

The Importance of Tourism in Andorra



Andorra, a small principality situated between Spain and France, is relatively unknown and is almost totally reliant on tourism. Most visitors arrive from its near neighbours, but more are beginning to come from further afield; from Portugal, Britain and Germany, for example. Tourism accounts for an astonishing 80% of the Andorran GDP and, although the government is keen to reduce Andorra's reliance upon tourism, it recognizes its importance.

Foreign visitors to Andorra have a variety of reasons for making their trips. Andorra is not a member of the EU and it can offer alcohol, cigarettes and perfumes at duty-free prices which cannot be matched elsewhere within the European Union. On a more cultural note, many visitors are attracted by the numerous international music festivals held there during the summer months. The town of Andorra la Vella has often been described as the music festival centre of Western Europe.

For sport lovers, activities available in the mountain areas include walking, hiking and skiing. A further advantage is that the cost of accommodation is relatively low. Andorra has a special attraction for some - its shrine to Our Lady of Meritxell. Pilgrims pay homage here annually on September 8. This is an internationally recognised event and brings in visitors from many different countries. One problem facing tourists however is the lack of an airport: the nearest is 196km. away in Toulouse. As the importance of tourism for Andorra continues to grow, this stumbling block has been recognised and now plans are being laid down to construct their first ever airport.

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