

# WATER SPORTS EMBRACED BY MORE HOLIDAYMAKERS IN SPAIN



The number of international travelers who practice water sports during their holiday in Spain increased significantly by 20%. The summer season, which represents 60% of the total annual income of the tourism industry, however did not bring an increase in turnover. The reason is that tourists opt mostly for the most economic water sports.

In an interview with Europa Press, the manager of Marine Resorts, Rafael Moreno, explained that **the most economic activities such as paddle surf, kite surfing and kayaking are becoming more demanded** while hiring a boat became less popular.

The boost of the international market, which represents between 60% and 65% of the demand in the summer months, is caused by the growing arrivals of British and German tourists to locations where water activities represent between 10% and 12% of these travelers' budget.

The major domestic tourist destinations, such as Catalonia, Balearic and Canary Islands, are the most affected by the popularity of water sports, despite still getting the effect of instability experienced in Egypt.

However, those destinations working in management, facilitating the establishment of companies and highlighting nautical products through tourist offices, are those who are working to learn to adapt to the consumer demand, Moreno explained.

Still, this segment continues to suffer from reduced spending and stay of coastal tourists and families, both nationally and internationally, representing 40% of sales of this type of tourism, and characterized by not having planned the purchase of the activity beforehand.

Marine Resorts' management model includes a public-private partnership in which local businesses and municipalities of 23 specialized destinations in this segment participate, which in 2013 reported a turnover of 650 million Euros.

The vast majority of companies doing this type of activity namely 80% are independent microenterprises, having usually between 2 and 6 employees and less than 500,000 Euros annual turnover.

Yet, Marine Resorts considers that Spain is not well positioned as a destination for nautical tourism, despite the very high potential of their beaches for such activities.

"A powerful campaign to raise awareness of our marine natural resources and reposition the segment 'sun and beach' as a type of coastal and marine tourism is needed," argued Moreno, lamenting the low level of investment allocated to commercial activities, highly localized, by boat operators.

**The manager underlined Spain's potential to become number one in beach sports, like kite surfing, where it has less competition than in other segments such as diving or sailing,** where Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta and Egypt are considered top destinations.

In fact, kite surfing is the sport of choice for 80% of international tourists traveling to the Spanish coast, resulting in the most popular sport this year. Spanish people placed this sport second, behind diving.

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