

MICE TOURISM IN BARCELONA APPROACHES PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS



Foreign tourism revival is expected to reach a historic high season in prices and occupancy, surpassing the levels seen in the summer of 2019. The reactivation of business trips, which constitute a significant part of MICE tourism activity in the last quarter of the year, will confirm the recovery.

The Fira de Barcelona has seen a significant increase in event bookings, making it the most profitable exhibition center in the Catalan capital. The institution aims to achieve economic figures similar to 2019, with a turnover of 215 million and operating results of 25 million (EBITDA). According to the fair institution, there will be over a hundred fairs, conferences, and events in the last quarter, 10% more than in 2022. A spokesperson for the fair institution states that not only is the number of professional exhibitions increasing, but the number of days for holding conferences and their size is also increasing. The spokesperson also highlights that 60% of the events will be international.

Many events happen in 2023, focusing on health and technology. The fairgrounds will host 20 mass events throughout the year, with 10 occurring in the final four months. The biggest event is CPHI, the largest trade fair in the pharmaceutical industry, which will take place from October 24th to 26th. It will feature 1,800 exhibitors and 40,000 congressmen occupying the entire fairgrounds. In addition, several international conferences will take place in the final four months of the year. These conferences include Neurosurgery (September 24th-28th), Neuropsychopharmacology (October 7th-10th), and Clinical Trials (November 29th-30th).

Two major events were already in the year's first half: a European Congress on gynecological cancer in February and Infarma, a European Congress of Pharmacy Office and Medicines Show that brought together 34,000 professionals. Other events taking place in 2023 include the European Society of Cardiology conference, the World Hospital at Home Care Congress, the Osteology Symposium organized by the Osteology Foundation, the World Congress on Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis, and Musculoskeletal Diseases, and the congress of the European Association of Cardiovascular Imaging 2023 (EACVI).

The impact of various events on the hotel industry in Barcelona is evident as occupancy forecasts and hotel rates skyrocket. This trend is expected to continue until the end of February, with the Mobile World Congress being the most significant event in terms of economic impact. The congress is estimated to generate 461 million euros in 2023, create 9,100 jobs, and attract 88,500 attendees. Jordi Clos, president of the Barcelona Hoteliers Guild, confirmed that event, incentive, and conference tourism are well-established in the last quarter of 2023 and throughout 2024. He also announced that two new global events, LabelExpo and ICE, will be hosted at the Barcelona exhibition center starting in 2025. All these events represent an excellent opportunity for the country's business sector, the city, and surroundings.

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