

SWISS HOTELS RECORDED MORE OVERNIGHT STAYS IN FEBRUARY



The massive appreciation of the Swiss franc in mid-January did not slow down Swiss tourism in February. The Swiss hotel industry recorded a total of 3.1 million overnight stays in February 2015. Compared to February 2014 that is an increase of 6.0%. For Christoph Juen, CEO of Swiss Hotel Association it is "a pleasant surprise".

The hoteliers profited in February indirectly from an early Easter and the good economic situation in Germany. **Both the number of domestic and foreign visitors has increased.** The Swiss have booked 8.4 percent more overnight stays than in the previous year (total 1.5 million). The overnight stays of foreign visitors increased by 3.8 percent to 1.6 million.

"The increase in visitors from Switzerland was due to Easter," said Juen. Since it fell on the first weekend of April this year, almost all of the cantons moved the school holiday to February. In addition, the hotels also benefited from the fact that there were hardly any cancellations as expected."

In fact, not even the visitors from Germany cancelled their early booked winter holidays. Despite the "Franken shock" the overnight stays from Germans have increased by 3.9 percent, which Juen explained is due to the favorable economic situation in Germany. Even the Belgians and Dutch are increasingly traveling to Switzerland. Overall the number of European guests increased by one percent.

However, the largest increase was from the Asian tourists. Their overnight stays increased by 22.5 percent. "That shows how important and successful our marketing in this region is," says Juen. The number of Russian tourists has decreased by more than a third. The collapse of the rouble and the Ukraine crisis apparently has had an even larger effect.

Thanks to the good numbers in February, Juen is confident that the winter season will still somewhat run mildly for the Swiss hotels. This is not yet clear however as to what extent the Swiss hoteliers will give discounts due to the appreciation of the Swiss franc and thus suffer a drop in sales.

Juen does not expect a continuation of February's upward trend of the number of overnight stays. In March there were definitely signs of a decline. "The standard number of spontaneous bookings did not happen," he says.

The director of the Swiss Hotel Association has great concerns for the summer season. "As it does not take much for there to be a serious slump," he says. **The real effect of how much the appreciation of the franc has negatively affected Swiss tourism will probably be seen in the next winter season.**

Ten of the fourteen tourism regions reported that in previous February compared to the same period last year, there has been an increase in overnight stays. The most significant increases were found in the mountain regions and in the region Lucerne / Lake Lucerne. Graubünden recorded the strongest increase in overnight stays. This included 45,000 additional overnight stays (+ 6.4%). Next are the Bernese Oberland and the Lucerne / Lake Lucerne region with an increase of 39,000 (+

11.8%) and 36,000 (+ 17.8%) overnight stays respectively. The Wallis recorded 30,000 additional overnight stays (+ 6.4%). The Basel region also reported an increase (+ 20,000 units / + 20.6%). In contrast, Geneva recorded the biggest decline in overnight stays with a loss of 4,500 units (-2.3%).

From January to February 2015, the number of overnight stays amounted to a total of 5.8 million. This represents an increase of 2.6 percent (+ 146,000 overnight stays) compared with the same period last year. The local guests recorded 2.9 million overnight stay and with that an increase of 4.6 percent (+ 127,000 overnight stays). With a total of 3 million overnight stays, foreign demand showed an increase of 0.7 percent (+ 19,000 units).

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