

RIVER CRUISES IN GERMANY ANNOYING LOCALS



Hundreds of river cruises in Germany sail through historic old towns. The residents are becoming increasingly annoyed in cities such as Bamberg, Passau or Regensburg. How much tourism can a city tolerate?

The old towns of Bamberg and Regensburg seem to be overcrowded by tourists. “There are people who advocate river cruises in the historic parts of the city because it brings a lot of money,” says a spokeswoman for the city of Bamberg. **“But it is too much for some inhabitants, they are annoyed.”** At times, the ships spit hundreds of tourists, who then push themselves through the city centers.

Low water and tough price competition made the industry grow. And the boom continues, according to the German waterways and shipping association Rhein-Main-Danube. The number of passengers on Western European rivers in the period of 2008-2015 rose from 250,000 to 383,000. Danube was the favorite river for German passengers in 2015, with 38% of river cruise travelers.

Just behind there was the Rhine and its tributaries. Interestingly, almost 38% of travelers on European rivers were citizens of the USA and Canada.

According to the port administration in Bamberg, ten years ago, there were about 327 ships with 47,000 seats. Last year, there were 874 ships with a capacity of 146,000 people. Würzburg also recorded a strong growth. In 2001, only 80 river cruises were used, in 2014 there were 916 of them.

Many municipalities have been doing everything they can to attract more river cruises for years. In the Rhineland - Palatinate of Speyer, for example, a new mooring has been approved. In Koblenz, the number of investments has steadily increased in the recent years. In Bavaria, cities, shipping companies as well as water and shipping offices have responded to the increased demand.

The city of Bamberg argues with the economic benefits of shipping tourists. Each of them, with 28 euros, spends around 4 euros more in the city than other visitors. This argument is also mentioned by a spokesman for the river cruising company 1AVista: “In general, river cruises in Germany enriches the cities with the many energetic guests who are welcomed.”

While cruise tourists bring greater revenues, the residents are annoyed by their numbers. Similar tensions are reported from cities like Venice, Amsterdam and Barcelona where the travelers spread to residential areas as well.

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