

FIRST COVID, NOW WAR - TOURISM IN POLAND SUFFERS



The tourism industry has been struggling significantly during the last two years and while there was a lot of hope with regards to this year, problems continue in many destinations worldwide.

For example, Europe expected a tourism boom this year with the Covid-19 pandemic gradually coming to an end. However, the war in Ukraine represents yet another obstacle on the industry's way toward recovery.

In this context, tourism in Poland is going through major problems. Ukraine's neighbor is losing a lot of the market due to its proximity to the battlefield.

Tourists Avoiding Poland

Many foreign tourists have avoided traveling to Poland since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. "We have observed that the number of hotel bookings has fallen sharply," said Konrad Guldon from the Polish Tourism Organization.

60 % of foreign travel bookings for a stay in Poland were canceled after the outbreak of the war. And the figure for group trips was as high as 90 %. According to experts, the problems are affecting the entire country, regardless of the distance to the Ukrainian border.

"We constantly receive phone calls from potential guests from abroad asking how safe it is in Poland. We can also guarantee access to bunkers in case of an attack. We are reassured that every municipality in Poland has evacuation plans in case of an attack," said Agnieszka Maszner from the Polish Chamber of Hotels.

At the same time, rising energy costs and high inflation make it almost impossible for Polish tourism companies hit by the Covid-19 pandemic to come up with bargain offers.

Poor May ahead for Baltic Coast

One of the most popular destinations in Poland is the coast of the Baltic Sea which is crowded every year with tourists from Germany and Scandinavia. However, this year, exactly these nationalities are missing.

Experts in the region also confirm that there is a lot of uncertainty with regards to the safety of Poland, which is also clear from the booking numbers.

According to data, the tourist occupancy rate in West Pomerania is approximately 40 % during the week and 50-60 % during the weekends. And while the Easter holidays were above average and the May weekend should attract tourists as well, it's hard to say what will come afterwards.

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine thwarted plans of the tourism sector experts for a good holiday

season. **There are more and more reservations, but mostly by domestic guests.**

There are many questions that rise for the coming high season. Experts worry that despite the May weekend heavily occupied, the rest of the month looks a bit poor.

All in all, it is clearly a difficult situation. After the Covid-19 pandemic, tourism in Poland is now tackling the effects of the war in Ukraine and it is thus also in the interest of industry stakeholders that the conflict is resolved as soon as possible.

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