

EUROPEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY CONTINUOUSLY GROWING



European tourism industry has been doing very well in 2017 and the development has exceeded all expectations. Many destinations were awaited to grow, especially those affected by safety concerns. But generally said, the tourism industry in Europe is at a strong level as of now.

According to the European Tourism 2017 report by the European Travel Commission from November this year, the majority of European countries report growth. Almost every country reported their year-to-date data from the first half of the year. **32 out of the 33 reporting countries have registered an increase in arrivals and overnight stays, showcasing the general growth trend.**

Turkey has registered one of the strongest growths out of the reporting countries in terms of total arrivals. The country registered an increase of 26.4% this year. This is a big boost for a country that has been declining greatly in terms of tourism in the past years. The main reason for the decline were political tensions with Russia. However, relations have improved in 2017 and Russians are once again flooding Turkey in masses. This is a great boost for Erdogan's country, as Russia has always been traditionally Turkey's main source market, despite the other source markets not being as prominent.

Meanwhile, Iceland's tourism industry has also experienced an extremely impressive growth of 29.9% from January to August 2017 compared to last year. Iceland is the European destination with the highest growth, despite a fall from a 55.7% increase in the first four months of the year. The country's growth average has been more than 25% in the last five years and in 2016 it even reached 40%.

Spain and Portugal have also reached high growth rates in terms of arrivals in 2017 – 10%. Both countries are continuing their growth from 2016, with demand having a stable growth trend. However, in the case of Spain there are some reports that the political tension in Catalonia will negatively influence the Spanish tourism industry. In connection to this, it is worth mentioning that nearly one-fifth of all foreign inflow to Spain accounts to Catalonia.

On the other hand, Spain and Portugal are also showing a general trend of faster growth in terms of arrivals than in overnight stays. The main reason for this is that there are much more short trips being made, including short business trips or leisure trips.

The United Kingdom is another country that has reached a significant growth – 9%. One of the notable reasons for this increase is the devaluation of the pound in connection with Brexit. It also seems that terror attacks in the country have not had a big effect on the tourism industry. The same can be noted

about France and Belgium (12.3%), which have both recovered well from earlier safety concerns.

The report stated that regarding the European tourism industry, almost all countries registered growth. **Countries like Slovenia, Montenegro, Serbia, Malta or Cyprus all exceeded the 10% mark in terms of increase in arrivals.** Traditionally these countries focus on the summer season. However, the focus has been shifted and the destinations have realized that reducing seasonality is the right way to go.

Finland has also experienced a big growth (14.5%). According to estimates, the Scandinavian country has mainly attracted much more Chinese and Indian guests. Neighboring Estonia is experiencing a similar trend, especially regarding Chinese visitors.

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