

ITALIAN TOURISM: A COMPLICATED END OF THE YEAR



The omicron variant is causing trouble to the Italian tourism industry ahead of the Christmas season. The number of cancellations of trips booked for the Christmas holidays, museums and exhibitions is increasing. Cancelled hotel bookings are also growing in numbers.

For the Christmas holidays, Rome is expected to see a 70 percent drop in hotel arrivals compared to 2019, while the demand for tour guides is already down 80 percent compared to the pre-pandemic period.

"At the moment, only 350 out of 1200 hotels are open in Rome, many reservations are cancelled. **There is no trace of Austrian, German and French tourists after the closures imposed by their governments,**" complained the president of the Roman Hoteliers Association, Giuseppe Roscioli. Since last week, a 3G obligation has been in force for hotel guests in Italy. For restaurants, cinemas and other pubs, a 2G obligation was introduced.

The wave of cancellations has been a cold shower for Italian tourism, which had enjoyed a fresh start in October and November. "Among foreign tourists, who accounted for two-thirds of arrivals before the pandemic, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans have disappeared, as well as Russians and Arabs," Roscioli lamented. While the 4 flights connecting Rome Fiumicino airport with the United States are still full, tourists from South America have completely dropped out, he said.

The new wave of health warnings and emergencies has also affected the tour guides - 2500 people in Rome alone. "In November, I only had one tour," says Isabella Ruggiero, president of Agtar, the association of tour guides. "People are afraid of losing their money if they book in advance, and it's difficult to make plans," Ruggiero said.

Concern about Bookings in Winter Season

In view of the rising infection figures in Italy and neighboring countries, hoteliers in northern Italian mountain resorts are also worried about the winter season. They are complaining about declines in the number of bookings for the Christmas season. The pandemic is also slowing down the arrival of seasonal workers from abroad, whom winter tourism desperately needs.

Italian winter tourism is watching the epidemic situation with concern. The third year of financial losses due to the pandemic would be difficult to cope with. Therefore, Italy has designed a strict safety concept for ski resorts. 12.4 million winter tourists were absent across Italy for the 2020/21 season. The losses, worth billions, were only partially compensated by the Italian government.

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