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Spanish tourist season on track to beat pre-Covid levels for the first time

10.1 million foreign tourists visited Spain in July, surpassing the levels seen before the Covid-19 pandemic in July 2019. With such strong figures, it s very likely that more foreign tourists will visit Spain this year than in 2019 – but global warming could soon begin to cloud the possibility of further growth

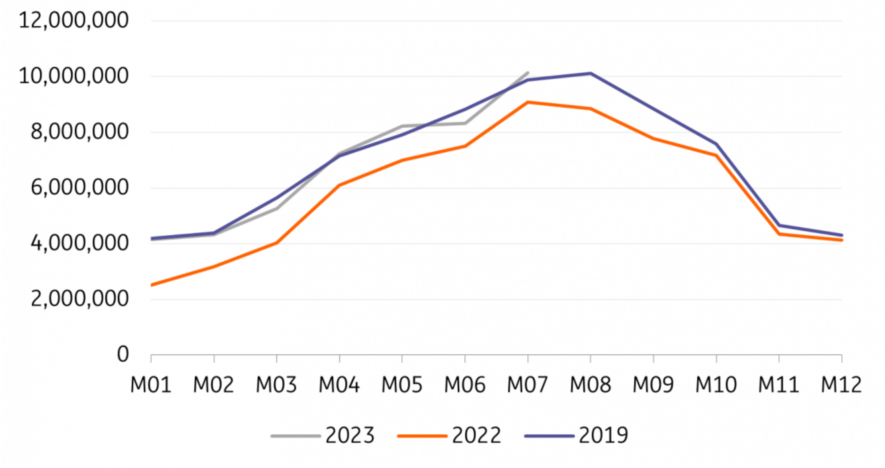
Tourists in Benidorm, Spain

Number of foreign visitors above pre-covid levels in July

Spain is well on its way to matching or even surpassing its 2019 tourist season. According to figures released this morning by Spain's statistical services, 10.1 million foreign tourists visited Spain in July compared to 9.9 million in 2019, the last year before the Covid-19 pandemic. After two years of travel restrictions, Europeans are hungry to travel abroad again and for many, Spain is still an attractive destination.

The UK is still the main source country for Spain, accounting for one in five international visitors. Still, the number of UK visitors is lagging behind slightly, standing at 94% of its 2019 level in July. The weak lira may have convinced many British tourists to change their travel destination to Turkey. The number of German tourists is also still a lot lower than in 2019, but this is more than offset by an increase from other countries.

International tourists arriving in Spain



Source: INE

Spain welcomed 71.7 million international visitors in 2022, which was still 14% less than the number of tourists received in 2019. Spain seems on track to shake off the effects of the pandemic and match the number of foreign visitors in 2019. With the tourism industry holding a significant pace in Spain's economy, it is also currently boosting the country's growth.

A surge in international tourist arrivals often leads to increased consumption, ranging from accommodation and transportation to dining and shopping. It also stimulates job creation. As a result, we expect decent growth of 0.3% quarter-on-quarter again in the third quarter of this year. Thanks in part to resurgent tourism, Spain remains one of the leaders in the eurozone after the Netherlands plunged into recession and Germany continues to flirt with one.

Global warming could hit Spanish tourism sector

For now, Spanish tourism seems little affected by the country's drought and extreme weather conditions, but this could change in the coming years. A recent report by the European Commission estimates that global warming could lead to a shift in European tourist flows away from the southern coastal regions to more northern shores. They estimate that in the most pessimistic scenario, a rise in temperature of either 3°C or 4°C could reduce the number of tourists during the summer season by 10% in southern coastal cities, while more northern coastal cities would see their numbers grow by 5%. Southern Spain in particular would be hardest hit in such a scenario.

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