

# SPAIN TO REACH 63.6 MILLION FOREIGN TOURISTS IN 2014



Spain is predicted to close 2014 with three million more international tourists than last year, thus reaching 63.6 million foreign visitors after recording a 7.2% increase from January to April, according to what the Minister of Industry, Energy, and Tourism, José Maneul Soria, has predicted.

“For April, it is estimated that growth has been greater by even 10%, and 2014 could end up with similar growth that tourism on the international level had last year, in the area of 5%,” Soria said at the press conference after the Minister's Counsel where they analyzed a report on the tourist situation.

Waiting for the definitive figures on the number of arrivals of foreign tourists, which will be known on May 22nd, Soria said that the behavior for the rest of the year regarding international tourism “is going to continue being favorable.”

Along these lines, Soria figured that the domestic tourism market will continue down the path of recuperation which will mean ending the year with new records, thanks to the improvement of the economy.

The Head of Tourism said that, according to the statistics recorded from last year when 60.6 million international tourists were welcomed and who spent 5.9082 billion euros, Spain continues improving its records in the first fourth of the year when tourist entries grew by 7.2%.

## **Domestic Market Improvement**

Regarding domestic tourism, which makes up 50% of tourist activity, he explained that since August 2013 there have been consecutive increases in the travels of Spanish residents with hotel stays increasing as much as air traffic, last month (April) growing for the first time in 30 months.

As such, the last months showed the best growth in trips taken by residents of Spain. In the month of December, an increase in trips of 7.5% was recorded. In January an increase of 19.4% was recorded, while in March it fell slightly because of Semana Santa (Holy Week, which last year fell in March); in April, it recovered again.

The statistics on hotel recovery are attached to these statistics for Holy Week (78%) and the long weekend in May (75%), both celebrated primarily in Spanish cities and in a lesser way by international tourists.

Soria explained that trips taken by the Spanish have been influenced in recent years by purchasing weakness, but since August of last year, a favorable tendency has been observed in domestic tourism, “which is clearly on its way to recovering.”

In addition, a recovery of tourist spending has been detected, globally, for an average stay and individually.

## **Effects of the PNIT**

Knowing all of this, the minister confirmed the recovery of domestic tourism that has been recorded since August of last year, not just confirming its influence on the national payment balance but also on the payments the Spanish made on trips to the rest of the world that have been increasing since the month of June in 2013.

“This says that Spanish tourism is not just getting better domestically, but also internationally. That is, the Spanish are traveling more,” explained Soria.

According to the explanation of the government, tourism continues being “a priority,” which was reflected on the road map created in 2012, the Comprehensive National Tourism Plan (PNIT).

“If things keep going the way they are going in these four months, we can say that at the end of this year we will also have a good year tourism-wise, with the difference being that this year, the positive behavior of domestic tourism stands out,” confirmed the Minister.

Soria showed his satisfaction about the evolution of the plan that has a total of 100 measures, of which 50% have been adopted, in his opinion showing that the results are the fruit of the application of this plan.

“Now, we need to increase the spending and influx of tourists that spend more than the average and the government is doing some things to get this done,” explained Soria, mentioning the different promotions for Spanish tourism on the Asian and Middle Eastern markets.

### **Good Prospects for the Summer**

For summer, the minister pointed out the solidarity of the British, French, and German markets, referring to arrivals, spending, and overnight stays, which is added to moderate growth regarding the Netherlands and Belgium.

In addition, favorable prospects were predicted for the Colombian and Mexican markets that will experience notable growth, which is the same with visitors from Japan, China, and India.

Soria explained that the Russian market will moderate its growth due to the devaluation of the rouble by close to 25%, and countries from the Gulf will increase their ability and their connections which likely makes a 50% increase regarding the previous year.

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