

STRANGER IN ONE'S OWN CITY: PRAGUE READY TO FIGHT AIRBNB



Joining in the battle of many other cities, Prague demands that the EU takes action against the explosive growth of the platforms like Airbnb. The authorities plan to fight Airbnb in an effort to stop the growth of mass tourism in the city center.

The mayor of the Czech capital, Zdenek Hrib, elected by the liberal Czech Pirate Party, explained the situation: “Airbnb in Prague is a serious problem. **It has an unlimited accommodation capacity in the city at a time when the city center is increasingly concerned about mass tourism.**” In the city center alone, Airbnb has a total of 11,500 apartments on offer.

Apolena Rychlíková, a filmmaker and journalist who initiated a campaign against the growth of short-term rentals, is disappointed with the city hall for “...ignoring the problem with Airbnb for five years. As a resident of downtown Prague, I feel like a stranger in my own city”.

Mr. Hrib explained that the aim now is to “give Prague back to the people of Prague” and to reduce the negative effects of mass tourism. The mayor adds that the city is now “a distributed hotel, where the comfort of other citizens, the residents, are not respected, and profit is sought at their expense.” The mayor believes that the lack of regulation is eating the city up from the inside.

“In the past, it was possible to limit the number of tourists in the city by approving a certain number of hotels, which could only have a certain capacity,” Mr. Hrib said. “Now, in Prague, it is not possible to limit the accommodation capacity of tourists. The numbers are utterly critical.”

Prague received nearly 8 million tourists in 2018 while the population is only 1.3 million. Airbnb accommodation has almost tripled in three years to over 13.000, with over 50.000 beds. This has caused an increase in noise and disturbance for residents. Property and rental prices skyrocketed and drove local residents out of the housing market.

Prague wants to join the list of destinations that have come together to fight Airbnb and its negative effects. Among the cities that have reported the problem to the European Union are Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna.

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