

# National Tourism Strategy 2030

Tourism has always been the heartbeat of Cyprus' economy, contributing (directly and indirectly) close to 20% of GDP. No wonder then, that launching a National Tourism Strategy 2030 became our Deputy Ministry's foremost priority at the beginning of this decade. The strategy, presented in its entirety within an expansive and strictly confidential document, was developed through discussions with several hundreds of tourism stakeholders, to which we are thankful for the support:

- Government ministries
- Members of Parliament
- Political parties
- Local authorities
- Airport operators (HERMES)
- Port operators (DP World Limassol)
- Marina operators
- Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Employers and Industrialists Federation
- Regional Tourism Promotion Boards
- Professional associations (e.g. CHA, ACTE, ACTA, Invest Cyprus, and many more)
- Labour unions
- Airline companies
- Overseas tour operators
- Overseas travel agents

From the very beginning, it was clear that the vision of our National Tourism Strategy 2030 should be to 'develop Cyprus' tourism in a sustainable way, which positively impacts our economy, our society and the environment'. This vision has become, and will certainly remain, our guiding principle at the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, and we are absolutely adamant that our role here goes beyond simply increasing the number of tourist arrivals to the country. Instead, our role is also to develop the destination as a whole, and to manage tourism in a sustainable way, so that future travelers, and above all future residents, can enjoy our island too. We have been blessed with a beautiful country, a fantastic climate, and an enviable way of life, so our most important aim should be to preserve them all for future generations, through a holistic approach to tourism.



The recent global crises faced by the world, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have not left Cyprus tourism unaffected. Nevertheless, these crises have not hampered our resolve to implement the National Tourism Strategy; in fact, they have made it even stronger. In the three years since launching our National Tourism Strategy in January 2020, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism has sped up its implementation and even added significant actions, which we felt were in line with the newest travel trends. The most notable of these are off-peak travel to secondary and tertiary destinations, slow travel with a strong focus on nature, travelers' thirst for authentic experiences, travelers' desire for immersion with the local community, increased interest in outdoor adventure travel and a stronger focus on locally sourced products.

In light of all the above, Cyprus has invested heavily in upgrading the quality and variety of its special-interest products; for example, we have created or enhanced destination labels like Cyprus Breakfast, Taste Cyprus, Vegan Friendly, Wine Routes of Cyprus, Les Vignobles de la Grande Commanderie, Cyprus Theme Parks, Colourful Villages, Christmas Villages, Heartland of Legends etc. These will help us attract a more diverse clientele from a bigger variety of source markets, which in turn will enable the island to remain attractive year-round. Due to these improvements, we are now able to promote Cyprus not only as a sun-and-sea destination, but also as an island rich in history and culture, full of authentic experiences which are accessible to all, available year-round and found at close proximity to each other. This is the new identity and fresh narrative that we will be building for Cyprus in the coming years.

Our vision, as stated in the National Tourism Strategy, remains unchanged. It aims at establishing Cyprus as: a) a year-round destination b) a higher-quality destination c) a digitally-smart destination d) a climate-friendly destination e) a widely accessible destination and f) a place where all residents can benefit from tourism. Some examples of initiatives that we have undertaken are the following:

#### **Establishing Cyprus as a year-round destination**

- rebranding Cyprus internationally, as a destination which offers much more than sun-and-sea
- improving airline and maritime connectivity to the island

#### **Establishing Cyprus as a higher-quality destination**

- supporting investments in special-interest products
- improving our price competitiveness and value for money



### **Establishing Cyprus as a digitally-smart destination**

- benchmarking our tourism services versus competing destinations, by leveraging data from online reputation management platforms
- investing in the digitization of experiences by launching the ‘Heartland of Legends’, a 3000km route of authentic experiences

### **Establishing Cyprus as a climate-friendly destination**

- benchmarking the carrying capacity of the destination against a set of climate-related key performance indicators
- studying policies to mitigate the ‘hidden cost’ of tourism to the island

### **Establishing Cyprus as a more inclusive destination**

- making sure that as many of our facilities and services as possible are accessible to persons with disabilities
- ensuring that Cyprus is a welcoming destination for persons of any ethnic background, religious belief and sexual orientation

### **Establishing Cyprus as a place where all residents can benefit from tourism**

- spreading tourism revenue across all regions of Cyprus e.g. by promoting the authenticity of our rural and mountainous areas
- spreading tourism wealth to other sectors of the economy by enhancing its linkage with them e.g. agriculture, handicraft, farming, fishing etc.

Such examples, and hundreds more, feature in our detailed action plan for the decade as a whole, which has been divided into specific time frames i.e. short term (2020-2022), medium term (2023-2025) and long term (2026-2030). Implementation of the action plan is carried out through collaboration between all aforementioned tourism stakeholders, under the coordinating eye of our Deputy Ministry. If successful, the decade’s actions could eventually establish Cyprus as one of the 30 most competitive countries in world tourism (we currently lie 31st, according to the recent Travel & Tourism Development Index, which was published in May ’22 by the World Economic Forum). They could also establish Cyprus as a destination which consistently provides a guest satisfaction of above 90% (based on statistics from the Deputy Ministry’s online reputation platform, guest satisfaction in 2021 was around 87%).

By the year 2030, we expect tourism overnights to grow by around 23%, reaching 45 million (in terms of arrivals, this means growth of 14% to around 4.5 million). On one hand, this is an opportunity, because there are a lot of areas in Cyprus which don’t yet benefit sufficiently from the socioeconomic boost that tourism offers. These places can therefore be beneficiaries of upcoming tourism development. On the other hand, such growth could also be a worry, if not managed correctly, because some areas are





becoming busy and natural resources are being stretched to their limits. In places like these, focusing on quality rather than quantity, will be of utmost importance going forward. As a destination, therefore, we should aim to combat seasonality and regionality by dispersing visitors to various areas, to various places of interest, at various times of the day, at various months in the year.

If we are successful in doing this, by 2030 tourism could provide an added value of around 1.5 billion Euros per year to the Cypriot economy. This represents an increase of 53% compared to a contribution of 2.9 billion Euros in 2018 (including domestic tourism). In terms of visitor spending per overnight, by 2030 we could approach an average of 93 Euros per person, an increase of 24% compared to 2018, when the average was 75 Euros per person. Around 40% of overnights could eventually be between November and April, up from 22% in 2018; as for overnights in mountain and rural areas, these could increase, by 2030, to around 400,000 a year, from 100,000 in 2018.

Amidst all of these qualitative and quantitative measures, we should not forget the most important concern of our time: climate change. Beyond a shadow of doubt, climate change matters and shutting our eyes to it is not an option. Flying and cruising are increasingly being criticized for their contribution to global CO2 emissions, and for an island like Cyprus, which is only reachable by air and sea, that reads like a disaster. More than ever before, travelers want to feel that, despite requiring such forms of transport during their travels, they are at least visiting a destination which is environmentally conscious. As tourism stakeholders, therefore, we must all take more action to transform Cyprus into one of the most sustainable tourism destinations in our region.

To conclude, it's obvious that the future is finally here, and can be ensured through the continuation of the current successful tourism policy and the seamless implementation of the National Tourism Strategy 2030 in the years to come. It presents an historic challenge, which is exciting at the same time, and we are all on this ride together. Let's make the best out of it, and let's be proud to be on it, because together we can work wonders for the country we all love so much.



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