

PARIS AWAITS THE RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS TOURISM



The Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau (OTCP) has just published a barometer deciphering the outlook for business tourism in Paris. The results, which are still mixed as the summer approaches, will have to be fine-tuned between now and the start of the new academic year.

On what horizon will the capital be holding another trade fair? This is the big question that prompted the managers of the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau (OTCP) to carry out the survey. **Its first Barometer on the outlook for business tourism in Paris targeted seven priority markets, namely the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United States and China,** as well as the domestic market, and totaled nearly 3,000 respondents.

According to the companies surveyed, we are heading towards a resumption of travel. If we add together the travelers who "soon" plan to travel domestically (25%), internationally (21%) or both (24%), we can consider that a majority of those surveyed (70%) are expecting a resumption of business travel. Conversely, 31% of travelers do not plan to make any future trips.

According to this OTCP barometer, meetings should be the main "bait" to attract professionals to Paris (34%), ahead of congresses (26%) and trade shows (12%). However, the "event culture" of each country makes this observation more nuanced. The German market is the most popular destination for congresses (54%) and the Italian market for trade fairs (28%). We still need to see more clearly the regulatory and logistical possibilities for taking over these trade fairs...". There is still a big question about the conditions under which these events can take place," says Corinne Ménégaux, Director General of OTCP.

"We feel that there is a desire among companies to be able to renew this tradition of events and participation in trade fairs, but today we still lack the information to know how it will go at the beginning of the new academic year. A certain number of major trade fairs in the October-November periods are planning to be held regardless of the conditions, but we are waiting for confirmation of the reality of the measures that will be taken. I hope we will know by the end of June. This is one of the things on which we regularly re-launch the government because it will also set the tone for the back-to-school season and business tourism," continues Corinne Ménégaux.

In any case, the habits of business travelers and their companies will not fail to be impacted by this unprecedented episode for an unknown length of time. When asked about their events policy, the majority of stakeholders (65%) mention a decrease in professional events, ahead of the integration of health precautionary measures (57%). Moreover, only 41% of respondents plan to organize a meeting, incentive trip or seminar in Paris. Nevertheless, those who travel to the capital should not cut back on their travel time, quite the contrary. Indeed, according to the OTCP barometer, 73% of business travelers plan to spend at least two nights in Paris during their next trip.

The health context should therefore not encourage express travel: good news for the destination and for the environment. On the other hand, if the length of the stay tends to increase, the time for reflection could well be reduced to the strict minimum: "Everything can change very quickly, and last-minute bookings could become very important, particularly when deciding to start a business trip because if the situation gets out of control, we will immediately sign the contract to get the

machine up and running as quickly as possible," says Thomas Deschamps, Head of the Paris Tourism Economic Observatory.

The results of this first OTCP barometer are therefore mixed, Thomas Deschamps being relatively optimistic given the attractiveness of the destination and its assets: "During the subprime crisis, which was a major economic and tourist brake on Paris, business tourism returned the following year, much more than we imagined. We are fortunate to be a very important economic hub, the leading city for hosting congresses at the international level, there are recognized economic clusters, congresses and trade fairs that contribute to the influence of our destination. The different nationalities [surveyed] have not abandoned this dimension, they know that they can do business at trade fairs in Paris and will no doubt come back."

*** facebook video ***

For her part, Corinne Ménégaux puts things into perspective: "**Without falling into blissful optimism, we feel that there is a desire to resume economic activity.** One might have expected the figures to be even worse, with companies having given clear instructions for zero business travel for the next three months. There is a real desire to get back to "normal" economic activity.

In these uncertain times - and as summer approaches - there is every reason to believe that event organizers are still in a state of flux, and the market picture revealed by this first barometer will become more accurate as the back-to-school season approaches. Hence the interest of the three other "waves" of surveys scheduled by OTCP, in mid-August, mid-October and mid-December, for a regular update on the events sector.

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