

SWITZERLAND PLANS TO FOCUS MORE ON HEALTH TOURISM



After a successful summer season, the Swiss tourism board, Switzerland Tourism, plans to turn the country into one of the world's leading health tourism destinations. Starting next year, corresponding promotional activities are planned in the target markets of China, Russia and the Gulf States.

The Swiss tourism industry reported a very successful summer season with record-high numbers of overnight stays (+ 2.6 percent). With an increase of 3.2 percent, the growth in domestic guests was responsible for the successful numbers, but also the overnight stays of foreign guests increased by 2.2 percent. **Positive numbers are expected even for the coming winter season.** Industry experts estimate that overnight stays should go up by 2.1 percent.

According to a recent announcement, Switzerland Tourism now plans to develop more the sector of health tourism and has entered into a partnership with around 20 Swiss hospitals and clinics to develop the image of Switzerland as a health tourism destination.

Especially in China, Russia, and the Gulf states, the demand for medical treatments is growing strongly, so the focus will initially be on these markets, writes Switzerland Tourism.

According to these figures, over 35,900 patients residing abroad stayed in Swiss hospitals and clinics in 2017. They accounted for around 2 percent of all patients. More than half of them were self-payers.

According to Switzerland Tourism, patients arriving from abroad for private treatment are often accompanied by relatives. **According to an estimate, medical tourists currently generate around 490,000 overnight stays in Switzerland** and, with accommodation, excursions, and meals, a tourism turnover of CHF 196 million (178 million EUR) per year. The Swiss authority expects this tourism sector turnover to increase by a quarter to CHF 245 million (222 million EUR) by 2022.

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