



THE MIDDLE EAST HEALTH TOURISM POTENTIAL

Health tourism is now an emerging alternative tourism trend in the world. In health tourism Europe, USA, Middle Asia and Middle East markets should be analysed and evaluated separately. In my this writing I dwell on Middle East market. When we assess health tourism as medical tourism, thermal tourism, elderly tourism, handicapped tourism, and spa-wellnes European market constitutes a great place in elderly tourism. While thermal tourism and medical tourism have bigger importance for Middle East countires medical tourism is more important for island countries like England.

We should analyse economic, social and communal realities of Middle East in priority. This region has been under the influence of the West, especially England for 200 years. Affluent and well educated elite class live nested with the West. English is spoken like mother tongue by the community of region. The majority of people, especially ruling class and businessman and their relatives have unbelievable income and spend money. On the other hand labourers from India, Philippine work for USD 100-200 per month in Middle East and Gulf countries. All the banks, products, brands, living and conviviality of the West are available in those countries.

We can't equate Dubai, Syria, Bahreyn, even Kuwait. However, although this composition differs at certain rates the countries of the region receive health services mostly from the West. In recent years western countries have opened big hospitals in the region. For instance, American Hospital, German Hospital and Iran Hospital etc have been opened in Dubai, Bahreyn and Saudi Arabia. But in the region there are health staff vacancies like everywhere.

Thermal tourism and willingness and efforts to have qualified medical services seriously exist in the region. If thermals and hospitals of our country are introduced and marketed well we can attract that populace to our country easily. Each visitor can stay in our country for 15 days for basic or thermal treatment. Minimum USD 3000, USD 15-20.000 currency/per person as per maximum treatment plan can be left for

each travel. A serious portion of the potential of the region's health tourism has skipped to Iran and Far East countries. Despite this reality the community of the region goes mostly to USA and England to meet their needs in the field of health tourism. 1% of the region populace comes to our country for health tourism.

We haven't explained the health tourism potential of our country to Middle East and Gulf countries up to now.

An authority of Kuwait Health Ministry paid a visit to our stand during a fair in Dubai. This authority assumed that Turkey was far away from Europe. He was surprised when our country had border with Syria and said, "very close". We should think out carefully and find out whether this disgrace is upon him or our country.

Regards,