

ITALY MISSED THE EXPECTED TOURISM RECORD



After promising record tourism figures, Italy's summer has left locals frustrated.

Italy is a holiday destination with something to offer. It boasts beautiful beaches in the south, vast Mediterranean landscapes in Tuscany, and alpine mountain scenery in the Dolomites. Several Italian cities are perfect for a culturally exciting city trip. Sicily and Sardinia have everything to cater to your tourist needs if you want an island holiday.

It is not surprising that tourist numbers have increased steadily for years. Record years were recorded in 2018 and 2019. After the pandemic, the numbers returned high in 2022, and several Italian towns had to fight mass tourism. Consequently, the country had high expectations for 2023, and the figures in the first few months confirmed this. The market research institute Demoskopika predicted new record values for the summer in its study, "Tourism Forecast 2023." But at the end of the summer, disillusionment prevailed. What happened?

Decline instead of growth in many places

In its latest report, the Italian Hoteliers Association (Federalberghi) predicts a decline in tourist numbers of around 3 percent for the first half of 2023. July and August also fell short of expectations.

Despite foreign visitors arriving continuously, domestic tourism in Italy has suffered. Wealthy travelers from the USA and China are still visiting luxury resorts in Italy. However, around 41 percent of Italians choose not to go on holiday this year, even within their own country. This is mainly due to economic reasons, as explained by Bernabò Bocca, the president of Federalberghi. The figures for August, which is usually the primary holiday month for locals, were surprisingly low for domestic tourism.

Many regions in Italy, especially the ones that are popular tourist destinations for Italians, such as the Ligurian and Tuscan coasts, Rimini, Abruzzo, and even Apulia, have been heavily impacted by the current situation. The number of travelers visiting these regions has decreased significantly.

Beach cost issues

The local operators on the beaches are partly responsible for the high prices at Italian beaches. Many are no longer allowed to bring food, forcing visitors to buy food at inflated prices at the beach. As a result, prices at beaches have increased significantly. The non-profit consumer association Codacons has announced its intention to take legal action against the ban on bringing food to beaches. The tourism industry is more interested in profiting from one tourist than serving many guests. Italy's inflation rate is just over 6 percent, yet tourism prices have skyrocketed in many travel destinations.

Vacations in Italy have become shorter

According to Federalberghi's analysis, the domestic tourism industry in Italy faces another challenge in 2023. Italian tourists who can still afford a holiday in their country no longer stay for the same time as before. The price increase has forced many holidaymakers to reduce the length of their trips and cut down on expenses such as accommodation, food, and entertainment. Most Italian vacationers now prefer to stay for only four to seven nights.

The Italian government has recently promised to work towards making holidays affordable for every Italian citizen. However, some of them appear to ignore their own country when vacationing. Albania, a nearby country with lower costs, announced a new record number of Italian tourists.

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