

CANCELLATIONS AND DROP IN DEMAND IN SPANISH TOURIST REGIONS



The surge in COVID-19 cases, the uncertainty surrounding the new restrictions both in the country and in the main tourist markets has sparked a wave of cancellations and a drop in demand in the most important Spanish tourist regions, especially in the Balearic Islands, after the British government moved the islands to the amber list.

Last week, the Netherlands also joined the list of countries that fear the recent rise of coronavirus cases in Spain, removing the Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands from its safe destinations list. Now, the entire country is downgraded to amber, meaning that **under the UK's traffic light system, citizens are advised against traveling to Spain, and those unvaccinated require a negative COVID-19 test upon return.**

In 2019, the Netherlands was the fifth largest tourist market to Spain, with 3.7 million Dutch visitors. While this market is not as important for Spanish tourism as the United Kingdom, the decision from the Dutch government comes at the worst time.

In the Balearic Islands, even hoteliers are afraid that British visitors will depart earlier since the switching from green to amber (which will come into effect from Monday 19) means that upon return, they will have to quarantine.

In Catalonia, the most affected regions by the recent cancellations are Costa Dorada (Tarragona) and Maresme (Barcelona), while for now, Costa Brava hasn't reported cancellations.

In the Valencian Community, demand is dropping, especially from international visitors. However, hoteliers on the Costa del Sol are beginning to see "some recovery" in the industry.

Baleares, Early Departure of British Visitors

The Mallorca Hotel Business Association (FEHM) believes that moving the Balearic Islands from green to amber in the UK list of safe destinations will mean "a decrease in reservations, cancellations and possible early departures."

Maria Frontera, president of the Balearic Islands hotel association, predicted that reservations will be canceled and some of the British currently visiting the islands will leave earlier than expected if "they cannot afford to quarantine upon return."

Catalonia: Costa Dorada and Maresme Also Affected

In Catalonia, the industry reports a slowdown in reservations for destinations highly dependent on international tourism, mainly in regions such as Costa Dorada and Maresme.

75% of the hotels on Costa Dorada have been open in the first half of July, although with a very low occupancy (approximately 40%), a figure that tends to rise on weekends.

The spokesman for the Hospitality and Tourism Federation in Tarragona, Xavier Guardiola, explained to Spanish news agency EFE that hotel occupation in Costa Dorada has been weak in July and says it

is because of the 'do not travel' warnings, such as France's, especially to Catalonia due to the increase in coronavirus cases.

This year, Tarragona hoteliers expect 60% of the sales of a normal year compared to 30% last year, so they hope August, September and October "go well."

In Maresme, the impact on the hotel industry has been greater. Since the travel alerts from Germany and France, there has been a "wave of cancellations". Currently, hotel occupancy is not even 10% in some establishments because most customers are foreigners.

Jordi Noguera, president of the Maresme hotel association, told EFE that their expectations have not been met and do not look favorable, although they are confident that in August the numbers will be a little better, and that the vacation season will move up until October "to try to recover a very painful season."

In other regions, such as Costa Brava, the situation is quite different and reservations are not as affected, although they continue to report last-minute reserves, said the manager of the Hospitality and Tourism Entrepreneurs Association of the Costa Brava Center, Judith Lloberol.

In the first half of July, Costa Brava had an occupation between 60 and 70%, which reached 90 to 100% during weekends.

The French market, which accounts for 40 to 50% of the Costa Brava tourists, has continued to visit Catalonia throughout the year, says Lloberol, although she agrees that "there is not much activity on weekdays."

Valencian Community with No Foreigners

The hotel and tourism business association of the Valencian Community (HOSBEC) says it does not have exact data on reservations, but assures that both the travel restrictions of European countries as well as domestic ones do not favor the recovery of international markets.

At the moment, international tourists in the Valencian Community barely reach 10% of the total, and hotels are not reporting reservations, but instead more cancellations every day.

The only area of the community that has registered up to 30% of foreigners has been the city of Valencia, according to the latest hotel occupancy data.

However, the high season of campsites for European tourists is from September and October, so it is hasty to make forecasts.

Andalusia: A Better Outlook for the Region

The president of Costa del Sol Hotel Entrepreneurs Association, José Luque, says that the rise in COVID-19 cases and travel warnings from France and Germany "have practically not affected" the number of reservations in peak season.

In fact, the association is reporting "some recovery", with establishments reporting an increase in reservations during the second week of July and August, estimating that average occupancy will be at 58% and 62%, respectively.

In the vacation rentals sector, restrictions have not resulted in cancellations for the

moment, said Carlos Pérez-Lanzac, president of the Andalusian Tourist Housing Association (AVVA), to EFE.

AVVA highlights the recovery in this type of accommodation, in which it expects occupancy of 65% (in 2020, it was 57%), with a significant increase in demand for beach and rural areas.

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