

# SWISS HOTEL INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO GROW



It was a record year for the hospitality sector in Switzerland. For the first time ever, the country recorded over 38 million stays – 38.8 million. This is an increase of 3.8% compared to the year before, according to data from the Federal Statistical Office.

Not even in the peak year of 2008, there were so many overnight stays. Domestic travelers alone booked 17.4 million overnight stays (+2.9%), while foreign demand grew by 4.5% to 21.4 million. The Swiss hotel industry is booming fast.

**“The weather was fantastic, the currency stable and the economy was booming,”** said Schweiz Tourismus director Martin Nydegger. But at the same time, the industry has also made itself competitive. Companies have invested in quality and new price models. Skiing in Switzerland has become much more affordable thanks to dynamic prices. There were also new records in terms of source markets. Highs were achieved in both Asia (+4.8% to 5.4 million) and the Americas (+8.9% to 3 million).

## **Mountain areas on a decline**

Only for one region, a completely different picture emerges. For European guests, the number of overnight stays increased by 3.3% in 2008. Since that year, however, the number of overnight stays has been pointing downwards. These losses have not been offset by the recent recovery. The biggest problem is in mountain regions, which have lost 43% of the overnight stays in the last ten years.

On the other hand, cities have benefited from this trend. To compare, while in Zurich the number of overnight stays since 2008 increased from 4.9 to 6.3 million, in Graubünden, there was a decline from 6.2 to 5.1 million overnight stays.

The mix of guests has changed and so have the destinations within Switzerland. Tourism regions such as Graubünden, Ticino, and Valais have had to cope with problems in the last ten years, while Zurich, Basel, and Geneva have grown. Lucerne and the Lake Lucerne region also recorded an all-time high in terms of overnight stays, while the canton of Zug reported a slight decline.

## **Good start to the winter season**

According to Schweiz Tourismus, the current recovery is just a first step on the way back to the strong years for the Swiss hotel industry. There is also optimism among experts regarding the current winter season. During the holidays, perfect winter conditions prevailed, with bookings reportedly rising by 4% based on a survey among industry members.

In order to further strengthen the importance of winter tourism, Schweiz Tourismus wants to invest in young skiers at an early stage. Last year, for example, the association and its partners launched the “Kids4Free” competition, which awarded children free weekly ski passes.

In the summer, racing cyclists and mountain bikers should boost tourism in the mountains and the countryside. According to the association director Nydegger, last year’s campaign has already borne fruit. The industry is registering noticeably more bikers on the mountains and in the accommodations. Moreover, **Schweiz Tourismus wants to focus specifically on wine tourism this year, with the Fête des Vignerons festival on Lake Geneva being the highlight.**

The goal of the tourism organization is also to increase market Swiss spas and hospitals. In particular, guests from Russia and the Gulf States, China, Great Britain or Scandinavia should be attracted to this. Health tourism is increasingly becoming the third strong pillar alongside holiday tourism and established business tourism.

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