

PARIS TOURISM HARMED BY RECENT STRIKES



The amount of foreign tourists in Paris and its region Ile-de-France six months after the terror attacks is still in decline. Authorities warn that the recent strikes and blockades protesting against a new labor law are likely to strengthen the feelings of insecurity among potential visitors and thus harm Paris tourism.

According to the Regional Tourism Committee, in the first quarter of this year **the arrivals of Japanese visitors in Paris and Ile-de-France were 56% lower than in the same quarter last year.** Russian tourists came in smaller numbers as well - their amount declined by 35%. The amount of Chinese visitors - whose numbers exploded in 2015 with an increase of 49% and a total of 1.2 million arrivals - decreased in Q1 by 13.9%.

The committee responsible for the promotion of Paris tourism recently warned that while the disastrous consequences of the 2015 attacks are still visible, the current situation poses a serious risk to the sector.

Over the recent weeks, the region faced strikes, blockades, and scenes of guerrillas in central Paris, viewed through social media all around the world. Such events strengthen the sense of fear among visitors in the context of anxiety following the extension of the state of emergency, stated the committee.

"A few days before the Euro soccer championship (June 10 - July 10), whose success is to show the world our capacity to organize large events, it is still time to save the tourist season by ending these blockades relayed around the world," said president of the CRT Paris-IDF, Frédéric Valletoux.

The leisure and business sector of Paris tourism is expected to feel the negative impact of the current strikes the most. In Ile-de-France region, 500,000 people work in these segments. Many Japanese and Korean companies warn their employees that they will not insure them during their business trips in France. The reputation of the country as a safe destination for business meetings has been compromised.

To restore the confidence and reassure tourists, last week the French ministry of foreign affairs and tourism launched a new international campaign to promote Paris tourism. The government, Paris town hall, and the tourism board invested EUR 1.8 million in the campaign to boost international tourism which decreased by 15% in recent months. Hotels even recorded a decline in occupancy reaching -22%.

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