

The Republic of Benidorm? The former fishing village outranks many nations

Submitted by AnnaMonreal on Wed, 25/07/2018 - 12:17

If Benidorm were listed as a country, where might it stand on the world tourism stage?

To place its pulling power into perspective, in 2015 more people visited the city than visited Egypt. Despite having much less than 100,000 permanent residents, according to Spain's National Statistics Institute (INE) in 2015 over 11 million people visited Benidorm.

In fact Benidorm is the fourth most popular destination in Spain – itself the third most visited country on the planet – with Barcelona and Madrid in the top two slots.

Such vast numbers of tourists are met with around 40,000 beds available every night in its 150 or so hotels. According to the website [Statista](#), by available rooms the city ranks in the nations leagues just behind Cyprus but above Slovakia, with more than double the accommodation of Malta (based on 2016 figures).

With over 140 buildings more than 20 floors high, the area competes with Frankfurt or London for number of skyscrapers. Spain's tallest residential building, called Intempo, comes in at almost 200m high. No surprise then that 'Beniyork' is how some locals call the area.

The above are more than just grand claims for the records book. Every visitor brings money to spend and the skyscrapers reflect just what that money can do. By some estimates Benidorm makes up 1% of the nation's GDP. That all means jobs, taxes for schools and hospitals, and more investment in the local economy.

What can explain this phenomenon? Basically it is the original package holiday destination. In the 1960s the mayor of the city persuaded the government to give them permission to let tourists wear bikinis (something frowned upon by locals at the time). The rest is history.

In 2015 the town even applied for UNESCO World Heritage status! Whilst that might seem comical to some, the bid attracted considerable media attention for the resort globally, all no doubt driving further tourism.

Over the years the resort has taught the travel & tourism industry globally a great deal. For better

and worse, how to do things properly has often been learnt the hard way right there on those golden sands. Everything that worries and inspires destinations today – infrastructure developments, permits and regulation, local taxes and investment decisions, and coping with over-tourism – all this and more the city had survived before even 1980.

Whatever you think about the city of Benidorm, if you work in the travel & tourism industry you really must visit the city where it all started. There's nothing like first-hand market research to know your customers better: 11 million visitors can't be wrong.

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