



## **Press Round-up – WTM 2011**

### **Rise in International Visitor Numbers to Turkey**

Turkish tourism is on course for another record-breaking year, with worldwide visitor numbers for the 9 months from January to September exceeding 25.6 million. Arrivals during the month of September alone were over 12% up on the previous year.

In 2010 Turkey welcomed over 28.6 million foreign visitors. This puts it in 7<sup>th</sup> place in the 2010 International Tourist Arrivals Rankings.

### **More Blue Flag Beaches**

The number of beaches and marinas in Turkey awarded the coveted Blue Flag now stands at 331, the country's highest ever number. Turkey ranks fourth out of the scheme's 41 participants worldwide, just behind France.

### **Tomb of St Philip Unearthed**

Archaeologists have uncovered the tomb of St Philip on the site of ancient Hierapolis, Denizli; the Apostle is believed to have been martyred in the city in around 80 AD. According to Italian Professor Francesco D'Andria, head of the excavation team, the structure of the tomb and its markings clearly identify it as his final resting place. The site, once opened to the public, is expected to become an important place of Christian pilgrimage.

### **Seimiye Mosque Added to UNESCO World Heritage List**

Built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, this magnificent monument, which the great Ottoman architect, Sinan, considered to be his greatest work, has been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. This brings the total number of Turkish sites to ten.

### **Launch of Istanbul Museum Pass**

An Istanbul Museum Pass for foreign tourist has been launched. Enabling single entrance to several of the city's top tourist attractions including Hagia Sophia, the Istanbul Archaeological Museum and the Topkapi Palace, the Pass is valid for 72 hours and costs 72TL (approx. £25). The new initiative enables tourists to pay just once and head straight to the turnstiles, therefore bypassing queues. The Card can be purchased from four and five-star hotels, mobile card stores and tourism information offices throughout the city.

First introduced for Turkish citizens in 2008, take-up of the Museum Card has now exceeded 2.2 million, with overall museum visitor numbers over the same period up by 61%.

Find out more at <http://www.muze.gov.tr/en>.

### **Hotel Openings**

Istanbul welcomed two new luxury boutique hotels earlier this year: the House Hotel Bosphorus and the Edition, whilst Rixos Hotels opened their first duplex suite hotel, the Rixos Elysium Suites Taksim. The luxurious Peninsula Gardens opened in Kas in June. The Amanruya in Bodrum meanwhile is now scheduled to open in December 2011.

### **North Cyprus**

In Turkey, 2011 is officially the year of North Cyprus. Combine an action-packed city break in Istanbul with a laid-back jaunt in unspoilt North Cyprus. Access to North Cyprus from the UK involves a touchdown in Turkey, so this affords the ideal opportunity to explore two vastly different destinations in one trip.

### **Looking ahead – 2012 and Beyond...**

#### **Istanbul – European Capital of Sport 2012**

Istanbul is to serve as 2012 European Capital of Sport, an honour it is hoped will strengthen the city's bid to host the 2020 Olympics. Event highlights include the IAAF World Indoor Athletics Championships (9-11 March 2012), likely to be the final opportunity to see athletes such as Jessica Ennis competing on an international level prior to the London Olympics.

Meanwhile Antalya, capital of the Mediterranean region and Turkey's golfing capital, is preparing to host the World Amateur Team Golf Championships in Autumn 2012.

#### **ABTA Travel Convention returns to Turkey**

The ABTA Convention will be held in Belek in October 2012. The last time Turkey hosted the ABTA Travel Convention was in Istanbul in 1996. At that time the country had just over 750,000 arrivals from the UK – now it is closer to 3 million.

#### **Turkey to be Market Focus Partner at the London Book Fair, 2013**

Turkey has been appointed Market Focus Partner for the 2013 London Book Fair. The Market Focus programme, in partnership with the British Council will be supported by a series of public events throughout the UK featuring visiting Turkish authors.

#### **Turkey Launches 2020 Olympics Bid**

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced Istanbul's bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games. Istanbul is an obvious choice, being Turkey's economic and cultural capital. The Prime Minister pledged to establish laws to smooth the way for necessary investments and tenders.

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**New flight routes to be launched from the UK for 2012**

National carrier, Turkish Airlines, has announced a new direct route flying daily between London Gatwick and Istanbul, starting in December 2011. In the meantime, Easyjet has announced that it will launch flights from Edinburgh to Dalaman in 2012 and Jet2 will begin flying from Manchester to Istanbul.

**Further information**

To register your interest in future group press trip opportunities, or to discuss individual requirements, please contact:

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