

GERMAN TRAVEL WARNING IS A DISASTER FOR VIENNA'S TOURISM



The tourism industry in Vienna expects huge losses due to the German classification of the city as a Corona risk destination. In other regions of Austria, the summer season did not run as badly as feared, but the winter season is expected to record dramatic losses.

The classification of Vienna as a Corona risk area means an enormous setback for Vienna's tourism according to experts. "This is a super catastrophe," said Vienna's tourism director Norbert Kettner.

German visitors had always been the most important group of guests and had remained loyal to the city, especially during the corona crisis. 35 % of overnight stays in July were accounted for by German guests. Now tourism, which had booked a record year in 2019, is heading for a 70 % drop in overnight stays this year. "Some hotels will close temporarily, some forever".

In Vienna 116,000 jobs are directly or indirectly linked to tourism. 35,000 are now estimated to be lost.

Like Switzerland before, Germany had declared Vienna a risk area last week because of the increased number of infections. The Federal Government issued a travel warning for the Austrian capital. This means that all travelers to Vienna must have a negative PCR test or be quarantined when returning to Germany.

Vienna's mayor, Michael Ludwig, had made an effort to remain calm. "Such measures also apply to Brussels, Paris, Prague or Geneva. We are dealing with a European development, not a Viennese peculiarity".

The outlook for tourism in Austria as a whole, which in the summer season at least in the Alps and at the lakes was in part better than initially feared, is also looking gloomy. There are so far clearly fewer reservations for the winter, said expert Thomas Reisenzahn of the tourism consultant Prodingler of the Viennese newspaper "Kurier". "The winter is responsible in most enterprises for two-thirds of the operating result".

As a reaction to the increasing number of infections, Austria wants to limit the number of participants at private meetings. Currently, only ten people are allowed at celebrations in buildings, said Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. However, a check of private homes is not planned, as it would not be in accordance with basic rights. It was about meetings in public spaces. The only exception to the new regulations is funerals.

These are "restrictions that hurt, but are necessary to prevent a second lockdown," Kurz appealed for understanding. **A second lockdown would have "catastrophic consequences". This must be prevented at all costs.**

Professionally organized sports and cultural events are mostly not affected. There, the upper limit of 1500 people in buildings and 3000 outside remains, said Vice-Chancellor Werner Kogler.

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