

Spain's foreign tourism surges nearly tenfold

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 05 June, 2022



Spain received almost 2.5 million foreign tourists in January, a fivefold jump from the same month a year ago and roughly 60% of the total that came before the pandemic hit in January 2020, official statistics showed on Thursday.

Total expenditure by foreign tourists rose to 3.03 billion euros (\$3.36 billion) compared with 562 million euros a year ago and 4.78 billion euros in January 2020, the National Statistics Institute (INE) data showed.

COVID-19 and the ensuing international travel restrictions brought Spain's economically vital tourism sector to its knees in 2020, but the industry rebounded by some 64pc last year and the government expects close to a full recovery this year. "The January data confirms that the impact of the Omicron variant on tourism has been lower than expected", Spanish Tourism Minister, Reyes Maroto, said in a statement.

She added that her ministry was monitoring how Russia's invasion of Ukraine could affect tourist flows. "The Spanish government is already looking for alternatives to a possible absence of Russian tourists this high season," she said.

According to the INE, more than 18,000 Russian tourists visited Spain in January this year.

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