

# BERLIN TOURISM FACING A DIFFICULT YEAR AMID AIR BERLIN BANKRUPTCY



When asked about the number of visitors in Berlin this year, Burkhard Kieker from VisitBerlin said that he did not know. The CEO sought a “moderate growth of 1.5 to 3 percent”, but whether the numbers will be reached is unclear.

The bankruptcy of Air Berlin has had a strong effect on Berlin tourism industry. **Kieker admitted to having underestimated the effects, especially their duration.** By the summer, 6 to 10 percent of seats available in air traffic would be missing.

The bankruptcy also had its effects on the passenger numbers. From November 2017 to January this year there were 250,000 fewer passengers. In terms of the number of visitors in the city in 2017, there was just a 0.3% increase in terms of overnight stays. The number of visitors increased by 1.8% to around 13 million. However, these data only reflect the guests of hotels and guesthouses. Day visitors or holiday apartment rentals are not recorded.

At 55.1 percent (+1.6%), German guests still account for the largest share of total overnight stays. In 2017, there were just under 17.2 million of them. There was also a slight increase in international visitors to 5.1 million. But the number of overnight stays decreased by 1.4 percent to 13.98 million.

Many international guests came from the UK, USA and Spain. High-growth source markets were Russia (+16.6%), Brazil (+10.2%) and USA (+7.5%). On the other hand, Europe is weakening. Overnight stays of guests from Italy, Spain, Denmark and Sweden fell by at least 9 percent year-on-year. Almost 10 percent fewer visitors came from Israel.

In view of this development, after years of double-digit growths and continuous records, Berlin tourism is facing a difficult season. Nevertheless, Kieker is not concerned. It must be clear that tourism is not self-run and Berlin must do something to stay attractive. If the number of visitors decrease, not only airlines and hotels were affected, but also cultural institutions and retail.

Thus said, VisitBerlin is raising money for a big marketing campaign this year. Berlin wants to attract guests with their “Hot City, Cool Water” slogan. According to Kieker, this combination of metropolitan life, culture and water can only be found in Sydney.

Other already planned activities are “roadshows” around Germany, with Governing Mayor Michael

Muller and Economics Senator Ramona Pop promoting Berlin. **Another initiative is the launch of an advertising campaign for the start of the Babylon Berlin TV series.**

Other than marketing measures, Kieker is also attempting to communicate with the Senate to guarantee improvement of the situation. He has called for the senators to set up a support program for airlines offering long-haul flights. Dusseldorf and Munich have already practiced this.

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