

# Tourism: France stays as the most visited destination despite attacks

France is still very attractive, this was the preamble used by Jean-Marc Ayrault to announce on 10 February that **the country kept its position as the world's leading tourist destination for the year 2016**, despite the several attacks that took place in Paris in November of 2015 and in Nice in July of 2016. **Between 82.5 and 83 million international tourists** traveled to the French territory in 2016, according to the first official estimates provided by the Government. This represents a decrease from 2.3% to 2.9%, compared to the information of 2015 (85 million international tourists).

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs stated "2016 will remain a year apart, due to **attacks, bad weather, and social movements**", but that even after this particular context, France remained the world's first destination **on top of the United States and Spain**. Jean-Marc Ayrault also reaffirmed the government's target of 100 million international tourists by 2020. A goal that was established in June 2014, before the wave of attacks that hit France and more particularly, Europe.

## The return of the empire of the rising sun

Among the causes of these good results, the head of the diplomacy mentioned "the strong rebound near the end of 2016" in terms of overnight stays. There is an inclination for a 2017 beginning that follows the same previous trajectory of a 10.4% increase in air bookings to Paris in the first semester. The general manager of Atout France, the French tourism promotion organization, confirmed that France "really started a recovery from September / October", and that the end of 2016 had been "better than expected".

Jean-Marc Ayrault also welcomed the "massive" return of the Japanese clientele who had shunned France by the end of 2015. Many tourists canceled their trip to France after the Paris and Nice attacks. According to Le Monde, Jean-Marc Ayrault welcomed "the 60% increase in airline bookings to Paris for the first quarter of 2017" which only concerns Japanese clientele. The government announced in November of 2016 that there was a 40-million euros fund to support the French tourism sector. As security is also a priority for France, around 15 million euros have been destined specifically to the safety of international tourists.

## The Parisian take-over

If such take-over is confirmed for the months of January and February, the results will be more noticeable in the capital. **The Parisian hotel industry suffered greatly from the tourists decrease**, much more than provincial cities. When considering overnight stays, the Quai d'Orsay recalled that this sector decreased by 5.7%. "2016 was a difficult year for our

companies, especially in Paris and on the French Riviera," confirmed Roland Héguy, president of the main hotel organization, the Umih. Even though there was a decrease expected as a consequence of the Paris and Nice attacks, **he stated that the situation had been "contained"**.