

INTERNATIONAL INSTABILITY THREATENS CHRISTMAS SHOPPING TOURISM



Several European countries, including France, Spain, and Belgium, have recently been alarmed about the risk of a terror attack motivated by the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza. This comes just a month before the start of the Christmas shopping tourism campaign, a crucial time for retailers.

As a result, the reinforced anti-terrorist alert could negatively impact shopping tourism in the year's final stretch, putting the upcoming holiday season in danger.

The escalating war between Israel and Gaza has increased Spain's terrorist alert level, although it remains at level 4 out of 5. **The Louvre Museum, one of Paris's most popular tourist spots, was closed last week due to the conflict.** Additionally, France ordered the evacuation of six airports—Lille, Lyon, Nantes, Nice, Toulouse, and Beauvais—following a bomb threat. Belgium has also raised its terrorist threat level to 4, the maximum, for the Brussels region after two people were attacked last week.

France is one of the countries taking the most measures in response to the escalation of international instability. Despite this, it remains one of Europe's most popular tourist destinations, with most European tourists visiting the country. According to data provided by the French National Institute of Statistics (Insee), the British have been the most frequent visitors to the country since 2022. In the last year alone, France welcomed 79.4 million tourists.

According to the latest WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) report, Spain is the fourth most popular destination for shopping tourism, only behind the United States, Japan, and Italy. France and the UK follow Spain in that order. Germany is the nationality that visits Spain the most, followed by Belgium, France, and Ireland.

In 2022, the United Kingdom received 31.2 million visitors, mainly from Europe. However, this number is still 24% lower than the visits received in 2019. During the fourth quarter of the year, which includes the Christmas campaign, the country welcomed 9.5 million people. The suspension of tax-free shopping two years ago has weakened shopping tourism in the country. Retailers like Marks & Spencer or Selfridges have described this decision as "devastating."

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