

Tourism: Despite the attacks, France remains the first destination

France is still quite seductive. This is the observation drawn by Jean-Marc Ayrault, who announced on February 10 that for the year 2016, **the country retained its position as the world's leading tourist destination**. And this despite a decrease in attendance recorded in connection with the Paris bombings of November 2015 and Nice in July 2016. Thus, between **82.5 and 83 million foreign tourists visited French soil in 2016**, according to the first official estimates provided by the government. This represents a decrease of **2.3 to 2.9% compared to the year 2015 (85 million foreign tourists)**.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has estimated that "2016 will remain a year set **apart, due to attacks, inclement weather and social movements**", but that, in spite of this very particular context, France remained the world's leading destination, **well ahead of the United States and Spain**. Jean-Marc Ayrault also reaffirmed the government's target of **100 million foreign tourists by 2020**. A figure that was decided in June 2014, before the wave of attacks that hit France and more specifically in Europe.

The return of the empire of the rising sun

Among the reasons for the good results, the foreign minister called it "a clear rebound in the end of 2016" in terms of overnight stays. The trends for the beginning of 2017 following the same trajectory with an increase of 10.4% air bookings to Paris in the first half year. The general manager of Atout France, the organization promoting tourism in France, confirmed that France "really began 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 having cancelled their visit to France after the attacks in Paris and then later Nice. According to 'Le Monde', Jean-Marc Ayrault congratulated himself as "air bookings increased by 60% to Paris for the first quarter 2017" only with regards to Japanese clientele. The government announced in November 2016 that it was releasing a budget of forty million euros to support the French tourism industry. Security being a priority for France, some 15 million euros had been allocated specifically for the safety of foreign tourists.

The Paris recovery

If the recovery is confirmed in January and February, it is most noticeable in the capital. The **Paris hotel industry had suffered greatly from the disgruntlement of tourists**, a lot more than the provincial cities. The Quai d'Orsay recalling that the sector for overnight bookings, recorded a decrease of 5.7%. "2016 was a difficult year for our companies, especially in Paris and on the Côte d'Azur", confirmed Roland Héguy, president of the main hotel organization, the Umih. If the drop in attendance in France after the attacks in Paris and Nice was expected, he however, affirmed that **the latter had been "contained"**.