

# BASQUE COUNTRY: NUMBER OF VISITORS DECREASED BY 1.7%



The hotel establishments of the Basque Country, registered a total of 207,187 visitor entries last October, representing a decrease of 1.7% over the same month in 2011. Overnight stays also fell in this period, down 0.9% to stand at 395,979, according to data released Wednesday by the Basque Statistics Institute, Eustat.

The decrease in the number of visitors was due to the drop that took place in Alava, of 11.2%, while Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa recorded a slight increase of 0.1%.

In the whole of the Basque Country, the number of state visitors fell by 6.6%, with negative growth of 15.8% in Alava, 2% in Bizkaia and 8.2% in Gipuzkoa. Among the communities that increased their tourists count are Andalusia, Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla and Madrid. By contrast, declined in greater percentage the arrivals from Balearics, Valencia, Murcia and Castilla-La Mancha.

Meanwhile, foreign tourists rose to 8.6% in the whole autonomous region, due to the growth of 6.1% in Alava, 4.3% in Bizkaia and 15% in Gipuzkoa. The largest increases are for visitors from Denmark, Japan, Sweden, USA, Canada, Ireland and the Netherlands, while stressing the decreases in Luxembourg, Greece, Finland and Italy.

The number of nights spent by all visitors, meanwhile, had in October a positive interannual evolution in Gipuzkoa, where it rose 0.8%, while it fell in Alava and Bizkaia down 4.6 and 1.1% respectively.

Thus, the length of the average stay in the Basque hotel establishments increased by 0.5% compared to October 2011, going from 1.90 days to 1.91 days. In Álava, the average stay was 1.93 days compared to 1.79 last year, in Bizkaia fell from 1.88 days in October 2011 to 1.85 this last October and in Gipuzkoa it was 1.99 days compared with 1.97 days last year.

The occupancy rate by available rooms experienced a decline of 1.6 percent overall, staying at 47.69 percent. This decline affected all three provinces: Alava had a drop of 1.4% (41.80%), of 1.5% in Gipuzkoa (49.48%) and 1.9% in Bizkaia (48, 36%).

Meanwhile, rural touristic Basque establishments in October recorded 10,284 visitor entries, representing a decrease of 0.3% as a result of the fall of 4.5% in Alava establishments and of 3.4% in the Gipuzkoa establishments, and an increase by 9.7% in Bizkaia.

State travellers increased in the whole community by 1.3%, with a growth of 5.6% in Bizkaia and 1.4% in Alava, and a decrease of 1.1% in Gipuzkoa. Foreigners, however, decreased their numbers by 14.6% on average, "diminishing their numbers significantly in Álava and Gipuzkoa, but increasing in Bizkaia" in percentage terms, explains Eustat.

Overnight stays in rural tourism increased to 23,811, which means an increase in the previous year's figures by 2.3%, with positive growth rates in Bizkaia (+14.3%) and negative in Álava (-3, 2%) and Gipuzkoa (-1.5%).

The average length of stay increased by 2.7% for the whole of the Basque Country, rising from 2.26 days a year ago to 2.32 this past October. In Álava there was a rise of 1.4% (with a stay of 2.11 days), 4.3% in Bizkaia (2.41 days) and 1.7% in Gipuzkoa (2.36 days).

The occupancy rate by bed grew on average by 0.9%, from 18.81% to 18.97% occupancy, as result of the increase in the province of Bizkaia which experienced a 17% rise. In Alava and Gipuzkoa, however, this decreased 6.2% and 4.6%, respectively.

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