

TOURIST SPENDING IN SPAIN WENT UP



Spain has increased its record of visitors with high purchasing power by 26%, but it still is only half the amount of the most exclusive visitors other destinations receive. The overall tourist spending in Spain increased by 13% in 2017.

The Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy, reported that Spain welcomed 82 million tourists last year, which represents a new record number of visitors for the country. The number represents a 9% increase over 2016.

The average spending of Spanish tourists from January to November last year went up by 13% over the previous year. It represents around 1,054 euros per person per trip. **As far as wealthy tourists go, Spain's visitors have grown by 26%, according to the Tourist Market Barometer,** prepared by the company Global Blue.

"We've become the second country in the world with the most tourist arrivals, and the second country in the world with the highest tourism revenue," said the Prime Minister.

The Ministry of Energy, Tourism and the Digital Agenda said in a statement released later that with these data, Spain has surpassed the US for the first time as the second most-seized tourist destination, and is only behind France in the world ranking.

It is a positive index in terms of increase per person, but Spain is still having a hard time trying to detach itself from the low-cost tourism scheme, and attracting more visitors looking for hotels, restaurants, and luxury accommodations.

The country welcomes only 10% of the most exclusive and wealthy travelers from the tourism sector: half of what its competition, like France and other destinations.

More than nine out of ten tourists that arrive in Spain each year fit the unusual European traveling habits: they take fewer than three trips in the last two years; and according to the National Statistics Institute (INE) data, that results in an average of 1,000 euros tourist spending in just over a week, as reported by Global Blue.

The profile of the most exclusive traveler is described as a tourist looking for a long-distance experience, passionate about shopping, and with traveling expenditures double the amount a European "sun and beach" lover spends.

According to Global Blue, the development of a sustainable tourism model isn't defined only by improving the amount of tourists, but it also requires an increase in their income per capita. Initiatives such as the Shopping Tourism Plan, or the improvement of flight routes to Asia, prove the efficiency of promoting strategies that may help overcome the stumbling block of seasonality.

In fact, these strategies, together with the reactivation of the Chinese economy, have made it possible to capitalize on the arrival of tourists of this particular nationality, who in 2017 increased their tourist spending in Spain by 27%. In this sense, with an average of 946 euros each time they shopped in a store, the Chinese emerged as the most profitable. **In Europe's tourism sector, the Chinese are considered the group with the highest expenditures, with an average of 1,485**

euros per tourist.

Right behind them, Argentines and Russians shared the most profitable tourist sectors podium of Spain, during the last year. The exchange rate of the euro against the Argentine peso rose up by 44%, thanks to the purchasing power of Argentines tourists, while the rise of the barrel of oil impacted the price of the ruble which increased the purchasing power of the Russians by 15%. Thus, almost half of the income from commerce through shopping tourism was reported from these three nationalities.

Catalonia's political turmoil has had an important effect on shopping tourism in the final months of the year. In fact, **the income from purchases by tourists outside the EU dropped in Barcelona by 16% in the month of December** and, for the first time in years, led to a negative growth in Spain's revenue, falling by 1%. Given that Barcelona boasts 50% of all the income through luxury shopping in Spain, what happens there affects considerably the total outcome of Spain.

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