

Press Release

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KOF Forecasts for Swiss Tourism: Number of Overnight Stays Hits a New Record

Successful summer season for the Swiss tourism sector: the number of overnight stays increased by 2.6% year on year. Overnight stays by guests from Switzerland rose particularly sharply. Although the outlook for the coming winter season is being slightly dampened by the more sluggish economy, it remains positive. KOF expects the number of overnight stays to grow by 1.8% in both 2019 and 2020.

Guests from Switzerland generate strong growth in summer

The number of overnight stays in Switzerland during the most recent summer season rose by 2.6% year on year, hitting a new record. This impressive achievement was largely attributable to guests from Switzerland: the number of their overnight stays grew by 3.2%, having increased for the third summer season in succession. Although demand from abroad weakened slightly owing to the sluggish economy, it still generated a significant increase of 2.2%. This stronger demand primarily benefited the towns and cities and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Alpine region.

Encouraging outlook for the winter season despite the stronger Swiss franc

The outlook for the coming winter season is cautiously optimistic. Although the economic slowdown and the slightly stronger Swiss franc are affecting demand from abroad, consumer spending in Switzerland is likely to remain robust, providing stimulus to the tourism sector. Assuming average weather conditions, KOF expects the number of overnight stays next winter to rise by 2.1%. The towns and cities are especially popular in the winter as well. The strongest growth in the Alpine region is expected to come from Grisons and Valais.

Forecast up to 2021: Economic slowdown having an impact

The Swiss tourism sector experienced an upturn in the past two years. The number of overnight stays rose sharply and it was possible to raise prices. This upturn is continuing in 2019, although it is now less pronounced. Economic conditions have deteriorated slightly this year. Lower growth is expected to come from overseas markets in particular – a segment that has grown significantly in recent years. Guests from the United States should continue to generate strong growth. Guests from Switzerland are also likely to generate further rising demand, although less so than in recent years. KOF expects the number of overnight stays to grow by 1.8% in both 2019 and 2020. It is forecasting an increase of 2.2% for 2021.

Mountain railways: Adverse trend halted thanks to the good weather

During the most recent winter season Switzerland's mountain railways reported more skier days for the second time in succession, posting an increase of 6.2%. The adverse trend was therefore halted temporarily – partly thanks to the favourable weather. KOF expects the number of skier days to increase by 1.1% in the coming winter season and by 0.9% in the following winter season. Over the longer term, however, the trend remains slightly negative. This is partly because of the more extensive tourist offering now available in the mountains and the smaller certainty of snow in lower-lying areas.

Spending by guests rising slightly less

Spending by tourists last year continued to recover from the consequences of the Swiss franc shock of 2015. Growth this year and next is likely to be slightly lower at 2.2% and 1.3% respectively on the back of

slightly weaker demand. Spending by guests from Switzerland is set to rise to a similar extent. Prices in the tourism sector will therefore probably continue to increase, albeit less so than in recent years.

Special analysis: Reasons for the strength of tourism in towns and cities

Switzerland's towns and cities are experiencing a real boom. Between 2006 and 2018 they increased their number of overnight stays by 35%. Meanwhile the Alpine region and other areas were hit by the strong Swiss franc and foreign competition. The number of overnight stays in these regions hardly grew at all over the same period. Analysis of the numbers of guests reveals that this trend is being driven by the changing guest demographic and by business tourism, which is becoming increasingly important. However, guests from Switzerland are also a key factor here. The number of their overnight stays in towns and cities jumped by an impressive 45% between 2006 and 2018, which was even higher than the average. A further factor is that towns and cities are becoming increasingly popular in the winter season as well as in summer.

The full report on KOF's forecasts for the Swiss tourism sector can be found here:

<https://kof.ethz.ch/en/news-and-events/media/press-releases.html> →

Further information on KOF's forecasts for the Swiss tourism sector can be found here:

<https://kof.ethz.ch/en/forecasts-and-indicators/forecasts/kof-forecasts-of-tourism-in-switzerland.html> →

KOF's tourism forecasts are prepared on behalf of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). SECO is able to finance tourism forecasts as a result of the Swiss federal act on the promotion of innovation, cooperation and knowledge building in the tourism sector (Innotour). The main target groups for these tourism forecasts are Switzerland's tourism sector and its cantons.

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