

CZECH REPUBLIC WELCOMED LESS FOREIGNERS BUT MORE ASIAN TOURISTS



In 2009, Czech tourism was seriously hit by 8.5% decline in tourist numbers. Asian travelers however seem to favor the country in the heart of Europe more than ever.

Last year the Czech Republic attracted only slightly over 6 million foreign visitors, which is 8.5 per cent decline compared to the year before. The drop was, nevertheless, milder than expected, as there was a 17 per cent decline in the first quarter of 2009.

The top five source markets for inbound tourism were Germany (1.4 million, -4.8 %), the UK (370,000, -22.7 %) Italy (360,000, -3.5 %), Poland (350,000, -7.4 %) and Russia (330,000, -21.7 %). Generally, the tourism industry was mainly affected by the financial crisis that hit other destinations as well but the declining numbers of Russians and the British were also influenced by the unfavorable exchange rates.

However, there is one group of tourists whose numbers are actually going up and these are travelers from Asia, reported Czech daily Ihted.cz. In 2009 their number increased by 2 per cent to 505,000. The Czech Republic is popular especially among Chinese (62,000 arrivals in 2009) and Japanese travelers (115,000).

According to the latest statistics, the most popular destinations in the Czech Republic last year were traditionally historical Prague, spa region of Karlovy Vary and the region of wine-makers - South Moravia. Nevertheless, all regions recorded a decline in the tourist arrivals. According to World Tourism Organization data, the overall decrease in the number of foreign tourists in 2009 was 4 per cent in year-to-year comparison. The situation in global tourism is however expected to improve and the industry should reach its 2008 level in 2011.

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