

STRIKES IN FRANCE: WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON THE PARISIAN TOURISM



You only needed to be at the Louvre's monthly free night last Saturday to realize it: the hour and a half of usual waiting had become five minutes because of the low attendance. And inside, posters announced that not all the rooms could be visited due to the lack of staff. Both situations reflect the impact the strike that hit the Parisian tourism as well.

"At the moment, everything is fine..."

"Everyone had anticipated the day of 5th December, but the days to come are more difficult to read," said Jean-Marc Banquet d'Orx, President of the Union of trades and industries for the hotel industry (UMIH) of Ile-de-France. **The organization announced a loss of 20 to 25% of turnover for Parisian hotels for the week.** The first figures were confirmed by an employee of TimHotel in Montparnasse, who said: "Usually, we are almost full at the start of December, especially with the Salon Nautic at the Porte de Versailles. This week, we're at around 75% occupancy."

The neighboring Berkeley hotel draws the same conclusion: "It's quieter than usual, but it's not a disaster either." Proportions difficult to estimate, according to the professionals interviewed: "There are people who couldn't cancel at the last moment and who paid but didn't come, and there are those who added a night or two because they couldn't leave."

Parisians on tourist buses

As for restaurants, the situation is also uncertain. Eddy, a waiter in a brewery close to the cinemas in the 14th arrondissement, explains: "I don't get the impression there are fewer tourists. If there are fewer people, it's because there are fewer Parisians, specifically."

The hundreds of kilometers of traffic jams are the main problem for Sébastien Vincent, General Manager of Bigbus Tours Paris, a guided bus tours company. However, he downplays the difficulties: "Of course, it's complicated, we noticed a slight decrease in tourist attendance. But we are seeing a new clientele arrive, Parisians deprived of public transport who are tired of walking."

As for museums and amusement parks in the region, they refuse to communicate about current events. But a quick tour on social networks shows that they are open and welcome the public, even if it's in smaller numbers, as in the Louvre. Jean-Marc-Banquet d'Orx (UMIH) warns all the same: "These are just the first days. We'll only understand the damage at the end of the strike. And the result could be disastrous."

"Tourist expenses aren't postponed, they're taken or they're lost"

According to the president of the UMIH, the worst would be a war of attrition between the strikers and the government. "If the strike continues, tourists will turn to other destinations." He adds: "When we talk about numbers, we often only consider hotels and restaurants, but there are all the additional expenses."

Retailers who are suffering from the current strike could catch up on sales in January, and there

could be a spread effect, as was the case with the "yellow vests." But that's "provided that the movement stops quickly and that the image of France is not too degraded", warns Jean Marc-Banquer d'Orx. "The 'yellow vests', it was one day a week: here, it's a run-on, it's completely different. The professionals are unanimous: tourist expenses aren't postponed, they're taken or they're lost. Antoine, the department store salesman, speaks for many: "December is Christmas. January is sales. If it continues like that, it's a recipe for disaster."

Double penalty

As for employees, there's a form of double penalty: not only are they affected by a possible decline in turnover but, like all workers, they must also manage to get to their workplace.

If those in support roles (accounting, human resources, administration, etc.) can be offered teleworking, it's one thing, but it's difficult to cook over the Internet... An executive at the La Coupole restaurant says: "Some come in later, others leave earlier, the work has to be done, so we manage." In hotels, some employees may have a free room to avoid the hassle of transport. For others, some companies pay for taxis or VTC. But it won't last long.

Date: 2019-12-16

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/parisian-tourism-feels-the-hit-of-the-strikes-news11326>