

ITALY: LACK OF TOURISTS THANKS TO HIGH PRICES



The number of tourists coming to Italy is going down. According to the local businesses, the outlook for 2011 is not optimistic either.

Italy has been fighting the decreasing interest of travelers in the country and its landmarks. Historical Rome, romantic Venice, sandy beaches, not even the world-known cuisine seems attractive enough for tourists to spend their vacation there.

According to the latest statistics, the number of tourists, both domestic as well as foreign, coming to the Italian peninsula has considerably dropped. It is expected that the situation is not likely to change this year either. Italian experts suggest that the tourist numbers should start rising again only in 2012.

More than 43 million foreigners visited Italy two years ago; in 2010 only 38 million tourists arrived, which is 12 percent less. The number of overnight stays of inbound travelers also dropped - by 8 percent.

Mr. Bernabo Bocca, the president of the Italian tourism industry association Confturismo, expressed his believe that the numbers will not go down even more: "We hope that the situation will stabilize in 2011, at least on the level of the previous year," said Bocca. The tourism data for January and February, however, did not show any improvement. According to Bocca, **greater interest in Italian hotels and restaurants can be expected during the Easter holidays when the country is traditionally visited by religious travelers.**

A recent survey among Italian hoteliers and managers of other tourism businesses has showed that they expect growing numbers of visitors from India, Japan, USA and Canada this year. Regarding the amount of travelers from European countries they were not that optimistic. Currently, around 20 percent of foreign tourists come from Germany, 10 percent from the USA and 4 percent from Austria.

The main reason for the drop in tourism in the region are high prices compared to the other Mediterranean destinations. Obsolete accommodation facilities are among other challenges of Italy. Despite of that, the tourism industry earns annually around EUR 150 billion, which is 12 percent of GDP and thus an important part of Italian economy.

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