

MALLORCA IS LOOKING FOR WEALTHY LONG-HAUL TOURISTS



The European holiday industry can be compared to an evergreen clover meadow, with Mallorca being the fattest cow in the field. But what happens when the grass in her meadow slowly disappears? The cow looks over the fence for juicier feeding grounds.

This situation is similar in the Balearic tourism industry today. The European source markets are saturated, and further growth in the number of tourists from Germany, England, Scandinavia, or Eastern Europe is neither ecologically nor politically justifiable due to the consumption of resources and the construction of more holiday accommodations. The formula for the future is "less is more," meaning fewer tourists who spend more money than the average mass traveler.

However, appropriate flight connections are crucial to attracting wealthy holidaymakers outside Europe to the Balearic Islands. The most notable example is the direct connection between Palma and New York, which United Airlines has offered since May 2022. Since the launch of this overseas airlift, more than 370,000 U.S. tourists have arrived on the island, bringing the local holiday industry sales revenue of around 517 million euros, according to the latest figures from the Spanish Statistics Institute. This is because, on average, U.S. tourists spend almost twice as much money during their stay on the island as their counterparts from Germany or England.

A visit to the regional statistics office is necessary to understand the difference better. In the first nine months of this year, approximately 15.5 million people vacationed in the Balearic Islands, with only 636,000 coming from outside the EU. Despite this, they generated 3.2 billion euros in revenue. In comparison, nearly 3.9 million German citizens traveled to the islands during the same period, leaving around 4.35 billion euros behind. When calculated per person, this amounts to 1121.83 euros that every German tourist spends on vacation in Mallorca or neighboring islands. In the European per capita expenditure ranking, Germany ranks fifth, behind Scandinavia (approx. 1386 euros), the Benelux countries (1302 euros), Switzerland (1231 euros), and Great Britain (1156 euros). However, this year's highest per capita expenditure was by long-haul tourists, spending 1668.38 euros per person on the Balearic Islands.

Local politicians and experts are interested in opening up new source markets in other parts of the world. The Madrid-based central government is supporting them. Rosana Morillo, Spain's Secretary of State for Tourism, has clarified that expanding direct flights between Asia and the major airports in Spain, including Palma and Ibiza, is one of her ministry's top priorities. The main objective is to create more direct flights between Madrid, Barcelona, and China, but they also explore possibilities for connecting with the Balearic Islands. Morillo is interested in strengthening tourism ties with other long-haul markets, not just China. Japan, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are also being targeted as new source markets.

Merely offering weekly flights is insufficient to entice spendthrift tourists, particularly those from the Far East, to visit the Balearic Islands. For instance, Japanese tourists are renowned for exploring as many destinations as possible during their European trips.

If the plan is successful, Mallorca's tourism industry will expand, allowing it to explore other regions beyond its own.

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