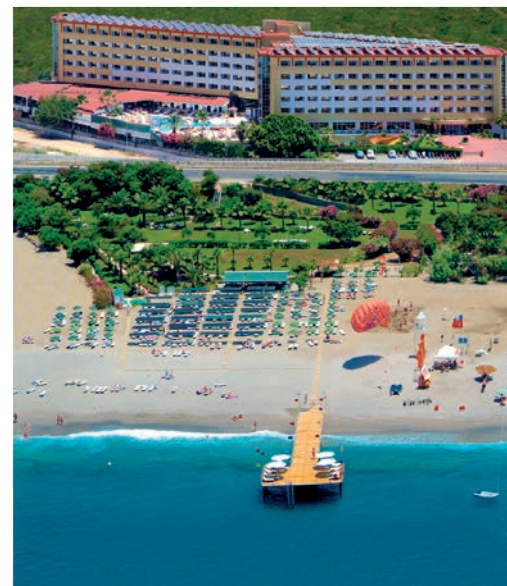


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# HOTELIERS HOPE FOR MORE GERMAN TOURISTS

Hoteliers on the Turkish Riviera are pinning their hopes on the German market following Moscow's sudden ban on package holidays in the destination at the end of a difficult year. **HASAN ARSLAN**

A slump in Russian visitors, a slowdown in the German market, the refugee crisis, international terror attacks and then Moscow's sudden travel ban have combined to hit business for hotels in the Antalya region this year. "2015 was a difficult year and 2016 could be even tougher," Yusuf Hacisüleyman, president of Aktob, the regional hoteliers association, told a record number of more than 1,000 participants at the annual conference in

Russians do not travel to other parts of the country such as Istanbul or the Aegean Coast like Western Europeans do. In comparison, the Turkish Riviera accounts for about 80-90% of bookings for major German operators.

The impact of Moscow's ban on package holidays in Turkey is not significant at present since hardly any Russian holidaymakers visit in the winter months anyway. Hoteliers are more concerned about what

particular, next year. According to Aktob estimates, the number of German visitors increased by nearly 4% this year, although this was largely generated in the first half-year before a slowdown in the summer and afterwards. German tour operators have mostly reportedly good business for this year. Öger Tours, for example, reported 'good demand' while TUI slightly increased last year's record numbers.

Looking ahead to next summer, German



Turkish hoteliers worry about the Russian market and hope for more Germans.

Antalya last week.

Hoteliers agreed with this assessment, according to a spontaneous survey of conference participants. About 63% expect fewer holidaymakers next year and 22% even admitted to having made a loss this year. Revenues could also drop further. Hoteliers already reduced prices early this year as Russian visitor numbers declined and have kept them at this lower level for 2016. Hotels with high numbers of Russian tourists have particularly suffered this year. Hacisüleyman predicted a 20% drop in visitor numbers from that country this year. With 4.5 million visitors in 2014, Russia is Turkey's second-largest source market after Germany (5.2 million) but just as important on the Turkish Riviera since

will happen early next year once holiday brochures for the important Russian family market are released in January ready for the February/March peak booking period.

Instead, the immediate financial impact could be felt more by Russian tour operators who have already been hit by the recent ban on charter flights to Egypt, just ahead of the winter holiday season. According to the Russian tour operator association Ator, all tour operators, including Natalie Tours, Pegas Touristik, Tez Tour and Coral Travel, have stopped selling Turkey holidays following an official government travel warning.

As a result, the German market will be more important than ever for Turkey in general, and the Riviera region in par-

tour operators are not planning to reduce prices for Turkey yet despite the Russian travel ban. Öger Tours managing director Songül Göktas-Rosati said hoteliers had urged tour operators to hold off until January when the situation would be clearer, and stressed: "German tour operators have no interest in their partners having problems."

DER Touristik CEO Sören Hartmann told hoteliers in a keynote speech at the conference that Turkey should retain its USP, which was based on good value for money, a high hotel standard, friendly staff and the country's culture and countryside. He admitted, though, that bookings for Turkey had started to weaken after the Paris terror attacks and called on the country to improve its public image.



Expand your point of view



# Sharp hike in Antalya hotel occupancy rates in November amid plunge across country

While hotel occupancy rates continued to decline in November across Turkey, especially in Istanbul, only Antalya hotels saw a sharp increase, thanks to the G-20 Summit as well as several local and international events, according to a report by the Turkish Touristic Hotels and Investors Association (TUROB). **HALİL ÖNCÜ**



The hotel occupancy rates declined by 7.6 percent to 56.3 percent in November across Turkey compared to the same month of 2014, according to TUROB statement, which is based on STR Global data.

While Istanbul's hotel occupancy rates declined by 12 percent in November compared to November 2014, Antalya rates increased by 13 percent to 56.2 percent, thanks to the G-20 Summit and other big events, even with a drop in the number of Russian tourists.

Antalya's hotel occupancy rates in general, however, decreased from 63.1 percent in the first 11 months of 2014 to 61.4 percent over this year, according to the statement. The revenue-per-room (RevPAR) increased to 69.6 euros in the first 11 months of the year from 60.4 euros in the same period of 2014.

The RevPAR decreased by 19 percent to 59.2 euros in Istanbul in November compared to the same month of 2014.

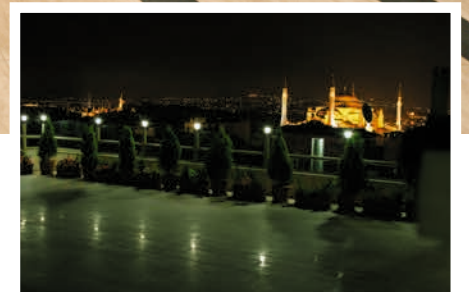
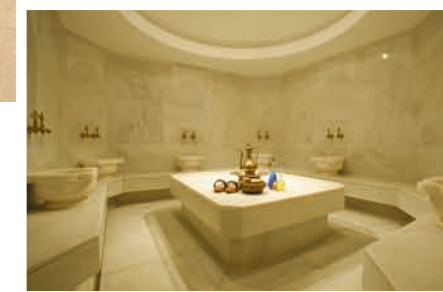
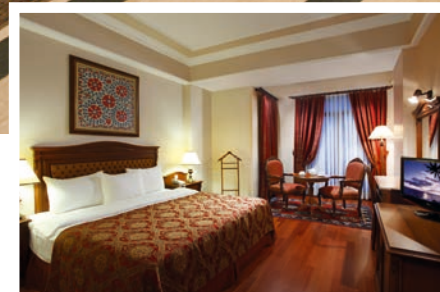
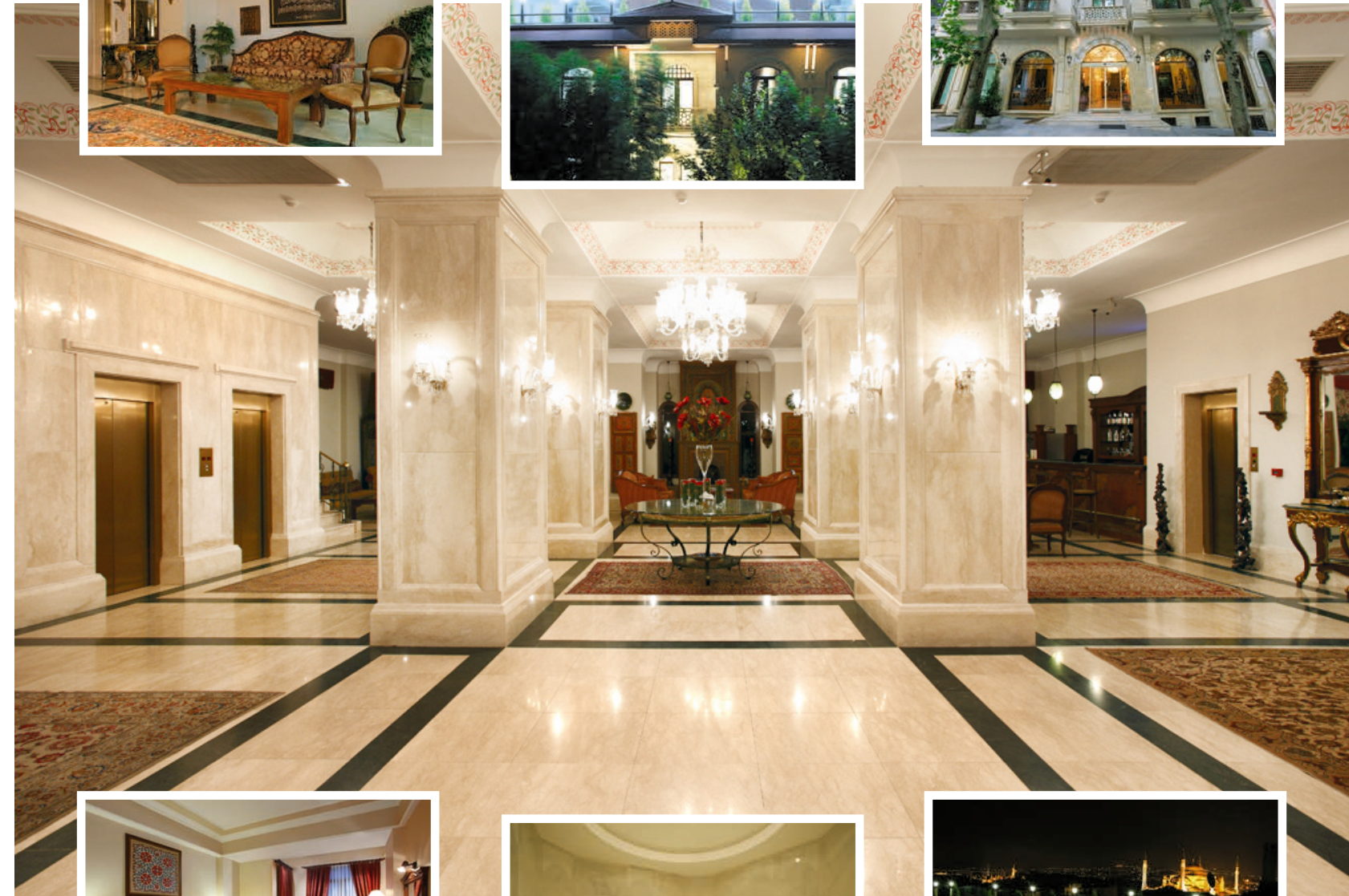
The hotel occupancy rates across Turkey declined by 0.2 percent to 62.9 percent in

the first 11 months of the year compared to the same period of 2014.

Turkish tourism sector players, expecting a continued decline in the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey in 2016 unless the current diplomatic crisis between the two countries is resolved, will launch a promotional campaign in Europe under the leadership of the Tourism Ministry to overcome its potential losses, according to leading sector representatives. The sector will also focus on both China's and India's markets in the medium-term.

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# EXPERTS DISCUSS GERMAN TOURISM MARKETING TRENDS

The latest trends in online and offline tourism marketing in Germany will be discussed by a wide range of experts at two consecutive one-day fvw conferences in February 2016.



Top speakers at the second Tourism Marketing Summit will include Jan Honsel, Germany chief of picture platform Pinterest, and Kerstin Pape, head of marketing at Otto Group, the largest German e-commerce and mail-order company. Pape will explain how companies can use lifestyle blogs to attract customers while Honsel will present Pinterest's growth plans.

There will be a panel discussion including Erik Friemuth, TUI's Chief Marketing Officer, and Lars Bolle, DER Touristik brand chief, while TUI Cruises CEO Wybcke Meier will explain the company's advertising concept. The Tourism Marketing Summit takes place in Frankfurt on February 17, 2016.

One day earlier, the ninth fvw Online Marketing Day (also in Frankfurt) will cover topics such as digital transformation, 'smombies', mobile travel payments,



Kerstin Pape and Jan Honsel are keynote speakers at the Tourism Marketing Summit.

social media marketing, and content management.

Among a wide range of speakers, Dirk Tietz, DER Touristik's Chief Transformation Officer, will explain why tourism has to transform to remain relevant in the digital era, Daniele Beccari, head of travel prod-

ucts for Criteo, will explain how to reach 'smombies' (smartphone-addicted 'zombie' youngsters) with mobile-first travel bookings, and well-known international tourism expert Andy Owen Jones, co-founder of BD4Travel, will speak on 'SEM is marketing and not sales'.



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# UPS AND DOWNS FOR TURKISH HOTELS

Demand for Turkish holiday hotels is continuing to fluctuate with new names overtaking established properties, the latest fww Hotelometer ranking showed. **HASAN ARSLAN**

There was a new number one in the fortnight from October 19 – November 1, the Trendy Aspendos Beach in Side which pushed the Aydinbey Kings Palace into second place, according to the ranking based on enquiries in the Traveltainment reservations system used by German travel agents and online booking engines.

The biggest jump was made by the Mary Palace (Colakli) from ninth to third place. There were also three new names in the top ten ranking, the Adalya Ocean, the Voyage Belek and the Sunis Kumköy Beach. The Trendy Aspendos Beach, the Primasol Hane Family and the Aydinbey Kings Palace were the top three in the ranking of

enquiries by families, while the couples listing was topped by the Commodore Elite Suites, the Aydinbey Kings Palace and the Paloma Oceana.

In Greece, the Lyttos Beach remained in top spot ahead of the Lindos Princess Beach and the Mitsis Faliraki Beach. The first two were also in first and second place in the ranking of family enquiries with the Sentido Mikri Poli Atlantica in third place. Couples were most interested in the Kalithea Horizon Royal, the Calypso Beach (Faliraki) and the Lyttos Beach.

In Spain, the Lopesan Costa Meloneras defended top spot ahead of the Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the Sotavento Beach Club. For families, the Sotavento Beach

Club, the Viva Cala Mesquida and the Hipotel Calar Millor Park were the favourite three. Couples were most interested in the Lopesan Costa Meloneras, the Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the SBH Costa Calma Palace.

The fww Hotelometer is a fortnightly ranking of the most popular tourist hotels in Spain, Turkey and Greece, based on all enquiries in the Traveltainment reservations system used by German travel agents and online booking engines. The data, supplied by IT company TrevoTrend and split into different categories (overall, families, couples, singles and star ratings), thus reflect demand trends but do not show actual bookings.

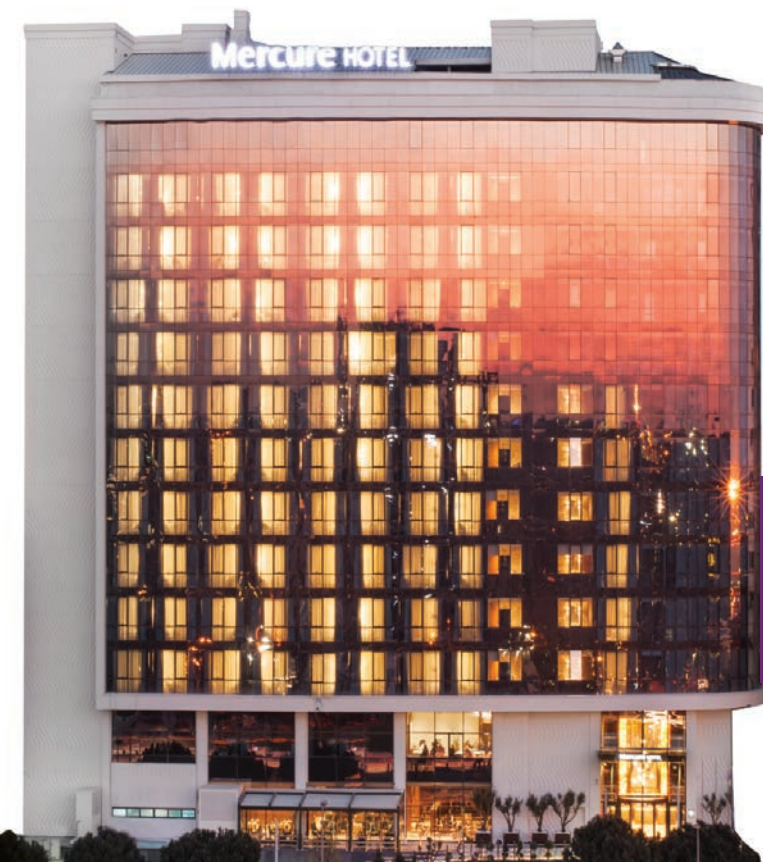


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# COLOURFUL COMBINATIONS AND BIG VOLUMES

More of everything is the general theme of German tour operator programmes for summer 2016, an fvw review of major destination offerings shows.

An offensive in America, on Majorca and in the Adriatic. A summer for families. Bulgaria as a new trend destination. German tour operators have not been short of slogans to describe their programme highlights for next summer. But in fact all these words cannot hide the fact that there are actually not many changes.

The sheer quantity of summer brochures has also barely been reduced. DER Touristik leads with 78 different brochures, TUI has 41, Thomas Cook 30 and FTI 26. Schauinsland-Reisen (9) and Alltours (8) are much more compact.

Spain, as always, is top of everyone's growth list. Alltours chief Willi Verhuvén declared: "We want to keep growing in Spain." The tour operator is expanding its Allsun hotel chain and offering more children's discounts. DER Touristik's ITS and Jahn Reisen have expanded their portfolio on Majorca, Schauinsland-Reisen is offering modernised hotels on an exclusive basis while FTI has expanded its hotel programme by 20%, including "the biggest offering in the company's history" on the



Canary Islands. TUI and Thomas Cook want to grow in Spain as well. TUI has more Sensimar hotels, new Family Life hotels and several modernised Riu properties among its programme, while Cook announced capacity expansion on Majorca, the Canary Islands and the Spanish mainland.

Similarly, Greece is seen as a destination with plenty of potential next summer. TUI has more Sensimar hotels, new Family Life properties, a new Robinson Club and other exclusive offerings on various islands and the mainland. Thomas Cook will open its first Casa Cook property on Rhodes, All-

tours has added several small islands and FTI is offering more up-market properties.

In contrast, there are fewer new products in Turkey. Thomas Cook's specialist brand Öger Tours has expanded its Istanbul programme substantially but the group's offering is otherwise "stable at last year's level". Other German tour operators are focusing more on exclusive offers. TUI has more Sensimar, Best Family, TUI Blue and Robinson properties, FTI has two Labranda hotels on the Aegean coast and DER will open a new five-star Cooe family resort in Belek.

Once again, all major tour operators are also pinning their growth hopes on long-haul travel next summer. The long-standing market leader DER Touristik claims to have "the largest current offering for tours worldwide", Thomas Cook has increased flight capacity by 50%, mostly on new Condor flights, and TUI has expanded its programme by 20%, especially in North America. FTI has also expanded its North America programme with 80 new tours, 20 new cruises and 25% more hotels.

Africa is making a comeback with more hotels in various tour operator programmes, most tour operators are continuing to expand their programmes for the Maldives, and there are also more tours and hotel offers in Asia and South America.



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# Tourism minister invites Russian citizens to visit Turkey

Tourism sector should be considered separately from politics, Turkish minister says **HALİL TUNCER**



**A** Turkish minister has invited Russian citizens to visit his country despite the worsening relations between the two countries.

Relations between Ankara and Moscow have worsened after Turkey downed a Russian jet for violating its airspace near the border with Syria on Nov.24.

“The tourism sector should be considered separately from politics,” Turkish Culture and Tourism Minister Mahir Unal told reporters Sunday in Kahramanmaraş, in southern Turkey.

“As Turkish Culture and Tourism Minister, I want to say to the Russian Federation citizens that Turkey is your home,” Unal said. “You can spend your holidays safely in Turkey, as it has happened before.”

Media reports say that about 3 million Russian tourists had visited Turkey last year. On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed an executive order

imposing economic sanctions against Turkey. The sanctions include the unilateral suspension of the visa-free regime for Turkish nationals traveling to Russia as of Jan. 1, 2016. Russian travel agencies are also to suspend the sale to Russian citizens of products that consider visiting Turkey.

On Nov. 24, two Turkish F-16 fighter jets on an aerial patrol intercepted an unidentified warplane within rules of engagement when it intruded into Turkish airspace on the Turkey-Syria border.

The intruding aircraft was warned about the violation 10 times within five minutes before it was shot down.

The Russian Defense Ministry later announced that its Russian SU-24 bomber jet had been shot down. It crashed in the Syrian region of Bayirbucak close to Yayladagi district of Turkey’s southern Hatay province. NATO confirmed the accuracy of information shared by Turkey about the

violation.

It was not the first time Russian fighter jets had violated Turkish airspace. In early October, Russian warplanes breached Turkish airspace. Russian officials apologized and pledged that no such incident would be repeated. Turkey had also renewed its warning on engagement rules, including a military response against violations of Turkish airspace.

Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish Cultural Friendship Festival

Despite the worsening relations between respective countries, the sixth edition of the Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish Cultural Friendship Festival was held Sunday in Antalya, Turkey’s southern coastal city.

Turkish and Russian children held gymnastics and dance performances. Russian citizens living in Antalya were also able to take Turkish-speaking lessons in a shopping mall.

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# TRAVEL INDUSTRY MUST PROVIDE SAFETY

Customers are concerned about travelling after this year's terror attacks. The travel industry must respond with a stronger focus on customer safety, writes DER Touristik CEO Sören Hartmann in a guest opinion article. **HASAN ARSLAN**



The attacks in Paris have shocked us all. However, there is no quick solution for the Syria, IS and terror problems. The virus of 2015 is called insecurity. There are so many major tasks that our countries face. The refugee flows, the conflict between Russia and the Ukraine, Syria and the terror attacks in Tunis, Kenya, Ankara, Sharm el-Sheikh and Paris. 18 attacks this year in destinations that are important for us leave traces in people's minds.

Insecurity is a bad travel companion. Travel demand will decline generally, and above all this is likely to impact on the Eastern Mediterranean. This is putting significant pressure on the booking figures for this winter and next summer. We don't just see this for Egypt and Tunisia. In Turkey, DER Touristik started into this winter with high growth but the increase is shrinking daily. The Balearic Islands, Portugal and the Canary Islands are selling well, and long-haul holidays are also in very strong demand. It seems as though customers are trying to escape from the turbulence in Europe for a while through their trips and simply switch off.

What can we as an industry do now? We must take the fears of our customers seriously. When the whole world seems unsafe, then customers will decide at short notice where they judge the situation to be best for themselves. For us as an industry this means two things. Firstly, together with our sales partners we have to react flexibly and dynamically, and adjust prices and products.

Secondly, we must push for security standards to be raised - this



This text is from a speech made by Hartmann at the recent conference of the Turkish Riviera hoteliers association Aktob in Antalya.

applies for airports, roads and excursion destinations just as much as for hotels. Of course, it's important that our customers can move freely. But it's even more important that nothing happens to them. In Paris, attacks were carried out at unmonitored places but the terrorists couldn't get into the stadium. I'm not demanding any complete surveillance. I'm calling for the highest level of caution to be applied at the vital points. The authorities must play their part. Clear and unmistakable safety advice from the foreign ministry is more important than ever.

This crisis will not pass quickly. That's why safety and security are issues for us and arguments for customers. Alongside attractive hotels and flights we will be selling safety in destinations more and more, and will be firmly evaluating these standards. We shouldn't only ask how many attacks there were. But also how many millions of people travel safely because governments and local authorities as well as the travel industry itself contribute to security. The travel industry has to make its influence felt. That's the only way we can secure the trust of our customers.

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# RUSSIAN ROW MAY PROVIDE CHANCE TO RESTRUCTURE TOURISM SECTOR

The political crisis with Russia will have serious consequences on the tourism sector, as Turkey will experience a drastic fall in the number of visiting Russian tourists. While there will be no quick fix to the problem, this should serve as an occasion to restructure the sector, says Bahattin Yücel, a former minister of tourism. **BARÇIN YİNANÇ**

There will be a dramatic fall in the number of Russian tourists coming to Turkey after Moscow instructed its citizens not to go to Turkey after Turkish jets drowned a Russian warplane on Nov. 24. While it will be difficult to compensate for the losses in the short term, the development could serve as an opportunity to restructure Turkey's tourism sector, which is still based on a conventional design, according to a former tourism minister.

The sector should shift to online sales, while Turkish Airlines should introduce flights between targeted markets and touristic airports in Turkey like Antalya, Dalaman and Bodrum, said Bahattin Yücel.

**Can you first tell us, what was the share of Russians in the Turkish tourism sector?**

Turkish-Russian tourism cooperation reached a level that could not have been im-

agined during the Cold War period. When I visited Russia in 1996 as a tourism minister, we were talking about not fully filling the potential. In the course of the past 20 years, the developments in the tourism sector have been really remarkable. One of the reasons for that is that the mental borders between the two countries were lifted; in addition, Turkey lifted visa requirements. The majority of Russian tourists come from the regions west of Moscow. A flight between that region and Antalya is approximately two-and-a-half hours, and that is a huge advantage that no one can compete with us on.

**In 2014, with 5.4 million tourists, Russia passed the Germans and became number one for the very first time.**

There are three to four Turkish companies that dominate 75 percent of the tourism sector in Russia; they don't operate only for Turkey but sales for other destina-

tions are under their control as well.

In 2014, of the 12 million holiday packages that was sold, nearly 50 percent was to Turkey; half of the other destinations were also sold by these Turkish operators; that shows the picture.

In 2015, however, due to Russia's economic difficulties, Turkey's losses have reached 27 percent.

Russians have been focusing on domestic tourism, but if left free, 99 percent of Russians would prefer Turkey. It is a very disciplined society; they implement the decisions that are taken [by the state].

**Has the sector predicted the probability of a crisis?**

The sector did predict the economic crisis and the government did provide support of approximately 500 million dollars to these three tour operators. While the number of Russian tourists decreased by 27 percent, I believe the income loss is around

40 percent. But the political crisis was not predicted.

**Do you think it is natural for the sector to fail to see a political crisis coming?**

Personally, I thought that the Syrian issue would pit Turkey and Russia at loggerheads. But the sector did not foresee it. And obviously no one thought there would be such an escalation after the downing of the Russian jet.

**The two countries had disagreements on political issues before, but they never let this affect their bilateral relations. What was different this time, in your view?**

It was obvious that Russia would not let Syria go. The [Turkish] government did not see that and took a more aggressive stance, and these are the consequences. Still, Russia's reaction is disproportionate and exaggerated. But let's also not forget that 224 people died when the plane carrying Russian tourists bound to Egypt was downed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The perception in Russia is that Turkey [recently] downed the Russian plane to help ISIL. The Russian public sees Turkey and ISIL as the same. At this stage, Russia thought, "If I am a big state, I need to give them a lesson."

**You said the Russian public is very disciplined in implementing a decision taken by the state. Did you experience this right after the crisis?**

Immediately. We saw a disciplined reaction and observed a dramatic fall. The planes are coming empty and going back full as if evacuating those that are already here. The Sharm el-Sheikh incident has also been influential.

**What is your projection for the short and medium term?**

We will see the bottom this year. There will be a serious fall. This year we lost more than a million [tourists], and it will be highly difficult to get even half of what we received this year; so less than 2 million.

But if the Russians are to continue to go abroad, this is not a market that will disappear. I don't think this [crisis] will continue that long. There is the nuclear power plant [that Russia is to construct]; no one talks about it, for instance. I think the tension will continue for a while and then the easiest exit from the crisis will prove to be the tourism sector. But if you ask me how long it will take, I can say at least a couple of seasons.

**It will not be easy to heal the wounds until 2020.**

In the meantime, we need to go for a structuring that will compensate for the losses from the Russian market.

**What can be done?**

First of all, it is wrong to say, as some officials have, that there are 8 billion people in the world and that if Russians won't come, others will. Of course others will come, and we will make an effort for that, but it is not that easy to reach other markets and establish a similar structure quickly. It will not be easy to fill in the gap that quickly. Germans who know the situation, for instance, will ask for lower prices.



age holiday bookings to enable consumers to build their own package of flights, accommodation and the like instead of purchasing a pre-defined package]. Turkey can fill in the gap with this concept.

**What needs to be done?**

Turkey has a very important asset: Turkish Airlines (THY).

We mainly have tree tourism-oriented airports: Antalya, Dalaman and Bodrum. Turkish Airlines should introduce flights between these airports and our target markets all through the year. Then I assure you tourists will flock here with online reservation systems. There are at least 40 daily flights to Germany from Istanbul. There could be flights to and from Antalya, too. Some 40,000 Russians live in Antalya; 3,000 German families live in Alanya.

Some 66 percent of Turkish airlines passengers are transit. In 2014, the average one-way price to Antalya was 274 liras, whereas the return ticket to Sharm el-Sheikh was 505 liras. The distance of Istanbul to Sharm el-Sheikh is 2.7 times longer than to Antalya. This means there is a 65 to 70 percent discount. Today, there is one daily flight to Dalaman, three to Bodrum; they're all too expensive. THY says, 'I am a commercial company, I need to make profits; I cannot lower prices to these airports.' But THY should act as a national carrier. Why can't THY fly to Manchester? It could be the same with Russia. Charter flights are easy to stop but you cannot do the same easily with national carriers.

**How do you evaluate the Tourism Ministry's crisis-management skills?**

I can't say it is efficient. What the ministry is currently planning to do is to continue subsidizing the [chartered] flights. But Russia is telling tour operators not to sell Turkey anymore. But the state cannot do the same to individuals. Some 37 percent in Russia make reservations through the internet. We won't manage to maintain the same number of tourists, but at least this will provide hope for the future. We need to concentrate on online shopping and get on with a new restructuring [process]. Our sector is designed on conventional structures. There are huge hotels in Antalya, and tour operators makes the reservations; these hotels are trying to make sure they stay around. It's for sure that we will get a bad fight; but at least let's know that and get our measures in place.

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Istanbul focussed on Instagram competition #oneistanbul has been launched to raise Istanbul's profile on the global stage and showcase its historical, cultural, natural charms much loved and favoured by visitors from all around the world. The competition running through the year quarterly with different Istanbul themes, allowing Instagram users to share their Istanbul photography with the hashtags #oneistanbul and #istanbul. At the end of

the competition, the top three winning photographs will be awarded with a notebook, tablet computer and a mobile phone.

Thus far, approximately 125.000 fantastic photos received in the competition have focused on Istanbul's stunning architecture, history and nature. This time, competitors will share their shots of the faces that make Istanbul what it is. The best photos as evaluated by the jury and shared with the hashtags #OneIstanbul and #Istan-

bul will win a special prize. The Instagram users' posted photography will also be shared on the official websites [www.howtoistanbul.com](http://www.howtoistanbul.com). #OneIstanbul Instagram competition, held in cooperation with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM), The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and The Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau (ICVB), continues on course! So take some shots yourself, join the competition and earn your chance to win!



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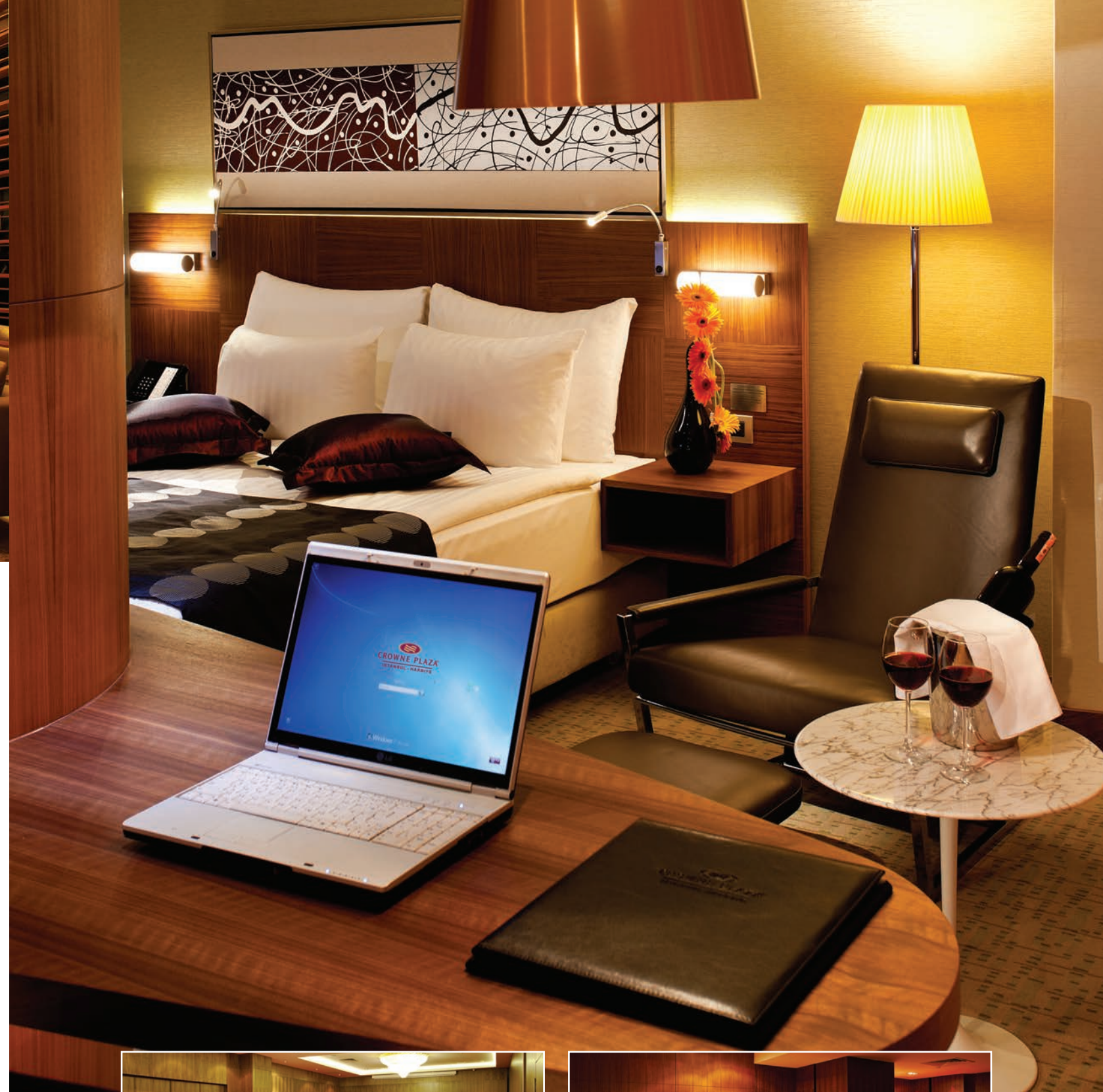
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# TURKEY TOUR OPERATOR DECLARES INSOLVENCY

**VÖ. TRAVEL**



V.Ö. Travel, the tour operator launched two years ago by veteran Turkey tourism entrepreneur Vural Öger, has declared insolvency and stopped trading.

The loss-making company remained behind its targets this year and bookings for 2016 have also started badly, owner Vural Öger told fvw. In addition, Öger was impacted by €16 million worth of debts owed to his Turkish hotel group Majesty Hotels by insolvent Russian tour operator Teztour and several other Russian firms.

In view of the economic situation in Russia and weak bookings in Germany, Öger said he did not expect any improvement this year and the insolvency of V.Ö. Travel had thus been unavoidable. Some 16 employees are impacted. His incoming agency Holiday Plan will also close down but the separate tour operator Öger Türk Tur is not affected and is trading normally.

Öger said that some 200 guests are affected by the insolvency but their return flights to Germany are not in danger as they have been paid for. Hotel payments will be covered by the Hamburg-based company's insurer Zurich Versicherung.

Vural Öger is best known as the founder of Öger Tours, the Turkey tour operator he founded more than two decades ago and sold to Thomas Cook in 2011. In January 2014 he returned to the German market with the launch of V.Ö. Travel as a new specialist tour operator for Turkey holidays. The company claimed to have had some 70,000 customers in the tourism year ending October 2014 and had hoped to more than double bookings to over 150,000 in 2014/15.

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# TURKEY AS A WINTER SPORTS DESTINATION

Snow has already begun to fall in a number of regions of Turkey. **KLAUS JURGENS**

Is this worth writing home about? I shall say “yes” as I wish to attract our dear readers’ attention to an issue that to me would benefit from getting more headlines: winter sports in Turkey and Turkey as an all-year-round leisure destination regardless if you already live here or are specifically journeying to this fascinating country for a snow-filled vacation.

Leading into the subject and taking a look at the numbers, it is correct to state that in the past, the sun, sand and sea paired with city tourism as well as visiting places of archeological and historical interest were what the majority of tourists chose to fill the agendas of their trips with. At the same time most expatriates eventually settle in either Ankara, İzmir or İstanbul, or alternatively along the sunshine belt stretching from Ayvalık in the northwest via Aydın to Alanya on the southern Mediterranean shores of this fascinating country. Hence my topic for today’s column may be a novelty, at least for first-time travelers or those amongst our international community who may perhaps have spent less than a full calendar year with us.

I like snow, probably even more so in Turkey as it becomes a much welcome change of scenery as summers are hot and long and some parts of the country do not see any snowfall at all. It reminds me of the fact that there are four seasons to be enjoyed

indeed and it reminds me that Turkey is an all-year-round destination! It needs some logistics as it all depends on whether you wish to go skiing, have a stroll around an ice-covered lake or simply take your family to one of the many parks in the metropolis of your choice and let the kids build a snowman. There is not enough line space to feature a really fair selection of the manifold splendid “white” locations but if accessibility is your key concern you should definitely check out Bursa’s Mount Uludağ ski center. If a trip further inland is more your winter traveler’s cup of tea, Erzurum should be on your itinerary, this time involving a short plane journey. And Kayseri’s Mount Erciyes vast ski area is not to be missed either and easily reachable overland or by air travel.

If forests and lakes are what you prefer over full-fledged skiing or snowboarding Bolu springs to mind with its hills and nature parks where after your walk in the crisp air a meal next to a log-fire in a chalet type restaurant could round off your day.

Yet even without leaving the metropolis you will realize that by sheer necessity traffic slows down and people walk more slowly. It seems as if by magic entire inner cities become a winter fairytale. Granted, for the captains of the road snow is the last thing they would wish for and if you are driving please exercise extra caution whilst on the road. Of course in all the non-exhaustive locations I mentioned (and wherever else you decide to visit) and at an ever increasing rate you will find top class hotels as well as smaller establishments, most of which can be booked comfortably in advance via the usual online reservation sites that allow us to compare a hotel’s offers in English before committing. You can rent equipment there and then.

This piece was never intended to be a comprehensive winter travel guide for Turkey; that would fill many more pages. What I wanted to do is whet your explorer’s appetite, so to speak. Snow and winter holidays in Turkey – highly recommended!



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# Mixed year for specialist tour operators



Jasmin Taylor is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer at JT Touristik.

Germany's many specialist tour operators have seen fluctuating fortunes this year although most have grown with a mix of new products, according to fvw's latest market overview.



Medium-sized and small tour operators in Germany have generally profited from the stable growth of the organised travel market this year. On a combined basis, these specialists increased their revenues by 5.8% this year compared to overall market growth of 4.2%, and slightly increased their share of the market to about one third, the fvw dossier on the German tour operator market showed. The largest 'specialist' segment comprises the 'dynamic packages' tour operators who combine available flight and hotel capacity at the latest prices. They grew well this year thanks to plenty of available airline seats due to over-capacity on short- and medium-haul routes.

The largest, Vtours, increased revenues by 2.9% to €176 million this year, with passenger numbers up 9% to 446,000. Rival JT Touristik made up ground with 16%

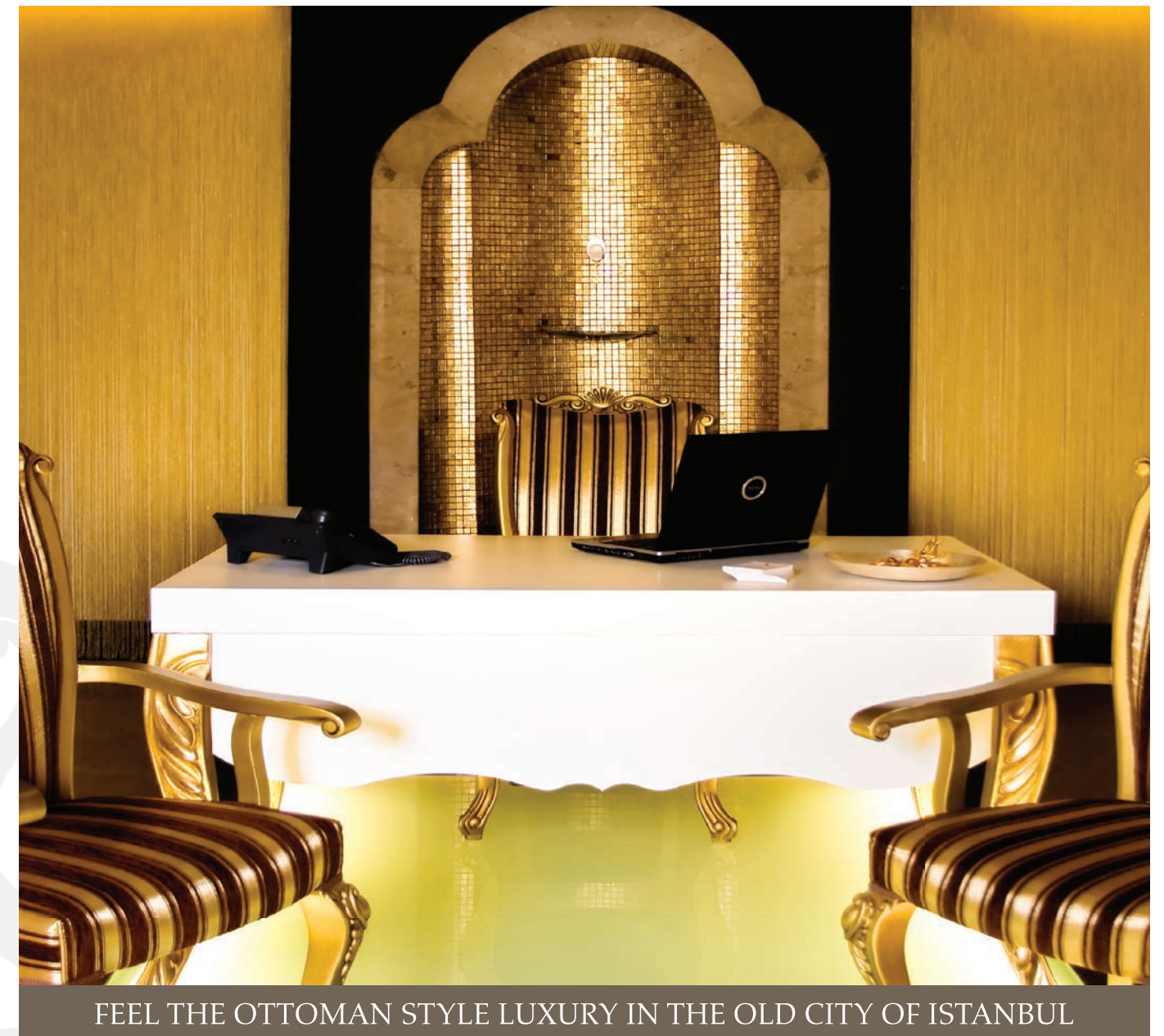
growth to €175 million and an 18% rise to 330,000 passengers. But LMX Touristik grew even faster, with revenues up 61% to €136 million on a 79% surge in customer numbers to 279,000. Tropo grew at a double-digit rate to €82 million and 149,000 passengers.

Business was more mixed for 'destination specialists' due to fluctuating demand in some major destinations. Turkey specialist Bentour suffered a 9.5% drop in revenues to €86 million and a similar fall in customers to 100,000. Greece specialist Attika Reisen shrank by 21% to just €20 million and 24,000 customers. In contrast, Portugal specialist Olimar grew by 8.8% to €74 million with passenger volumes up 10% to 124,000, while North America tour operator Canusa increased revenues by 6% to €70 million and had 49,000 customers.

The cultural holidays specialists mostly

performed well. Studiosus/Marco Polo increased revenues by 3% to €258 million while customer numbers grew 4.6% to 103,800. TUI's study tours subsidiaries Gebeco/Dr Tigges had a slight 1.2% revenue rise to €116 million on a 1% rise to 58,500 customers. Among the active holiday specialists, Wikinger Reisen achieved double-digit growth with an 11% rise to revenues of €91 million, while 'best ager' specialist Mediplus increased revenues by 11% to €80 million with slightly higher customer numbers.

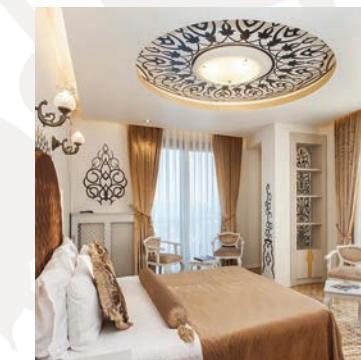
In other segments, Deutsche Bahn's rail holidays subsidiary Ameropa had a 5% drop in revenues to €107 million and a 2% fall in passenger numbers to 500,000, mostly due to lower demand for Switzerland, while holiday homes specialist InterChalet had stable revenues of €133 million despite rising online competition.



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# GERMAN TOUR OPERATORS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC AFTER RECORD YEAR

Tour operators in Germany are mostly positive about the outlook for 2016 despite many uncertainties after achieving record results this year, according to fvw's annual market overview.

The 56 tour operators who participated in this year's fvw dossier increased revenues by 4.2% to €21.2 billion in the year ending October 2015, while their customer volumes rose by 2.2% to 32.7 million. These companies are estimated to cover about 80% of the total market. The overall German organised travel market is estimated to have grown 3.8% to €27.2 billion, according to DRV calculations based on the fvw dossier figures. Total customer numbers are put at 44.9 million, up slightly from 44.2 million last year. This slightly lower growth rate is based on the very low 0.5% growth generated by the many small coach, rail and self-drive tour operators this year.

Growth drivers this year were once again long-haul holidays, with a 6.9% rise in sales, and cruises, with a 10.2% increase in revenues, the fvw dossier showed. This higher growth for more expensive holidays, resulting in a different overall product mix, also explains why tour operator revenues grew by two percentage points more than customer numbers. Sales of package holidays in short- and medium-haul destinations – the core business of most tour operators – grew about 4% this year, according to DRV calculations. However, the profitability of German tour operators declined slightly this year, according to the dossier results. Half of the 56 tour operators improved profits in 2015 compared to two thirds last year, while one third had stable profits (18% last year) and the remaining 18% (including TUI and Thomas Cook) had lower profits.

The overall ranking of the seven major German tour operators did not change significantly this year. TUI (which did not participate in the dossier survey) maintained its clear market leadership with revenue growth of 3.4% to an estimated €4.5 billion. Customer numbers were 1% higher at 6.3 million. If the separate sister companies TUI Cruises and Hapag-Lloyd Cruises are



included, then the group's German package holiday revenues rise to €5.4 billion.

Second-placed Thomas Cook (also a non-contributor to the dossier) increased Germany revenues by 2.4% to an estimated €3.5 billion. This was largely due to Condor's seat-only sales which grew to about €630 million while Thomas Cook's German tour operators had a slight 0.4% drop in revenues. Customer numbers rose fractionally by 0.7% to 6.1 million.

DER Touristik, which is larger than Thomas Cook in terms of tour operator revenues, grew only fractionally by 0.7% to €3.2 billion this year while customer numbers stagnated at 6.4 million. The Frankfurt-based individual holidays unit increased revenues thanks to long-haul growth while the Cologne-based package holidays unit saw a drop in revenues, although customer numbers increased.

Fourth-placed FTI, with 3.8 million customers, grew by only 2.4% to €2.15 billion this year (including its Austrian and Swiss subsidiaries) after several years of strong growth. Alltours had growth of 2.2% to €1.5 billion and 1.87 million customers respectively.

Aida Cruises' revenues increased only moderately to €1.3 billion due to the delayed launch of its new flagship Aida Prima. Schauinsland-Reisen continued its double-digit growth rates this year with a 13% revenue increase to €1.1 billion, and customer numbers were up nearly 10% at 1.4 million.

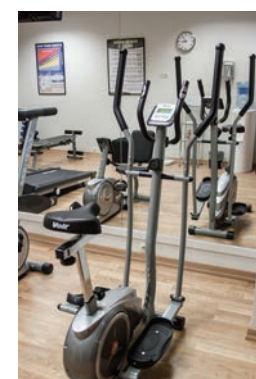
In terms of market shares, TUI Germany (including subsidiary brands) has a 16.5% share of the overall €27.2 billion market, while TUI Cruises/Hapag-Lloyd Cruises have a further 3.3%. Thomas Cook has a market share of 12.9% followed by DER Touristik (11.4%), FTI (7.9%), Alltours (5.5%), Aida Cruises (5%) and Schauinsland (4%). These top seven tour operators account for about two thirds of the total market.

## POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, most tour operators surveyed for the fvw dossier expect to increase revenues in 2016, generally by up to 5%. However, they are much more cautious in their forecasts for next year following the terror attacks in Paris and the generally uncertain political situation in many parts of the world.



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# TURSAB'S CORPORATE STRUCTURE WILL BECOME STRONGER

Başaran Ulusoy has been put into the chair once again at the 22nd General Meeting's election done by TURSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies). Ulusoy has a long project list for the new season. Ulusoy said that the most important goal is to make TURSAB's corporate structure stronger. **HALİL TUNCER**

The 22nd General Assembly of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) is held at Istanbul Convention and Exhibition Center between 4 and 6 December 2015. President Başaran Ulusoy and his team restored trust in the 22nd General Assembly. Mr. Başaran Ulusoy who was re-elected as the President of TURSAB for the 9th time, set a record that probably cannot be broken for years in Turkey. Winning the election for the 9th time, Başaran Ulusoy will continue with his duty as the president of TURSAB's Board of Members.

4,566 travel agents registered for par-

ticipation to the election, however a total of 3,783 travel agents voted in the 22nd General Assembly of TURSAB. Mr. Ulusoy received 1,688 of the votes and re-elected as the president, while from other candidates Mr. Emin Çakmak received 1,060 votes and Mr Firuz Bağlıkaya received 1,014 votes. 30 votes were deemed invalid.

So Ulusoy continues being one of the steadiest presidents in the business world, after the General Meeting. Ulusoy has been president between 1991 - 1993 and since 1999 he's been elected in all TURSAB's (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) General Meetings which has been carried out

biennially. Even if he said that he would not be a nominee before the last 3 meetings and he wanted to go back to his village, tourism sector's professionals insisted him to toss his hat into the ring so he couldn't leave this position. The recent election also showed clearly that he is unrivalled. Ulusoy indicated that they want to make TURSAB's (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) structure stronger at the new season.

## TURSAB'S GOALS AND PROJECTS FOR THE NEW SEASON

Our most important goal is to update our 1618 numbered regulation on which we started working the previous season, in order to meet today's tourism and trade conditions and to make our agencies improve and expand. We'll give priority to make regulations related to tourism trade correspondent with the internet era, to provide equality of opportunities between our members, to realize a tour operator system which will provide consumer guarantee needed.

Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications has already made numerous regulations about these, correspondent with the needs and demands in Turkey as well as the European



Union's standards. But there have been some problems about giving permission to provincial municipalities for the documents created within these regulations and to prepare these documents. "Transportation" which is a must of tourism, directly concerns our agencies therefore TURSAB's (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies). Our association met with the authorities to get over these problems and finally agreed with the Ministry of Transportation, Maritime Affairs and Communications in order to allow travel agencies

to give their service such as tour and transfers without a problem, concerning to 1618 numbered law. Thus, next season our travel agencies will be able to clear these problems in such services as they are allowed by the laws, by taking a private document prepared for their vehicles which are their private goods.

### New Board Members are as follows:

Başaran Ulusoy, Bülent Katkık, Çetin Gürcün, Burak Tonbul, Davut Günaydın, Ercan Mahmut Durmuş, Kerim Çavuşoğlu, Rıza Gençay, Numan Olcar.



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# Russia crisis now threatens Turkey's winter tourism

Many sectors have experienced a decrease in business at varying levels on the back of a recent crisis between Russia and Turkey, and the latter's winter tourism facilities are also experiencing repercussions, with hoteliers bemoaning reservation cancellations.



Tourism facilities at Turkey's premier skiing spots, including Uludağ and Palandöken, have seen declining traffic in foreign arrivals as well as cancellations of reservations.

As New Year's Eve approaches, tourism facilities at Turkey's premier skiing spots, including Uludağ and Palandöken, have seen declining traffic in foreign arrivals as well as cancellations of reservations.

Mehmet Akkuş, the chair of the Marmara Regional Board of the Turkish Association of Travel Agents (TÜRSAB), said more than 25 percent of all reservations made by Russian tourists in the Uludağ region have been canceled already.

After Turkey downed a Russian warplane over an airspace violation in late November, Moscow launched several restrictions on Turkey, resulting in deepening revenue losses in Turkey's tourism, agriculture and textile industries. While the media have focused on fewer visitors to the country's sea resorts in reporting the effects on the tourism sector, Turkey's winter tourism representatives are also complaining about effects from the diplomatic spat.

Recalling that Russian visitors have, for some time, already been on the decline due to a weakening ruble and Western sanctions against Russia, Akkuş said the recent crisis has added to the turmoil.

"The problem with the Russian economy lingers on all across Turkey. It damaged Antalya in the summer and has hit skiing resorts, particularly Uludağ, in winter," Akkuş said. Bora Kanber, the general director of the Renaissance Polat Hotel in Erzurum's Palandöken region, told Today's Zaman that the hotel's losses in revenue stemming from Russian crisis alone have already reached \$300 million.

"Since the jet crisis and amid Polish tourists' security concerns, an average of 90 room reservations are canceled each week. ... All systems are go for skiing in Palandöken; the only problem is that we lack foreign tourists," Kanber stressed.

The canceled reservations of Russians over a span of 14 weeks, in addition to those

of Polish visitors worried about safety, have caused a loss of \$500 million, \$300 million of which was due to Russian jet crisis alone, Kanber said.

Highlighting that domestic demand is not enough to cover the losses, he added: "We are trying to get Arab tourists to come here, but it is too late for this year; maybe it is possible for the coming year. No country has sent chartered flights here this whole year other than Iran."

Russia's sanctions also included a ban on Turkey-bound charter flights.

The Kartalkaya region of the northwestern province of Bolu, however, seems to have been less affected by the Russia-driven turmoil, as hoteliers there report no considerable downturn in reservations.

"Our customers are mainly from the domestic market and we do not have concerns about foreign arrivals," Recep Yılmaz, the marketing director of Kartal Hotel in Kartalkaya.



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# POSITIVE OUTLOOK AS PROFITS TOP €1 BILLION

Good growth in the UK, Nordics, hotels and cruises outweighed weaker results in Germany, driving TUI's underlying operating profits to more than €1 billion this year. The outlook for 2016 remains positive despite the impact of terror attacks on demand.

Europe's largest tourism group slightly beat market expectations with a 22.9% rise in operating profits (underlying EBITA) to €1.07 billion in the year ending September 2015, while turnover rose by 8% to just over €20 billion. Net profits increased by 56.7% to €448.4 million in the first year after the merger of TUI AG and TUI Travel.

Current trading for the 2015/16 year is "in line with expectations", taking the cancellation of Sharm el-Sheikh flights into account, the group said. Winter bookings are flat but average prices are up 4%, with UK sales revenues 6% higher on a 4% rise in customers.

In Germany, winter sales revenues are up by 4% with a 5% rise in average prices offsetting a 1% drop in bookings. Long-haul bookings are 17% higher, with Thailand, Cuba and Asia performing particularly well. However, the Canaries are under pressure due to capacity expansion, the group stated.

Joint CEO Fritz Jousen commented: "We have delivered on our promises, outperforming our ambitious targets. We are headed in the right direction. We are the global market leader in tourism and remain set for growth."

Growth this year was driven by the Northern Region (UK & Nordics), Hotels & Resorts and Cruises, which achieved substantial earnings growth but the Central Region (Germany & Central Europe) was weaker while Western Region (France & Benelux) suffered from lower demand for North Africa, TUI said.

The Northern Region (UK & Ireland, Nordics, Canada, Russia) benefited from a very strong trading performance in the UK & Ireland source market with a 5% customer rise, in spite of the tragic events in Tunisia in the summer. The Nordic countries also contributed to the positive development, achieving improvements in margins and operational efficiency. The region's operating profits rose by a third



to €530 million, although this included substantial currency effects due to the weak euro, while revenues rose to just over €7 billion.

By contrast, the performance of Central Region (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland) was adversely impacted by competitive market conditions in Germany, higher margin pressure, further investment in distribution and additional pension charges at TUIfly in the final quarter. The region's underlying profits dropped by €60 million to €103.5 million on revenues of €5.6 billion.

The performance of Western Region (Netherlands, Belgium, France) was impacted by weak demand in France for northern African destinations. Moreo-

ver, rebranding costs were incurred in the Netherlands to launch the TUI brand. Overall, the region's profits dropped slightly to €69 million.

The strong performance of the Hotels & Resorts segment was again driven by the core brands RIU and Robinson, according to TUI. RIU hotels, in particular, achieved increases in occupancy and average rates, despite the impact of the tragic events in Tunisia. The segment increased underlying EBITA by 15.7% to €234.6 million.

The Cruises business continued to sail ahead strongly with underlying profits soaring to €80.5 million from only €9.7 million in 2014. TUI Cruises benefited from its fleet expansion while up-market brand Hapag-Lloyd Cruises completed its turnaround, with higher average prices, occupancy and operating results.

Looking ahead, TUI said it expects to sustain its profitable growth, with underlying operating profit growth of at least 10% in the current business year and a turnover increase of at least 3%.

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# WTM: £2.5 BILLION IN BUSINESS DEALS EXPECTED

World Travel Market London – the leading global event for the travel industry – has seen a busy first day of business deals and networking. Simon Press, World Travel Market London Senior Director, said: “We have had a fantastic start.” “We had 211 buyers meeting a host of exhibitors for the speed networking session before the event opened this morning, and we have had good feedback from the exhibition floor. “We expect there will be 1.1 million on-stand meetings this week, generating £2.5 billion in business deals.” **HASAN ARSLAN**

Industry bosses gathered to hear the BBC’s Stephen Sackur interview former Manchester United CEO David Gill at the World Travel Leaders lunch, and leading analysts discussed the latest travel trends at the WTM Forecast Forum.

Gill said one of the rare times that he pulled rank on United’s long-serving manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, was over US rock star Bruce Springsteen.

“Sir Alex was never happy about Old Trafford being used for concerts because he was worried about the pitch but Springsteen was planning to tour the UK. I was a big fan so I was determined to get him to play at Old Trafford, and he did,” said Gill.

The event also welcomed senior executives and tourism representatives from key destinations such as Greece, Egypt and Mexico, to share news about growth in visitor numbers and plans for further expansion in 2016.

The speed networking session kicked off WTM London and drew large crowds

of buyers and sellers, keen to make useful contacts to follow up during the course of the four-day event.

David Thomas, Head of Travel and Events at SuperBreak Mini Holidays, said: “It’s a great way to start the show. It’s surprising the number of great leads that you can get within half an hour on a Monday morning. “My first contact this morning has already made the hour here worthwhile.” Dany Duncan, Director at Elemental UK, added: “It’s exceptional. I made three really good contacts last year and subsequently now have put in over £200,000 worth of business just through doing the speed networking session.”

The WTM Forecast Forum heard expert panellists discuss the findings of the World Travel Market 2015 Industry Report. The experts said that China’s economic slowdown is unlikely to adversely affect the country’s burgeoning tourism trade.

“Those with money will continue to travel,” said John Strickland, Owner of JLS Consulting. UKinbound’s Chief Execu-

tive, Deirdre Wells, added: “250 million new people are expected to join China’s middle classes in the next few years; we’re nowhere near hitting our peak.”

Wells also commented on the recent Rugby World Cup in England, and the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, both of which she hopes will drive inbound tourism numbers in 2016.

## GREECE’S TOURISM INDUSTRY EXPECTS 2015 TO BE ANOTHER RECORD YEAR

Euromonitor International head of travel and tourism research Caroline Bremner welcomed the introduction of two-year multi-entry visas for Chinese tourists entering the UK and said that countries needed to work together to boost long-haul inbound traffic.

Greece was also debated, and Euromonitor’s Head of Travel and Tourism Research, Caroline Bremner, said Europe’s politicians need to work together to help the country deal with the refugee crisis.



# FLIGHTS, CRUISES AND LOW PRICES



Bentour, FTI and Dertour are in the news on the German market this week.



Bentour Reisen will deepen cooperation with leisure airline Sun Express both for its main destination Turkey but also for Spain and Greece. From April 2016 the tour operator's customers will fly on Sun Express flights from Germany to Tenerife, Lanzarote, Palma, Ibiza, Chania and Heraklion. Bentour, a Turkey specialist which is broadening its portfolio to other Mediterranean destinations, said it will offer 20 new flight destinations next summer. Managing director Deniz Ugur said bookings for the new destinations are developing well while he was optimistic that demand for Turkey would pick up in January. FTI has denied claims that it is selling cheap packages to its new winter destination Rak Al Khaimah due to low demand following the launch of offers such as €499 for eight days in a five-star hotel. Sales director Ralph Schiller said: "We're not selling any holidays at a loss." He claimed the

tour operator is successfully filling its daily charter flight with Sun Express (from a different German airport each day) to the emirate on the Persian Gulf.



Dertour is the latest German tour operator to offer gay cruises. The tour operator is offering a Mediterranean cruise for German-speaking gay men on Royal Caribbean's Jewel of the Seas next September. Dertour aims to fill at least 50% of the capacity on the ship, which has 1,055 cabins, by itself and will market the 'M Cruise' only through travel agents. TUI Cruises has already announced a similar Mediterranean cruise targeted at the entire LGBT community on Mein Schiff 2 next spring.

German holidaymakers have only minimal interest in environmental protection, according to an online survey by market researchers FUR. This found that 57% of Germans are not prepared to travel less in order to reduce their environmental footprint, and 52% were not ready to stop flying. In contrast, 36% said they preferred a close destination for environmental reasons.



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# TURKEY SEES GOLDEN EGG IN MEDICAL TOURISM, STABILITY REMAINS KEY



With a fast-developing healthcare infrastructure and increased government incentives, Turkey hopes to get a larger share of the global medical tourism market that is estimated to reach \$32 billion in size by the year 2019, and players in the industry are working hard to make sure lingering security issues in the region do not overshadow this quest. **HASAN ARSLAN**

**T**ourism revenue is the principal factor reducing Turkey's large current account deficit (CAD) of \$25.4 billion in the first 10 months of 2015. The country has long been pushing to diversify its income streams from the conventional all-inclusive seashore package tours. Separate figures put the average number of medical visitors to Turkey per year at between 300,000 to 400,000. Turkey's Ministry of Health estimates this figure will increase to 500,000 in 2015, and to 2 million by the year 2023, generating an annual \$20 billion in revenue. This has seen many local and foreign entrepreneurs race to enter the market, and healthcare centers have mushroomed in urban centers in recent years.

Observers, however, warn that companies in the sector should not underestimate ongoing security problems in the country's Southeast and neighboring countries. "Turkey's appeal in medical tourism, both regionally and on a global scale, will continue so long as the country is not associated with security problems.... It should also continue investing in the required infrastructure," Meri İstiroti, chairwoman of the executive board at the Turkish Healthcare Travel Council (THTC), tells *Turizm Aktüel* Magazine. Medical tourism, as a global



trend, has thrived over the past decade, as ever-increasing healthcare costs in developed countries encouraged developing nations like Turkey -- and some others in Asia and the Americas -- to invest in cost-effective medical services. This offered alternatives for medical treatment to millions of patients from countries such as the US and the UK, among others. For instance, approximately 1 million Americans traveled outside the US for medical treatment in 2014, global research firm Future Market Insights (FMI) says. The relatively cheap and high-quality healthcare treatment options in Turkey and its peers have drawn people to their emerging new medical hubs. Each year, tens of thousands of visitors, many from the surrounding region, travel to Turkey for medical treatment at cutting-edge health centers, most of them private hospitals. An earlier report by market intelligence and research firm Transparency Market Research (TMR) cites Turkey among the top 10 emerging global medical tourism hotspots. Low-cost and diversified options for medical treatment in these countries "is also fueling the global market for medical tourism to a great extent," the TMR report says, estimating that global medical tourism's market size will grow to \$32.5 billion in 2019, having been \$10.5 billion in 2012. Studies show tourists traveling to Turkey for medical purposes come from Europe and the Middle East, as well as Russia and countries in the former Soviet bloc. The majority of visitors from Europe belong to the Turkish diaspora living in these countries, especially in Germany and France. Turkey has been striving to improve its standards to help keep it a part of the game, but such countries as Germany, the US and the UK remain major rivals that can potentially attract tourists from Turkey's traditional markets due to se-

curity concerns, İstiroti says. Regional players like India and Iran stand out as other key rivals due to the competitive prices they offer, the THTC head adds. According to data from the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB), Turkey has hosted nearly 500,000 visitors from abroad in 2015 for medical treatment, including in sub-sectors such as thermal therapy centers used mostly by the elderly. The main specialties in Turkey drawing medical tourists were treatment of eye diseases, hair transplantation, dentistry, cardiology and plastic surgery in 2014, according to the TÜRSAB. İstanbul, Ankara and Antalya were the top three hotspots for medical tourism in Turkey. Private hospitals cater to as much as 90 percent of the medical tourists in Turkey, while the remainder opts for relatively developed public hospitals.

## PRIVATE INVESTMENT, STATE SUBSIDIES

The Turkish government sees medical tourism as a key way to improve the healthcare business and services at home and to boost the country's tourism industry as well. Turkey eased visa procedures, diversified the number of global destinations for its national carrier Turkish Airlines, and its private sector boosted quality healthcare service investments. The government announced in 2013 that it aims to build large hospitals in 15 cities across Turkey, with a total cost of TL 20 billion and 25,000-bed capacity by the year 2017; however, the project is still far from completion because of financial and bureaucratic obstacles. Consequently, some observers believe the Turkish medical tourism industry's future lies in private investments rather than public. Investors from Malaysia, Qatar and the US

have already put money into the Turkish healthcare sector. Political and economic stability will decide if local and foreign entrepreneurs will continue to invest in Turkey's medical facilities, İstiroti says, adding that she does not expect private investments to stall over the next five-year period. "There are around 1,500 medical treatment facilities in Turkey and 600 of these are private entities. We can cite around 20 percent of all these private hospitals as genuine centers of attraction for medical tourism; the rest should also be encouraged to make use of their capacity," she asserts. Others say public investments will still play a key role in the future. Actually, Turkey has seen a boom in the number of hospitals accredited by the US-based Joint Commission International (JCI). Dr. Ahmet Demir, from the Turkish private hospital chain Memorial, tells *Today's Zaman*. Demir says it is possible to achieve the government's 2020 goals. "That depends on how committed we are to promoting the industry, improving customer services and finding solutions to the problem of communication and language barriers," he says. Turkey ranks fourth in the world in terms of the number of hospitals accredited by JCI, Demir recalls, adding that the construction of more private and public hospitals equipped with state-of-art technology and advanced diagnosis and treatment systems will improve this ranking. Turkey needs to introduce a number of legal arrangements to facilitate foreign visitors' access to its medical industry, enhance coordination with foreign public and private insurance companies, boost promotion at international fairs and organizations and push to get involved in the EU free-travel regime for healthcare, according to the Ministry of Health's Health Tourism Coordination Council



# TUROB'S NEW YEAR PARTY STIRRED UP THE SECTOR

HALİL TUNCER

The New Year party of TUROB (Tourism Hotels, Managements and Investors Association) gathered all tourism sectors in Crowne Plaza İstanbul Harbiye Hotel. TUROB's executive board members, protocol guests, tourism professionals and press members attended the party which was held in Crowne Plaza İstanbul Harbiye Hotel. While seizing upon the year of 2015, the tourism professionals wished for a more successful year for tourism sector in 2016.



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# World tourism met in Izmir

The Travel Turkey Tourism Exhibition, one of Turkey's most important gatherings in the field of tourism, took place between 10-13 December 2015. **HALİL TUNCER**

Organised by İzmir Exhibition Services Culture and Art Works (İZFAŞ), Turkish Union of Travel Agencies (TÜRSAB) and Hannover Fairs Turkey and hosted by the Municipality of İzmir, the exhibition was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism. While 22 countries joined the fair last year, this year 30 countries found the opportunity to promote their services and products.

902 companies attended the 4-day exhibition, which was visited by 28 thousand 73 people. Visitors from 67 countries and 52 cities of Turkey came to İzmir to plan and evaluate the future tourism potential. Last year the exhibition was visited by 26 thousand 487 people from 34 countries.

Tourism photographer Halil Tuncer exhibited his photographs at the Travel Turkey tourism exhibition. Halil Tuncer, the tourism photographer known closely by

the sector opened an exhibition at the fair. Halil Tuncer's exhibition at the İzmir Travel Turkey exhibition was visited by a wide range of visitors from sector representatives to foreign mission members, the private sector and attendees from the public. Members of the press were also very interested in the exhibition.

Born in 1939 in Amasya, Halil Tuncer was the first photographer to take the pictures of Nemrut in 1971. The Nemrut photograph he took in 1993 won him a second place at the Tourism Photography Competition that was held in Denmark and attended by 69 countries. Tuncer opened personal photography exhibitions in the US, Cuba, more than 15 European countries, Egypt, Malaysia and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.







## HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES DROP DOUBLE DIGIT NUMBERS IN TURKEY: ASSOCIATION

Turkey's hotel occupancy rates saw double-digit decline in September despite a rise in local tourists during a 9-day Eid holiday, said the Turkish Touristic Hotels and Investors Association (TUROB) in a written statement on Oct. 30.



Hotel occupancy rates decreased by 12.4 percent to 65.3 percent in September compared to the same month of 2014. As was the case in August, Turkey faced the steepest drop in hotel occupancy rates across Europe, including Russia, according to data compiled by TUROB from STR Global's September figures. The rates also decreased in Turkey's most popular tourism destinations, Istanbul and Antalya, added TUROB.

Room prices also showed a drop, said

the data. While average daily room prices (ADR) were 115.1 euros in September 2014, this figure regressed to 111.1 euros in September 2015. The revenue per available room (RevPAR) also decreased from 85.7 euros in September 2014 to 72.5 euros in September 2015. "The next few years will not be easy for the sector after this year, which is full of uncertainties and concerns. Our 2016 target is not to see lower figures than the 2015 figures. All problems result-

ing from escalating violence, terror attacks and economic instability need to be resolved in Turkey. Spreading negative perceptions about Turkey abroad also need to be recovered to enable the sector's revival," said TUROB President Timur Bayındır.

The largest hotel occupancy rates were seen in Malta with 91.6 percent in September, followed by Hungary with 89 percent and Ireland with 88.7 percent. Bulgaria and Turkey took place at the bottom of the list with 67.5 percent and 65.3 percent, respectively, according to STR Global data.



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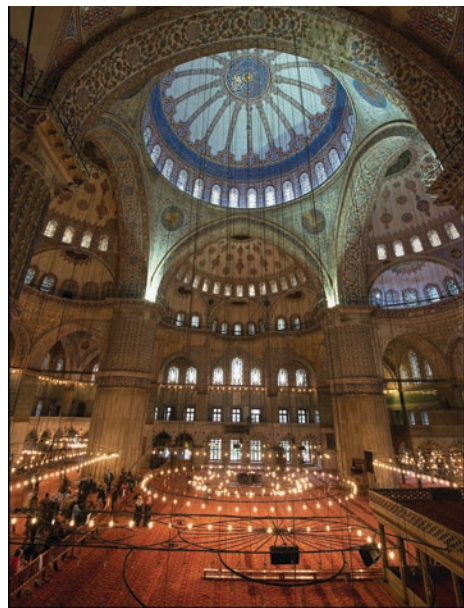
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# RECORD RISE IN MUSEUM PRICES



Turkish officials have enacted sweeping hikes in the price of admission for museums and ancient sites despite a drop in the number of visitors this year, with some tourism operators worried the rise will further detract visitors.

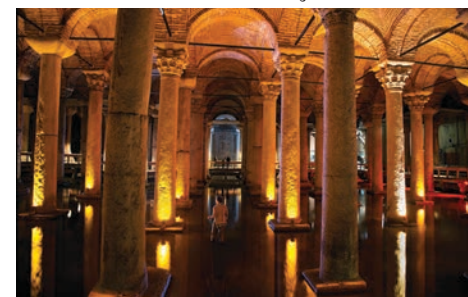


“The price for the ancient city of Pamukkale was increased from 25 to 35 liras. This rise will detract the people of Denizli from Pamukkale. It will also have a negative effect on tour package sales,” said the head of the Denizli Touristic Hoteliers Association (DENTUROD), Gazi Murat Şen.

The entrance price for Ephesus, Topkapı Palace and Hagia Sophia have all increased from 30 to 40 Turkish Liras.

One of the five most visited cities in world tourism, Antalya saw a decline in tourist numbers for the first time this year due to the economic crisis in Russia. For 2016, prices have been increased in the ticket prices of most ancient sites and museums operated by the Turkish Travel Agencies’

Union (TÜRSAB). The rise at Olympos and Side has hit 400 percent, with the five-lira price skyrocketing to 20 liras. Şen said the rises were inexplicable at a time when the tourism sector needs a boost. “Fewer people will visit museums and ancient sites. These rises should be withdrawn,” he added. The ticket price increases will go into effect on Jan. 4, 2016, Şen said.



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 BLUE VOYAGE  
 ONLINE BOOKING



## AN EXPERT ON ISTANBUL

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# Destination hotels retain customer popularity

The leading leisure hotels in Greece, Turkey and Spain remained top of the popularity stakes in the first half of November after weeks of fluctuations with only a few changes and new names in the top rankings, the latest fvw Hotelometer ranking showed.

In Greece, the biggest winner was the Ikaros Beach Luxury Resort & Spa on Crete which entered the top ten in third place in the fortnight from November 2 -15, according to the ranking based on enquiries in the Traveltainment reservations sys-

tem used by German travel agents and online booking engines. The Lyttos Beach again remained in overall top spot ahead of the Lindos Princess Beach. These were also the top two in the ranking of family enquiries but with the Lindos ahead of the Lyttos Beach, followed by the TUI Best Family Alex Beach. Couples

were most interested in the Ikaros Beach, the Happy Days hotel in Georgiopolis and the Kernos Beach in Malia.

The picture also remained very familiar in Spain, where the Lopesan Costa Meloneras once again defended top spot ahead of the Iberostar Playa Gaviotas with the Iberostar Fuerteventura Palace in third place. Families preferred the Sotavento Beach Club, the Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the Viva Cala Mesquida, while the Lopesan Costa Meloneras, Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the Iberostar Fuerteventura Palace were the three top

favourites for couples.

In contrast, the Turkish ranking showed several changes. The Aydinbey Kings Palace regained top spot, the Primasol Hane Family jumped to second place and the Trendy Aspendos Beach dropped back to third. The Primasol Hane Family, the Aydinbey Kings Palace and Trendy Aspendos Beach were the top three in the ranking of enquiries by families, while the couples listing was topped by the Aydinbey Kings Palace, the Commodore Elite Suites and the Paloma Oceana.

The fvw Hotelometer is a fortnightly ranking of the most popular tourist hotels in Spain, Turkey and Greece, based on all enquiries in the Traveltainment reservations system used by German travel agents and online booking engines. The data, supplied by IT company TrevoTrend and split into different categories (overall, families, couples, singles and star ratings), thus reflect demand trends but do not show actual bookings.



Best Western Empire Palace hotel has been awarded for excellence in service and standards. This S-Class boutique hotel offers comfort and pleasure for all travelers. Its perfect location is within walking distance of all major historical, cultural and touristic attractions of magical Istanbul like Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, Topkapi Palace, the Egyptian Spice Bazar, the Golden horn and many others. No matter if for a business trip or a family holiday, the loveliest and most convenient place to stay.

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# Court blow for Booking.com

The German cartel office has banned Booking.com's 'best price' clause, which forces hoteliers in Germany to offer their lowest rate to the accommodation booking portal. The competition authority ruled that the clause limited competition and gave the company a deadline of end-January 2016 to change its contracts. A similar HRS clause was banned two years ago but Expedia is still allowed to operate with a 'best price' clause on the German market.

In response, Booking.com's president Gillian Tans said the accommodation portal will appeal against the decision but the company will change its clauses for German hotels in line with the decision pending the appeal. "We believe this decision is flawed because it does not recognise

efficient marketing channel for most hotels that could not otherwise afford to market their brand to domestic and international consumers. Narrow parity was put in place to ensure that consumers don't have to check hundreds of hotel websites in order to get the best price, allowing sites like

Denmark and the Czech Republic, according to a study by portal Bestfewo.de based on two million room night bookings. Most bookings, however, are for properties in Germany, led by the Baltic Sea coast and Bavaria. Germans are spending more on holiday homes for 2016, the study found, with average spending up by €86 to €592 for an average stay of 7.6 nights.

Frankfurt Airport has achieved a new passenger record with 60 million passengers in a year for the first time. Airport operator Fraport expects passenger numbers to grow about 2-3% a year in the coming years, meaning that the 70 million figure could be reached in about seven years' time.

Charter airline Germania will launch more flights from Münster/Osnabrück airport next May using an A319 stationed at the regional airport. Among the 19 weekly flights to 13 destinations are new services to Malaga, Ibiza and Varna.



the immense benefits that online travel brands like Booking.com bring to both consumers and accommodations," she declared. "We do not only save consumers time and money, we serve as a highly cost-



Booking.com and others to achieve advertising efficiencies on behalf of hotels."

Austria and Spain are the top foreign bookings so far for 2016 ahead of Poland,



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# BARUT HOTEL IS SHOOTING STAR IN TURKEY RANKING

The Barut Lara Resort & Spa is the big mover in the latest fww Hotelometer ranking of the most popular hotels in Turkey, Spain and Greece for German tourists. **HALİL ÖNCÜ**



The hotel in Lara, near Antalya, jumped into the top ten for Turkey in second place, behind the Aydinbey Kings Palace and ahead of the Primasol Hane Family, the ranking for November 30 – December 13 showed. Families were most interested in the Aydinbey, Primasol and the Trendy Aspendos Beach while the Barut Lara, the Aydinbey and the Commodore Elite Suites were the three favourites among couples.

In Greece, there were only a few changes. Top place in the overall ranking was taken by the Ikaros Beach Luxury Resort & Spa, ahead of the Apollonia Beach Resort and the Lyttos Beach. In the family ranking, the Lyttos Beach, Apollonia and Lindos Princesss Beach were the top three. Most enquiries from couples again went to the Ikaros Beach, the Kernos Beach and the Agapi Beach. The main change in Spain came from FTI's Labranda Bahia de Lobos, which moved up four places to sixth. The overall top three were the Lopesan Costa Meloneras, the Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the Iberostar Fuerteventura Palace. Families again preferred the Sotavento



Beach Club, the Iberostar Club Cala Barca and the Viva Cala Mesquida, while the Lopesan Costa Meloneras, Iberostar Playa Gaviotas and the Iberostar Fuerteventura Palace remained the three top favourites for couples. The fww Hotelometer is a fortnightly ranking of the most popular tourist hotels in Spain, Turkey and Greece, based

on all enquiries in the Traveltainment reservations system used by German travel agents and online booking engines. The data, supplied by IT company TrevoTrend and split into different categories (overall, families, couples, singles and star ratings), thus reflect demand trends but do not show actual bookings.



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— I S T A N B U L —



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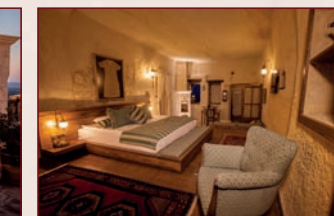
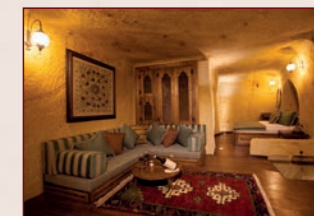


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