

Egypt's tourism numbers on the rise despite geopolitical tensions

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The Israel-Hamas war in Gaza caused a drop in tourism to Egypt compared to expectations in the last quarter of 2023, but the number of visitors picked up in the first two months of the year, the country's tourism minister said on Thursday.



In addition to the effect on tourism, attacks on Red Sea shipping have jeopardised another of the main sources of hard currency for Egypt's struggling economy - receipts from traffic through the Suez Canal.

Tourism Minister Ahmed Issa said 3.6 million tourists visited in the October-December 2023 period. Although this was the second highest number on record for a final quarter, it was 600,000 below the record 4.2 million that had been expected, Issa said in an interview on the sidelines of a travel fair in Berlin.

"Culture tourism is probably where we've seen the most significant impact," Issa said, naming Luxor, Aswan and the greater Cairo region.

Visitor numbers have since picked up, Issa said, with 2.12 million tourists visiting in the first two months of the year, an 8% increase over the same period last year.

Meanwhile, tourism in the occupied West Bank has come to a standstill, Majed Ishaq, marketing director of the Palestinian ministry of tourism, said during the travel fair.

Before the war, around 2.7 million tourists a year visited, he said, adding that around 35,000 families depended on the sector.

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