

BARCELONA CRUISE BOOM NOT PLEASING THE RESIDENTS



Barcelona cruise tours have been growing in popularity and the number of travelers exploring the Spanish city is booming. However, the residents stand in opposition against rising tourism numbers as well as the cruise ships.

The “Harmony of the Seas” was one of the cruise ship mooring in the port of Barcelona last June. Spain was astonished by the recently constructed ship since it is the largest ship in the world. The capacity is 6780 passengers and 2300 crew members. There is a small town with casino, theatre, 20 restaurants, four swimming pools and three giant slides.

The environmental initiative Ecologistas en Acción however was not impressed. They organized a demonstration at the harbor stating that **the enormous ship is a disaster for the sea, for the atmosphere and the cities in which it is moored.**

Latest developments from Barcelona signify that the entire city seems to be in a turmoil against tourism. Against illegal holiday apartments, against new hotel projects, loud night life, half-naked bar visitors, against endless lines in front of the Sagrada Familia, against the souvenir shops on the Rambla, and against the Barcelona cruise world. Growing tourism make the city broken and the cruises have a big share in that.

The locals appreciate the visitors of Barcelona. 86.7% of interviewed residents see tourists as a benefit for the city. However, what is new is that now almost half of the population thinks that, after year of growth, there should be a definite pause.

Around nine million people visited the city with 1.6 million inhabitants in 2015 and spent at least one night at a hotel. This type of tourists is more popular with the locals because they spend more money in the city than the one-day visitors. Most of them come from the resorts on the Costa Brava to Barcelona.

And then there are the Barcelona cruise ships. Cruise ships flooded the city with nearly 2.7 million passengers last year. No other European port has so many ships moored. And it does not seem the situation is likely to change any time soon. The Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) just announced the construction of a new - seventh - cruise terminal in the port of Barcelona.

Is this good or bad for the Catalan capital? “Our tourism is very clean and enriches the city that we visit,” says Fernando Pacheco of MSC Cruceros España. Finally, cruise passengers spend money on the ground, for example for excursions, transport, food or museums.

The Port Authority of Barcelona estimates that cruise ships generate an 800 million euros turnover in the city per year. That much, despite the fact that about half of the passengers spend only a little more than four hours in the city. The ships are huge tourist pumps, which eject their passengers in order to absorb them shortly afterwards.

Barcelona also has the advantage that the city is bigger and the masses can be distributed well,

unlike smaller places like Venice or Dubrovnik. In addition, more and more cruise companies choose Barcelona as the starting point and destination of their routes, giving their passengers all the time they need to get to know the city before the start or at the end of the trip. After all, 58% of all cruising tourists entering Barcelona are starting their voyage here. **And finally, more and more ships come to Barcelona off the high season when the city is less crowded.**

Critics like ecological activists are not convinced by the benefits of Barcelona cruise ships. They especially highlight the pollution generated by the huge ships. There are efforts to operate the engines with less contaminated maritime diesel or at least during the period in which the liquefied natural gas (LNG) is stored - provided this can be made available by the port. But this is only the beginning. The protests will continue and the ships will go on.

Date: 2017-06-26

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/barcelona-cruise-tours-are-booming-news5449>