

RECORD TOURIST SEASON EXPECTED IN SPAIN



of the tourist season.

The world's second tourist destination before COVID-19, Spain is anticipating a record number of tourists in the summer after two years of health restrictions. But inflation could bring challenging times when the season ends. No more partially empty beaches and hotels scrambling for guests. The rage for travel across Europe has caused a frenetic rise in tourist numbers in Spain at the beginning

According to data from the Spanish tourism ministry, 22.7 million people visited the country in the first five months of 2022, **seven times more than in the same period in 2021, a dynamic that is expected to continue during the summer tourist season.**

"The booking figures confirm our country as a favorite destination internationally and there are good prospects for the high season," Tourism Minister Reyes Maroto said.

"After two long years, we will have a normal summer," said Fernando Valdés, Secretary of State for tourism issues.

According to Exceltur, an association of travel companies, July and August this year could be "similar" to those of 2019, a record year for tourist attendance in Spain.

"European and national demand is very high and will benefit the whole sector," said its vice-president José Luis Zoreda.

An opinion shared by professionals, especially on the coast. "It will certainly be one of the best summers in history," celebrated Diego Salinas, head of the Association of Bars, Restaurants and Cafeterias (ABRECA) of Benidorm, a famous tourist town on the Costa Blanca in the east of the country.

Javier Ibáñez, an economist at Caixabank, is a little less optimistic and expects a tourism GDP for Spain "similar to that of 2017", which was lower than that of 2019.

The recovery is a relief for the tourism sector, on which 13% of jobs in Spain and 12.5% of GDP depended before the pandemic. But professionals are finding it difficult to hire, especially on the coast and in large cities.

According to Exceltur, the GDP generated by tourism is expected to reach 151.8 billion euros this year - 10 billion euros more than according to the initial forecast.

This figure is slightly lower than in 2019 (EUR 155 billion), but much higher than in 2020 (EUR 52 billion) and 2021 (EUR 88 billion).

The destinations that should benefit most from this recovery during the tourist season are those on the Andalusian coast (+7.4% compared to 2019), Canary Islands (+3.5%) and Balearic Islands (+3.6%).

The sectors with the most optimistic outlook are amusement parks (+7.4%) and car rental

companies (+1.7%).

But this strong recovery also brings concerns. For example, the massification problems that have caused chaos in several airports in the country in recent weeks and have rekindled the controversy over the mass tourism model.

This “tourist demand explosion” can cause “saturation” problems, which result in “clashes between residents and tourists”, affecting “the sector’s reputation”, Zoreda admitted.

The worldwide increase in prices is also harmful. This “inflationary spiral”, which especially affects energy and food, limits “the profit margins of companies”, Exceltur warned.

But could this price increase slow down the recovery by hurting consumers’ purchasing power? Although the sector has shown resistance so far, the economic slowdown caused by the war in Ukraine “will affect” tourism, Javier Ibáñez of Caixabank admits.

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