

PRESS RELEASE

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25th World Travel Monitor® Forum in Pisa: International travel industry needs new strategies to manage ‘overtourism’

**Mass tourism hits quality of visitor experiences – Not only cities overcrowded –
New solutions needed to manage global tourism growth – ITB Berlin exclusively
publishes World Travel Monitor® Forum results**

‘Overtourism’ has made headlines worldwide this year due to record visitor numbers at many destinations, prompting well-publicised protests by residents and diverse measures by local authorities in some places. Over-crowding is also negatively affecting travellers themselves, and the international travel and tourism industry needs to find solutions to manage visitor numbers without restricting growth, experts agreed at the 25th World Travel Monitor® Forum in Pisa, Italy (November 9-10). At this exclusive industry meeting, initiated at the invitation of consultancy IPK International and supported by ITB Berlin, around 50 tourism experts and academics from around the world present the latest figures and current trends in international tourism.

One international trip in ten affected by over-crowding

Overtourism not only impacts directly on destinations, tourist attractions, local infrastructure and residents, but also on travellers themselves, Rolf Freitag, CEO of IPK International, made clear. Around 25 percent of all international tourists had the feeling that their destination had been “over-crowded” this year, according to a special World Travel Monitor® representative survey of 29,000 international travellers in 24 countries in Europe, Asia and the Americas conducted in September 2017.

Moreover, 9 percent – equivalent to around 100 million tourists – said this over-crowding had actually affected the quality of their outbound trip. At 13 percent, this feeling was the highest amongst families with children and young people under 34. In terms of origin regions, 15 percent of Asians, 9 percent of North Americans and 8 percent of Europeans said their trip experience had been affected by excessive visitor numbers. Hence, Asian outbound travellers seem to be more sensitive with regard to “over-crowding”.

All kinds of holidays and destinations affected

Contrary to public perceptions, the worst over-crowding is not always in big cities, according to World Travel Monitor® figures. Ski resorts are the most crowded tourism locations. Nearly one international traveller in five (19 percent) said their winter sports holiday had been affected by overtourism, resulting, for example, in long waits for ski lifts.

Other types of holidays were fairly equally impacted by high numbers of visitors, suggesting that overtourism is a general problem rather than restricted, for example, to cities. About one traveller in ten described the quality of their touring holiday, cruise, city trip, sun & beach holiday or countryside holiday as affected by too many tourists. The most affected cities include Guangzhou (24%), Shanghai (23%), Beijing (21%), Amsterdam and Istanbul (both 19%), and Barcelona, Florence and Venice (all 18%), according to World Travel Monitor® respondents.

Analysing the results, Freitag said: “Overtourism is clearly not good for nature, culture, locals and tourists alike. However, global tourism has not reached its limits. Many destinations would be happy to see more visitors, either throughout the year or in the low season. So tourism does not have a growth problem but rather a regional



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and seasonal problem!”

Local strategies with all stakeholders needed

Various speakers at the Pisa forum highlighted the need for the international travel industry to act together with destinations on coordinated strategies to tackle overtourism. Such strategies could focus on issues such as managing seasonality and visitor flows, spreading tourism benefits such as jobs and revenues more widely among local communities, and investing in infrastructure and protection of tourism assets, they suggested.

Cruise expert Prof. Dr. Dr. Alexis Papathanassis, director of the Institute of Maritime Tourism in Bremerhaven, Germany, explained: “Overtourism is a very localised problem at certain times in certain places, and is not always a problem in the surrounding area. The problem is not over-tourism in general, but under-management of tourism.” Above all, solutions needed to be found in destinations, for example by tackling seasonality, and not by limiting demand, Papathanassis urged. He underlined: “Each destination case is different. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.”

Venice tackles overtourism

One city that is suffering increasingly from over-crowding is Venice, which has just 55,000 residents in its historic city centre. Valeria Minghetti, chief senior researcher at Ciset - the International Centre of Studies on Tourism Economics of Ca' Foscari University Venice, told the forum that mass tourism is resulting in far more costs than benefits for the city, including over-crowding, pollution and rising prices.

In response, the Italian city reacted to heavy over-crowding of St Mark's Square and its narrow canals this year with measures to ban cruise ships from docking directly on the waterfront and with the 'Enjoy Respect Venice' initiative for 'responsible tourists', including fines for tourists who break local laws. Minghetti said that other ideas under discussion include limiting access to St Mark's Square, a new tourist tax and an app with real-time information on visitor levels.

David Ruetz, Head of ITB Berlin, commented: “Overtourism is a major challenge for the global travel and tourism industry, and new solutions are obviously needed. This will be a hot topic at the ITB Berlin Convention next year where experts will discuss the problems as well as potential solutions.”

Alongside special evaluations from IPK International's World Travel Monitor®, ITB Berlin will publish further key data from the World Travel Monitor® as part of the 'ITB World Travel Trends Report 2017/18' in January (Link to last year's ITB World Travel Trends Report 2016/2017 [here](#)). The 'ITB World Travel Trends Report' is based on the latest results and presentations at the World Travel Monitor® Forum, which is an exclusive meeting where current trends in the travel industry are discussed and predictions for tourism developments are made. The annual results of the World Travel Monitor®, which is the largest worldwide study on global travel behaviour, will be presented by IPK International at the ITB Future Day at the ITB Berlin Convention.

About ITB Berlin and the ITB Berlin Convention

ITB Berlin 2018 will take place from Wednesday to Sunday, 7 to 11 March. From Wednesday to Friday ITB Berlin is open to trade visitors only. ITB Berlin is the World's Leading Travel Trade Show. In 2017 a total of 10,000 companies and organizations from 184 countries exhibited their products and services to around 169,000 visitors, who included 109,000 trade visitors. Parallel with the show the ITB Berlin Convention, the largest event of its kind, will be held from Wednesday, 7 to Saturday, 10 March 2018. Admission to the ITB Berlin Convention is free for trade visitors and exhibitors. More details are available at www.itb-berlin.com, www.itb-convention.com and at [ITB Social Media Newsroom](#).

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