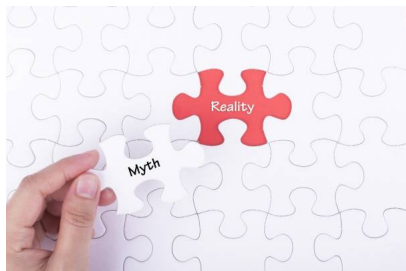


# MAJOR MYTHS ABOUT SPANISH TOURISM INDUSTRY



Spanish tourism attractions are highly popular among international tourists. However, all that glitters is not gold. Even though in 2016, according to data published by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Spanish tourism industry accounted for 11.1% of GDP, there are many myths surrounding the sector.

Between January and November of 2016, according to the INE, Spain received 71.58 million foreign tourists, 10.1% more than in 2015. However, it is important to analyze the source and expenditure of these visitors.

A recent study “Myths about tourism in Spain”, drawn up by EY, reveals that **the country only attracts 1.2% of tourists from the main distant markets, which have greater growth potential and spend more on their travels.**

This study analyses the urban legends that surround Spanish tourism and offers recommendations to boost the growth of high-value international tourism, or greater spending capacity in the destination.

## Leading Destination

For many years now, Spain has had a place on the world podium thanks to high arrivals and revenue from international tourism. According to the WTO, in 2015 Spain held the third place in the world for revenue, following only the United States and China. Despite the figures, Spanish tourism industry is still very much associated with the sun and beach model that above all the Europeans seek for their vacations. The country is thus a leading destination in terms of volume but not profitability.

Spain is a destination increasingly known by the long-distance issuing markets, such as the Asian or Middle Eastern countries. However, the country is still an unknown destination in the main distant markets. It is only attracting 1.2% of the tourists from these markets. Investment in promoting tourism should be strengthened towards this goal.

## Diverse Attractions

Spain is rich in tourism resources, not only because of its geographical characteristics which bestow it with an excellent climate most of the year and numerous coastlines, but also because of the orographic variety and its extensive cultural, monumental and historical offerings. However, according to EY, Spanish tourism industry does not have any adequate communication strategy as a destination due to the duplications of administrations in this matter. Therefore, this prevents the creation of a single message promoting the offer effectively abroad.

Once again, thanks to the hotel tradition and years of experience receiving foreigners, the belief has grown that Spanish tourism offer is of higher quality than that of other European countries. Although the quality-price ratio of the hotel offer in Spain is far superior to that of other European countries, the complementary tourism offer aimed at the high-value tourist is still in the development phase.

## **Developing International Tourism**

Thanks to the upswing of the global economy Spain has received more tourists from distant markets (e.g. China). This summer Spanish tourism industry recorded a 10% increase in this type of tourism; compared to the increase of 5.2% in Portugal and 4.3% in Croatia, or falls in Turkey (-26.7%), France (-9.6%), Germany (-4.1%) and Italy (-2.6%). But this increase has not occurred in high-value sectors, since the growth in tourist spending is not as significant as that observed in the number of international tourists.

The Spanish tourist industry continues to be based, over all, on the arrival of traditional European tourists. In fact, in 2015, these represented 89.4% of the total of visitors to Spain. However, tourists from the rest of the world, who spend more on their travels, only represented 10.6%, although it is true that this rose compared to the 9.1% of the previous year.

## **Significance of the Sector**

Some experts state that the economic activity linked to tourism has stood up better than others in the crisis in recent years and is key for the Spanish economy. In fact, while Spanish tourism industry is a very important sector in the country (last year it is estimated that it represented 12.7% of employment), the budget invested in tourism is below 1% in the majority of Spanish tourist regions, despite the great importance of this sector in the economy.

It is also necessary to expand Spain's connections with distant destinations and therefore facilitate the flow between markets since the study counted only 16 weekly connections from Spain to China currently serving about 116 million Chinese tourists, while France has 68 flights on offer.

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