

# All tourists' medical bills must be repaid

*Measures part of summer safety campaign*

## REBECCA WARDEN

The Catalan autonomous government or Generalitat wants to make foreign health authorities foot the bill for all of their tourists' medical costs. The Catalan authorities will be "strict and inflexible" when it comes to recovering these costs and will therefore "charge for all of this expenditure," vice-president of the Generalitat Josep Bargalló said yesterday.

The Generalitat has been tracking the amount it spends on foreign visitor's medical bills for several years now and recognises that although foreign governments are billed for some of this amount, the amount actually recovered is low. The Generalitat spent a total of 5.7 million euros on foreigners' medical bills in 2002. Just over 65 per cent of this was for EU citizens.

However Catalan health minister Marina Geli recently informed central government that the Generalitat gets back far less money from foreign governments than it spends under reciprocal health arrangements.

French, German and British visitors account for the lion's share of foreigners' health bills; 21.2 per cent or 1.2 million euros are used up by the French alone. German tourists take second place, accounting for 13.87 per cent of the budget or 700,158 euros. The British are close behind, accounting for 11.94 per

cent of spending or 687,959 euros.

The new measures Bargalló announced yesterday form part of a special summer plan drawn up by the Catalan autonomous government to look after the country's health during the busiest time of year. It includes a plan of action to ward off the effects of a possible heatwave.

Last summer high temperatures killed a total of 800 people in Catalonia, according to Bargalló. The Generalitat is understandably keen to make sure the mortalities are much lower should the temperatures soar during the summer months.

Coastal resorts and other places popular with tourists will increase their medical staff with the addition of 373 more doctors, nurses and administrative staff to cope with the extra population during the summer. Many of the extra medical staff - 62 doctors, 54 nurses and 42 administrators - will be sent to top tourist destinations on the Costa Daurada such as Cambrils and Salou.

Preventing fires in Catalonia's forests by boosting human and material resources is another priority outlined in the plan. 85 new surveillance points have been set up in forest areas to be manned by 170 people. The fire-fighting forces, currently made up of a total of 4,208 firemen, will be supplemented by



Bagalló is keen for Catalonia to recover all of foreign visitors' medical bills

1,400 extra people during the summer campaign. The Catalan ministry of the environment will provide special 24-hour a day weather reports for the emergency services.

The Generalitat is also aiming to reduce the number of deaths on the roads by setting up 110 permanent control points by roadsides. Radar equipment will be set up to catch

drivers breaking the speed limits, especially in areas with an 80km per hour limit.

The current average speed on Catalan highways is 98km per hour according to Bargalló. This is too high and the aim of this summer's campaign will be "to reduce the average speed by five kilometres per hour," he said.

## Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air begins flights to Girona-Costa Brava airport

The Hungarian air carrier Wizz Air has started to operate flights from the Girona-Costa Brava airport. The company is offering connections three times per week from Budapest and three more to Katowice, Poland.

Wizz Air, with 20 planes is predicted to be the largest airline in Hungary in 2005.

The company started its flights from Katowice on 19 May and just last week began to offer flights from Budapest. According to figures given by the company, they have operated 246 flights with more than 20,000 passengers in the last few weeks, and claim a 65% occupancy rate on their flights.

The airline's main objective, according to its finance minister is to unite the central and eastern European countries, which consist of a combined market of 70 million peo-



Wizz Air currently has 20 planes and is predicted to become Hungary's largest airline

ple, according to the company's vice president and chief financial officer András Hajdu.

He also said the company expect-

ed much success with its Girona-Costa Brava flights because it is a very attractive destination for Eastern European citizens.

The company currently offers flights from Budapest to London, Brussels, Stockholm, Paris, Girona, Rome and Athens. From Katowice, it has flights to Athens, Girona, Dortmund (Germany), London, Minal, Paris, Rome and Stockholm.

According to Hajdu, the company will soon offer flights from Warsaw to London and from Gdansk (Poland) to London.

Wizz Air started flights from Budapest on 24 June to Athens, London and Girona. The company claims 80% on-time reliability and a total absence of flight cancellations due to technical reasons.

Earlier this month, Wizz Air began its final phase of negotiations to secure 60 million dollars of venture capital from American and European investors. The company sees Poland as its best business opportunity.

## EDUCATION

### Marks on final exams posted

Students who took the university entrance exams (PAU) this year can find out today from 10 a.m. via internet what they got at [www.gen-cat.net/dursi](http://www.gen-cat.net/dursi), a government webpage for the University Council. Only the test taker may check his or her results, as they will need to enter their PAU registration code. The 25,000 students can also find out their overall grade for secondary school.

## WINERY

### Parliament urges winery plan

The Agriculture Council in Catalan Parliament voted unanimously yesterday in favour of a bill calling for a plan to be drawn up for the wine sector. The plan is to ensure the viability of all aspects related to the wine industry, such as companies involved in wine-making and bottling.

## MUSIC

### Summer music on Montserrat

Starting 10 July, the Basilica de Santa Maria will play host to the latest Montserrat summer concert series. It will be set off with a performance by the quartet El Misteri d'Elx. On 6 August the programme continues with the Ensemble Kapsberger, playing music from 17th and 18th century Spain and Italy. The series ends on 3 September with the Janas Ensemble, playing Mediterranean Baroque music.

## ITALY

### Prodi has a score to settle

The Italian left chose Romano Prodi yesterday to be prime minister. Prodi, who had presided over the European Commission, will head the opposition to wrangle against the Silvio Berlusconi government. This is a first step towards creating a broad opposition, composed of a combination of parties ranging from leftist to moderate, and in the future, the communists and the greens.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### New member for tv talent team

Josep Maria Mainat has been selected to join the new Global Creative Team. He is the creator of "Operation Triunfo" as well as the manager of production company Gestmusic Endemol.

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