

ITALY WELCOMED 55% MORE EUROPEAN TOURISTS



countries.

Foreign tourism continues to be an important source of revenue for Italian budget and even in times of crisis and increased competition, tourist flows from abroad ensure a stronghold of the industry. The National Agency of Tourism released data regarding the Christmas holiday season stating that the largest tour operators in 18 European countries and 10 other countries recorded increasing sales of Italian tours - 55% more for European travelers and 62% visitors from other

The grand cities of art, along with the little provincial gems of Italy, strengthen their appeal in all target markets, thanks to the typical allure of the year-end holidays: shopping, museums and places of worship, cultural events, exhibitions, shows and flea markets. Also popular are holidays in Italian ski resorts, spa breaks and active tourism. **Food and wine are among the main attractions for international visitors as well.**

The mountainous regions are popular especially among German tourists who come to Italian Alps for winter sports activities. This holiday the tour operators reported a 5% increase in turnover in the sales. Germany is the prime target market for Italy, as is also evident from the tourism balance of payments from the Bundesbank: in 2012 German tourists spent a total of EUR 6.4 billion euro.

In the first half of 2013, tourist spending was EUR 2.42 billion, with estimated increases at the end of the year.

The amount of bookings for Christmas 2013 in Italy recorded a growing trend over the last year for other German speaking markets (Austria and Switzerland), UK, Nordic countries, Czech Republic; slight increase for France, Poland and Belgium; a decrease for Hungary, and an uphill struggle for the Iberian Peninsula and the Netherlands.

Among the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), the **Russian Federation continues to take the lion's share of year-end holidays reaching +20% of arrivals in Italy.** Despite the Christmas period not being relevant for arrivals in Italy, India and China recorded sales increases even for their tour operators with +5% and 5-20 % respectively.

In Brazil, the Italian Christmas festivities coincide with the end of school holidays and the beginning of the summer, which is a time to spend with family.

The operators reported increases from around 8 to 10% also for other overseas markets such as the U.S., with American tourists often heading to the art cities of Rome and Venice, the Amalfi Coast and Cinque Terre. Visitors from Japan (with sales up 3-10%) on the other hand were interested mainly in cultural offerings and Italian products as well as the regions of the southern Italy, especially Campania and Sicily and local nature and parks.

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