



23 January 2009

ENE.09.228

Spain's tourism figures down in 2008

The Spanish tourism sector has suffered a blow as a result of the global economic downturn. Almost two million fewer tourists visited Spain last year compared to 2007.

Spain is the world's second most popular tourist destination after France, reports The Financial Times (FT). However, 1.8m fewer tourists took holidays in Spain in 2008 than in 2007. This was the first **year-on-year fall** since 1997, when the current method of measuring visitor numbers was introduced.



"The global crisis is now being felt in Spanish tourism," José Luis Zoreda, vice president of lobby group Exceltur, told the paper. "The impact has been delayed, but Spain's ability to recover from this will depend on how we confront it now."

Zoreda spoke as the Spanish government released figures showing that the number of **overseas visitors to Spain** fell by approximately three per cent between 2007 and 2008.

Visitors from the UK dropped by three percent to 15.75m. It is thought that high fuel prices and then the falling value of the pound against the euro influenced Britons' behaviour in this respect.

Spain also received fewer tourists from France. The total number of French visitors fell by 8.5 per cent to approximately 8.2m. **Domestic tourism** within Spain was also down. According to Exceltur, Spaniards spent much less on accommodation, eating out and leisure during their traditional summer, Easter and Christmas holidays.

Nevertheless, visitors from Germany remained more or less static at just over 10m.

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