

THE SLOW RECOVERY OF CATALAN TOURIST SECTOR



Catalan tourist sector closed 2021 with 5.6 million international visitors, less than half the level of 2019.

"We want 2022 to be the year of the tourism reactivation, despite all the uncertainties". This is what the Minister of Business and Labor, Roger Torrent said.

However, he did not mention a specific forecast of how many tourists are expected to arrive this year - "It's too risky," he said - he was optimistic about "consolidating the recovery process".

But this is a long-distance race and there's more than a half of the way to go: **although 2021 closed with the arrival of 5.6 million international visitors (101.3% more than in 2020), these numbers are still 62% below pre-pandemic levels, as Torrent pointed out.**

After leaving behind 2020, a dark year for Catalan tourist sector, the industry is optimistic about 2022. On the one hand, because of the acceleration of vaccination rates worldwide and, on the other hand, because of the lower impact that the authorities attribute to the omicron variant despite the number of cases.

"The tourism sector is ready," Torrent said after almost two years since covid-19 appeared. Now, to meet expectations and "consolidate" the arrival of visitors from other parts of the world, the Catalonian government is clear that it is necessary to attract a very specific traveler: the American and Asian visitors. "They're indispensable for survival", they believe this market will complement that of Central Europe.

In fact, the international visitor represents half of the total of the activity. According to data from the Catalonian government, 49.2% of the tourists who arrived in 2019 were foreigners. In addition, they spend more money than domestic or Spanish tourists. In 2021 the arrival of international travelers to Catalonia generated 4,955 million euros by November (still far from the 21,325 million generated in 2019), while the average expenditure per foreign visitor was 954 euros.

However, Catalonia was the second community, only behind the Balearic Islands, which received more foreign tourists until November 2021 (18.4% of the total of the country). As regards leadership, Torrent wanted to highlight the role of Barcelona as a "hub of attraction" and the importance of returning to position Catalonia in the "center".

"The city has suffered the most during the fall of Catalan tourism sector," said the minister, who has ruled out that Madrid can "be a rival".

The visitors that responded best have been the Catalan tourists and those from the rest of the country. In the first case, Catalonia received a total of 8.1 million Catalan tourists by November last year (still 10% below 2019 levels), while tourists from other parts of Spain were about 4.5 million (17% less than in 2019). **Torrent has pointed out that 2022 not only has to be a year of**

"consolidation" of the numbers, but also the year to create a "higher quality and sustainable tourism model from the environmental and social perspectives".

Date: 2022-01-24

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/catalan-tourist-sector-expects-recovery-news12359>