

# SUCCESSFUL SUMMER IS NOT ENOUGH FOR ITALIAN TOURISM AMID COVID-19 CRISIS



The tourism industry worldwide has suffered greatly in the past couple of months due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, some countries have felt the effects, even more, especially those that heavily rely on the tourism sector.

Italian tourism for instance is crucial for the country's budget and thus all the lockdowns and restrictions got the European country in serious trouble. But how severe is the situation? And were there some improvements registered during the summer?

## **Positive Summer Season Not Enough**

According to data of the Observatory on the tourism economy of the Italian Chambers of Commerce, the good results of the summer period for Italian tourism cannot compensate for the losses suffered by the entire sector in the first part of the year.

**Overall, the summer season recorded a significant recovery with an average increase in overnight stays of about 30 % compared to 2020.**

The trend in June and July was significant (+ 40 %), while the growth stabilized in August (+ 22 %) and a more contained increase came in September (+ 6 %).

Moreover, between June and September, Italian accommodation facilities sold on average 58 % of the available rooms, a significant improvement compared to 2020 with a peak in August when the average occupancy rate reached 84 %.

However, the first nine months of the year recorded a decrease of 40 % compared to the pre-crisis year 2019 and 2021 will thus close with a limited growth of + 2 %.

## **Veneto Growing Impressively, Art Cities Less So**

Regionally speaking, demand for the Italian tourism sector was well above the national average in almost all regions of Southern Italy (Sicily and Sardinia + 39 %, Puglia and Campania around + 33 %) and in some areas of the north (Veneto and Lombardy recorded an average growth of 37 %).

Veneto's performance, in particular, must be highlighted. From June to August over 35 million visitors arrived in the region, almost the same as in the entirety of 2020.

The summer quarter that just ended also holds up a comparison with the same quarter of 2019, an exceptional year from the tourism point of view. With over 31 million presences, compared to 38 million in the pre-pandemic period (-17.9%), it can be said that the revival has already begun.

Meanwhile, the recovery of Italian tourism was more contained in areas with the highest density of art cities (Lazio and Tuscany).

While it must be noted that the numbers in the likes of Rome and Florence are improving (40 % and 50 % hotel occupancy rate, respectively), they are still far from the pre-pandemic levels when both historical cities recorded an occupancy rate of almost 80 %.

### **Absence of International Travelers a Big Blow**

Nevertheless, it is clear that the situation is still very problematic. One of the biggest problems of Italian tourism is the limited number of international tourists, who usually make up well over 50 % of the tourism presences.

This absence is deeply affecting especially the luxury segment. Generally speaking, international tourism is still at a substantial standstill, with the effects being felt especially in the art cities.

The first signs recorded in August were better than in 2020, but still very far from 2019. In September, traditionally the high season for the art cities, European tourism was still very low and although US travelers appeared, the data hardly come close to the pre-pandemic January.

The reason for this is also the fact that some fundamental markets for the great art cities are still – and will remain for quite some time – completely closed to travel. This is the case of China and Russia, but also for India and other source markets important for Italian tourism.

### **A Recipe to Get Out of the Crisis**

So, what is the way out of this difficult situation? Experts indicate that companies in the industry will have to observe and anticipate new market trends.

**They will need to find a path that meets the new requirements of travelers and reorganize themselves to the new needs of the post-Covid world.**

It will be increasingly important to make the tourism product sustainable, usable throughout the year, throughout the territory and with an increasingly diversified offer.

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