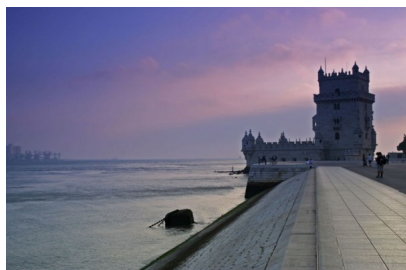


PORTUGAL RIDING HIGH IN TOURISM CHARTS



Portugal makes up for losses of British tourists by attracting tourists from elsewhere. Cheaper prices compared to Spain are proving to be a big help.

Portugal has the seeming disadvantage of being one of Europe's lesser-known nations. It does not have the business prowess of Germany nor does it have the romance of France or the well-known ancient culture of, say, Greece.

However, this neutrality can sometimes work as a huge advantage; just ask the Belgians or the Swiss. Being slightly cheaper than Spain, Portugal is therefore able to **offer more attractive holidays** to today's Europeans than the vast majority of the bigger and better-known European superpowers of tourism.

Tourists are beginning to realise that there is almost nothing that is offered elsewhere in Europe, which Portugal does not have. Indeed, the Portuguese boast of **fine wines, beautiful coastlines, stunning castles and monuments, terrifically varied cuisine and mountain areas** just as their Spanish neighbours have.

The success of Portugal has mostly been focused around three areas: the Algarve, Lisbon and Porto. However, tourists from abroad are now starting to spread their wings a little and explore the areas of Portugal, which are not so famous. Again, the even cheaper prices in these areas are doing wonders for Portuguese tourism, especially in times of crisis. Indeed, the crisis is to blame for the fact that less British tourists visited Portugal in 2008 and so far in 2009. This problem is not unique to Portugal.

Nevertheless, Portugal is making up for British losses by welcoming more Brazilians, Dutch and French tourists. Whereas the British now stay at home to take breaks, the afore-mentioned nations are still travelling, yet to cheaper destinations. This situation has helped Portugal gain a ranking of 17th in the world list of the most competitive destinations (Travel and Tourism Competitiveness report). It has also been the main catalyst behind the record earnings of tourism - 7.5 billion EUR in 2008.

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