

EMPTY BEDS: TOURISM CRISIS ON KO SAMUI



During the main season, Thailand was the trend destination for a long time, but now the popular holiday island of Ko Samui is running out of tourists and the experts talk about the tourism crisis. Seven out of ten beds were empty in the last quarter of 2019.

The hotels are there, the beds are there. Ko Samui, the second-largest island in Thailand, is ready for the tourists: However, not as many as expected are coming. In October, November and until 20 December, seven out of ten beds remained empty, **the occupancy rate was only 30 percent - 20 percent less than in the last quarter of last year.**

Even though Christmas and the early New Year represent the main season and more tourists usually come at that time - the weak figures until December will not compensate for this. The forecast for the first quarter has been lowered to an occupancy rate of 35 percent - from 50 to 60 percent last year, says the president of the Ko Samui Tourism Association, Vorasit Pongkumpunt.

For insiders, the tourism crisis has two reasons: on the one hand, too many hotels have been built in the past years, there is simply an oversupply. And this year, 1,000 more rooms will be added to the current 30,000 or so - while the number of tourists is falling.

The other reason includes the Thai currency, the baht, which is currently so strong that many people are opting for cheaper destinations such as Vietnam, the Philippines or Indonesia. This applies especially to travelers from China. And Thais also prefer other areas for holidays, for example, Japan, especially at the turn of the year.

The Association is, therefore, waging a price war among the hotels, wooing the remaining holidaymakers - which in turn could lead to layoffs and other social consequences and problems. **It, therefore, proposes a lower airport tax and discounted air tickets, especially in the low season in October and November.**

They also demand a pier where ferries and cruise ships could dock. In this way, 60 percent of all travelers still come to Ko Samui: 62 cruise ships are scheduled to stop at the island in 2020.

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