

ITALIAN TOURISM ON ITS KNEES DESPITE MINISTER'S OPTIMISM



the horrific Covid-19 months?

Italy represents one of the most popular travel destinations in the world, with approximately 40 % of the population having the country on top of their wish list for this year's holiday. These are significant numbers which clearly show what the Italian tourism industry means for the country. But what exactly are the prospects of Italian tourism for the summer months? Is it set to recover after

According to the country's Minister of Tourism Massimo Garavaglia, Italy is heading towards a "sold out" summer, as the "machine has started up again".

However, Garavaglia also noted that **this will only be the case of seaside and mountain destinations**, while large cities are set to continue their struggle in the upcoming months.

The minister also added that the number of bookings in Italy is expected to increase by 10 % compared to last year, with domestic travel also experiencing growth. Finally, one cannot neglect the resumed, albeit limitedly, flow of foreign tourists.

Unwarranted Optimism?

However, from the latest data it seems Garavaglia's optimism may seem somewhat unwarranted, especially when one takes into account how essential the Italian tourism industry is for the country.

According to the Centro Studi Turistici in Florence, the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in Italy will decrease by an astonishing 56 million in comparison to 2018 when 60 million foreign tourists stayed overnight in the country.

This fall represents a loss of 3.2 billion euros for a sector that represents 13 % of the Italian GDP. In other words, a massive blow for the Italian tourism industry, which cannot catch its breath since the beginning of the pandemic.

Bergamo Struck Hard

In this difficult context the cities are struggling the most. One of these cities is also Bergamo, which is often visited by travelers taking a trip to Milan.

However, this year it is a completely different story, mainly because of the Covid-19 pandemic in the city which caused the highest death rate in Europe (6,000 death/150,000 inhabitants).

"I don't blame the tourists. The whole world has seen pictures of our church full of coffins. Everyone has seen it. Of course they are afraid," a local said.

Lombardy Sees 80 % Drop in International Arrivals

Another example of Italy's desperate situation is Lombardy, one of the most important regions for the sector. During the four-month period of the year (January - April 2021) there was a drop of around 80 % in international tourist arrivals compared to 2019.

Lombardy is on top of the list of regions in terms of hotel turnover: 15 billion. This represents 17 % of the total turnover of the country. Moreover, there are more than a quarter of million companies active in tourism in the region.

For this reason, stakeholders are calling for urgent and substantial responses for Italian tourism that is one of the engines of the economy, so that the summer season is finally the turning point.

Green Certificate May Be a Boost

The Italian Green Certificate could represent a boost for Italian tourism, allowing people to move freely within the country.

The Pass is a document that confirms vaccination against Covid-19, recovery from the same infection or a negative result of a molecular test. In a sense, it is very similar to the EU initiative, with the difference that it gives you benefits in terms of domestic travel.

When Will the Industry Recover?

A question that has been asked by many, but which does not have a simple and unified answer.

There are many factors that will influence the recovery of the tourism industry and at this point it is difficult to predict a date or even a year.

However, Deloitte has come up with its estimates with regards to the tourism recovery. According to the company, a 'real recovery' is to be expected domestically in 2023, while the international market will recover a year later.

However, this certainly does not mean that the tourism situation will not improve from now on. The estimates were made at the end of 2020 before the vaccination campaign started.

In this context, there is hope that the campaign itself will be able to improve the performance of the sector starting from 2021. In short, the recovery will be slow but probably constant.

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