

POSITIVE SUMMER SEASON FOR SWISS TOURISM



Tourism is at a critical turning point, according to a joint media conference on Swiss Tourism, the hotel industry, and the Federal Office of Statistics (Bundesamt für Statistik - BFS) held in Zurich recently. The increase of 2013 constitutes a recovery following the decline of the last two years.

With 35.6 million overnight stays, the numbers for 2008 or 2010 are no longer achieved. At that time, over 36, or even 37, million overnight stays were counted. Similar figures were achieved in 2007. However, aside from these years and within the last two decades, Swiss hotels have never received as many guests as were received in 2013.

The increase in overnight stays was particularly high in the summer months of June, July, and August. In eight out of twelve months, more overnight stays were recorded than in the previous year. However, the most significant decline, according to the BFS, was recorded in February.

Best Outcome for Swiss Tourism since 1991

"With an increase of 1.3% or 15.9 million guests, Swiss visitors ensured the best outcome in this area since 1991", said Marc Gindraux, Department Chief of the Federal Office of Statistics. Foreign visitors also increased (+3.5%) to 19.7 million.

Most of the guests were tourists from China (+20.3%) and the Gulf States (+20.1%). Guests from Singapore and Thailand also increased, although numbers from Japan and India decreased.

"The tourism environment remains difficult", said Jurg Schmid, director of Swiss Tourism. "We must succeed in regaining guests from Europe. There was an increase in 2013 (+1.8%) after four years of strong decline in European demand. However, it's no time to celebrate", says Schmid.

Stays by visitors from Europe have fallen 13% in the aftermath of the strengthening Swiss Franc since 2010. This draws the attention of those with a "particular affinity" for Swiss vacation. This refers to regular visitors who have been to Switzerland on two to five occasions. "They are usually around 45 years old, well-off, and very educated," Schmid said.

Germans ought to come back

Switzerland wants to recover these guests from the most important foreign market: the German neighbors. In the winter of 2014/2015, Swiss Tourism is planning a two-year extension and strengthening campaign for the German market.

Over the previous year, 11 of 13 tourist areas recorded an increase in stays. The Lake Geneva Region (+6%), the Bernese Oberland (+4.6%), and Ticino (+4.6%) recorded the largest increases in customers. The Canton of Valais and Eastern Switzerland suffered declines.

To better represent the added value of the industry, Swiss Tourism has developed a new concept of measurement. The "Tourism Development Index" revealed on Monday is meant to present a more holistic picture of the economic basis of tourism in Switzerland. In addition to overnight stays, day-trips and excursions should be taken into account.

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