

SPORTS TOURISM SCORES IN SPAIN



The increasingly common plan to visit a city with the excuse of attending a sport event means business. International sports tourism in Spain produced more than 12,000 million euros in 2017, at a time when the country is trying to move away from the sun and beach tourism.

Up to November 2017, a total of 10.1 million foreigners who visited Spain participated in sports activities or events, with a total expenditure of 12,091 million euros, according to the data provided by the Tourism Expenditure Survey (EGATUR).

The sports tourism has become a goldmine, and has allowed that necessary diversification to happen, where the effects of seasonality can be reduced and tourists can be expected beyond the summer period.

Proof of this is that, in the last decade, the tourist expenditure of international travelers who attended sports activities has increased by 41.5%. And so has the volume of tourists who traveled for this very reason, with an increase of 15.4% over 2007.

Without going any further, of the 20,100 participants in the last edition of the Barcelona Marathon, half were foreigners, and 15% of them were French runners. In the case of the Marathon held in Valencia, 31% of the participants were foreigners.

The resorts are not far behind. La Manga Club has signed agreements with FC Barcelona, and Chelsea F.C., to organize summer camps in its facilities to attract tourists and welcome elite athletes from around the world.

Another sign of improvement is that nowadays, each traveler spends more on their trips than years ago. For example, until November, the average expenditure per visitor was 1,194 euros, that's 22.5% more than in 2007. That year, the average investment was still at 2007 levels, according to the data provided by the National Statistics Institute (INE), which since October follows the testimony of the Ministry of Tourism, as the body in charge of gathering information on sports tourism expenditure.

Beyond strict practice, attendance at sports events such as football matches, or motorcycling races, also favored the arrival of foreigners. Specifically, until November, a total of 2.18 million people arrived in Spain to attend sports events, with a total expenditure of 2,792 million euros, which represents an average expenditure of 1,278 euros and an average stay of nine days in the country.

In general terms, up to the eleventh month of the year, Spain received a total of 67.8 million foreign tourists with revenue of 71,135 million euros, and an average investment of 1,049 euros. Travelers who strictly practiced sports, or took part in nature tourism, accounted for 2.6% of the total.

The INE has not yet published the breakdown of international tourists' expenditure following the reason for their travels, but the 2016 statistics show that leisure and recreational trips were the ones with the highest revenue, amounting to 65,365 million euros. It was followed by sun and beach tourism, with 39,959 million, and business travels, with 5,322 million euros.

But what were the activities that international tourists enjoyed the most? Sports tourism in Spain which includes, for example, **running or tennis practices, generated the arrival of 4.88 million tourists with a total expenditure of 5,911 million euros.** It is followed by hiking, with an expenditure of 3,465 million euros among the 2.85 million who practiced mountaineering in Spain.

Although golf was not the most attractive sport for tourists, it was the one with the highest average investment, with 1,226 euros per person for a total of 1,383 million euros. This sport was surpassed by aquatics, which includes diving, fishing and windsurfing, with a total of 2.54 million euros.

Surprisingly, snow sports are actually gaining attraction, and in 2017 they attracted 124,059 tourists to the terminals in Spain, with an expenditure of 129.4 million euros, 29.6% more than the previous year. It was the category with the highest growth, in a year where the total revenue from foreigners practicing adventure sports fell by 36%. In terms of attendance to sporting events, the number of spectators grew by 3% and spending by 4%, remaining as the most stable activity.

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