

THE CITY OF GHENT PROTECTS ITSELF FROM OVER-TOURISM SO AS NOT TO SUFFER FROM IT



Cities like Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Venice have faced the issue of over-tourism, which has caused frustration among locals. However, some cities not yet experiencing this problem are taking proactive measures. Ghent, Belgium, is one such city - a popular tourist destination with a medieval old town. Despite initial confusion about why tourist flow needs to be regulated, it is essential. While few tourists are on the cobble streets of downtown Ghent under the scorching July sun, it is crucial to prevent over-tourism.

Ghent is a refreshing change from crowded cities like Barcelona. The atmosphere is pleasant and not overwhelmed by tourism. There are plenty of activities beyond sightseeing, making it a well-balanced city. However, the challenge for Ghent is to maintain this balance.

The town hall aims to maintain an authentic and pleasant living environment for its inhabitants while preventing the city from becoming too touristy. Despite a 10% increase in tourism after the Covid crisis, officials aim to avoid turning the city into a museum-like destination like Bruges, Amsterdam, or Barcelona. Bram van Braeckevelt, the head of tourism, emphasizes the importance of action to achieve this goal.

Impose tourist taxes

The town hall has implemented a new accommodation measure. No new bed and breakfast establishments can be opened, and starting in 2024, those who offer accommodation through Airbnb will be required to pay a tourist tax of six euros. This is due to the unfair competition observed between Airbnb hosts and hoteliers.

The town hall now focuses on regulating the influx of tourists arriving on cruises and boats. These tourists only stay in the city for a few hours. The number of these visitors has been restricted. Rudy Deuvitte, who represents the Ghent hoteliers, has expressed his opinion that these tourists do not contribute to the city's economy. He says, "They arrive in groups of 600 but do not spend money in the city. They do not dine in local restaurants but eat on the boat."

Based on a municipal report, tourists who stay for several days typically spend an average of 163 euros per day, while those who visit for just a day spend only 81 euros. This information has influenced the municipality's decision to prioritize hotel accommodations to balance tourism's economic benefits and Ghent's peacefulness.

Date: 2023-07-26

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/city-of-ghent-prevents-over-tourism-news13469>