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# 60 MILLION FOREIGN TOURISTS PREDICTED TO VISIT SPAIN THIS YEAR

## **2008 predictions for Spanish tourism**

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According to Exceltur (the association which represents businesses in the Spanish tourist industry) 59.7 million foreign tourists visited Spain last year. This figure shows a 2% increase compared to 2006 and this year it expects that this number will increase to 60.7 million visitors.

José Luis Zoreda, the vice president for Exceltur said that results for 2007 had been positive given that Spanish businesses in this sector had experienced a moderate increase in sales and profits. He predicted that this trend would continue in 2008 except for air travel due to the price of fuel and the number of airlines competing against each other.

He said that the results for the sector were mainly due to the reduction in costs and better management rather than a significant increase in sales. He said that the number of foreign tourists helped to keep the sector afloat while internal tourism had slowed down.

Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Granada and Santiago de Compostela are the most popular tourist destinations partly due to their accessibility by air.

However Spain's main tourist attractions - the sun and beaches - continued to suffer from competition from abroad. For example the number of foreign tourists visiting Turkey and Egypt increased by 18% and reached 32 million compared to an increase of just 1.8% for Spain.

Exceltur estimated that money spent by tourists in Spain increased below inflation at 3.6% compared to 2006. However, this wasn't enough to compensate for inflation in Spain which averaged at 4.4% in 2007. This meant that in real terms tourists spent 628 euros each which was 0.7% less than the previous year.

Tourism from the UK and Germany showed signs of stagnating although tourism from Nordic countries and the USA recovered.

The number of visitors staying in hotels increased by 6.3% in urban locations and 0.7% for tourist destinations. The Vicepresident of Exceltur and Sol Meliá, Sebastián Escarrer, said that the number of visitors staying in Spanish hotels had improved in 2007 and he expected that 2008 would be a positive year for Spanish hotels