

SPAIN: INTERNATIONAL TOURISM STILL DOWN BY 87.5%



The Spanish tourism industry continues to record losses. In the first quarter of 2021, only 1.6 million foreign tourists arrived in the country by air, 87.5% less than in 2020 and 90.4% less than in 2019, when 17 million international arrivals were surpassed during that same period, says data from the International Air Passengers study prepared by Turespaña.

By months, 565,666 travelers arrived in January, 430,244 in February, and another 658,943 in March, making the figure low compared to previous years, where all records in arrivals were broken year after year.

The decline has affected both low-cost and traditional airlines. In this quarter of the year, 495,175 passengers traveled using low-cost airlines, 93% less than in 2020 and 94.7% less than in 2019. As for traditional airlines, the decrease was smaller, although the impact is still important. From January to March, these airlines carried a total of 1.1 million passengers (81.1% less than in 2020 and 85.2% less than in 2019).

Last March, almost 660,000 passengers arrived through international airports, 71.8% and 90% less than in the same month of 2020 and 2019, respectively. Of these, 70.2% chose traditional airlines to travel, recording falls of 58.4% (-84.6% compared to 2019); while the remaining 29.8% who traveled with low-cost carriers (LCC) decreased by 84% (-94.5% compared to 2019).

The data on international tourism released last week by Turespaña show that between January and March the country welcomed 1.65 million international passengers, 87.5% and 90.4% less than in 2020 and 2019.

Low-cost international arrivals registered year-on-year decreases of 93% (-94.7% compared to 2019), while traditional companies fell by 81.1% (-85.2% compared to 2019). 62.4% of total arrivals came from the EU and the United Kingdom, registering a 93.6% decrease (-98.6% compared to 2019). Arrivals from the rest of the world (only 37.6%) experienced an 86.1% drop (-97% compared to 2019).

Major Falls in UK Market

Turespaña data for March show that all tourist markets for Spain decreased, with Turkey being the least affected one (decreasing by 31.5% compared to 2020, and 75% compared to 2019), while the United Kingdom was the most affected market (down by 96.5% compared to 2020, and 98.7% compared to 2019).

In March, only 2.9% of the travelers were from the United Kingdom. The British market only accounted for 3.3% of the total low-cost arrivals, with a steep fall of 98.5% (99.4% decrease compared to 2019). As for traditional airlines, only 2.7% of total passengers traveling with these companies were British, recording an 89.1% drop compared to 2020 and 96.7% compared to 2019.

German passengers (24.5% of the total) decreased by 53% (-84.4% compared to 2019), going down across all Spanish autonomous communities, particularly in the Canary Islands, which is traditionally

a German tourist market in winter. The other main markets, France, Italy and Switzerland, also experienced decreases of 56.8% (-83% compared to 2019), 44.1% (-92.2% compared to 2019), and 56.1% (-85.6% compared to 2019), respectively.

Madrid Recorded the Most Arrivals

The fall was substantial for the six autonomous communities with the highest arrivals, reaching a 71.3% decrease in total (-89.8% compared to 2019).

Madrid was the community with the most arrivals (40.9%) while the Canary Islands, Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia and the Valencian Community together accounted for 58.2% of the total passengers arriving in Spain, according to the study. Madrid also had the most arrivals in traditional companies (54.2%), while the Canary Islands, Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia and the Valencian Community accounted for 44.8% of the total passengers who traveled with these carriers.

Regarding the low-cost passengers, Catalonia recorded the highest number (23.8%), while 75.3% of the total low-cost arrivals were in the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia, the Valencian Community and the Community of Madrid, according to Turespaña.

The Outlook for the Rest of the Year

“Spain cannot have another summer like 2020. It cannot afford it,” said José Luis Zoreda, Executive Vice President of Spanish tourism association EXCELTUR, a group that brings together tourism corporations such as Iberia, Meliá, Riu, Globalia, NH and Renfe. Last week, Zoreda warned of the extreme low reserves, especially international ones, which would barely reach 10% of those in the summer of 2019 and be partially offset by the pull of international tourism.

The negative outlook has been confirmed following the latest air capacity report by the Secretary of State for Tourism, revealing that the number of plane seats reserved for the second quarter is 14.1 million, 53.8% below the 30.5 million passengers in the same period of 2019 before the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

It is expected that arrivals in the remainder of the year will have to be compensated by domestic or neighboring markets in Europe. The prospects for the two major markets of origin (the United Kingdom and Germany, which account for 40.9% of passengers) are particularly bad, with falls of 53.8% for the UK, and 60% for Germany.

The US decision to include Spain in the ‘Do Not Travel’ list along with 129 other countries also fuels this pessimist outlook, considering that the risk has increased in almost the entire world.

Date: 2021-04-26

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/spain-reported-low-international-tourism-numbers-news11999>