

BELGIAN TOURISM REPORTS POSITIVE NUMBERS



After the attacks of 2016 that drove away many tourists, the Belgian tourism industry is returning to the performance in 2015. The latest data reveal that the overnight stays in hotels across the country increased in the first six months of the year.

From January to June 2017, the number of hotel rooms booked in Belgium registered an increase of 10.1% compared to the same period in 2016.

Kris Peeters, Minister of Economy, analyses these figures optimistically: "If this same growth is maintained for the second half of 2017, **Belgian tourism will return to the same level, and even to a higher level than before the attacks.** This proves that the advertising campaigns to restore the image of Belgium have worked," he said in a response to a parliamentary question.

Brussels benefits from the upturn with 18.4% more bookings over six months and an increase of 30% in turnover. "For the year as a whole, the occupancy rate of our hotels should reach 70%, which is the same level like before the attacks," says Rodolphe Van Weyenbergh, Secretary-General of the Brussels Hotels Association.

"The assessment is very different if we look at the financial health of our sector, which has suffered a crisis of 18 months. The trend is good, but we do not fill a pit with money in such a short time," he said.

"People are back in Wallonia equally with 5.4% more nights over the first half of the year," according to Thierry Neyens, president of Fédération Wallone. "**To get back to growth of Belgian tourism, we had to sacrifice some of our poor returns, cut prices.** With or without recovery, our sector is not healthy, because it suffers from very high employer costs," he says however.

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