

TOURISM IN DRESDEN FIGHTS DISASTROUS JULY DATA



In July, the number of tourists coming to the German city of Dresden dropped by 10%. Local representatives of the hotel industry, however, warn against any exaggerated reactions. According to them, it is essential to set the right course for tourism in Dresden to grow.

During July, 398,930 nights have been booked by visitors in Dresden. This represents a decline of 10% compared to July 2015, reported Dresden Marketing GmbH (DMG).

Domestic visitors booked 11.2% fewer overnight stays than in the same period last year, the number of foreign overnight guests dropped by 6.3%.

In 2016 so far, the number of overnight stays has dropped by 2.1%. Moreover, German tourists have booked 3.7% fewer overnight stays compared to the January - July period in 2015. Foreigners, on the other hand have booked 4.4% more stays.

In comparison to other major cities in the country, only two of them, besides Dresden, have registered a downfall - Cologne (-5.3%) and Hannover (-0.5%). Other cities are experiencing growth. Nürnberg reached double digits with an increase of 10.8%. Other than that, Hamburg (5.7%), Berlin (3.8%), Munich (2.2%) and even Leipzig (4.6%) have all experienced an increase in the number of tourists.

Hoteliers face serious problems when it comes to the room occupancy rates and the decreasing tourism in Dresden. This year so far only 59.8% of Dresden hotel rooms were booked. This is by far the lowest value among major cities. Hamburg is on top with 77.9%, but even Leipzig is well ahead with 70%.

The average room per night in Dresden costs 73.40 euros, which is the lowest price among major German cities. In Munich, the cost is about 130.30 euros, while in Leipzig it is 83.50 euros. The revenue per room in Dresden amounted to 43.80 euros, and even here the city ranks the worst in Germany. On the top there is Munich with 98 euros, while Leipzig experienced an average of 58.50 euros.

Johannes Lohmeyer, chairman of the Tourism Association Dresden, described the figures as "dramatic". Marc Arendt, chairman of the Tourism Committee of the Chamber of Commerce Dresden, said he does not remember such a downfall. Both warned, however, against any panic.

"That would be unnecessary at the moment," said Arendt. "The numbers are bad, which we cannot and will not deny, but we also know what to do."

Tourism in Dresden lacks business tourists; there are not enough congresses taking place, according to Arendt. "Anyone who wants to organize a congress with 1,000 participants must be willing to invest," Arendt added. "The money would flow back into the city budget because conference participants spend on average 350 euros per day."

Moreover, Dresden needs more attractions and entertainment, especially on weekends. "If there were concerts during the Elbenights then even in my house occupancy rates would increase," said Arendt. Cities like Halle, Leipzig or Magdeburg are much further than Dresden and provide numerous shows and attractive events. "We cannot rely only on the Frauenkirche. We need to offer guests something more," the committee chairman concluded.

An initiative of Mayor Dirk Hilbert is to offer overnight guests a discount card, but this is only an initial step according to Lohmeyer and Arendt. "Since we speak about the state institutions of Saxony, the transport, retail and foodservice must be likewise involved," said Arendt. **The fact that the DMG is to receive an additional one million euros per year is supported by both Arendt and Lohmeyer.** "However, it should not mean that the DMG will have additional duties," says the TVD - chairman.

Finally, the lodging tax should be reviewed, according to the two experts. Dresden produces the second highest output of German tourists. "If this is not improved, then the inflow from bed tax will decrease, considering the price-sensitive market with predominantly domestic leisure tourists," said Lohmeyer.

The official number of tourists for August is not available yet, but Lohmeyer and Arendt believe that it did not go as bad as in July. The city council has to set a course to guarantee a better future. "It is not only hotels. Tour guides, retailers, restaurateurs all suffer from the decreasing tourism in Dresden," Arendt concluded.

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