

BARCELONA: HOTEL SECTOR WARNS OF A DROP IN TOURISM QUALITY



2018 has been a distressing year for the hotel sector in Barcelona, reporting considerable losses throughout the first half with no visible recovery in the near future. The tourism quality is at stake according to experts.

Jordi Clos, the president of the Barcelona Hotels Association and president of Gremi d'Hotels, announced a **3% drop in hotel occupancy in the last six months, as well as a 7.2% decrease in total turnover.**

Regarding luxury hotels, the turnover has decreased by 10%. Considering this balance, which collects data from over 400 hotels and 40 tourist apartment buildings, the leader of the association expressed his concern about a noticeable loss of tourism quality in the city.

On one hand, the association believes the increase of the “low profile” tourists is due to the illegal offer of tourist flats and the now legal platforms for shared accommodations. In reference to the decree of the Government of Catalonia that considers endorsing a policy of rental rooms per day, the association recalled that this offer has caused coexistence problems in the past and fuels the tourism-phobia mentality of the population.

In the same vein, Clos criticized that the Government made an “arbitrary” cut to tourism budget, going from 6 to 4 million euros at a time that he considered “inappropriate”.

Additionally, the president of the association took advantage of the occasion to denounce Ada Colau’s municipal policies, which, in his opinion, have contributed to fabricate a poor image of the city. Clos expressed his disagreement with the presence of ‘manteros’, ‘lateros’ and all kinds of street vendors that, together with the ‘botellones’, encourage the presence of a “market segment that isn’t beneficial”. “The beach looks like a circus and that causes the tourist to lose interest in the city,” he explained.

On the other hand, the Gremi d'Hotels also singled out the impact of the overall decline of business tourism due to the political climate as well as the exit of companies from Barcelona. “Banks and companies have stopped hosting their events in the city and we have lost a significant number of reservations,” said Clos. For the business association, this translates into lower tourism quality, and the average expenditure per visitor is evidence of its consequences: going from 406 euros in 2016, to 362 euros in 2017.

Despite the present negative figures of the hotel sector, Barcelona was leading the ICCA 2017 ranking, an international recognition that scores cities based on their quality as hosting locations for congresses and conventions. However, Clos emphasized that the city’s success was the result of “many years of work” and said in advance that the following years may not be so positive because of “the future that is being shaped today.”

Regarding this summer period, **the city has already accumulated a 78.8% of the occupancy for**

the month of June and it is expected to reach 80% by July and August, 5 points less than the previous year.

As a way to revert the decline that the hotel sector currently experiences, Clos called on the municipal and autonomous administration for “better regulation of tourism offers and their consequences”. In addition, in a clear allusion to Arran, the anti-system organization linked to the CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy) that recently announced a new campaign against tourism in the city, Clos recalled that “Barcelona’s tourism is the ‘lung’ of Catalonia”.

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