

# FRENCH TOURISM - DOMESTIC TRAVELERS WILL NOT SAVE THE SECTOR



For those who wondered whether tourism would be impacted by the health crisis, INSEE (The French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) has just provided some answers. The statistical institute unveiled the figures of French tourism as of September 2020. And despite the recovery plans, communication, consumption, etc. domestic travelers are not enough to save the industry in July-August, besides, it's the hecatomb.

While Spain has jumped 30 years back in terms of tourism revenues, in France the situation is barely better.

**For 2 months the country has been caulking itself to avoid the congestion of the hospitals and an implosion of our health system, depriving many sectors of activity including tourism.**

After this period of total standstill, to restart the machine the government did not go idle, neither did the regions.

From communication campaigns to tourist consumption campaigns, everything was done to make the French spend the summer at home and support the local industry.

However, according to the figures revealed it was not enough, even if the hotel industry has probably limited the damage. Thus, over the summer season, hotels lost 58% of their overnight stays compared to the 2019 season.

The famous slogan "stay in France" has been well followed, but has not made up for the loss of income of a country whose communication and access to tourist sites are largely oriented towards foreign customers.

For the INSEE, the July and August 2020 resumption is judged as "timid".

With a 30% drop in overnight stays in the heart of Sais, the two summer months, activity has slowed sharply compared to 2019.

Even worse, while the number of overnight stays by resident customers fell in July (-14% compared to July 2019), it rose by 2% in August.

Thus, over the period July-August 2020, the number of hotel nights in metropolitan France amounted to 33.8 million. The category most affected by the crisis remains the luxury segment, due to the disaffection of foreign customers.

These figures highlight the fact that an industry that is not adapted to local customers and that is recovering from airline connections is likely to experience structural difficulties.

Île-de-France is the region that has suffered the biggest shock. Overnight stays by non-residents (foreign tourists) have dropped by 85% over the last two months, and the number of visitors to the 4-5 stars has dropped by 79%.

In total, the region has lost 69% of overnight stays compared to July-August 2019. While the urban area has been very hard hit, the coastline has seen a lighter decline (-9%). Overall, tourists preferred the sea (+14%).

On the coasts of Occitania, New Aquitaine and Pays de la Loire, total tourist numbers even increased slightly (from +1% to +2%). On the other hand, it fell on the coasts of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (-15%) and Corsica (-24%).

The mountains remain one of the big winners in the summer of 2020. Attendance in the mountain ranges remains stable thanks to the influx of residents (+21% compared with 2019).

September 2020 was to be the month of recovery for French tourism, the epidemic has started again.

Despite an opening of almost all French hotels (94%), health measures and the disaffection of business travelers led the entry into autumn.

More alarmist announcements from the government and the persistence in companies of teleworking and virtual meetings and the cancellation of many events, limiting leisure and professional travel.

**In September 2020, tourist attendance reached 11.8 million overnight stays in metropolitan hotels, a 42% drop compared to September 2019.**

Hotel occupancy by resident tourists in France is down 19% compared to September 2019 and that of non-resident tourists is down 81%, mainly due to an almost total absence of non-European tourists.

Once again, the Île-de-France region is a bad pupil, with a region almost exclusively focused on foreign tourism.

As France emerges from tourism, it is inevitable that this crisis will hit it hard and lastingly. And if consumer behavior does not change, the landscape will no longer be the same.

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