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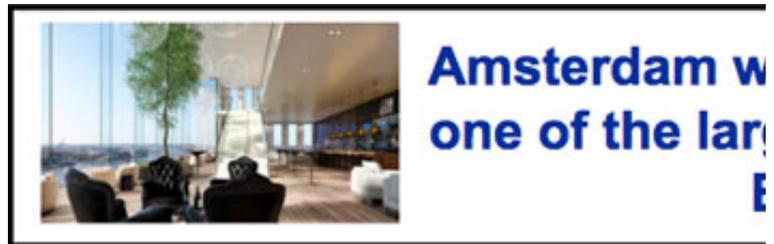
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European Cities Marketing Benchmarking Report 2015 confirms the emergence of a strong trend

Category: [Agency & Association](#) Created on Monday, 06 July 2015 15:10

A strong positive trend in percentage growth rate for ECM report cities has emerged again this year, achieving a rate of 5.7% to 7.0% in international bednights. Sharp decreases in the number of bednights contributed by Japan and Russia seem to have been offset by the growth trends of the other seven top source markets, with China and Italy each reaching increases of over 12% since 2013.

European cities are still surfing on the wave of success : the UNWTO Annual Report 2014 affirms that "Europe continues to be the most visited continent of the world's international tourists." Furthermore, the ECM Benchmarking Report 2015 states that over the last 5 years (2010-2014), bednights in Europe have been increasing at a faster rate than of the 28 EU nations with + 5.8%, 1.2 points higher than the average growth rate for the world.

Top Performing Cities

The 2013 top five cities in terms of total bednights held their rankings in 2014. London, already being the top performing city, showed a 7.0% increase over the previous year, whereas Berlin had the highest growth rate among the top 5 cities with 6.5%. Rome and Barcelona followed suit with positive growth rates of 5.7% and 5.5% respectively. In contrast, Paris managed to maintain its position at number two, despite a negative growth rate for the second year in a row. Madrid, Istanbul and Amsterdam were also top performers in terms of growth rate with more than 10% increase over 2013.

While explaining Istanbul's remarkable growth, Özgül Özkan Yavuz, General Manager at Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau answered "Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city at the heart of culture, and today the number of visitors to the city is growing exponentially as it becomes an ever-more accessible from around the world plays a big factor in this growth; Istanbul is the only city in the world spanning two continents."

Top Source Markets

Similar to 2013 and making up 20% of total bednights in the ECM Benchmarking Report cities, the US, German, UK and French markets have grown by 9% since 2013. Spain and Italy resumed positive growth rates after continuous decreases in number of bednights spent in European cities. Not surprisingly, the highest top source market was China, with an impressive growth rate of 14.5% over 2013. Japan kept on its negative growth rate, and the most marked decrease in bednights belonged to Russia. Nonetheless, the Russian source market remains important to ECM Benchmarking Report cities, with 10% of bednights registered in European cities.

Tourism Densities

This new section of the ECM Benchmarking Report examines the number of bednights a city hosts per citizen. In 2014, the average tourism density was 7.14 bednights per citizen. The two destinations with the highest tourism densities are Funchal and Venice. However, nearly two-thirds of the sample shows tourism densities below average, and about half of the sample shows densities of between 0.6 and 5 bednights per citizen.

Commenting on the results, Ignasi de Delàs, ECM President said: "These results provide crucial insights into European city competitiveness. The ECM Benchmarking Report clearly shows that the continuous success of city tourism in Europe is based upon a rich mix of source markets. With a mix of source markets, European cities can cope with negative growth of markets like Russia or Japan, thanks to the recovery of the Spanish and Italian markets. As a result, it is proven that the cities' strategic focus on international visitors is the main reason for the triumph of the cities, which gives us confidence in the strength of the European tourism industry."



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