

SPAIN: HEALTH TOURISM IS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY



Health tourism has become more important in Spain in recent years, attracting more than 20,000 international tourists in 2012, according to Secretary of State for Tourism, Isabel Borrego.

At her conference in the Comisión de Industria, Energía y Turismo del Senado (Committee on Industry, Energy and Tourism of the Senate), Borrego noted that **more and more domestic and international tourists are visiting Spanish spas or taking part in health-related travel.**

Specifically, last year 21,868 international visitors came to Spain to for various health treatments spending in total EUR 12.1 million, according to data provided by Turespaña.

Speaking at the first Jornada Nacional de Turismo de Salud (National Conference on Health Tourism), held in Archena (Murcia) in late March, the Secretary of State for Tourism stressed that health tourism is strategic for the executive.

She emphasized that the average expenditure of a medical tourist is significantly more than that of a conventional tourist and the time spent in the country is generally longer. Health tourism actually moves more than nine million Europeans a year, and there are predictions that by 2020 the trips that are motivated by health and wellness tours will be increased by 90%.

Similarly, she said that **these trips are not usually undergone over the season so there is an important unseasonal factor and labeled the rise of the segment as a "golden opportunity,"** considering that it will improve the quality and diversify Spanish thermal spa offer.

Borrego called health tourism the "niche of the future" noting that its great capacity for growth will benefit from the evolution of Europe's population, which is becoming increasingly older with greater life expectancy. She also stressed the importance of markets like Germany, one of the main sources of tourists to Spain along with Britain.

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