

FOREIGN TOURISTS BOOST FRENCH TOURISM



Tourist numbers in France remained buoyant in the first quarter of 2018, recording a 7.4% year-on-year increase in the number of overnight stays, thanks to the Ile-de-France region. It is mainly foreign tourists who are driving the growth of French tourism.

Between January and March, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies recorded 65.5 million overnight stays, up 7.4% compared to the same quarter of 2017.

However, French tourism professionals fear that their activity will decline in the second quarter of the year, due to strike periods at SNCF, which began on 3 April, and at Air France. Growth in the first quarter "is driven by foreign tourists (+13%) and by the dynamism of the Ile-de-France destination" (+21.6%), the public body explained. The increase was 5.2% for French tourists.

Hotels alone account for 42.1 million of these nights, an increase of 5%. "This trend has now been observed since the end of 2016 and partly reflects a catching-up phenomenon," commented INSEE, adding that "it is more marked for hotels in the higher range". The public body attributes this increase in particular to a stronger dynamic in the number of foreign tourists (+13.5%).

By geographical area, hotel attendance increased strongly in the Ile-de-France (+8.6%) and "more moderately in the urban areas of the provinces (+3.2%) and on the coast (+2.9%)" thanks to foreign customers.

The 4 and 5 star establishments experienced a 7.4% increase in their overnight stays over the quarter, while the 1 and 2 star establishments posted a 6.6% decline. Tourist residences and other collective accommodation jumped 12.1% to 23.4 million nights. INSEE also stated that it had reduced its attendance figures for the fourth quarter to 7.7%, compared with 7.8% announced last February.

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