

Article

NEW PROSPECTS FOR TOURIST SEASON

The prospects for this new tourist season remains uncertain mixing positive indicators data and situations that do not provide an optimistic view.

The year 2009 was especially hard on some sectors such as tourism, unacquainted to such severe recessions: Fallings of -13% in average income and -9% in visitor quantities. For 2010 the WTO estimates that international tourism will grow between 3% and 4%, especially in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and more slowly in America and Europe, and even so, the prospects for the new season remains uncertain and positive indicators mix with facts and situations that do not provide an optimistic view.

In my opinion there are four positive indicators that would come to support some optimism:

- The balance of Easter Holidays of 2009 with an 8% increase in visitor numbers has improved and Easter Holidays usually are a good advance on the performance of the sector.
- According to the site Hotel.info the average price of hotels in Spain grew 2.84% during the month of April. The first ascent in the last year that would indicate that the downward trend, coerced or forced by markets by operators as a strategy of "resistance", would have finally had a turning point
- The set between Euro and Dollar which will favor the North American demand and specially the arrival of one of our key source markets: The United Kingdom
- The revival of "proximity tourism" can be another major factor of recovery in Spain, specially, if it encourages the recruitment of French tourism demand and mobilizing domestic tourism

On the negative side, four indicators or events should be highlighted, that are not conducive to the improvement of the sector:

- The *de facto* freezing of "Plan Horizonte 2020" for Spanish Tourism threatens competition by halting a series of initiatives that were suppose to promote various improvements clearly oriented to enhance our competitive capabilities.



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- The strong emergence of destinations such as Egypt, Israel and Singapore in the first two months of 2010 have recorded double digit growth and reaffirms the strength of these markets and their ability to compete.
- The surprisingly small role of tourism in economic forecasting and policy when its ability to generate employment, to grow in innovation, our willingness to specific know-how and our capacity to "export", should become the economic activity to nurture and strengthen in the current economic crisis scenario.
- The serious threat and the long shadow -never better said- that Eyjafjall's activity projected over air mobility supposes an imponderable that, in addition to manifesting our vulnerability, may seriously distort the tourism season in different markets. Faced with this threat, it appears that the trend will opt for medium distance trips.

We must add to these indicators the uncertainty that supposes a difficult autumn that is expected to be with serious social mobilization and could make a false closing of season that otherwise could point to a mild improvement in number of visitors, a surge in average prices and improved occupations.

Xavier Vives - C4T