

# Spain remains Europe's top tourist destination

*Spain is still a favoured holiday destination in spite of terror attacks*

Spain is still the most popular destination for Europeans taking a vacation, even though they have concerns about travelling to a country that has suffered terrorist attacks. This finding was made after a survey by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) that one in four Europeans planning a holiday in another country in Europe prefer to travel to Spain. The survey was conducted in six countries earlier this year, including France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Britain and Spain. 63% of those quizzed said that security was a very important factor when they choose a holiday destination.

The survey found that security worries were playing a major part in people choosing a holiday. However, it found that the attacks in Madrid in March this year hadn't had any adverse effects on tourists numbers visiting Spain, except that they had kept the numbers from increasing significantly. Concerns about security only increased by 5% in Spain after the attack but in other countries there was a bigger increase, in Italy 12%, France 9% and 8% in Austria.

Other findings show that a huge majority of Spaniards, 85%, like to holiday within their own country, while Belgians are at the other extreme with only 14% of the population bothering to holiday there.

The popularity of Spain as a holiday destination has helped the hotel industry in Barcelona which has surpassed 50,000 beds, according to figures released by Barcelo-



European tourists prefer the sunny beaches of Spain to take a holiday

na's tourism bureau. The city currently has 42,648 beds, to which the figure of 7,650 was added to represent cities around Barcelona that could handle requests for accommodation in Barcelona.

The latest figures represent a

7.6% increase over a survey conducted in December 2003, when 42,648 beds were counted. Of the beds available in the city, 6,248 were in five-star hotels, 20,268 in four-star hotels and 11,358 were in three-star hotels.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Yahoo increases capacity

The Yahoo internet portal has extended the storage capacity of its free email service to 100 megabytes. Previously they had offered 6 megabytes. The announcement came two months after its rival Google launched a trial service of its free email, called Gmail, which offered 1 gigabyte of storage space, much more than had been offered by Hotmail, which only offers 2 megabytes. Yahoo also expanded the maximum amount of messages that can be sent to 10 megabytes, when the previous maximum amount had been 3 megabytes. A Yahoo spokesman said that the company began to conduct trials to expand the service before Google introduced Gmail, and signaled that this would help to assure the position of Yahoo as one of the leaders in the sector.

## SHIPPING

### Shipping down in Tarragona

The port of Tarragona transported 29.2 tonnes in 2003, slightly less than the 30 tonnes shipped the previous year. Authorities attributed by a 2.5%.

On the other hand, traffic for the first part of 2004 was up 3.7%. The Catalan Family and Welfare Department has attributed the retention of an increase in pension payments to 12,000 widows to rules applied by the Spanish government. According to the law, beneficiaries of the pensions cannot have annual income levels higher than 7,213 euros. The Catalan government has asked the Spanish government to allow a progressive increase in the pensions.

## INVESTMENT

### Meeting of producers

More than 20 representatives from the United States, Argentina, Paraguay, Canada, and various European producers will meet in Barcelona for the 7th International Dialogue for Producers of Oil Seed. In this meeting participants will deal with the reform of the Common Agrarian Policy, the World Organisation of Commerce, and the use of oil seed as fuel. The oil seed producers organisation is a non-profit organisation which tries to promote discussion on topics of importance to oil seed producers.

## INVESTMENT

### Shareholders approve amortisations of shares

At a meeting of shareholders of Altadis yesterday, they approved the amortisation of 2.5% of company share capital by a reduction of 7.2 million shares of which the number of shares is 283 million euros. Shareholders also approved the payment of a 0.80 euros per share for this year, which represents an increase of 14.3% compared with the previous year. Of the total, 0.35 euros per euro was paid last March and the remaining 0.45 euros will be paid June 22. The group thus confirmed its promise to distribute in the form of dividends 50% of the net profits, with the objective of continuing its policy of increasing payments to shareholders.

Internationalisation, diversification and the acquisitions in other markets are the best way to generate increases in the revaluation of the company's shares, according to a company spokesman. A new proposal was approved to include new demands with respect to corporate regulations so as to eliminate the need for a minimum number of shares.

## Tripartite government rejects CiU and PP budget amendments

The Catalan tripartite comprised of the PSC, the ERC and the ICV-EUiA today rejected all the amendments to the 2004 budget that had been tabled by the CiU and the PP, and expressed the view that they wanted Pasqual Maragall's first budget agreements to represent "a new phase for the country" and to reject the "tricks" being played by the CiU.

The amendments were rejected by a vote of 71 to 49, thereby foiling the opposition's plans to block the tripartite government's first budget. CiU members complained that with this budget the government was "dumping the responsibility for

Catalonia's health deficit onto the shoulders of the citizens" by increasing taxation.

Josep Piqué, the president of the PPC, added his voice to those criticising the Generalitat budgets for raising taxes, saying that "Just like all left-wing governments, they are incapable of limiting public spending."

In answer to the critics, Jordi Carbonell, the economic spokesman for the PSC, said that the government "wanted to look to the future and create a budget for change", as well as emphasising the cuts that had been made, including a 50% re-

duction in expenses in the areas of protocol and advertising and a 5% cut in the Presidency's discretionary subsidies.

In addition, the ERC economics spokesman, Sergi de los Rios, slammed the "bad management" of the previous CiU government and the "state of poverty" brought about by the financing system which the CiU had drawn up with the PP.

Finally, the ICV-EUiA parliamentary spokesman, Joan Boada, praised the rejection of all the amendments, saying that the country could now move on to a new phase.

## Cappuzano angered at pension plan

The spokesman for social policy for the CiU party in the Spanish Parliament, Carles Campuzano is perplexed with the intentions of the social security department to raise the money due from self employed to pay for their pensions. He said it would cause alarm amongst people. It follows an announcement by the Minister for social security, Octavio Granado who said it was only just that there is change in the system for self employed businesses who must pay for their pensions.

Campuzano said this move was unfair as self employed people received less protection compared to

rest of the workers. "The words from Granado towards the group of self-employed people is a fraud who must pay for their own pensions.



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