

FRANCE: SUMMER SEASON LOOKS PROMISING



After a mixed spring, tourist numbers in France should be stable overall or even on the rise this summer season. The return of foreign visitors to Paris is confirmed.

As the summer holiday period has barely begun, the season looks promising according to the latest business survey published by the national tourism agency Atout France, with the help of various bodies including the departmental tourism committees and some 1,700 tourist offices. The majority of respondents to online questionnaires conducted from June 18 to 26 **expect stable activity this year compared to 2017, in both July and August, with more than one-third expecting an increase during the summer season (37% and 38% respectively).**

The expected increase in patronage is particularly true for Paris, which should primarily benefit from a larger international clientele. In substance, Atout France's latest economic outlook confirms the return of foreign visitors to the capital observed since last year.

On the other hand, the survey showed a "slight erosion for the mountains" in July, with nearly a quarter of respondents expecting a decline. August, on the other hand, will be on the slack side, as for the coast and the countryside. Moreover, the same month of August is, at this stage, encouraging for all types of accommodation, in particular hotels.

For French tourism professionals, these good prospects for the summer season are welcome after a spring that may have been disappointing because of the series of strikes at Air France and SNCF, but also unfavorable weather. While the series of bridges in May augured a promising "before season", Atout France's latest business survey confirms the impact of social movements in transport on business tourism. It also underlines a drop in the number of visitors to the coast and the countryside.

The number of foreign tourists in France reached 86.9 million in 2017, up 5.1% compared to 2016, according to the Directorate General for Enterprise (DGE) of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance in a recently published balance sheet carried out jointly with the Bank of France. The last peak was in 2015 with 84.5 million visitors.

Although the rebound is confirmed after the fall in 2016, following the attacks, the final result is, however, below expectations. The public authorities had indeed several times put forward a range between 88 and

89 million. However, France remains the most visited country in the world. The increase in 2017 is primarily due to an increase in the number of visitors from Europe (+5.6%), which represented 78.7% of arrivals.

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