

ITALY: NUMBER OF TRAVELERS FROM SAUDI ARABIA BOOMING



A record increase of +68% has been reported in Italy regarding the number of travelers from Saudi Arabia. Especially the north part of the country has become a popular destination for Arabian visitors.

Despite the distance and lack of direct flights, the recent data show that Australians have increased the number of travels to the Apennine peninsula. The Mexicans are (re)discovering the region, while the number of travelers from India is also going up. On the other hand, the Chinese and Japanese prefer to stay at home or travel elsewhere.

However, the real stars of Italian tourism for the summer of 2016 are the Saudis. They arrived in masses in June and were increasingly present in July, particularly in Milan and northern Italy. In August there will be 68% more Saudis than in August 2015. These are the findings of a recent report by ForwardKeys, an international company that analyzes tourism flow.

The study focused on the long haul travelers, i.e. those flying from other continents who often have greater spending power. The data was collected through more than 200,000 travel agencies worldwide by analyzing about 14 million bookings.

According to the data collected by the company, from 1 June to 31 July 2016 the long haul arrivals in Italy were 2.4% lower than in the same period last year. This is mainly because of the decrease of inflow from the Far East. Also, Brazilians have reduced their travels due to the economic crisis. On the other hand, the number of travelers from the USA, Argentina, Mexico and Australia increased.

The hotel bookings of guests who spent at least one night in an Italian hotel in August went down by -4%. The authors of the report explain the result by Expo 2015: "Last summer there was a visiting boom thanks to the Milan Expo, this year there is no great even," explained Laurens van den Oever, chief marketing officer of ForwardKeys. Compared to the June-August period of 2014, the number of travelers from this year is higher.

The hotel bookings regarding Saudis however went up. "Despite the attacks in Paris, Brussels and Nice, Arabs feel safe in Italy, they think it is a destination not at risk," said Laurens van den Oever. Most visitors from Saudi Arabia traveled to Rome, Milan and Venice.

The number of travelers from India has registered a 16% increase in bookings in August. The same can be said about Mexicans, whose inflow has increased by 10%. There was a slight increase in arriving Canadians (+2%), while the US visitors decreased (-3%). As to Chinese tourism, the report states that the flow is negative especially due to the unfavorable exchange rate of the yuan, the local currency. "It has become more expensive to travel to Europe," said Zhang Bin, an analyst at Sinolink Securities.

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