

ROME: HOTEL TAX INCREASE LIKELY TO HIT TOURIST NUMBERS



Rome is still in the eye of the storm after the controversy over warnings from abroad and recent increase of the tourist tax. The capital is under siege; operators and industry associations feel discomfort after the considerable tax rise.

The foreign ministries of United Kingdom, United States, France and Germany have warned their travelers about the risks and increased hotel prices in Rome. Despite all difficulties the Eternal City is trying to defend the record of most desired destination of foreigners. Giuseppe Roscioli, the president of the Rome's hotel association, said that the arrivals in 2014 are growing, but **the new hotel tax will probably have an impact on the numbers especially in the low season.**

Rome's gross income increased more than 6 percent in the first 7 months of the year, but the prospects of the continuing increase are pessimistic because of the hotel tax increase.

Roscioli stated that: "Since September we become the most expensive tourist destination in Europe and this will undermine our competitiveness." Just look across the border. "Tourists are usually going on the internet to choose the destination and they will give priority to France that has much lower taxes, or London, which is tax free."

Those who choose Rome will have to pay 7 euro per night (4 euro more than before) if accommodated in a 5 star hotel, 6 euro for the 4 stars, 4 and 3 euro for the lower classes of hotels.

"The tax is more than doubled and a family who will be staying 4 days in Rome will spend about 100 euro more," emphasized Roscioli. "Tourists are clever and they will notice that the services are not improved for the money." According to the hotel association the tax increase will affect the budget of tourists.

Operators accused the Rome's authorities that they need to fill a budget hole instead of dealing with real emergencies. "They should consider illegal trade in the first place and improve cleanliness of the city with the expansion of services." said Roscioli.

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