

SPANISH TOURISM INDUSTRY TO STOP GROWING IN 2018?



CEHAT, the Spanish hotel management association, demands a “transparent and forceful” regulation of labor strikes that are threatening the airline industry during the summer season.

According to CEHAT, the tourism industry in Spain will not grow this year compared to 2017.

The data released by the INE until May suggests that, in the first half of 2018, Spain set a new record with 28.5 million foreign visitors. **But hoteliers estimate that this development will decline in the upcoming months due to fewer arrivals of British and German visitors**, and because of the new level of competitiveness in the industry with the inclusion of countries in the Mediterranean such as Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey.

Despite the odds, Spanish tourism industry forecasts positive figures for the summer season, as the fear caused by the arrival of a smaller number of foreigners would be offset by the increase in domestic tourism. Two thirds of Spaniards choose the country to spend their holidays, and the estimates also take into account that more than half of the nationals have already made their reservations.

Catalonia will still lead the rankings as the first Autonomous Community with the highest influx of foreigner visitors, and it is expected that this destination will be visited by one in four foreigners, followed by the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia, Madrid and the Valencian Community.

The forecast is that the country’s best customers will still be the British visitors: 25% of the visitors until May came from the United Kingdom, but with a year-on-year decrease of 2.3% in the first five months of 2018. That is the reason why hoteliers demand the government to carry out targeted campaigns in the country during the fall season, to try to minimize the negative consequences that ‘Brexit’ could have.

However, as summer continues, the main concern of the hotel association are the consequences that labor strikes in the airline sector can have in the country: such as the case in Ryanair, where the ground staff and the handling workers (baggage handling) of Iberia in the Barcelona airport have called a strike for July 29.

Juan Molas, president of CEHAT, argues that the right to go on strike at specific times and in strategic services “must be regulated”. One of them, he says, is the airport sector. “There is too much at stake for a sector with a 12% direct and 18% indirect contribution to the national GDP, which creates jobs for 2.4 million people.” Therefore, he adds, **“the hoteliers complain and demand” that the Government implements measures to regulate the current labor strike law in a “much transparent and forceful” manner.**

On the other hand, the president of the hotel association also highlighted the holiday rental segment, and he is confident that it will be “the number one issue” to be addressed in the Tourism

Sector Conference that Minister Reyes Maroto has convened. He insists that this is still the main issue that the Spanish hotel sector is currently facing: "This is chaos. We are gambling with the brand, with competitiveness, with the neighborhoods of many cities and tourist locations."

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