

TOURISM IN CHILE REPORTS LOW HOTEL OCCUPANCY IN JANUARY



Tourism in Chile reported a slight decrease in the numbers of guests. According to Hoteleros de Chile, the decrease in the hotel occupancy rate in January of up to 5% is the result of fewer Argentinian tourists, the departure of Chileans due to the low price of the dollar, and the climatic change in the central coast.

After reporting a successful figure in the total arrival of foreign visitors in 2017, January of the present year has been a “weak” month in terms of accommodation, marked by a break in the upward trend, as reported by the trade association Hoteleros de Chile.

While air travel showed positive figures in relation to domestic and international flights during January, the established hotel industry, grouped by Hoteleros de Chile, was affected with a 5% decrease in hotel occupancy, a lower rate than the one registered in January 2017.

For Paulina Sierra, manager of that association, there are several factors that influenced the downward trend, such as the decline of the Argentine boom since the second semester, the more than 20 overcast days on the central coast, and the continuous decline of the dollar. “A good part of the Chileans decided, therefore, to spend their vacations outside the country, which causes a decrease in the occupancy of Chile’s establishments. To that, we must add the elections and the weak economy in 2017, which caused some to take precautions and simply decided to avoid traveling,” Sierra explains.

The low number of arrivals from Argentina during January was especially noticeable in the Valparaíso Region, an area that traditionally has the highest number of trans-Andean tourists during the summer, and that this year was reduced by 15%, according to the Regional Chamber of Commerce.

“The expectations for 2017 were not met, because according to hotel figures, reservations were quite high in October, which meant that it was going to be a very good summer, and it wasn’t. High temperatures and sunshine had been forecasted, and this wasn’t the case either,” said Santiago Pérez, president of the Chamber of Tourism and Commerce of Reñaca. For the leader, the situation is similar to January 2012, which also had most of its days with an overcast weather, driving away the Argentinians.

In La Serena, Coquimbo, the decrease in the arrival of Argentinians would have reached a maximum of 3%, which the local tourism chamber credits to the new direct flights between San Juan and Santiago.

In the same line, the sub-secretary of Tourism, Javiera Montes, states that while the decline of Argentine tourists in the December-January period reached 16.3% compared to last year, the base for comparison is very high, and is still higher than any January before 2017. “Although the arrival of Argentinian tourists in January of this year reached 502 thousand visitors, it is lower than the figure reported back in January 2017, a historical figure of 647,955. Even so, it still is a figure higher than any month of January before 2017,” Montes commented.

At the same time, the expectation of the hotel sector is to recover ground in the low season, starting from March, a period that every year gains more visitors for tourism in Chile. In fact, they already have a high percentage of hotel bookings, which, according to the tourism industry, could compensate for the decrease in January in the hotel industry, with more Chileans traveling during the year.

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