

EUROPAMANIA AMONG US TRAVELERS

Many travelers are really into Europe, or at least from some destinations, with Americans leading the trend of strong tourist flows to the old continent.

In fact, after three years of restrictions due to the pandemic, the forecasts for the summer season are to exceed the records of 2019 in some of the most popular European destinations, from Barcelona and Rome, from Athens and Venice to the islands of Santorini in Greece, Capri in Italy and Mallorca in Spain.

In 2023 US travelers are expected to be the main contributors to the tourism industry. This is due to the strong dollar, savings from the pandemic end, and the desire for "revenge tourism." Despite recent riots in Paris and other French cities, domestic travel bookings have decreased slightly.

Despite the ongoing problem of "overtourism," focusing on making tourism more sustainable has taken a back seat for now. According to Alessandra Priante, the UNWTO Europe Director, the lessons that should have been learned from the pandemic have been overshadowed by the priority of recovering lost revenue. However, she warns that the current prices are unsustainable, and we need to consider the future impact of our actions.

Although there are concerns about over-tourism in certain areas, it is too soon to determine the overall impact. Currently, travel to and within Europe is experiencing a 10% decline compared to 2019, based on UNWTO data. This decrease can largely be attributed to fewer visitors traveling to war-torn neighboring countries of Ukraine, including Moldova, Poland, Lithuania, and Finland.

Currently, there has not been a boom in Chinese tourism. Although Asian travelers are beginning to return, their numbers are still 45% lower than in 2019, as reported by ForwardKeys.

Greece, which relies heavily on tourism, anticipates 30 million visitors annually. This is a decrease from the 34 million visitors in 2019. Despite the decline in visitors, flights to Greece have increased. As a result, there is growing pressure on managing popular tourist spots.

Spain's Tourism Minister, Héctor Gómez, announced that the country is experiencing a "historic summer for tourism," as it welcomed 8.2 million visitors in May alone, breaking the record for the second consecutive month. Nonetheless, some hotel chains have observed a decrease in bookings during the first few weeks of summer, primarily due to a substantial increase in flight and accommodation costs.

Italian destinations are currently a popular choice among travelers, particularly US travelers driving arrivals to cities like Rome, Florence, Venice, and Capri. According to Federalberghi, these cities have already surpassed pre-pandemic levels regarding visitors. However, other parts of Italy that rely on Italian and European tourism are still struggling to recover to 2019 levels. Hoteliers' President Bernabò Bocca says a full recovery may take another year. The economic slowdown has also discouraged German tourists, while Italians themselves are less likely to spend money on travel this year.

Experts report that housing costs in Florence have risen by 53% compared to last year, with Venice seeing a 25% increase and Rome experiencing a 21% increase. **This has brought up the ongoing issue of short-term rentals, particularly in Florence, where the mayor is trying to limit their proliferation in the historic center** - a UNESCO heritage site - to 8,000. Other mayors in

Italian art cities call for a national law to manage the sector. In Venice, no action has been taken, despite the historic center having 49,432 residents and 49,272 tourist beds, nearly half of which are available for short-term rentals as apartments.

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