

IS LONDON TOURISM RESILIENT TO TERRORISM?



On June 3, London was struck by a terror attack on London Bridge. As a result, 8 people were killed and 48 injured. In May, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb at the Manchester Arena, killing 23 people. It is clear, that the attacks had to have an impact on London tourism. But how significant was the impact and is the British capital actually a safe city?

Despite the terror attacks, London is showing signs of resilience. **After the London Bridge attack, there was no significant wave of cancellations of air travel to the UK.** But there has been a slow-down in the new bookings, according to ForwardKeys. Similar trend has been recorded all around Great Britain.

In the week following the London Bridge attack, flights to the capital fell by 12% compared to last year. In the second week following the attack, bookings remained down by 5% compared to 2016. The Manchester Arena bombing also led to a fall in bookings by 3.5%. However, this stall was aggravated by two other factors: Whit Monday as a national holiday on June 5 as well as the Qatar travel blockade.

The decline however seems to be just short-term. Travel data shows that bookings to London for July and August increased by 12% compared to last year. This is much more than the European average, which is currently 7.8% ahead. This could change in the future, but probably not much.

Before the London Bridge attack, bookings for July and August were 16% ahead. This signifies that the London tourism prospects are still very much positive.

Travel companies were nervous about the tourism developments after the attack. The main reason for the insecurity was the example of Paris as a precedent. After terror attacks in Paris in November 2015, the number of tourists visiting the French capital dropped by about 30%. The character and publicity of both attacks were very different, but nevertheless, the difference between Paris' decline and London's is huge.

There have been three major terrorism incidents in London in 2017. These have claimed 15 lives and injured about 100 people. Recent attacks surely were terrible, but statistically is extremely unlikely that a visitor will be killed in a terror attack. To compare, around 1,800 people are killed in the UK every year in traffic accidents. In contrast, 38 people have been killed in terror attacks in the UK in the last year.

"London is open to tourists from the UK and around the world. It remains a safe city to visit. There is an increased police and security presence around London and the city's visitor attractions," said Laura Citron, CEO of London & Partners.

Citron's words should calm down those planning to visit the British capital. For now, the long-term effects of the attacks on London tourism remain to be seen. **However, compared to Paris, London seems much more resistant to the impact of terrorism.** As mentioned, this could be due to the difference between both attacks. But perhaps also for the fact that continental Europe offers many

alternative destinations to Paris.

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