

SWISS HOTELS AND TRAVEL COMPANIES EXPECT STABILIZATION IN 2016



After a decline in overnight stays in 2015, Swiss hotel owners expect 2016 to stabilize. A soft turnaround can apparently be seen in alpine and rural tourism. According to a survey, Swiss hotels hope the summer season will bring positive changes after the tough winter.

In 2015, the number of overnight stays in Switzerland decreased by 0.8 percent. At a recent conference, director of Schweiz Tourismus, Jürg Schmid, said that the strong market presence of Switzerland in Europe is to be maintained in 2015.

Simultaneously, the tourism board plans to target groups of tourists with strong buying power and an affinity for Switzerland, which should help stabilize the overnight stays this year. **These target audiences consist of nature lovers and city travelers, among others.** The tourism board is also going to focus on less price-driven markets such as Scandinavia.

Meanwhile, China has become Switzerland's fourth most important market. Schweiz Tourismus plans to establish destinations beyond the popular tourist spots among Chinese visitors. The supply is supposed to be expanded, for example by making winter tourism attractive to Chinese customers.

The industry is more than happy with its Swiss visitors as well. At the conference, it was stated that the locals have set a new record in 2015 with 16.1 million overnight stays in Swiss hotels.

Until after the end of Easter, Schweiz Tourismus' campaign #abindieBerge is supposed to contribute to a good final spurt of this winter season and make guests aware of the good ski slope situation.

After the season's first half, Switzerland's cable car operators were 11 percent in the red. Swiss hotel providers also suffered from a heavy pricing pressure and mild temperatures, as a member survey of Hotelleriesuisse revealed. According to this survey, roughly 57 percent of Swiss hotel owners have had a worse winter season than in the previous year, especially those in rural and alpine regions.

Expectations for the remaining season hardly look better. Due to the current booking situation for Easter, hoteliers bank on a similar situation to previous year. However, 42 percent of Swiss hotels in alpine regions still forecast that their situation will get worse, as reported by Hotelleriesuisse.

As a reaction to the decreasing guest numbers from Europe, **42 percent of Swiss hotels lowered their prices and more than half of the surveyed had to decrease their staff during winter.** In the cities however, 38 percent of hotels were able to increase the number of staff.

Furthermore, many of the affected hotel owners utilized managerial measures such as an optimization of their online appearance, offering additional products and services as well as focusing on specific guest groups and new markets.

Things are looking bright for the summer season of 2016. Swiss hotel owners expect better starting conditions, and 72 percent of them plan to hold on to the prices similar to last year's.

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