

PROTESTS IMPACT HONG KONG'S TOURISM INDUSTRY



The wave of protests in Hong Kong is affecting tourism in the former British colony. Experts mainly highlight the impact on air traffic and hotel revenues, as reported by the local press last week.

According to the South China Morning Post, the number of travel bookings from Asian countries to the territory fell by 5.4% during the last month. **This was when Hong Kong was the scene of massive demonstrations against amendments to the extradition law.** This was revealed from the analysis of data collected between June 16 and July 13 by ForwardKeys, which analyses 14 million travel booking transactions daily.

This fall represents another risk to Hong Kong's tourism and the economy of this world financial center, after the reported decline in visitors from the mainland and the drop in hotel occupancy as well as retail sales.

Hong Kong has been the scene of several protests, mostly peaceful ones. The largest one, according to reports, happened on June 16. About two million (more than a third of the population) went out to protest against the new legislation.

However, three of the protests, on June 12, July 1 and July 15, were marked by violent clashes between protesters and the police, who even used rubber bullets, pepper spray and tear gas.

Hong-Kong's deputy, You Si-wing, said the impact of the protests in Hong Kong's tourism industry "is evident". You, who is also director of the Chinese tourism agency China Travel Service, stated that the average growth of tourists in the first six months of the year was 13% but in June it fell to 8% and in the first days of July to 4%.

Hoteliers, meanwhile, reported that the average occupancy rate fell between 3% and 5% in June compared to the same period in 2018, while overall revenues fell by 10%.

"If the conflicts continue, the growth rate will continue to decline in the second half of the year," said a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong.

However, he attributed the slowdown to violent clashes between protesters and the police rather than the protests themselves. "Hong Kong has hundreds of peaceful protests every year. It was the conflicts and bloodshed that left tourists unsure and worried about travelling here," he said.

After the most recent protest last Sunday, the protestors have issued several demands to the government. Firstly, the proposed amendment to the extradition law is to be withdrawn definitely.

Secondly, all the detained protesters from previous protests should be released and finally, an independent inquiry into police violence is to be made and the Chief Executive Carrie Lam dismissed.

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