

TOURISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC DECLINING



Tourism is suffering world wide mostly because of the global crisis. The downturn negatively affected even the Central Europe and the Czech Republic.

According to "Czech Republic Tourism Report Q4 2009" by the Research and Markets, a **9 per cent drop in the number of foreign tourist arrivals is likely to appear in 2009**. The number of foreign visitors is expected to drop even more, by 11 per cent. The researchers expect the short-term weakness of the Czech koruna to help the tourism industry but they also expect the currency to strengthen and therefore Czechs will lose this comparative advantage.

In the first half of this year, the number of people using the services of Czech accommodation facilities dropped by 8.5 per cent to 5.37 million compared with the year before as stated the Czech Statistical Office. According to the head of the Association of Czech Travel Agents, Viliam Sivek, **it has been the worst season for hotel owners in 20 years**. The biggest drop occurred in the numbers of foreign guests because only 2.7 million of them stayed in Czech hotels, which was a 12 per cent decline in year-to-year comparison.

Not only are foreigners less often traveling to the country, they also shorten their stays here. The number of arrivals from all the main source markets has declined with British and Russians showing the biggest decrease. Naturally, sales in the hospitality industry dropped as a result. The worst hit facilities are campsites, where the decline goes up to 30 per cent in the number of guests. Four-star hotels are holding the best with "only" a 2.5 percent drop in guest numbers.

The most popular tourism regions are Prague and the South Moravian region. However, both of them have witnessed a decline in arrivals. The South Moravian region welcomed 17 per cent less visitors than last year. **Prague remains the main attraction of the country**. The biggest draw in the capital is the Prague castle, which alone managed to lure 1.34 million visitors in 2008.

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