

# turizm aktüel

Türkiye

YEAR: 17 • NUMBER: 2017/3 • MARCH 2017 YIL: 17 • SAYI 2017/3 • MART 2017 • ISSN: 1301-4587



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**TURKEY'S  
SLOW CITY  
NETWORK  
GROWS WITH  
3 NEW  
ADDITIONS**

**JOLLY TOURS  
AND KILIT  
HOSPITALITY  
GROUP TO  
JOIN FORCES**

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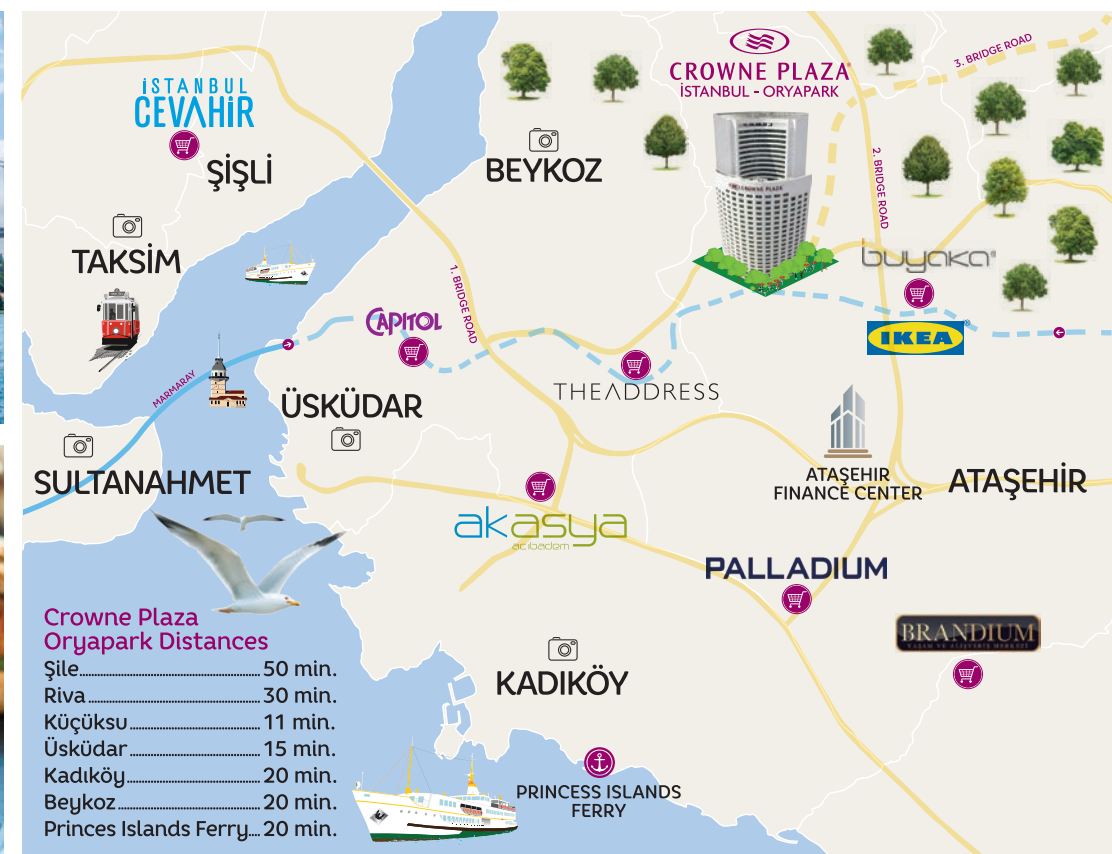
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## Turizm Aktüel

Year: 17 • Number: 2017/3 • March 2017  
Yıl: 17 • Sayı 2017/3 • Mart 2017  
ISSN: 1301- 4587

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İstanbul Tel:0212 612 00 88

### PUBLICATION TYPE

Local Periodical - Monthly Magazine  
**YAYIN TÜRÜ**  
Yerel Süreli Yayın - Aylık Dergi

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T.C. YASALARINA UYGUN OLARAK YAYIMLANMAKTA DİR.  
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UYMAYA SÖZ VERMİŞTİR.

# THE FAIR MARATHON IS ON

Hello from ITB Berlin Special Edition of Turizm Aktüel Magazine...

Another year has passed and once again we meet in Berlin, at the trade fair making tourism professionals from all over the world meet.

This is the place where we all promote our products, meet each other, learn about new trends and keep up-to-date about the aspects of the new season. This is where new plans for the future are made. And this trade fair is very important for Turkey. In 2016, much has changed in Turkey but also all over the world. In Turkey change has brought negative effects in its wake. It seems that tourism in Turkey has to pass through difficult tests once again. Since many of the fine equilibriums have changed in 2017 and created many problems, there is a heavy load which has been left on the shoulders of tourism in Turkey. But each bad time has its heroes, and thus we witnessed many people who worked hard to promote Turkey abroad against all odds, who tried to keep morale up and to motivate others to follow their lead. We want to thank all or them from our heart.

Let's admit it, the expectations for tourism in Turkey are not very promising. It might be a bit early to be pessimistic, but still, the outlook is not fine. We cannot be sure at the moment how things will turn out, but we can be sure that the performance of all tourism professionals and of all the sector will play a big role. This is the reason why we are all called upon to shape our future actively, to take a proactive stance and to work with all our energy.

To give a little bit of information about ourselves: Along with this special edition to be presented at the ITB Berlin we have also prepared another special edition for the Trade Fair in England. We will represent our branch in Germany where we will strive to promote Turkey with our news and editorials. You will find the most important and up-to-date news on Turkey and its new hotel investments in this edition.

Our next special edition will be published on the occasion of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) which is held in Dubai in April. We are looking forward to meet you there as well soon...

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# ICCA'S SOLIDARITY VISIT TO ISTANBUL

Istanbul is hosting ICCA's CEO Martin Sirk, European Regional Director David Bodor, and Board Member Marta Gomes, and showing their support of ICCA's global community during the 'ACE of MICE by Turkish Airlines' tradeshow.

CEO Mr. Sirk stated that: Over the last 20 years Istanbul established itself as a "premier league" player in the international association meetings market, and the rest of Turkey developed a strong country-wide infrastructure and professional capacity on the back of that pioneering work, with Turkish Airlines adding to the mix with its ambitious, global network. Turkey and Istanbul have acted as an invaluable bridge between East and West, Europe and the Middle East, between cultures and peoples. The challenges currently facing Turkey can blind us to this vital role that the country can play in our global industry, and we hope to identify some practical solutions and ideas that will help our members re-establish long-term growth and development in Turkey's meetings industry. Regarding ICCA's full



support, Istanbul CVB's General Manager Ms. Hicran Ozbuk added: "We are extremely pleased to have the full support of the ICCA. Istanbul has a breathtaking history, having been the capital of no less than three different empires, and has been a mercantile trade center for many centuries. We are confident that Istanbul will continue to be the top place for meetings and conference. In 2016 the city hosted a number of well-attended congresses. In addition, the

city welcomed over 11.9 million international visitors in 2016 (MasterCard Report), and this makes the city one of the top 10 most visited cities in the world. We strongly believe that Istanbul will continue being a strong meeting point for both business and leisure visitors. We are also focusing on the congresses that will be held in Istanbul this year. We will be hosting very important congresses with a large number of delegates in 2017. Just to name a few; the World Petroleum Congress (WPC) with 5.000 delegates, the Apimondia International Apicultural Congress with 8.000 delegates, World Conference of the International Association of Science Parks (IASP), WFNS World Congress of Neurosurgery and World Congress of Aesthetic Medicine. For upcoming years, 2018 and beyond, we are working more and more effectively with new leads and we are happy that we are receiving positive feedbacks for future congresses." In addition, Istanbul also hosted significant congresses in 2016: the World Energy Congress with 10.000 delegates, the World Cereal and Bread Congress, the World Polymer Congress, the World Congress of the Universal Federation of Travel Agents' Association and World Congress on Human Resources Management with 3.000 delegates. The list goes on and on.



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## ANTALYA TARGETS STABLE GERMAN VISITOR NUMBERS IN 2017

The Antalya region is aiming for two million German tourists again this year after a dramatic slump in 2016 and hopes for a big comeback from the Russian market.

The Turkish Riviera gateway suffered a heavy drop of about one third in German visitor numbers to two million in 2016 as demand for the destination fell away dramatically. But Menderes Türel, mayor of Antalya, remains hopeful and is targeting stable numbers or even a slight increase in 2017. The region has been seeing positive year-on-year bookings in the last few weeks, he said at a roadshow in Frankfurt this week. However, reliable figures about the bookings situation will first be possible after ITB Berlin in early March, he added. Türel underlined that Turkey continues to offer good value for money,

very good hotels and reliable sunny weather, while prices are lower this year. Meanwhile, officials are urging airlines not to cut back on capacity to Antalya in response to weak demand so far but to stay loyal to the destination. Yasar Döngel, Fraport's representative at Antalya Airport, explained that late demand could not be fully met last year due to capacity cuts and hoped that "the airlines have learned their lesson" for 2017. German-Turkish leisure airline Sun Express claims that it benefited from maintaining a stable flight schedule to Antalya last year while competitors cut back on services. Its passenger numbers to Antalya declined only 9% while the airport's total volumes dropped by a third. Overall, Sun Express flew eight million passengers, maintained stable revenues of about €1 billion and broke even last year. New CEO Jens Bischof has ambitious plans for this year. He will increase overall capacity from German-speaking markets to Turkey by more than 25%, and thus further increase the airline's current market share of 36%. He firmly believes that bookings for Turkey will

improve in the coming months. "Others have cut back, and that's our chance," he declared. Turkish hoteliers are meanwhile hoping for a strong comeback from the Russian market this year following the improved relations between the two countries' governments, which could compensate for continued weak demand from Germany. Russian visitor numbers to Antalya slumped to just half a million last year compared to three million in 2015 following a Russian travel ban. "We know that at the moment about half of all Russian early bookings are going to Turkey," Erkan Yagci, the new president of the regional hotel association Aktob, told fvw in an interview. "With regard to Russia, we believe that we will soon come back towards the record figures of the past." Looking ahead to this year's overall prospects, Yagci continued: "The Russians are coming back, so it will definitely be better (than last year), even if the German market is weak. In 2016, we had 6.5 million foreign visitors in Antalya. For 2017, we expect 8-9 million. And we think the level of 2015 can be reached in 2018."



Promoting Turkey: (from left) Menderes Türel, Jens Bischof, Yusuf Hacısüleyman, Yasar Döngel



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— ANTALYA —



# EUROPEAN TOURISM GIANT EYES NEW MARKETS TO FILL ITS HOTELS

European travel and tourism company TUI said it aims to start offering holidays to customers from countries such as China, India, Spain and Italy as it seeks new ways to keep its hotels full.



TUI has been reorganizing its business to invest in more of its own hotels and cruise ships and has been selling off units that it doesn't see as core, such as Hotelbeds and Travelopia, a portfolio of specialist holiday brands which it agreed to sell on Feb. 13.

Chief Executive Fritz Joussen told journalists on Feb. 14 that while TUI sells holidays to southern Europe, it doesn't take customers from those countries on holiday and it wanted

to change that.

"This is also true for China, Southeast Asia ... We're looking at countries with increasing middle classes and high synergies," he said, announcing the plan which targets 1 million customers and 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in revenues.

Joussen said TUI would keep investment costs by focusing on digital sales channels and making sure that customers were directed to its own hotels in places such as

the Caribbean and Thailand. That will help to minimize risks if it proves not possible to build up the business successfully in these new markets.

"Many have entered China and come back with a bloody nose. This should not happen to us," he said.

Joussen was speaking after TUI reported a narrower loss for the first quarter of 66.7 million euros, a 17 percent improvement on last year. Tourism companies typically make

losses during the winter months.

TUI confirmed a forecast for core earnings to rise by at least 10 percent this year at constant exchange rates and said summer trading was in line with expectations. Rival Thomas Cook last week gave a cautious outlook for its financial year, citing depressed demand for holidays in Turkey and the impact on sterling of Britain's vote to leave the European Union. Joussen said that summer bookings from

the UK were up 3 percent on last year and revenues were 12 percent higher. Revenues were being driven by a combination of higher prices and customers spending more to travel further afar.

"Higher prices are necessary because of the depreciation of the British pound, you need higher prices to cover higher costs in destinations," he said, without specifying further price rises for British holidaymakers..







# Russian tour operators expect a record number of tourists holidaying in Turkey

According to a statement released by Russia, the number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey this summer will hit a record high.

President of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) Maya Lomidze, confirmed that according to data provided by Turkey on summer tourism, the number of bookings made by Russians, who want to visit Turkey was satisfactory. He stressed that the numbers they received overtook those of the pre-crisis period, which occurred due to the downing of a Russian jet by Turkey, on the grounds of violating its airspace back in 2015. ATOR President Maya Lomidze informed that the number of Russian tourists who will spend their vacations in Turkey this

summer broke the record set before the crisis, despite the fact that we were still in winter. She also pointed out that there was still time until the early reservation period ended, but cautiously added that although the current situations looked bright, they did not know what would happen until summer. Lomidze further said that in order to learn the choice of Russian tourists in definite terms, they should wait for the summer season. She also noted that the number of Russian tourists who wanted to seize the advantages of early reservation packages offered by Turkey constituted

to 50 percent of the sales. One reason why Russians prefer Turkey this summer in great numbers was the previous reservations that had been cancelled due to terrorist attacks, according to the ATOR president. Another reason, Lomidze argues, was the special offers and prices that Turkish hotel owners drew up for the Russian market. A 20 to 50 percent discount in the 2017 prices, offered by Turkey to the Russian tourism sector was also observed. She said the price of accommodation for two in an all-inclusive three-star hotel was about 36,000 rubles.







# 1,500 HOTELS IN TURKEY TO ACCEPT RUBLES

Hotel owners are to meet with banks to discuss carrying out sales operations in rubles. Osman Ayık, the chairman of the Turkish Hoteliers Federation (TÜROFED), said if the exchange rate risk were mitigated, 1,500 hotels would start using the ruble for their sales operations. Tourism businesses have taken the initiative for trade in the local currency. [HASAN ARSLAN](#)



Osman Ayık

Hoteliers who make their sales to Russia using the ruble instead of the U.S. dollar are preparing to meet banks with this month. Tourism investors aspiring to shield themselves against exchange rate risks will start using the ruble in the Russian market. If agreement is secured, 1,500 hotels that sell rooms to Russian tourists will start using the ruble instead of the greenback in their transactions. Chairman Ayık stated that they want to settle the issue of trading in rubles before the new season. "However, the exchange rate risk still prevails. A month ago, the dollar was traded at 70 rubles, yet today the dollar/ruble parity stands around 50. We do not know what will happen two months from now. Because of this volatility, we set our prices with the U.S. dollar. To start trading in local currencies, we need to sort out TL/ruble parity," Ayık said.



He noted that the federation will meet financial institutions, including Denizbank, which is owned by Russian Sberbank and has already made available ruble withdrawal from the banks' ATMs and started providing call center services in the Russian language. "If TL/ruble parity is stabilized, we aim to start using the ruble in sales transactions before the new season, which begins in March," Ayık said, underscoring that hotel owners support a stable exchange rate because they start drawing up their plans one year beforehand. Ayık added that a stable exchange rate will enable hotel owners to see the future.



Moreover, trade in local currencies will also positively contribute to the number of tourists, Ayık pointed out. According to the TÜROFED chair, since prices are set in U.S. dollars, tour operators are at risk emanating from any hike in the exchange rate; accordingly, they reflect this risk in their vacation packages. The risks reflected in prices create a disadvantageous situation for marketing,

which, Ayık claims, will be resolved through stable parity and create a situation in favor of Russian tourists. This whole situation, if resolved, will increase Turkey's charm, according to Ayık. He said that trade in rubles will provide hoteliers an important experience and that if an agreement is reached with other countries, their local currencies as a medium of exchange for transactions in tourism can be used, as well.





# A traditional Ottoman mansion that jewels the Asian Bosphorus shores

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Besides the frequent and convenient flight to Istanbul, crossing between continents is a spectacular experience. Whether you drive or take the complimentary Aija boat shuttle it is a feast on eyes.







# TURKEY'S SLOW CITY NETWORK GROWS WITH 3 NEW ADDITIONS

Having started as an attempt to preserve and publicize more livable towns and cities around the world, the Cittaslow movement continues to add more Turkish towns into its network, the latest of which are Göynük, Gerze and Eğirdir.

The three towns are known for their rich historical and cultural characteristics, but in order to be considered a "slow city" they had to fulfill 70 criteria in categories such as environment, infrastructure, social cohesion, and urban quality of life. At a recent meeting held

in the northeastern city of Artvin, these three towns were given their "Cittaslow" certificates. With the addition of Göynük, Gerze and Eğirdir, the number of cities that received the title of "Cittaslow city" in Turkey has increased to 14.

Located within the borders of Isparta, Eğirdir is a history and nature-rich district because of its various natural and historical characteristics and landmarks such as Lake Eğirdir, which changes color during the day in each season, the Alpine Commando Unit of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), Kasnak Oak, a rare sight in the world, Sığla Forests and the Apollon butterfly, which is only seen in Eğirdir. Lake Eğirdir is suitable for many watersports such as water slides, underwater diving, and sailing as well as fishing. Trekking, mountaineering and paragliding are performed in the mountains surrounding Eğirdir.

At a distance of 1.5 kilometers from Eğirdir's city center, Yeşilada maintains its authentic character. It has stone-based wooden houses, narrow streets and small fishermen's shelters. Yeşilada, formerly known as Nis, has popular residential accommodation and fish restaurants. There is also the Aya Stefanos Church which is considered sacred to Christians on the island. In the winter months, visitors at Davraz Ski Resort in Isparta can ski at the center overlooking Lake Eğirdir, which is Turkey's fourth largest lake. Located at 2,635 meters at the peak of the Taurus Mountains, Davraz Ski Resort is currently experiencing the busiest period of the ski season. The resort, whose hotels have reached 100 percent occupancy rate over the semester break, is swarming with day trippers at this time of the season. At the center, where the snow thickness reaches 1.5 meters in the hotel region and 3 meters in the higher spots, ski lovers can ski at the

peak of the center, where they reach with four mechanical facilities. Tourists who prefer the hotel region can enjoy the snow with their sledges.

## GÖYNÜK, BOLU

The Göynük district of the province of Bolu, which has recently come to the fore as one of the leading tourism destinations in Turkey, is also known as an "Ottoman city" that has managed to preserve its architecture, natural beauty and traditions. The Gazi Süleyman Pasha Mosque and Bath, Akshamsaddin Tomb, Ömer Sekkin Tomb, Victory Tower, Phrygian ruins in Soğukçam Village and Byzantine ruins in Kilciler Village are among the important historical monuments in the district. Göynük, also known as "Akşemseddin Diyarı" (The Land of Akshamsaddin), serves as one of the important centers of belief tourism because of its mosques and tombs. Göynük cuisine, which carries all the features of Ottoman cuisine, has all the features of the slow food movement.

## GERZE, SINOP

Gerze is the third district that has recently joined the Cittaslow network alongside Eğirdir and Göynük. In Gerze, which has

suitable natural conditions for alternative sports, Hacısellî village has become a favorite destination for paragliding lovers. The 400-meter-high Yelken hill leading up to Hacısellî is one of the most convenient places for paragliding in the Black Sea. Located 15 kilometers from downtown Gerze, the Saklıköy waterfall is another paradise for nature lovers with its creek bed hidden in the slope of the Asar Hill. It is home to hundreds of plant species and butterflies. After driving from Gerze, it is possible to reach this hidden paradise with a 1.5 kilometer walk towards the creek bed to see the waterfall falling from a height of 20 meters. Cittaslow is an international

municipal association movement founded in 1999 in Italy. It aims to improve the quality of urban life as well as the overall well-being of urban-dwellers through cultural preservation and healthy lifestyle initiatives. "Slow cities" are known for their beautiful natural surroundings, organic foods and tranquil daily life. To qualify for a Cittaslow certificate, each city must act per the philosophy of the movement, have a population of under 50,000, and complete an application file to be submitted to the Union. The Cittaslow movement, which became widespread among Italian cities during its early years, now has 182 members in 28 countries.







# SunExpress expects rebound in Turkish tourism in 2017

Turkey's tourist industry is set for a rebound in 2017 following difficult times in 2016, according to the general manager of SunExpress, a joint venture of Lufthansa and Turkish Airlines.

**W**e believe Turkey will become a very attractive holiday destination in 2017 when both quality and price are considered. SunExpress is an important tourism partner for Turkey. Additionally, it is a strong partner in the Turkish business world and will remain so. We trust that every aspect of tourism will improve in 2017. In this respect, we are not considering downsizing; on the contrary, we will do our utmost to remain capable of meeting improving demand in a timely manner," said Jens Bischof in a press statement. The company "has proven that it is an important catalyst for Turkish tourism even in a year like 2016, in which many tough ups and downs were experienced in Turkey. Flying the greatest number of tourists to the Mediterranean and Aegean regions of Turkey

via scheduled and direct flights, SunExpress contributed a great deal to Turkish tourism by welcoming onboard one of every five tourists from Western Europe in 2016," the statement read. "Despite all the hardships and tough conditions encountered in 2016, we continued our flights with determination. When compared to the previous year, we carried 8 million passengers with a slight decrease of 9 percent compared with 2015, which is a respectable accomplishment in such a rough year," said Bischof. Bischof also said that while the decline in the tourism sector in Antalya, Turkey's top tourism destination, reached 30 percent in 2016, SunExpress only suffered a 9 percent decline in Antalya while increasing its market share to 36 percent. "Our market share in our

transfer center, İzmir, increased to 76 percent. We, as SunExpress, will continue to focus on Turkey as our main capital in 2017 and will continue welcoming tourists from Germany, Austria and Switzerland with 450 scheduled flights a week," he added. Still, Bischof admitted that there were fewer tourists considering Turkey as a holiday destination. "On the other hand, there is a limited amount of capacity at other holiday destinations in the Western Mediterranean region. This in turn causes prices to increase," he said. Together with SunExpress Germany, which was founded in 2011, SunExpress boasts a flexible fleet structure.

The airline also operates in Egypt and Bulgaria, which have respective market shares of 30 percent and 26 percent each, Bischof said. He also expressed his support for the "bring your family too" campaign, which has highlighted direct scheduled flights from 13 Turkish cities to 40 different cities in Germany, where more than 3 million Turks currently reside. "We therefore naturally support 'bring your family too' campaign. We act as a bridge for those who want to spend their holidays with their families and friends in their native land. Thus, we want to continue our promotional offers to enable them to spend their holidays in Turkey," said Bischof. The campaign was launched by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Six brand new B737-800 will also join the SunExpress fleet in 2017, officials said.



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# UN TOURISM CHIEF PRAISES TURKEY

Turkey has done its best to minimize the influence of terrorism on the tourism sector, says UNWTO Secretary General



Security is not only Turkey's, France's, Belgium's or Germany's problem, it is a global problem and the solution must be the result of a collective work, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Secretary-General Taleb Rifai has told. Rifai met Menderes Turel, the mayor of Turkey's southern tourist resort Antalya, in Spain's capital Madrid on Friday.

Stating that Turkey had done its best to minimize the influences of the terrorist attacks in Ankara on the tourism sector, Rifai said these kinds of attacks have been occurring in various destinations around the world and added:

"Turkey is a powerful country in tourism and we are confident that this trend will continue. Our message as the World Tourism Organization is that people should go on travelling to

these destinations."

Rifai said Antalya is at a very significant location among the other tourism cities across the Mediterranean.

Turel said Antalya is a model city during these hard days, adding: "Strengthening tourism means the strengthening of peace and brotherhood."

"Tourism is a peace industry. Tourism is in a position that gathers humanity and brotherhood and that leaves all the political conflicts aside. The more we strengthen the tourism sector, the more we contribute to world peace. This is what we have been trying to accomplish in Antalya. You can see the citizens of countries experiencing serious political debates in the world in the same pool of a hotel in Antalya." Turel said Antalya is the third most popular touristic area after Paris and London in Eurasia.



United Nation's World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Secretary General Taleb Rifai

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## OVER 2.6 MLN TURKS MAKE EARLY BOOKINGS FOR HOLIDAYS IN TURKEY IN 3 MONTHS: ASSOCIATION

More than 2.6 million Turks have made early bookings for their 2017 holidays in the country in just three months, a leading tourism representative said, adding that the figure was expected to surpass 5 million in the upcoming months.

Sector representatives say the reason behind the introduction of these campaigns was an attempt to help the ailing sector rebound its losses after continuous defeat in the Turkish Lira's value and big cuts in hotel prices in the country. Early reservation campaigns were launched on Dec. 12 for local tourists.

"Some 5.4 million local tourists have made early reservations in a five-month period last year. We are very optimistic for this year, as more than 2.6 million Turks have benefited from early reservation offers in just three months after such campaigns started late in 2016. We expect this figure will see further rise as the weather gets warmer," said Mehmet İşler, vice president of the Hoteliers Federation of Turkey (TÜROFED), as quoted by state-run Anadolu Agency on Feb. 13. He noted that the share of local tourists in the country's tourism stood

at around 15 percent, which is expected to increase over this year. "We will see how local tourists are of great significance to our sector in 2017, by creating a strong resilience factor against crises. We will see more local tourists travelling in the country," he added. Another sector player noted that the campaigns, which offer up to 50 percent

price cuts and nine-installment payment opportunities, were preferred mainly by public servants. "Public servants can easily plan their travels in earlier dates than many others do. We have seen a flocking demand in early reservations for this year mainly due to the rise in foreign exchange rates, significant slashes in hotel prices and partly

some sort of 'national stance' by some people to help the sector overcome its losses," said Cem Polatoğlu, the spokesperson of the Tour Operators Platform, as quoted by state-run Anadolu Agency.

Early reservations campaigns will last until May 31, according to sector players. The number of foreigners visiting Turkey declined to 25.3 million in 2016, a 30 percent drop compared with 2015, after a series of bomb attacks, a crisis with Russia, and a failed military coup attempt in July 2016.



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# 8 mln foreign tourists 'expected to visit Antalya in 2017'

Around 7.5 to 8 million foreign tourists are expected to visit the Mediterranean province of Antalya over this year, following a daunting year for Turkey, a leading tourism player has said.



The number of foreigners visiting Turkey, mainly Istanbul and Antalya, declined to 25.3 million in 2016, a 30 percent drop compared to 2015, after a series of bomb attacks, a diplomatic crisis with Russia, and the failed July 15, 2016 coup attempt. Professional Hoteliers Association (POYD) President Hakan

Duran said the Russian market has started presenting attraction to Turkey again, as early bookings from them were growing in high numbers. "We expect around 7.5 to 8 million foreign tourists to visit Antalya this year, which will represent a 30 percent increase compared to 2016," he said, as quoted by state-run Anadolu Agency.

Half of Russia's holidaymakers have chosen Turkey as their top travel destination in 2017, a recent report released by the Association of Tour Operators in Russia (ATOR) stated, citing estimates from the country's tour operators and agencies.

"We have expected around 2 to 2.5 million Russian tourists to visit Antalya this year. If an average of 2.5 million Russians visited Antalya this year, we can close 2017 with around 7.5 to 8 million foreign arrivals, even in the scenario of some 1 million losses from the European market," said Duran. He added that there was a strong recovery in the U.K. market, as many Brits wanted to visit Antalya, however the same trend could not be seen for many other European markets, including Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Duran also noted that around 650,000 to 700,000 Israeli tourists were expected to visit Antalya this year.



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# CHINESE REAL ESTATE GIANT WANDA TO OPEN FIRST OFFSHORE HOTEL IN ISTANBUL

In the latest example of strategic and robust foreign partnerships established by Turkish companies, a partnership agreement between Turkey's Mar Yapı and Chinese commercial estate giant Wanda Group points to the level of confidence among foreign investors in Turkey's investment environment **HASAN ARSLAN**



Mar Yapı Chairman Münir Özkök (L) and Wang Jianlin, chairman of Chinese commercial estate giant Wanda Group (R) shake hands after signing a partnership agreement for the Wanda Vista Istanbul project in Shanghai.

A strategic business partnership agreement has been signed between Mar Yapı and Wanda Group, one of China's largest commercial enterprises which also owns a chain of luxury hotels. The agreement regarding Wanda Vista Istanbul, Wanda Group's first offshore hotel to be built in Istanbul, will be opened in the city as part of strategic collaborations with Mar Yapı under the scope of its investments in Turkey, ranging from a variety of fields including technology, tourism, finance and real estate. Prior to the signing ceremony for the Wanda Vista Istanbul project in Shanghai, Mar Yapı Chairman Münir Özkök came together with Wanda Group Chairman Wang Jianlin, China's richest man, at Wanda Group headquarters in Beijing. During the meeting, Wanda and Mar Yapı agreed to collaborate in different areas apart from the tourism sector, also making decisions to take steps in e-commerce and

other brands the group owns. Wanda Vista Istanbul, the first step in the business alliance between the two groups, will be operational in 2018 and will serve as a hotel with 150 rooms, as well as undertaking the operation of 300 residences in the hotel building.

## WANDA TO OPEN FIRST OFFSHORE HOTEL IN ISTANBUL

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Wanda Hotels & Resorts Chairman Qian Jin announced that they will open their first foreign hotel in Istanbul under the scope of the Wanda Vista brand. Noting that Wanda Vista Istanbul will be the first hotel brand of Wanda Hotels & Resorts in the global market, Jin said the hotel will be followed by openings in other world-class cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, London, Sydney and Gold Coast. Jin also said their partnership with Mar Yapı is an important milestone in China's goals to become an international hotel management company worldwide.

## WANDA TO CONTINUE INVESTMENT WITH OTHER PROJECTS

Responding to questions from members of the Turkish press after the signing ceremony, Qian Jin said about 120 million Chinese tourists travel abroad every year, 45 million of whom use Wanda agencies, adding that with this partnership they want to show all of China that Turkey is a developed country that continues developing. Pointing out that a great level of responsibility falls on the relevant institutions of the two countries in order to increase the number of tourists that can come to Turkey, Jin said, "Companies like Turkish Airlines [THY] are already doing their part regarding this issue. [THY] is one of the best airline companies in the world. The opening of the new airport [Istanbul Third Airport] is also a great advantage for Istanbul. We think that Turkey and Istanbul will become a great hub." Jin suggested that Wanda and Mar Yapı will work together in other sectors as well, noting: "Our strategic cooperation includes more than one field. We discuss the things that Mar Yapı can do in China as well as what Wanda can do in Turkey. We are open to everything in this regard." Mar Yapı Chairman Münir Özkök said they are happy to see Wanda Hotels & Resorts today by their side, referring to their goals to

work with the best in the real estate sector at the national and international level as well as in the development of the most highly qualified projects in Turkey. Stating that this strategic cooperation will contribute greatly to Turkey's real estate sector and the international reputation of its brands, Özkök said they aim to increase their brand value and the number of investments with strong international business partners as well as domestic partnerships. Pointing out that they will focus on commercial activities in addition to the real estate and tourism sectors in the following periods, Özkök noted that the agreement will contribute to the increase of mutual trade and cultural relations, especially in tourism,

## 'THIS COOPERATION WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR BRIGHTER OPPORTUNITIES'

Sabri Tunç Angılı, consul general of Turkey in Shanghai, expressed his joy for attending the agreement ceremony, which will contribute to the development of cultural and commercial relations between the two countries. Highlighting that China, the second largest economy in the world, is also Turkey's second largest trading partner, Angılı said the Republic of Turkey, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2023, supports all kinds of initiatives and commercial relations as a part of its goal of becoming one of top 10 economies in the world. Pointing to the rapid development and



between the two countries. Münir Özkök expressed his joy in being part of a partnership that will bring forth the mutual interaction that began centuries ago thanks to China's Silk Road and spice routes which paved the way for future developments. Özkök also added that the preliminary demand for Wanda Vista Istanbul began to be collected from the Chinese. "We will sell residences to the Chinese. We think Wanda Vista Istanbul will create a value of \$150 million. After the hotel is open, a big advertising campaign will start in China. Turkey will become a destination for more Chinese tourists," Özkök said, adding, "We want to help Turkey make profit. We can consider opening to the public in the future by increasing our hotel investments."

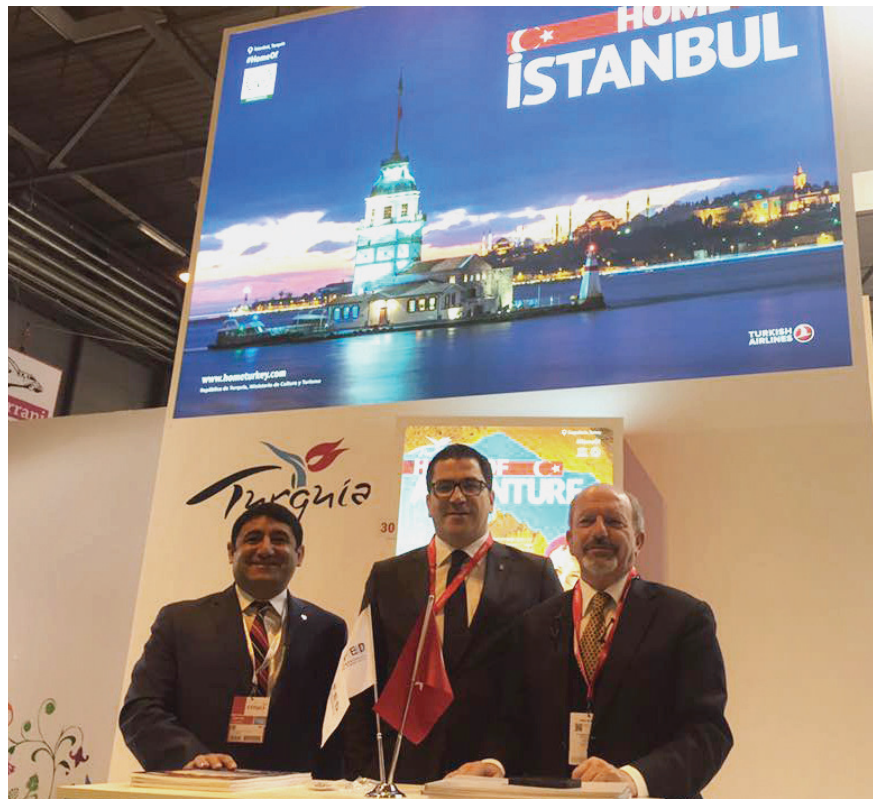
diversification of the economic cooperation between Turkey and China, Angılı said the two major banks of China have started to operate in Turkey, while large Chinese companies such as Huawei and ZTE have invested in Turkey and Turkish companies have also invested in and around Shanghai; namely, Beko, Aksa, Teklas and Çimtaş. Stressing that the strategic partnership agreement between Wanda Group and Mar Yapı, two important companies of Turkey and China, is one of a kind, Angılı said, "I am confident that this will pave the way for new collaborations and brighter opportunities. I congratulate the two companies for their vision of working together. I believe that the same bright vision will shape the future of Turkish-Chinese relations."





## SPANISH MONARCH BACKS TURKISH TOURISM AT MADRID EXPO

Spain's King Felipe VI backed Turkish tourism at an international travel expo on, saying the country's industry would recover quickly.

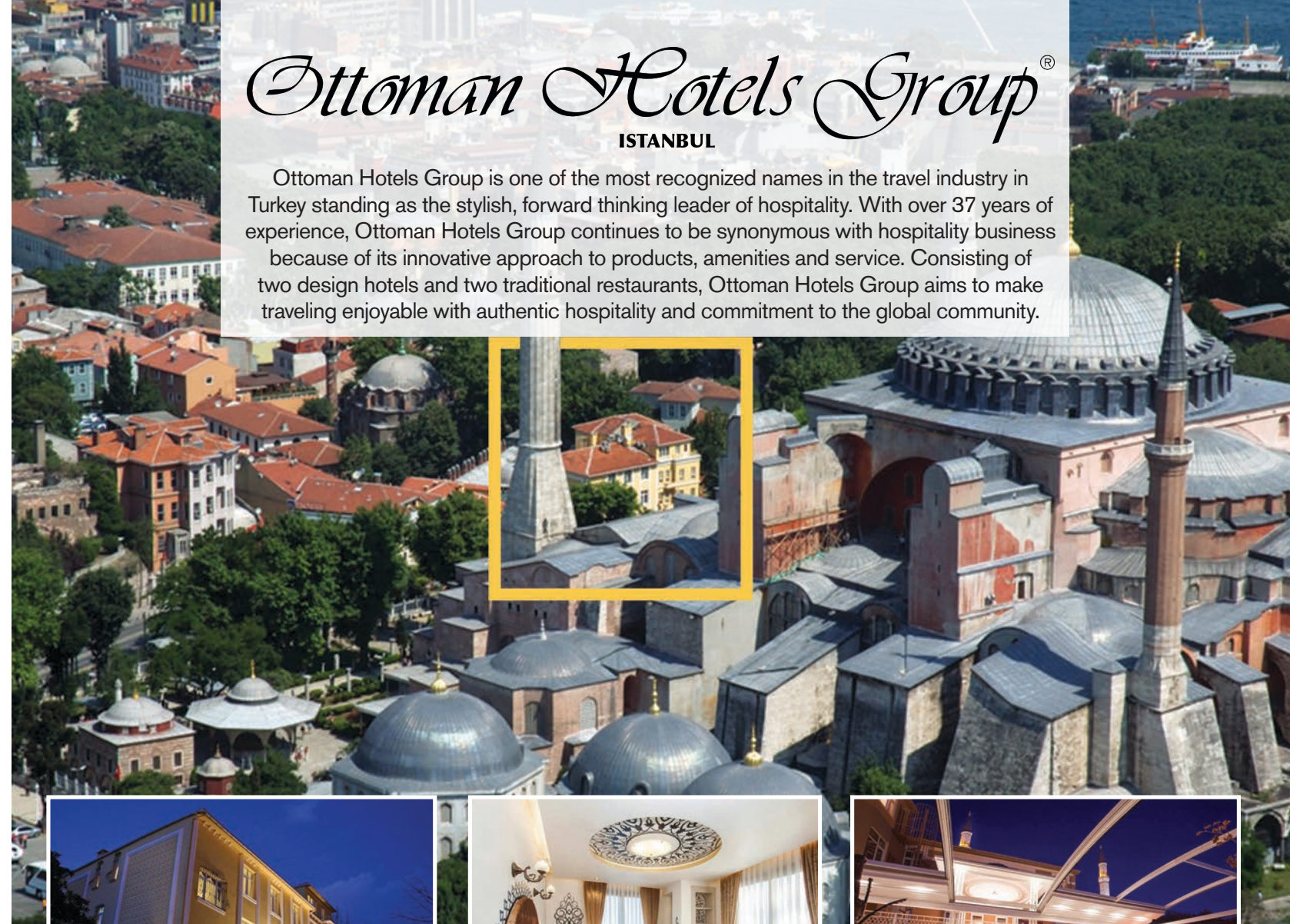


During his visit to the Turkish stand at the 37th Fitur International Tourism Fair in Madrid, the Spanish monarch said Spain deeply felt Turkey's pain over various terror attacks. "I believe Turkish tourism will recover as soon as possible and gain its former strength," he said. The Turkish stand at the Madrid fair -- which has hosted 125,000 tourism professionals and more than 100,000 visitors from 164 countries -- was visited by Secretary-General of the UN's World Tourism Organization Taleb Rifai as well as Spain's Tourism Minister Alvaro Nadal. Huseyin Yayman, the deputy minister of Turkey's Culture and Tourism Ministry, said King Felipe's visit was important to show the friendship between Turkey and Spain. "There are global terror threats around the world," he said, adding: "If the world does not say stop to terror attacks in Paris, Madrid, London, Berlin or in Istanbul, then a bigger threat is waiting for the world." Turkey's delegation included 27 organizations and featured destinations such as Istanbul, Izmir, Nevsehir, Antalya, Bodrum and Marmaris.

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# JOLLY TOURS AND KILIT HOSPITALITY GROUP TO JOIN FORCES

Jolly Tours, one of the biggest groups active in domestic Turkish tourism, and Kilit Hospitality Group, one of the major players amongst holiday resort hotels, gave a press conference to announce future cooperation. [HASAN ARSLAN - HALİL TUNCER](#)

Mete Vardar, chairman of the board of Jolly Tours, Tolga Kilit, member of the board of Kilit Hospitality Group (KHG), Korhan Alşan, CEO of one of KHG's hotel brands Amara World Hotels, and, last but not least, Umman Çetinbaş, CEO of the Crystal Hotels as well as Jolly Tours Contract Manager Yavuz Öztürk, joined the mutual press conference being held at the Rahmi Koç Museum in Istanbul.

Mete Vardar emphasized his joy to come together with the Kilit Hospitality Group as partners, and stressed the fact that the hotel

brands Amara, Crystal and Nirvana hold very strong positions on the hotel sector and are expected to enhance these positions considerably in the future. He also indicated that the Kilit Hospitality is known for its innovative new projects and concepts which have made the group ever more powerful over time.

Mete Vardar expressed his conviction that Turkish tourism will experience an important recovery period in 2017, but he also recollected the fact that Turkey went through bad times in 2016. Nonetheless, according

to Vardar "2017 and 2018 will be years to catapult us to new levels of success".

## "DOMESTIC TOURISTS WILL PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE THIS YEAR"

Mete Vardar pointed at the fact that price differences due to mounting foreign currency exchange rates did not affect the prices in domestic tourism, and expounded: "This is at least valid for Jolly Tours, and this offers domestic tourists in Turkey price advantages of up to 65 percent. This will be one of the factors leading to a more



important role being played by domestic tourism." Vardar also emphasized the fact that early reservations in domestic tourism used to start in May, but in 2016, early reservations for 2017 started in November – five months earlier than before and underlining the new importance of domestic tourism in Turkey.

## "WE CONCEPTUALIZE OUR DOMESTIC MARKET PLANS IN COOPERATION WITH JOLLY TOURS"

Tolga Kilit from Kilit Hospitality Group pointed at the dynamics and increasing developments in the domestic tourism market and stressed the fact that they made their plans concerning domestic market

strategies for the near future in collaboration with Jolly Tour as their major partner. He added: "The high quality standard, the investments made in technology, their contributions to the development of enterprises and the team spirit created by Jolly Tour will add a new valor to our cooperation. Our hotel groups, consisting of some of the most important in Turkey like Crystal Hotels, Nirvana Lagoon Villas and the Amara World Hotels brands comprise 16 resorts and hotels, with a total of 25,000 beds, thus being one of the biggest groups in Turkey."

According to Umman Çetinbaş, CEO of the Crystal Hotels, pointed at the fact that the domestic market are an important market for

hotels, and stressed that the Crystal Hotels their share of the domestic market in 2016 by 15 percent. He expects further increases because of the high quality standards offered to their guests.

## "THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOMESTIC MARKET HAS BECOME EVIDENT"

According to Korhan Alşan, CEO of the Amara World Hotels, who said "we are aware of the advantages offered by the domestic tourism market", this market had been underestimated and treated wrongly from time to time in the past, but its importance now has become clearer, as traveling for holidays inside of Turkey turned into a need for many citizens.



## CEREMONY



## THE BEST OTTOMAN CUISINE AWARD: MATBAH OTTOMAN PALACE CUISINE

The traditional Time Out Eating and Drinking Awards held this year and found with the ceremony at the Four Seasons Hotel Bosphorus on February 23rd. Among the 6 candidates in the best Ottoman Cuisine category, MATBAH Ottoman Palace Cuisine was awarded with the honor of the distinguished jury and guests.

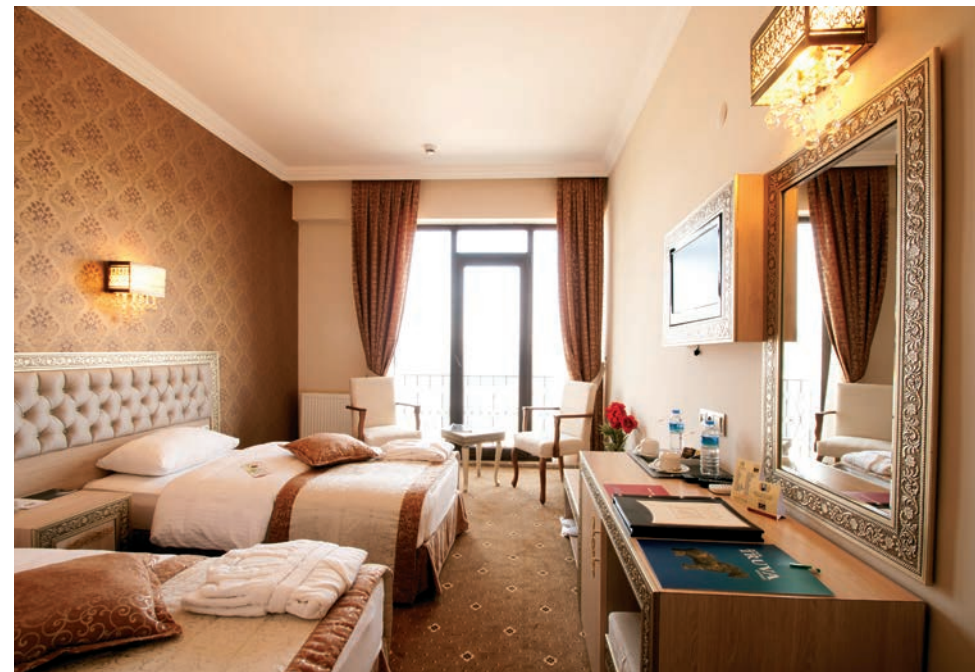
## Turkey, Philippines ink tourism agreement

Turkey and the Philippines have signed an agreement to increase cooperation in culture and tourism.

Speaking to reporters after the signing ceremony in Istanbul on Feb. 16, Culture and Tourism Minister Nabi Avcı said the two countries had the potential to boost tourism not only through bilateral projects but also through joint projects with third countries. "Especially after the opening of [Istanbul's] third airport, we will have the chance to host our guests from the Philippines traveling to Europe and Africa," Avcı said, adding that he was planning to visit the Philippines in the summer. Currently under construction, Istanbul's third airport is expected to start operating by February 2018 with a capacity of up to 200 million passengers a year. Philippines' Tourism Secretary Wanda Corazon Tulfo Teo expressed her hope that the agreement will encourage more people from Turkey and the Philippines to visit their respective countries. "I hope to see the minister in the Philippines in the near future and I hope he will bring some investors and tour operators with him," she added. According to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, 70,000 Philippine tourists visited Turkey in 2014.



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# ISTANBUL EXPERIENCES EUROPE'S BIGGEST PLUNGE IN HOTEL REVENUES

Hotels in Istanbul experienced the biggest decline in both revenue per available room (RevPAR) and average daily rate (ADR), a measure of the average rate paid for rooms sold, among all European destinations in January, as the city's hotel occupancy rates continued to decline, fresh data showed.

Istanbul's hotel occupancy rate regressed to 45.7 percent with a 6.5 percent of year-on-year decrease. Its ADR and RevPAR decreased in January by 29.7 percent and 34.2 percent, respectively, compared to the same month of 2016, according to STR Global Data released by the Hotel Association of Turkey (TÜROB) on Feb. 28.

Istanbul saw the largest plummet in hotel revenues among all European destinations. The ADR regressed to 67.4 euros in January from 95.8 euros in the same month of 2016.

The city's revPAR also regressed to 30.8 euros in January from 46.8 euros in the same month of the previous year.

## URGENT MEASURES NEEDED FOR ISTANBUL


TÜROB President Timur Bayındır called for urgent measures to be taken for Istanbul in a press release, saying that the city was worst hit from the Turkish tourism sector's recent problematic scheme.

"Despite the declining trend in hotel room prices in November and December 2016, we felt a bit optimistic with some slight increase in hotel occupancy rates. The January figures have however disappointed us. Especially for Istanbul, urgent measures are needed to be taken," he said. Turkey's hotel occupancy rates remained the same in January at 47.2 percent compared to the same month of 2016, according to STR Global Data. Meanwhile, the number of foreign tourists visiting Istanbul declined to 9.2 million in 2016, a 26 percent decrease from the previous year, official data showed.

This was the first year-on-year decrease in the number of foreign arrivals to Istanbul since 2000 amid escalating security concerns.

The highest monthly plunge was seen in June, as the number of foreign arrivals saw a 35.2 percent decline compared to the same month of 2015.

TÜROB President Timur Bayındır



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# A luxurious and modern hotel

Wish More Hotel Istanbul has been serving in Bayrampasa since 2016, with the motto of "Passion for hospitality".

The 5-Star hotel, founded with an investment of 120 million TL, offers a pleasant and comfortable accommodation experience for both business and leisure travelers with its heartfelt service approach, city-oriented service characteristics and innovative practices for the business world. The hotel is within walking distance from

metro station and it is possible to connect to the city's main transportation axes by car in just minutes. Guests can easily reach Atatürk Airport, Cnr Expo and Istanbul Expo Center, as well as business centers such as Maslak and Sisli, and city's symbol regions such as Taksim and Historical Peninsula within 20 minutes. It is also just next to the city's one of the biggest shopping malls, Forum

Istanbul and only one kilometer away from Bayrampasa Bus Terminal. There are 198 rooms in the hotel, including 29 suits. Ranging in size from 26 to 97 square meters, all the rooms offer spacious and bright spaces with large windows from floor to ceiling, combination of white and anthracite furniture, and functional architectural solutions.

The Wish More Hotel Istanbul provides a great variety of venue alternatives for productive meetings, unforgettable weddings and inspiring celebrations. There are 7 meeting rooms, three of which gets daylight and all equipped with latest technologies, a 254 square meter conference room that can split into two, a 440 square meter ballroom with no columns, and a 400 square meter outdoor event space. Fitness & SPA center established on 2000 square meter area accepts both hotel guests and members from neighborhood. The center offers comprehensive exercise programs and wellness rituals under the guidance of local and foreign therapists and coaches.

Wish More Hotel aims to create a global hotel chain and its mission is to bring a Turkish brand to the hospitality sector.



Wish More Hotel Group  
General Manager Erkan Akkurt

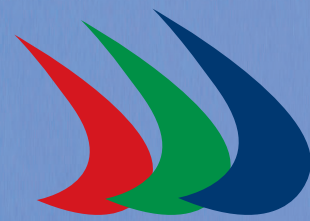
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*Best Western Citadel Hotel Leaning against the historical city walls of Istanbul, Best Western Citadel Hotel offers its pink and white colored facade to the fluorescent blue of the Marmara Sea. A wonderful location, the hotel is situated at Sultanahmet, the heart of Istanbul (Old City), 5 walking minutes from Blue Mosque, Topkapı Palace, St. Sophia. You will have a pleasant stay in our authentic, yet well-equipped 25 rooms and 6 suites. In these rooms with air-conditioning, minibar, cable TV, Wireless, direct dial phone, hair dryer, you will feel at home. An additional restaurant with 90 persons capacity continues in the millennia old building tradition of Anatolia. Marmara Cafe, with a stained glass roof and facade, offers a beautiful view of the Marmara Sea. Here you can enjoy the view while listening to the music of water splashing down from a magnificent fountain. The Best Western Citadel Hotel welcomes you with traditional Turkish hospitality*



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