

Tourism industry of ukraine



The Ukraine has to reclaim former days of esteem with so much promised yet very little delivered, this it would seem is the position of her tourism industry. The country itself has bountiful natural assets with the Carpathians in the west and the steppes to the east; fulfilling a panoramic delight of land, sea and river. The World Economic Forum had the Ukraine very low down the listing for competitiveness in tourism. Pricing and infrastructure in the industry is considered to be weak Ukraine's percentage of GDP(Gross Domestic Product) is very small compared to its neighbours, for example Bulgaria. It is considered that a large portion of revenue from tourism arrives with the business traveller. There are always reasons for everything and the Ukraine is no exception. Historical and contemporary issues have contributed to this position so positioning the country behind its regional neighbours. It has very little global profile with poorly developed domestic facilities hindering progress.

Investment has been somewhat variable and inconsistent following independence. The country's bureaucracy is considered to be disproportionate to its needs. Yet the prospects have to be exciting especially following the Orange Revolution(the people electing Viktor Yushchenko)placing the Ukraine on the tourists'lists as a must-see region to visit. There is the capability of very rapid improvement with astute management, belatedly. Additional impetus has arisen with Ukraine securing the hosting of the Euro 2012 football championships.

The President declared 2008 to be the Year of Tourism and Resorts promising financial assistance and to promote the implementation of key

policies for the development of tourism within the Ukraine. He also pledged to promote the image of Ukraine to all countries of the world.

Yet for quite some years the Ukraine was a very popular tourist destination. During the Soviet Era the party's elite were harboured in palatial villas and the masses catered for in the huge holiday camps. These were to be located in the Black sea region and the Crimean peninsula. The Crimea has a near perfect climate very similar to the Mediterranean. Winter sports were to be found in the Carpathian highlands. A number of hotels reserved for business were built some still doing business in Donetsk and Kyiv. The transport network linking with other regions of the Soviet bloc were efficient especially the northern route to Moscow; although communications to the satellites of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia were not so developed. Development of the railways also had a wide dispersion of airports serving the region.

That was yesterday for with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc popularity as a tourist destination along with many other of the Soviet states has declined to almost nothing. The Crimea has witnessed a very sharp decline. Turkey, Cyprus and Egypt have become harbingers of the new wealthy Ukrainians; with a dramatic rise in the popularity of winter holidays in Europe, skiing holidays in Austria for example.

Visits to the Ukraine consist mainly of those travelling to work or visiting relations. To the west of the country many have relations living in Romania, Moldavia, Hungary and Poland; while to the east they are to be found in Russia itself. It has been estimated that around 75% of visitors to the Ukraine would be from Russia or other former Soviet bloc countries.

Ukraine is now only second to the Philippines for the supply of seamen. They are to be seen on all flights both overseas and domestic travelling to embark at Odessa or the neighbouring port of Ilichivsk. Continuation of the old ways of bureaucratic control with jobs for the apparatchiks and the ever present criminal activity ensures a slow transition within the Ukrainian market. The country is very much less developed than its former brethren of the Central and Eastern blocs in tourist growth. What has given the most impetus recently is the relaxation of the visa regime. Visa restrictions were lifted by the Orange government in 2005 for citizens of the European Union, Australasia and Japan, North America. This has proven to be a great success due to the recent enlargement of the EU accommodating to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Austrian Airlines were established in the Ukraine in 1993 have become the beneficiaries of this upsurging. Passage across the frontier has shot up by 95% except that to Russia that amounts to only a 1% improvement. The reasons for this being the retention of old bureaucratic nonsense with letters of invitation often accompanying visa presentment, still in force. Yet although hugely received by the tourism sector it is still only experimentally enforced.

A matter of concern for domestic tourism is the transport infrastructure. The railways used to be premium but have been neglected and the road network falls below European standards. The Kyiv-Odessa motorway is the only route worthy of name.

There has also been a noticeable decline with the airways. Numerous problems have disturbed progress and a bevy of local airlines poorly serviced

are mostly run by local concerns at the whim of the owners who do not own the aircraft anyway and are well below true operational standards.

There is present however prospective hope because the country in fact has vast potential with opportunities blatantly festering beneath the surface. Commitment and resolve and a certain amount of courage is required and for those willing to apply themselves to the task rewards will be substantial. Inevitable change is alive and will not be thwarted because of the ongoing political dispute.

Thailand is a destination that is facing a very real threat resulting from the development of domestic political events, impacting upon its position as a tourist destination. Two sparring adversaries of the political scene have produced an undermining of the tourism confidence. Occupation of Bangkok's international airport, December 2008 resulted in major disruption. Thailand's reputation as a transit point for travelers and airline operators has been seriously damaged. Some recovery occurred following the yellow shirts' occupation of the airport but has been compromised by the opposing faction called the red shirts. Fifteen heads of state had to be evacuated from Pattaya representatives of countries who are especially valuable because they are source markets for Thailand's tourism industry. The Australian Prime Minister had to turn back en route by plane without even landing. The red shirts' motives for undermining the authority of the Thai Prime Minister has been counter productive. It has proven to be an expensive victory.

Tourism consists of 6% of the GDP for the nation, with a multiplier effect creating hundreds of thousands of jobs in the country; jobs that have been

put into jeopardy by such acts of irresponsibility. Although the riots did not have any real impact upon visitors the impact on Thailand as a tourist destination has become very serious. The considerable charm of the Thais no less absent within TAT can do nothing to reassure those tourists who simply will not be visiting again. Tour operators are now liable for cost of repatriation should anything arise that compromises the well-being of their clients. That said the obvious follows, it is that few are now prepared to take a risk on Thailand. They are in fact advising their valued clientele to go elsewhere, to destinations that are more stable politically. This makes for good business sense that will be very difficult to change following the recent events. Thailand is no longer a magnet of paradise for anyone who simply wants a blissful few weeks they have been saving for since last year. Alternatives are now readily available such as India, Cambodia, Laos and the lonely beaches of Vietnam. Thailand is another victim of the economic global downturn and the tourist budget has to be trimmed, the Thai Baht being unusually strong there is no inclination to make the effort for a round the world flight and to a place that is 'dangerous.' The government office warns of risks involved if any visit is being contemplated. For the TAT reducing visa fees and bland reassurance will simply not work with a very significant decline in tourist arrivals spelling this out.