

# ITALIAN TOURISM STILL SUFFERS DESPITE POST-LOCKDOWN MEASURES



After a long coronavirus lockdown with billions in losses for the economy, Italian tourism hopes to generate income during the summer holiday season. However, the interim data are catastrophic for the Apennine peninsula.

Despite the media campaign of the Italian government and the easing of the lockdown measures, very few people want to spend their summer vacation in Italy. According to data from several associations, the country is facing a huge fiasco. **In June alone, the sector welcomed ten million fewer tourists than usual.** And the prospects for the next few weeks are also bleak.

## Enormous Economic Damage

The revenue from tourism activity is urgently needed to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the lockdown and to get the economy going again. The number of new infections every day has been consistently below 200 and the country has done a good job dealing with the situation.

But the economic damage is enormous. Many jobs are at stake, especially in the extremely important travel sector. It is therefore no wonder that the government is doing everything it can to get rid of the crisis image of the country.

“The beauty of Italy has never been in quarantine,” stressed Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte recently. Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio was outraged by the concerns in neighboring countries. “If someone wants to treat us as a hospital, the Italian will not put up with it,” he wrote on Facebook.

The borders have been open again since June 3rd and if you come from an EU country, you no longer have to go through quarantine. Restaurants, cinemas, theatres, museums and opera houses are open. Beach holidays, for example on Lake Garda, are possible without a protective mask. However, demand is scarce.

## Big Problems for Italian Tourism Industry

According to calculations of the Coldiretti association, a summer without foreign guests would mean a loss of twelve billion euros. This would have “dramatic consequences” for the 2.7 million employees who are dependent on the travel business. The fact that more Italians want to spend their vacation domestically than usual does not make up for the losses.

And the initial signs indicate that the fear is indeed there. Flight bookings to Italy for the period from mid-June to the end of July fell by more than 90% compared to last year. It didn't help that Foreign Minister Di Maio vigorously promoted Italian destinations in German media, because even the Germans are staying away from the peninsula.

The images of coffin convoys from Bergamo have taken its toll. The approximately 35,000 corona deaths weigh heavily on Italy and despite thousands of kilometers of coastline and dozens of world heritage sites, it is currently not particularly attractive.

## Venice and Sardinia Struck the Most

In the month of June, there was an average decrease of 80% in terms of visitors throughout the country, but some regions were struck by the post-lockdown crisis more than others.

Some regions suffered lower decreases (around 65-70%) due to their proximity and accessibility, especially during weekends, for domestic tourists. This is the case of the Romagna Riviera or the Ligurian coast.

On the other hand, regions that focused on foreigners in the past, suffered greatly last month. The prime examples are Sardinia (-95%), Venice (-90%) and Capri (-90%). Besides Venice, also other historical cities, such as Verona, were struck, with many important events cancelled.

The spas of Abano and Montegrotto are also dealing with problems because a message was spread that the water is dangerous because it transmits the infection. The same goes for Lake Garda, where foreigners usually made up 85% of the inflow.

The only partially positive note comes from the mountains. After the disastrous May and June with losses of around 80%, the Dolomites have good prospects for the month of August.

## Spiritual Assistance

Even spiritual help couldn't change the course. Several Catholic bishops recently pledged their "closeness and support" to the industry. **The church wants to help with the "rebirth" of Italian tourism.** Because responsible travel can have a healing effect in the Corona period, which is characterized by distrust and fear. "We are at your side," said the bishops.

And the church itself is also feeling the effects of the crisis. The main source of the Vatican, the famous Vatican Museums, recorded only 60,00 visitors in June - most of the Romans. This is only a fraction of what was common before the pandemic. Instead of 12.5 million euros in income per month, less than a million was recorded.

\*\*\* facebook video \*\*\*

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