

MALLORCA PLANS TO BOOST ITS WINTER TOURISM



Mallorca gets overly crowded in the summer and come winter, the place is deserted. It is this extreme fluctuation that is forcing the new government of Mallorca to devise ways that will ensure the tourism schedule of the area remains vibrant all year round. However, so far virtually all their attempts to accomplish this have been futile.

The Spanish island has become very popular among vacationers. When summer time comes, all facilities available get completely full. These include hotels, beaches, hideaway bays etc. **Actually in July there were about 1.7 million tourists on the Balearic Island.** This is about 300,000 more than the figure recorded five years ago during the peak of the season.

The steady rise in the tourist numbers year after year has worried the authorities governing the island. Therefore, efforts are being made to ensure the area is not only adored as a summer destination but also as a possible winter destination. This will aid in minimizing the pressure on the available resources and facilities.

It is not only the government that is getting concerned with the over-crowding of the island in summer. The vacationers too, are getting uncomfortable with packed beaches. However, hoteliers insist that efforts to reduce the influx of people to the highland will not bear any fruit since what the tourists want is a place they can get to enjoy the summer-time sunshine as well as the beach fun.

According to Bernd Grundmann, a vacationer of German origin, the island has become excessively crowded within the recent past. Having been regular vacationers at the island, Bernd and his wife Sylvia recall how they met 25 years ago at the erstwhile fishing village when the place had just enough tourists. He goes on to mention that the government should have done something way back to counter the mass tourism being witnessed currently.

The tourism minister Biel Barcelo agrees that the situation at the island is wanting. He said that they are devising ways to ensure vacationers get to visit the island even during off-season. He mentions that one strategy is to market the island as a hub for sporting activities like bicycling and hiking. That is not a new idea, it has been done before but didn't fetch any significant results.

The major challenge has been the inadequacy of airline connections during winter, and major hotels closing during the off season. Considering the fact that hoteliers are miffed by the government's plans to introduce tourism tax by 2016, chances that they will cooperate are very low. The chief of hotel industry association, Immaculada Benito, said that they are hoping for more vacationers in 2016.

The Mayor of Pollenca, Miquel Angel March insists that quality tourism is more important than the numbers. While there are plans to ban the renting out of private apartments, Miquel doubts the possibility of enforcing such a ban, as people will still do it regardless. However, the Tourism Minister Barcelo insists that the objective of the move is only to set the standards for renting private apartments and to regulate the same.

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