



Press release

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10 Tourism

Tourist accommodation in 2020

Record drop in overnight hotel stays in Switzerland in 2020

In 2020, the Swiss hotel sector registered 23.7 million overnight stays. This represents a fall of 40.0% (-15.8 million overnight stays) compared with 2019. The exceptional context of COVID-19 explains this unprecedented fall at a level not seen since the end of the 1950s. Foreign demand registered 7.3 million overnight stays, i.e. a decline of 66.1% (-14.3 million). Swiss demand fell less drastically (-8.6%/-1.5 million) to 16.4 million overnight stays. These are the final results from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

While for the first two months of the year increases were observed (January: +7.1% and February: +7.0%) compared with the same period of the previous year, from March to December demand fell sharply. Decreases ranged from -91.8% (April) to -24.9% (July).

Drastic fall in foreign demand

In January, overnight stays for both foreign and domestic visitors increased (+5.7% and +8.5% respectively). In February, this situation continued (+5.4%/+8.6%) but the first effects due to COVID-19 are perceptible. Asian customers were down sharply (-29.0%), particularly guests from China (-69.9%).

In March, the extraordinary situation due to COVID-19 led the Federal Council to put in place restrictive measures like other countries. Foreign demand fell by 68.2% and it did not recover throughout the year 2020. Decreases ranged from -96.2% (April) to -60.9% (August).

Overnight stays by Swiss guests also fell drastically in March (-55.4%), April (-86.2%) and May (-54.6%). In June, in the context of a relaxation of the measures linked to the COVID-19, domestic demand remained strongly negative (-23.1%) but nonetheless showed a slight improvement compared with the three previous months.

Record number of overnight stays for domestic visitors over the summer

From July to October, a strong reversal of this trend was observed for this clientele. Unprecedented levels of Swiss demand were recorded every month during this period. The symbolic level of 2.0 million overnight stays was even exceeded in July, August and September, with a peak in July (2.6 million overnight stays). Monthly increases during this period ranged from +35.0% (July) to +16.4% (October).

At the end of this period, an increase of 1.7 million overnight stays (+23.6%) was observed compared with 2019. However, from November onwards (-29.1%) and then in December (-17.2%) with the arrival of the second wave of COVID-19 and the reintroduction of cantonal and federal sanitary measures, domestic demand fell once again sharply though it did not reach the negative level seen between March and May.

Drastic drop in overnight stays in city regions

In 2020, Switzerland's thirteen tourist regions observed declines in overnight stays compared with 2019. The largest declines were observed in city regions. Geneva (-67.5%), the Zurich Region (-65.4%) and the Basel Region (-58.8%) posted the largest contractions in demand among all regions. The least marked declines were seen in Graubünden (-9.2%) and Ticino (-16.3%). All tourist regions observed extremely marked drops in foreign demand, ranging from -74.9% (Lucerne/Lake Lucerne region) to -42.8% (Graubünden).

In terms of Swiss demand, however, four regions saw an increase in overnight stays. These were Graubünden (+12.2%), Ticino (+9.7%), Bern Region (+6.4%) and Valais (+3.5%). The other nine tourist regions saw a decline in domestic demand, but less markedly than for foreign clientele. The declines ranged from -49.6% (Zurich Region) to -2.3% (Lucerne/Lake Lucerne region).

Regression in room occupancy rates

During 2020, the net room occupancy rate fell to 36.1% with a 19.1 point decline on 2019. It is the lowest rate recorded since the start of observation of this variable (2005). This rate declined in all tourist regions, but it was in the city regions where the largest declines and the lowest rates were observed.

Geneva observed a rate of 26.6% i.e. the lowest rate for all tourist regions (in 2019, Geneva registered in contrast the highest rate of 66.5%). This was followed by Zurich Region with a rate of 27.2% (65.0% in 2019). For their part, the mountain tourist regions posted slightly lower rates compared with the previous year. Valais reached a rate of 48.1% (53.9% in 2019) i.e. the highest of all the tourist regions, followed by Graubünden with 47.2% (50.2% in 2019).

Validity of results

The figures in this press release are final. They therefore differ from the provisional results published previously.

Net occupancy rate of rooms

Number of occupied rooms divided by the total net room capacity of the period under review, as a percentage. (The net room capacity is the number of available rooms of an establishment during the month under review, multiplied by the number of days this establishment is open during this month).

Information

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Access to results

This press release has been established on the basis of the European Statistics Code of Practice, which ensures the independence, integrity and accountability of national and community statistical offices. Privileged access is supervised and under embargo.

Switzerland Tourism (ST) received this press release 48 hours prior to publication in preparation for the press conference. The Swiss Tourism Federation (STF), hotelleriesuisse (hs), Gastrosuisse (GS) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) received this press release 24 hours prior to publication to fulfil their missions.