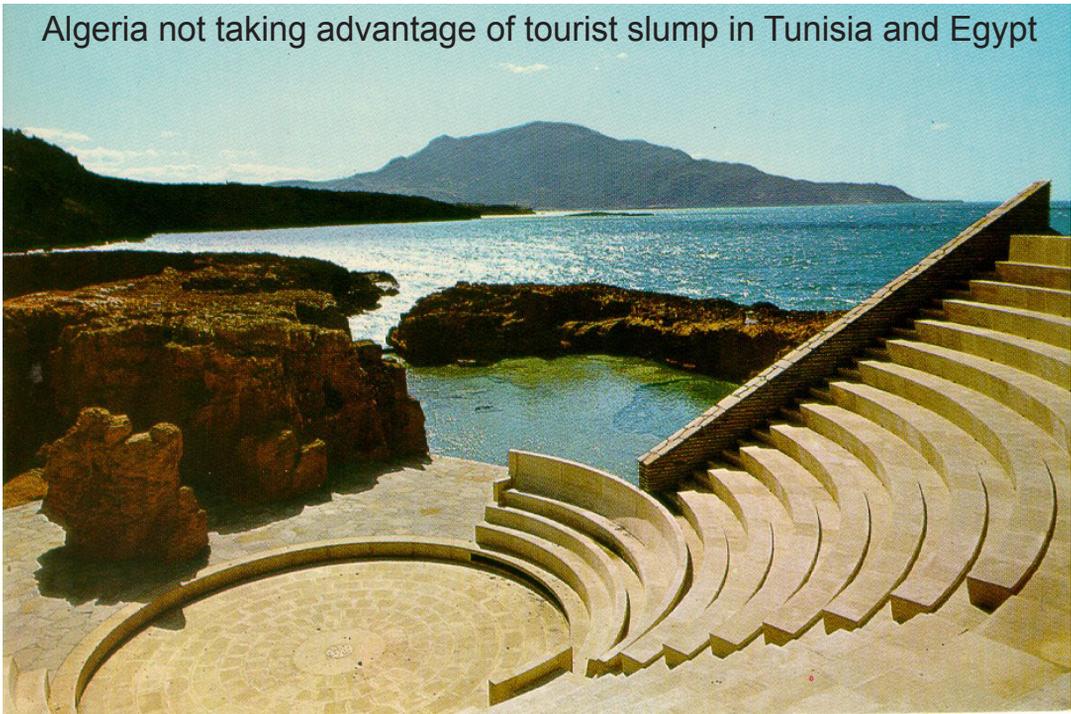


Popular uprisings and tourists: winners and losers

ITM London

At London's destinations travel show in February the London manager of Arkno Tours was confident the tidal wave of popular uprisings sweeping across the Arab world would not reach Libyan shores.

Algeria not taking advantage of tourist slump in Tunisia and Egypt



He was wrong about the uprising. revolutionaries.

Libya's tourist industry is now on hold but at least its spectacular Roman and Greek ruins have not incurred the wrath of the

Last year, 10,000 tourists from countries like Japan, Germany or Britain came to visit Cyrene, but

not a single one has appeared since February when Libyans began their bid to topple Colonel Qadhafi according to tour guide Mohamed Bucharit.

"We were very lucky that nothing was damaged. Fortunately they (Qadhafi's forces) didn't use tanks here, only guns," he said, describing the fighting in the town of Shahat, whose suburbs reach the edge of Cyrene.

Egypt's tourist industry has also been dealt a devastating blow following the ousting of President

Mubarak.

While Tripoli's Museum has not been a victim of the uprising Cairo's Egyptian Museum was burgled by thieves on 28 January when the guards disappeared because of the fighting in nearby Tahrir Square and the building of the National Democratic Party was set on fire. Until recently, the skylight through which they entered the museum had not been repaired. Fortunately, the robbers took only a few items, including a military golden trumpet, from the



Ancient sites hit by slump in tourism

Bahrain hit hard by decline in tourist numbers



grave goods of Tutankhamun. Much of their time was spent looting the cheap but gaudily painted replicas of ancient Egyptian sculpture from the museum's gift shop rather than the shabby but priceless originals.

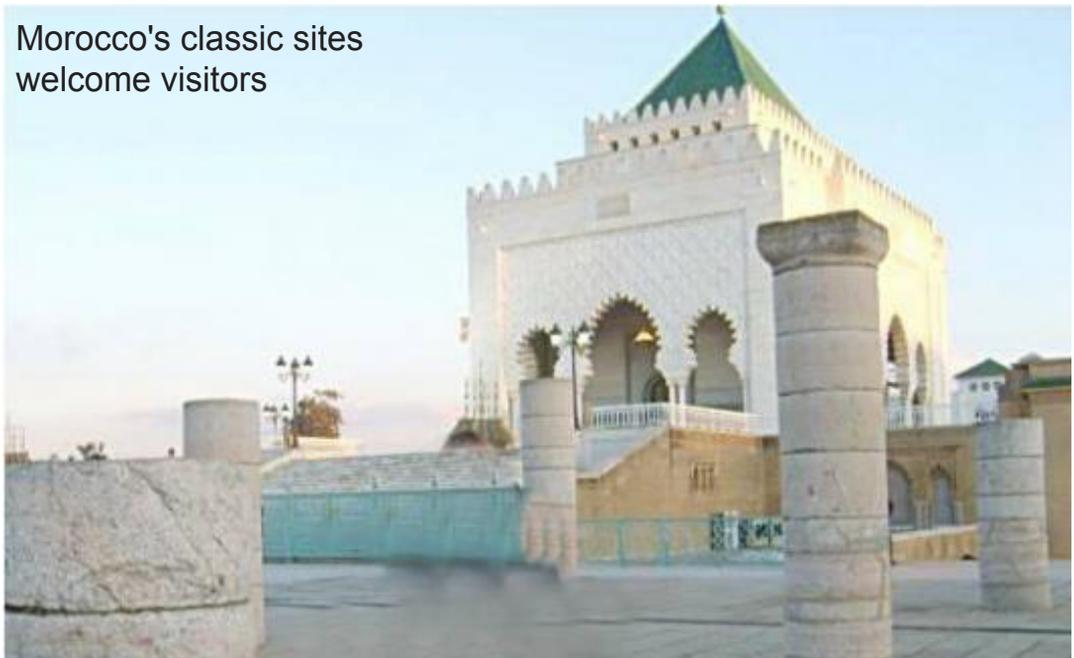
Veteran Middle East correspondent Patrick Cockburn commented that Egypt is a little more dangerous than it used to be. "The police, highly unpopular and blamed for the violence against protesters, are keeping a low profile. Though 1.4 million strong, the security forces are notoriously corrupt and, these days, are demoralised, often

telling those who complain that they have been the victim of a crime to address themselves to the army. There have been fierce sectarian clashes between Copts and Muslims in the tough, working-class districts of Imbaba and Ain Shams in Cairo with at least 30 dead and hundreds injured. But, given that the population of Cairo is 18 million, casualties are not high. Some 864 people were killed in the revolution out of 80 million Egyptians though this is still enough to make Egyptians, accustomed to the security of the Mubarak police state, edgy and fearful".



Tomb of Tutankhamun's treasurer opened to the public

Morocco's classic sites
welcome visitors



The extensive media coverage of the uprising has frightened would-be tourists. Egypt has opened to the public the tombs of leading retainers of the Pharaoh Tutankhamun at Saqqara, south of Cairo, in a desperate bid to lure them back.

Unemployed guides at Saqqara, one of the great archaeological sites of the world, speak hopefully of the publicity surrounding the grand opening of seven tombs boosting foreign interest in Egypt's past. They stress that never before

have visitors been able to see the tomb of Maya, Tutankhamun's treasurer, with its scenes of bearers bringing offerings, or of the young pharaoh's general, Horenheb, with incised stone carvings of his military victories.

The latest government figures show that tourist arrivals slumped 46 per cent in the first quarter of 2011. Mounir Fakhry Abdennour, minister of tourism, said that tourism losses to the end of April were \$2bn. Tourism was not wiped out but it had been significantly



Cyrene Temple of Apollo
devoid of tourists

Bahrain hit hard by decline in tourist numbers



reduced with occupancy rates down to an average of 35 per cent. The drop in hotel occupancy has been particularly sharp in Cairo and the Pharaonic destinations of Luxor and Aswan. Red Sea resorts such as Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada, which tend to attract holiday-makers from eastern Europe, have fared slightly better.

There, hotel occupancy averaged 45 to 50 per cent in April, down from 80 per cent in the same period last year. In May, the start of the low season, occupancy dropped further to about 25 per cent.

In the last fiscal year, which ended in June 2010, tourism receipts of

\$12bn represented some 5.3 per cent of gross domestic product. Indirectly, tourism is estimated to have contributed 11.5 per cent to GDP because of its impact on sectors ranging from construction to bottled water.

“The decline this time has been huge,” said Elhamy El Zayat, chairman of the Egyptian Tourism Federation. “This is worst we have ever witnessed. It is a bigger drop than after the September 11 attacks.” He said a difficult summer lay ahead because the Spanish

and the Portuguese, Egypt’s traditional summer tourists, face their own economic problems, making them unlikely to travel in large numbers.

This year the holy month of Ramadan, which Muslims tend to spend at home, will coincide with August, making for a short travel season.

But there are some winners. “Dubai has benefited drastically, with high occupancy rates, more tourists, and high retail numbers, because your average Arab who

Egyptian museum burgaled





Hurgada significant decline in tourism

used to go to ... Jordan, Syria or Lebanon, or to Egypt find these countries suffering from unrest,” said Mahdi Mattar, chief economist at Abu Dhabi-based CAPM Investment.

“They have adjusted to the next best thing which is Dubai. Also international tourists who used to go to Egypt and wanted to see better weather are coming to Dubai right now,” he said.

UAE Economy Minister Sultan bin Saeed al-Mansouri said he had already seen an uptick in tourism

in the first four months of 2011. Tourism contributes about 25% to Dubai’s economy.

The UAE, along with Qatar, has avoided the public protests that have swept through the Arab world, and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in the Gulf.

Occupancy rates in Bahrain hotels dropped to 10% in March, compared with 60% a year earlier, according to a Ernst & Young Middle East survey. Struggling hotels in Bahrain may be able to

withhold their five percent levy to the government for the next three months. Bahrain's hotel industry, which relies on a regular calendar of business conferences to keep rooms full, has taken the most severe hit. So far, one project finance conference has decided to move a long-planned event to Dubai and Bahrain's Spring of Culture, a festival, has been downsized.

"You're not going to believe it, I have two guests in my hotel right now," said Ahmed Sanad, head of Bahrain's hotel and restaurant association and owner of a one-star hotel.

Crown Prince Sheikh Salman Bin

Hamad Al Khalifa decided to postpone the season opener Formula One Grand Prix, which draws over 40,000 every year. The influx of tourists from Saudi Arabia who spend their wealth in Manama's shopping malls and jewellery stores has also dried up. Malls are noticeably emptier.

Algeria and Morocco have remained unaffected by large scale protests but they seem to be doing little to promote themselves as safe destinations for tourists wanting to avoid the turbulence of other Middle Eastern and North African countries.



Leptis Magna not affected by Libya's uprising



The Arabian Spring uprisings are “changing the face of the Middle East and potentially reshaping tourism” according to Euromonitor’s travel and tourism industry analyst Nadejda Popova.

“Incoming tourist receipts in the region are expected to register \$71 billion and international arrivals to reach the 100 million mark by 2015, both growing at 45%- a year, with 2012 earmarked for a return to positive growth,” she said.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia were among those leading growth in the region, with a stellar GDP outlook for Qatar of 20% and Saudi Arabia arrivals looking at 12% annual growth in visitors to 2015, mainly driven by religious tourism and significant infrastructure developments.

Effective communication efforts would be key to overcoming any negative impact on the region’s tourism prospects, said Popova.