

# GOOD IDEA: TOURISM BUSINESSES SHOW SOLIDARITY IN HARD TIMES



Hotels made available to medical staff, cruise ships transformed into hospital ships... Tourism companies are mobilizing to help stem the coronavirus pandemic.

Strongly affected by the spread of Covid-19 in the world for several weeks, tourism businesses remain no less united, drawing solutions from their problems to help each other and support caregivers.

## Hotels for Doctors

The French Hotel Trades and Industries Union (UMIH) announced the provision of hotels for doctors and nurses. The employers' organization thus ensures that the health care providers get accommodation, in-room catering, laundry and digital services, such as free WI-FI.

"We are responding to this crisis and are waiting for the framework and the instructions defined by the government to provide support as quickly as possible to the medical staff," announced the organization in a press release.

## Ships as Floating Hospitals

The MSC group has offered, via its subsidiary Grandi Navi Veloci (GNV), to provide a ferry which can be transformed into a hospital ship in Italy. This was done with the goal of coping with a possible shortage of beds caused by the Covid-19 epidemic. Three CNG vessels were mentioned for this project: the Supreme and the Superba (567 cabins each), as well as the Splendid, with 473 cabins. Aid can be even greater, with the possibility of using a cruise ship, the MSC Opera (1071 cabins), for other needs. The ship is currently anchored in Genoa.

## Disaster Fund

The B to B online booking management solution, bookingkit, has decided to mobilize by creating a back-up fund for leisure operators. "With the desire to be a real partner in times of crisis, bookingkit launches a support operation with the "Corona Operator Relief Fund". The budgetary allocation for this fund amounts to €10,000", the start-up announced in a press release.

In concrete terms, service providers affected by cash flow concerns will be able to contact bookingkit to obtain financial support until 20th April. But the help doesn't stop there, since the company also offers advice to its partners, as well as a free hotline with individual solutions. To do this, it relies on a network of more than 6,000 suppliers in the travel and tourism sector.

## Rides at Cost Price

In Switzerland, the car rental company Hertz announced that they will provide 1000 vehicles at cost price. The offer is aimed at everyone who is doing something extraordinary these days: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, people from civil protection and the army. Due to falling demand, the Swiss

Federal Railways reduced public transport from March 19. The offer o Hertz thus comes at the right time for many people.

### **Hotel Turned to Hospital in Spain**

In Spain too, tourism businesses remain united. A premier hotel in Madrid, the Gran Hotel Colon, was transformed last week into a medical center, in order to treat the least serious cases of coronavirus that don't require hospitalization. This will "ease the pressure" in hospitals and "free up rooms," the Madrid region said in a statement. Another four-star hotel in the city, the Marriot Auditorium, will also be converted into a medical center in the coming days. In total, the hotel association in the Spanish capital announced that it had made "9,000 beds available in more than 40 hotels to assist patients suffering from coronavirus".

### **Holiday Apartments to Become Shelters?**

Holiday apartments in Berlin now mostly stay empty, since no holidaymakers are coming. Local authorities are discussing how to use them in the time of crisis. "We have thousands of apartments in Berlin that were previously rented to holidaymakers, but are now empty in the Corona crisis," says Green MP Katrin Schmidberger. "It would be conceivable to accommodate people who need to be quarantined but should not stay at home because they could infect their families there if they are infected." The rooms could also be used to look after children. This would make "a virtue out of necessity," says Schmidberger. "We also need solutions to get the homeless off the streets. At the latest, if there is a curfew with us, we must have found accommodation for the homeless."

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