

SPANISH HEALTH TOURISM IS UP 20%



Health tourism is growing in Spain at a rate of 20% per year, in both revenue and patient volume. It is estimated that the sector has brought more than 500 million euros into the country in 2015. Globally, the health tourism industry generates more than 75,000 million euros every year.

Inigo Valcaneras, the director of Spaincares, the organization that released the data, commented that while the growth has been maintained, Spain, at the moment, is getting only a small share of the potential market. "We were looking at 500 million euros, while I believe we should be among the 3 or 4 countries capturing most of the business," said Valcaneras. **"Spain has all the potential to be one of the leading countries in health tourism globally."**

Currently, the most popular countries among health tourists are Germany, UK, USA, and other countries with less reputable healthcare systems such as Israel or Turkey, according to Valcaneras. Although globally Spain is the country receiving the third highest number of leisure tourists, at the same time, he adds: "We have a very efficient and a very good healthcare system."

Spaincares is a strategic alliance between Spain's tourism and health sectors. The Spanish Health Tourism Cluster was formed with the dual aim of positioning Spain as a leader in the market and attracting patients to the local healthcare facilities.

According to Valcaneras, Spain meets all the requirements to offer a very competitive value for health tourists. 2016 is expected to be the year of health tourism in Spain. "Spain's commitment will be very clear; it is going to grow the business," he noted.

Hospitals specializing in the care of foreign patients, spas, rehabilitation centers and specialist tour operators, as well as insurance companies and health tourism destinations are some of the main areas of focus.

"From the health tourism industry point of view we see that there are different markets which we have to segment. **There is a high demand for health spas in countries like Germany or France with great thermal culture as well as the rehab centers in the Nordic countries where 20% of the population is over 65,**" he stated.

Moreover, hospitals have a better chance in Arab countries and Russia where there is a demand for highly complex treatments such as oncology or cardiac surgery. There is also a demand for less complex treatments such as cosmetic surgery for which there is a large market among the European population.

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