

FRANCE: STILL NUMBER ONE TOURIST DESTINATION IN THE WORLD



Despite the recession and the ensuing disappointing figures, France remains the most visited country in the world. It has held the number one position for a number of years over Spain in Europe and often fights with the USA over pole position.

Herve Novelli, the French junior minister in charge of tourism in France, has made a statement about a downturn in French tourism. Last year, **6% fewer tourists came to camp, taste wines, romanticize in Paris, visit Mont Blanc or indulge in cycling.** France has just about everything a country can offer and its size means that its climate can appeal to everybody, from those who relish baking sunshine to those who adore deep snow.

France was, however, deep in recession until the second quarter of last year, meaning that the amount of visits from foreign countries dropped quite significantly. Due to the poor exchange rate of American dollar, visits from the USA dropped by 8%. For similar reasons, 17% fewer Britons came to France during the recession period. Both these customer groups accounted for financial problems, typically being the biggest spenders.

Nevertheless, **the missing pounds and dollars did not push France off its position of the world's leading tourist destination.** It still welcomed 74 million foreign tourists in 2009 (79 million in 2008) and has the massive advantage over a number of 'up and coming' destinations in that it needs to do relatively little marketing for itself.

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