

# FRENCH TRAVELERS WILL TRAVEL MORE THIS SUMMER



At the beginning of the summer season, tourism professionals have noticed a sharp rise in the amount of vacations booked by French travelers. This is a recovery that mainly benefits the foreign destinations.

According to tour operators and other tourism stakeholders, **the number of French travelers leaving for summer vacation will be bigger than last year** and they will be traveling more abroad, mainly to Southern Europe and Maghreb. "There has been a sharp rise in the number of vacations among French tourists this summer. It is very clear and very significant since we have not seen this level of intention since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008," Jean-Pierre Mas said; Jean-Pierre Mas is President of "Entreprises du Voyage", a professional federation which monitors the reservations made with 850 French travel agencies.

These companies recorded a 9% growth in the total number of French travelers (+10% in terms of turnover). For Jean-Pierre Mas, these positive figures are related to "the recovery of households' morale". "We think that people are feeling better and want to travel, to go on vacation". But, "this recovery has been most beneficial to foreign destination," he underlined. Medium-haul (+14%) and long-haul destinations (+13%) grew more than French destinations (+4%).

Southern Europe, in popular demand these last few years, continues to attract the majority of French tourists with Spain in the lead, followed by Greece, Italy and Portugal. Next in line are Tunisia and Morocco. As far as French travel agencies are concerned, the Tunisian destination, which was severely affected by the 2015 attacks, has begun to recover - representing the largest increase in bookings (+211%), far ahead of Greece (+22%). Furthermore, very significant increases were observed for Asian destinations and France's overseas territories: +40% for Antilles and +17% for Réunion.

"Sales trends over the summer have been excellent," said Pascal de Izaguirre, CEO of the travel giant "TUI France". The group recorded a 39% increase in the number of reservations for its clubs in Tunisia and 23% for those in Morocco. Greece achieved a good performance with "double-digit growth". There will be 1.2 million more French citizens leaving for the vacation this summer - some 30 million in total - thanks to their increased purchasing power, according to the research firm "Protourisme", based on a study interviewing 3 000 participants.

"We have more or less returned to the point we were at in 2015," with 43% of French citizens saying that they would like to leave for vacation (+3 points), noted Didier Arino, Director of "Protourisme". However, this ratio had reached 50% ten years ago. "French travelers will be more numerous at all of the country's destinations this summer, with the exception of the Côte d'Azur which is perceived as being too expensive." He noted that "all of the Atlantic coast destinations are doing well," namely Brittany. But it is Corsica which appears to be the most attractive destination.

Bordeaux is the city that most French people want to visit, while "Biarritz", "Arcachon" and "la Grande Motte" are the seaside resorts which arouse the most interest, added Didier Arino. Tourism

stakeholders will not all benefit equally from the recovery. “Reservations for campsites are doing well (+7% compared to last year). Private apartments offered by individuals is also on the rise (+10%) while vacation resorts are performing a bit worse,” he underscored.

“Aritel-HomeAway”, a specialist in private vacation letting among individuals, estimates that the average budget for a French family is 1 700 euros for an average duration of 12 days. “People are going for vacation a little more now, it is a good sign for tourism,” noted Timothée de Roux, General Manager for France. He considers that the main motivation of parents this summer will be “spending time with their children and families”, an objective put forward by 88% of those polled (a 10-point increase relative to 2016).

**Among the most distant destinations, “Japan is doing very well”, and Indonesia is “increasingly popular”**, noted Rémi Campet, General Secretary of the start-up “Marco Vasco”, a specialist in internet-based personalized travel. The primary long-haul destination for French citizens, the United States, remains popular according to several interviewed professionals who were nevertheless cautious about the real possibility of a “Trump effect” occurring.

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