

SPAIN: MISSING RUSSIAN TOURISTS LIKELY TO BE REPLACED BY BRITISH VISITORS



Russian tourists numbers in Spain fall because of the war, but English tourists grow. There is no doubt that the United Kingdom has always been the great hope of the Spanish tourism sector; especially this year in view of the decline in Russian tourism.

During 2019 and before the arrival of Covid-19, about 1.3 million Russian tourists spent their vacations in Spain. **A figure that was reduced by the pandemic and that is again suffering due to the international conflict between Russia and Ukraine.**

The great hope lies in British tourism, the leading source market for Spanish tourism. Even so, in 2021 it received 4.3 million compared to the 18 million who visited the country before the health crisis. Recovering the volume of travelers prior to the pandemic is therefore one of the greatest challenges for the recovery of the Spanish economy.

The British Have No Restrictions

"In 2022 British tourists can travel to our country without restrictions, so we expect them to make up for the tourism deficit in other markets," said Alberto Peris, executive director and founding partner of CESAE Business & Tourism School, who points out that "to reach the 2019 figures it is vital that the British choose Spain as their holiday destination."

All this in a scenario in which forecasts for 2022 promised to reach pre-2019 levels in many aspects. At that time, Spanish tourism accounted for 12.4% of GDP. This figure could return thanks to MICE tourism, the end of ERTes and the reinstatement of tourism professionals; but also because of the return of leisure and cultural agendas to cities and religious tourism.

In this sense, Alberto Peris said that "domestic tourism will play an absolutely crucial role this summer; especially to compensate for those gaps in foreign tourism". The executive director and founding partner of CESAE Business & Tourism School said that "the tourism balance shows that Spanish people do not end up traveling abroad as before. This reinforces the idea of a summer particularly dominated by domestic tourism; where the traditional segments, such as the sun and beach destinations will experience a great summer season; as well as urban and inland destinations".

British, German and French Spending Grows

In addition, one fact that provides optimism to industry professionals is that tourism spending by UK visitors, as well as visitors from Germany and France, has already surpassed the pre-pandemic levels at a moment when summer has not even begun. **A recent Hilton survey shows that British tourists plan to take big family vacations in 2022 and expect to spend £1,246 (€1,460) per person, exceeding the pre-pandemic budget by 34%.**

This means that the prevalence of domestic tourism will not prevent British and French tourists, according to all hotel forecasts, to exceed pre-pandemic levels with significant increases in spending levels. This, among other things, can absorb the negative impact of the absence of tourists from other countries, especially Russian and Chinese visitors, and, ultimately, continue to bring us closer to the foreign visitor figures of 2019.

What is certain is that 2022 and 2023 will be fundamental in determining Spanish tourism's ability to maintain its leadership in the tourism sector and is critical for Spain to be well prepared to continue to be at the top, which is everyone's task.

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