

BARCELONA PLANS TO LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF TOURISTS



In the past, Barcelona's tourism industry suffered from low tourists' turnout. However, in recent years, the city has shown signs of improvement. This year, about nine million visitors are expected to visit Barcelona which is home to 1.6 million inhabitants.

This number has increased more than five times as compared to the past 20 years. **The boom in Barcelona's tourism industry is attributed to the weak Euro, which is attracting more tourists.**

However, the president of tourist guides, Mari Pau Alonso, is not happy with how the residents treat the tour guides. He says that people give them nasty remarks and mock them as they show tourists around.

The head of Barcelona's hoteliers association, Jordi Clos, says that citizens should become more sympathetic to the visitors. The city's new mayor, Ada Colau, says that new measures should help regulate tourism in the city. She is afraid that Barcelona may end up becoming like Venice if no limits of the tourist numbers are set.

A survey done for Exceltur tourist group revealed that there is now twice the number of beds in rented apartments as in hotels. Tourist flats are more attractive and economical to visitors, and owners can expect more than 125% rents more than what they could have received from long-term tenants. Although most of the flats are managed by online organizations like Airbnb, others are rented by homeowners who want to make extra cash during Spain's long holidays.

It is estimated that tourists spend 25 million Euros daily in Barcelona, and the tourism sector accounts for 15% of the city's GDP and more than 120,000 jobs. Colau says that the visitors will stop coming if the tourism standards are compromised.

In the last eight years, Ciutat Vella, that is the most popular district in the city, has lost more than 13,000 residents. The locals have been driven away by high rents and ruthless noise of tourism. In fact, some areas such as Las Ramblas have become a no-go zone for residents.

Despite Colau suggestion that tourists should be encouraged to visit other parts of the city; the old city, Barcelonan beaches, and Antoni Gaud buildings are still popular among tourists. Barcelona is the Mediterranean cruise capital receiving thousands of passengers. The tremendous number of passengers at the city's port has a huge impact.

Many people feel that the social impact of the tourists in Barcelona outweighs their financial contribution. Some legislators are even suggesting that a tax on cruises should be implemented. The 7 million Euros annual tax on hotels has been used to promote tourism in the city, but the parliament is considering using the same to ease the industry's effects.

Fracenz Munoz, a professor of urbanization at the Barcelona Universitat Autònoma is asking why hotel chains do not finance nurseries and schools. Moreover, he wants to know why cruise companies are not paying for road works. In this way, the residents will see the returns for allowing tourist invasion in the city.

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