

THE MICE SEGMENT IN BARCELONA ACCOUNTS FOR 19% OF TOTAL TOURISM



In 2023, Barcelona experienced a recovery in the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) segment after the setbacks caused by the pandemic. Professional tourism is gaining momentum and almost accounts for 19% of the total number of visitors to Barcelona, equivalent to approximately three million corporate travelers annually. However, this percentage is still slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels (19.7% in 2019).

According to the Barcelona Tourism Observatory (OTB), the professional visitor is predominantly male, aged between 25 and 64, highly educated, and more likely to travel alone than other tourists. Approximately 75.7% of corporate travelers are men, while 24.3% are women.

Regarding age groups, most visitors to Barcelona are between 25 and 34 (33.2%) and 35 to 44 (31%). Following this group are those in the 45-54 age group (21.5%), 55-64 age group (7.9%), under-24 age group (4.9%), and those aged 65 or older (0.7%). Additionally, many visitors have a university degree (88.2%).

Moreover, MICE visitors tend to visit Barcelona more frequently than traditional tourists. Almost 70% of MICE visitors return to Barcelona, compared to 48.5% of conventional travelers. Corporate travelers usually travel with others (56.6%), although a high percentage also travel alone (43.4%) to Barcelona, according to the OTB. This group also has much higher daily expenditures than traditional tourists. On average, MICE travelers spend €260.7 per day, while other tourists spend €175.9 per day.

Barcelona is a Popular MICE Destination

In 2023, Barcelona hosted a total of 1,945 events, which included congresses, conventions, incentives, conferences, and courses with more than 580,000 attendees. The impact of these events exceeded 1,000 million euros. As a result, the city ranked first in the ICCA world ranking in terms of the number of delegates and fourth in the number of international meetings, behind Vienna, Lisbon, and Paris. Barcelona is the only destination that has consistently remained in the top 5 of the world rankings for organizing meetings for 21 consecutive years.

Over 90% of the attendees were foreigners. Among the events held in the Catalan capital, 28.2% were attended by doctors, 16.2% by scientists, 15.3% by academics, and 9.2% by people in the technology and telecommunications industries.

Barcelona's Tourism is a Significant Source of Income

The OTB estimates that tourists' expenditures in 2023, excluding arrival transport, will be 9,676 million euros. This is the highest value recorded in history, 26.1% higher than the previous year and 14.7% higher than in 2019.

The increase in tourist spending has positively impacted other sectors, such as catering, which has experienced a 56% increase in revenue compared to pre-pandemic rates. The accommodation sector has recovered 21% more revenue than in 2019.

Barcelona's Tourism Recovery

Barcelona's tourism industry has shown signs of recovery in the past year, with over 12 million visitors staying in tourist accommodation and almost 36 million overnight stays. Although this represents a 7% decrease in the number of tourists compared to the historic record set in 2019, the average length of stay has increased, resulting in a 1.8% increase in overnight stays.

Domestic tourism has performed well, with a 10.3% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. International tourism has seen a 5.5% decrease from 2019 numbers but has improved significantly from the sharp declines experienced during the pandemic. The United States and the United Kingdom have been Barcelona's leading source markets for tourism.

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