

CZECH REPUBLIC: FOREIGN TOURISTS RETURN ONLY SLOWLY



Despite the partial return of international visitors, Prague and the Czech Republic are still facing a drastic reduction in the number of foreign tourists.

For many stakeholders, Czech visitors and some Europeans alone are not enough to compensate for the losses of the industry, as business and organized tourism struggles in this difficult context. The Asian, Russian, and American tourists have basically disappeared from the region.

MICE Tourism in Ruins

Before the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, a wide variety of conferences, exhibitions, meetings, and much more were held in the Czech Republic, especially in Prague. Today the situation is desperate.

According to experts, the MICE tourism sector is now in ruins, as there are practically no requests and the demand has hit rock bottom. It will take at least another year to see any revival in this sector.

Travel agencies are also in deep trouble, especially those specializing in welcoming foreign tourists in the country.

“The Chinese have disappeared, we no longer see Russians either, and the same goes for the South Koreans and the Americans. More generally, Asians have all stopped travelling to the region,” said Karel Výrut, director of the DIR Bohemia company which facilitates foreign trips to the Czech Republic.

Entry Requirements Changing Frequently

Moreover, frequent changes to entry requirements for foreigners in the Czech Republic are regularly criticized by stakeholders in the sector.

According to them, it is often difficult to understand the restrictions actually in force, which is why many tourists likely to travel to the Czech Republic ultimately prefer to choose another destination, which is more accessible.

“The reason we joined the EU was that we could travel freely in Europe, but that freedom does not currently work,” said Jan Papež, vice-president of the Association of Travel Agencies.

“The work of informing the world about the conditions of entry and stay in the Czech Republic is on our shoulders, but that does not prevent restrictions from remaining the biggest hurdle foreign tourists face,” he added.

Hotels Being Sold, Employees Leaving

According to experts, destinations mainly focused on foreigners report declines in tourism numbers – e.g. Prague, Český Krumlov, and the popular spa towns like Karlovy Vary. Many hotels only have an occupancy rate of one third and their employees are leaving.

Similarly, long-term employees are leaving Czech spas and moving to Germany. Due to restrictions on foreign workers, it will not be even possible to replace them with workers from abroad.

In Prague, almost a third of hotels did not open at all, in most cases the owners have only closed the operations and laid-off employees. However, many of them do not expect to open until Easter next year. And some are even looking for potential buyers.

Lack of PR and Return of the US and Asian Tourists

Another problem is the insufficient promotion of Czech Republic as a destination abroad. Experts insist that the government should increase the budget for the PR of the country in the surrounding countries, because it is now losing foreign tourists at the expense of Vienna, Krakow and Budapest.

Finally, experts are also insisting that US tourists should be allowed to enter the country, even though the US-European deal on travel of vaccinated people was not closed, and that a way needs to be found to get Asian tourists safely to the country.

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