

TRAVEL NEWS EUROPE

The information you need to make decisions

April 2004 Issue 41

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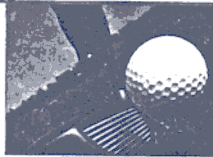
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BOOST IN EUROPEAN CITIES ARRIVALS

Urban tourism in Europe did better than international tourism generally last year according to European Cities Tourism. International arrivals in European cities increased by 5.6% and bed-nights by 5.9%. By comparison, data from the World Tourism Organisation points to a modest 0.5% growth in international arrivals for 2003.

Domestic tourism performance was not as impressive for European cities, however, with arrivals up less than 1% and bednights down by close to 2% on 2002's level, according to research by European Cities Tourism. The number of cities' data on which this overall trend is based is relatively small - less than 25% of European Cities Tourism membership. But the TourMIS survey creators believe the sample is a valid one and reflects general trends.

Trends in both arrivals and overnights showed a marked improvement from about August last year, with the second half of 2003 recording healthy growth after six months of weak figures.

It is also important to note that the trends for 2003 compare very favourably with those for 2002, when both international and domestic arrivals stagnated and bednights showed an overall decline.

Weakest markets

The USA and Japan prove to be the weakest markets - again. Although Japanese overnights in European cities appear to have increased generally in 2003 - at least according to preliminary data - arrivals from Japan fell by an estimated 11%. Cities attracting growth out of Japan included Dresden, Barcelona, Nuremberg and Zagreb.

The US market recorded almost as big a drop in arrivals, of 9% overall, with overnights falling by 7% at the same time. Nevertheless, as with Japan, some cities escaped the general trend and chalked up good growth from the US market. Dubrovnik was a prime example.

The performance of European markets was much more encouraging, with some - notably the Netherlands and France - recording double-digit increases in both arrivals and overnight volume. Germany, Europe's



CITY ARRIVALS AND OVERNIGHTS SHOWED A MARKED IMPROVEMENT FROM AUGUST LAST YEAR.

leading source, stagnated last year in terms of outbound trip volume generally. But European cities attracted an 8% increase in German arrivals and a 7% rise in nights.

Cities benefiting most from the positive trend were Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Graz, Stockholm, Vienna and Salzburg - possibly reflecting a move back to tried and tested destinations, such as Austria. But there were still cities that recorded a decline in German numbers.

Prospects for 2004

Current trends would seem to suggest that prospects for 2004 are a lot more bullish than anticipated a few months ago. Pent-up demand for travel, notably short breaks, is likely to stimulate short-haul trips, and there are already clear signs of a revival in demand for Europe among the Japanese. All eyes, meanwhile, are on China as the strongest potential source of growth, especially following the signing of approved destination status (ADS) for the Schengen countries between the European Commission and the Chinese authorities.

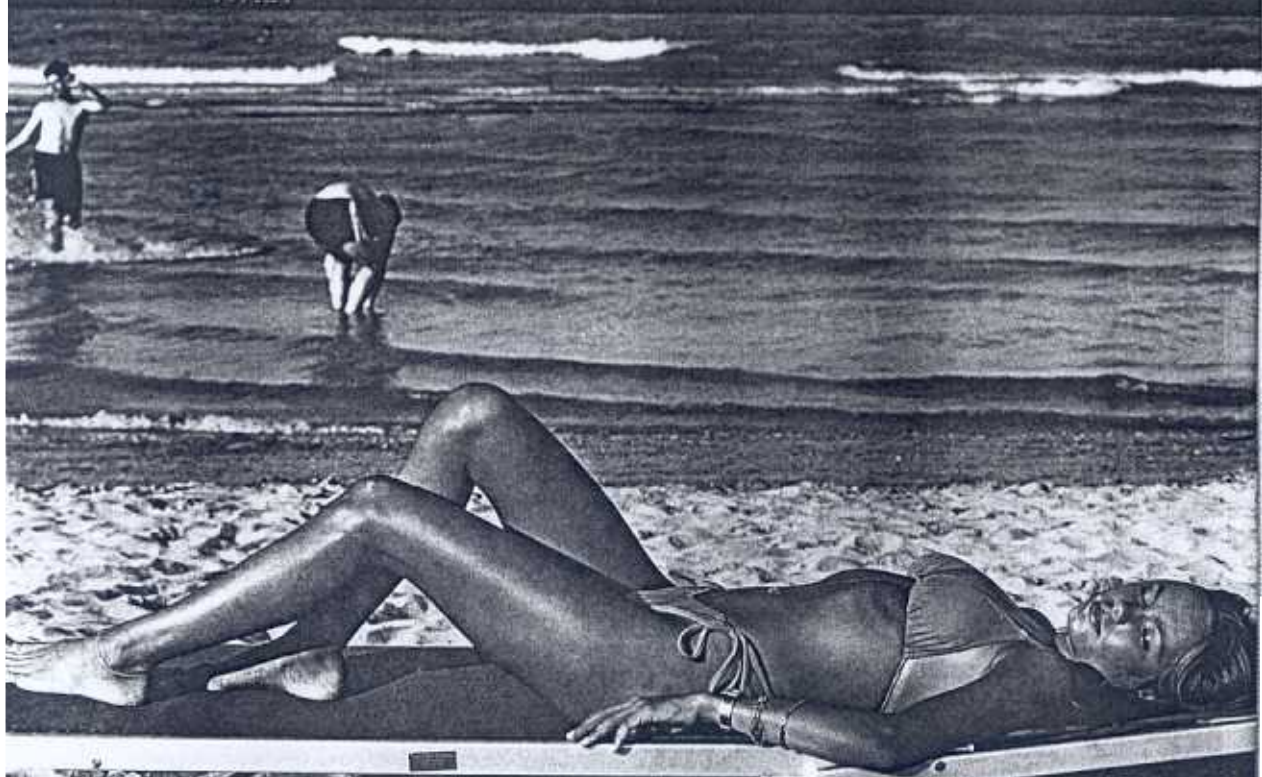
The only cloud on the horizon is the

US market, which is expected to remain closer to home in 2004 - thanks largely to the weak US Dollar.

Online booking

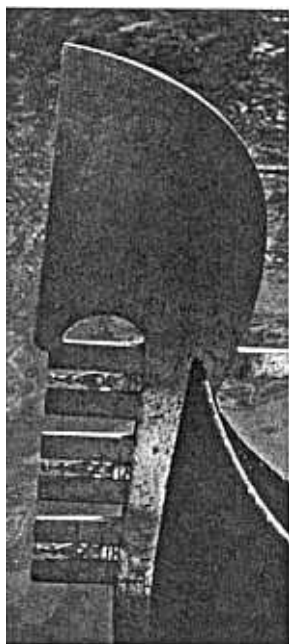
UK travel website Onlinetravel.com reports another change in the short breaks market: Paris has been knocked-off its top spot and dethroned by Prague as Brits' number one city destination - at least in the UK online travel market. Onlinetravel.com compared year-to-date (to end February) bookings against the same period in 2003.

The survey was based on all bookings made using the sites 'Build Your Own' (BYO) functionality, where consumers create their own holidays by combining flights and hotels onscreen. The company's figures also showed a drop in online bookings to a few old favourite destinations, with Amsterdam losing its lure and falling to sixth place from third, and exuberant Barcelona dropping to third place from its previous position as the second most popular European city destination. ■



Italy

NEW HOTELS IN THE ART CITIES AND ON BOTH GLITTERING COASTS.



Amedeo Ottaviani, President of the Italian Tourism Authority (ENIT), reported that 2003 closed with a loss of about €600 million revenue from foreign tourism in Italy, though in the last three months of the year a recovery trend was recorded that provided strong hope for this year. The greatest drop was recorded between April and June due to the conflict in Iraq, which led to the loss of €620 million. Currently, there are signs of recovery in the international travel market. This can foster the recovery of Italy's losses, particularly of American and Japanese tourism, even though the exchange rate of the dollar and yen against the euro inhibits the choice of Europe as a destination. ENIT's promotional program for 2004, says Ottaviani, consolidates the Italian presence in these large markets while also focusing on new frontiers, including the ten countries that will enter the European Union and will spend over €10 billion for trips abroad, and other large potential markets such as China, India, Korea, Australia and Latin America who will

show strong growth thanks to the work of over 400 specialized tour operators. Major events planned for 2004 include participation in the China International Travel Mart in Shanghai to take the pulse of Chinese tourism that is particularly attracted to Italy. Ottaviani concludes, "A positive new development is the law approved by the Council of Ministers in support of the Italian mountain regions that includes a mountain tourism promotion campaign abroad by ENIT, with a budget of €700,000 for 2004-2006.

New hotels

Since first opening its doors in 1880, the Bauer has always been prominent in Venetian life. Located in the heart of Venice, minutes from St. Mark's square and from all the elegant shops and boutiques, the Bauer recently completed a €25 million renovation of the contemporary wing built in the 1930's. This renovation developed the Bauer into 115 totally refurbished guestrooms, including 20 suites and junior suites. Many rooms have two



bathrooms, a sitting room and beautiful city views. Only two years earlier, third-generation owner Francesca Bortolotto Possati had focused all of her energy on a €50 million renovation, establishing a separate, exclusive

Hotel Casvo, Porto Casvo



boutique hotel in the XVIII century wing: "Il Palazzo at the Bauer," with a



separate entrance and private dock for boats.

From early spring to late autumn, the hotel's De Pisis restaurant – decorated with Venetian silk and gilded mirrors – moves outdoors to a beautiful

terrace overlooking the Grand Canal. The B Bar has become one of Venice's most exciting lounge bars and nightspots.

Italian group UNA Hotels & Resorts has in very little time, distinguished itself in Italy's four-star business sector, with 17 hotel facilities in the Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Lazio, Campania and Sicily, totaling over 1 600 rooms. The appeal of Una's 'complete offer' to business travelers is enhanced by the modern leisure facilities in its resorts, UNA Fattoria Santo Stefano, UNA Palazzo Mannaioni and, opening soon, UNA Villa Le Maschere.

The Una Hotel Tocq, designed by the architect Aldo Cibic in 1998, is a typically minimalist and refined boutique hotel in the Italian business capital, with 109 rooms and 13 apartments. It is located near the subway and Porta Garibaldi Railway Station, a short walk from Corso Como, one of the most social and fashionable areas of the city. There are six meeting rooms accommodating up to 110 people. Its well-known restaurant, overlooking the large terrace, is popular for business lunches and cocktail parties.

The Una Hotel Cusani, in the historical centre of Milan opposite the Castello Sforzesco, is a short walk from the Duomo. Its 92 rooms are soundproof, air-conditioned and provide exclusive comfort. The well-known and welcoming restaurant offers a taste of the best gastronomic specialities of traditional and international cuisines.

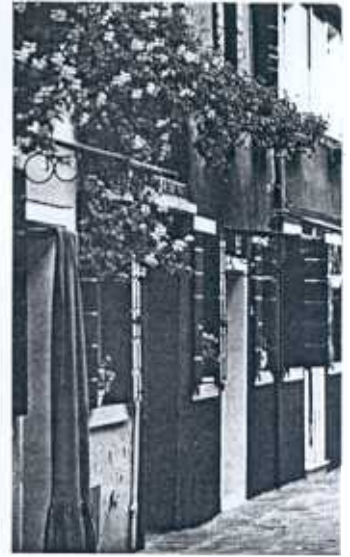
The group will open three new hotels this year: a property offering 93

rooms and six apartments in Bologna; one with 160 rooms and conference facilities for 300 people at Cerro Maggiore, on the motorway link to the Milan Malpensa Airport; and the former Central Palace Hotel in the centre of Catania, a restored property with 97 double rooms, six meeting rooms, and a 180-seat restaurant

Milanese landmark The Westin Palace, part of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide group, presents itself with a new look, thanks to recent important investments, that enhanced both the quality and the variety of services, taking more care of the business requirements as well as the comfort of its guests.

The historical façade of red Aswan marble has been newly lighted to emphasize the building's prestige and importance. The entrance and driveway have been enriched by a new floral décor and a new lighting. In addition, besides the Heavenly Bed, all guestrooms have been endowed with Heavenly Shower, the latest Westin innovation studied to offer a fabulous beneficial massage.

Soon the WIFI system will be available, giving to all the guests the possibility of connecting to the Internet and to their corporate networks wirelessly from all the areas of the hotel: the rooms, the meeting rooms, the lobby, the bar and the restaurant. These investments add to the already high standard of comfort offered by the 241 hotel guestrooms, all endowed with the famous Heavenly Bed, developed exclusively by Westin in order to offer an excellent sleep. Moreover, 10 of the 16 luxury



suites are endowed with private Turkish bath with breathtaking overview on Milan's Cathedral.

The Adriatic coast

The region of Emilia Romagna offers famous beaches, seaside resorts with a large stock of four- and five-star accommodation, extensive national parks of mountain and forest, and historic centres of art, culture and gastronomy such as Parma and Rimini.

Emilia Romagna's marketing arm, APT Servizio, has formed a public/private cooperation to promote the region's tourism offerings, focusing on the seaside, cities of art, thermal spas, and the Apennines. Working groups have developed around each of them, with the aim of bringing tourism projects aimed at developing each area and co-financed by the Region via APT Servizi, to fruition. Each grouping is a contact point between publicly-funded promotion and private initiative providing a network of support.

Within the groupings about 250 Product Clubs have developed. Their topics range from art to gastronomy and from active holidays to entertainment, making Emilia Romagna a true leader in the area of hospitality. They collaborate to offer through Emilia Romagna Turismo's website special offers such as bed & breakfast in 4/3/2/1-star hotels in Rimini, Riccione, Cattolica and Bellaria from €20 per person. The site offers discounts for children, and add-ons such as rail tickets or hire of a Smart car from €2 per hour + €0,25 per Km with gas and free parking.

Turin's rebirth

The ancient city of Turin, known internationally as a centre for skiing



and motorsport, is to host the 2006 Winter Olympics. The city is taking advantage of the Winter Games to relaunch itself as a centre of new architecture.

The cityscape has been dominated since the Renaissance by its Royal Residences, the sumptuous homes of the Savoy family, and the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista, home of the Holy Shroud. Now the city is building new urban spaces, new cathedrals and wide-ranging architectural works. The renovation extends over the entire metropolitan area.

An underground railway line will lead to the creation of a vast area called the Viale della Spina. The futuristic new station of Porta Susa and the large avenue created above the railway link will be truly impressive: an open-air museum featuring eleven masterworks of contemporary artists. The first length should be completed in 2005; The second part, from Porta Nuova to Lingotto, 6.5 km long with 7 stations, will be completed in 2006. In the Olympic District, an Oval Palaghiaccio (Ice palace) in the Lingotto area will seat 8 200 spectators. It will be a spectacular structure of steel with a vast glass area to observe the Turin of the future. It will be the venue of the speed skating



events and will later become an exhibition area. The Palavela will be the site of figure skating competitions; it will seat about 9,400 persons, and will be transformed into a 2,000-place amphitheatre and a meeting hall for 2,800.

The Market of Porta Palazzo is the largest in Europe: over 3,000 square meters of shops, 2000 square metres of inside free space housed in an impressive pentagonal structure.

Turin is above all a cultural centre full of life. Its new symbols are represented by the Biblioteca Civica, an elegant creation of light and transparencies that extends over 30,000 square meters and the Teatro di Prosa - Prose Theatre, where audiences can enjoy traditional and experimental theatre.

The Costa Smeralda

Preparations for the launch of a new season are underway in the Costa Smeralda. The Hotel Romazzino, with its 37 completely refurbished rooms, among which the luxurious 'Royal' and 'Presidential' suites, represents a significant addition for 2004: apart from a number of technological

innovations - music and video systems, Internet - the rooms and bathrooms will be characterised by the typical colours associated with Sardinia and the use of material, marble and mosaic tiles. The hotel, which looks directly over one of the most beautiful beaches in the area, will provide ad hoc programmes for families thanks to the facilities specially built last year.

The Hotel Cervo has become a popular refuge for those who wish to stay in the centre of Porto Cervo in a peaceful setting. The Hotel Pitritza, which only last year opened two executive suites, two private villas situated inside the grounds of the hotel each with a private swimming pool, and from this year a third villa will be added with its own private beach. Last but not least the Hotel Cala di Volpe, which for years has been the symbol of the Costa Smeralda will present its newly refurbished external pool-side restaurant area. For those in Costa Smeralda for work there are new business centres in all the Starwood Hotels which along with the Centro Congressi will host important meetings. ■

HARD FACTS ITALY



What's new

UNA Hotels & Resorts are adding three new boutique properties to their offering: a property opposite Bologna's central railway station offering 93 rooms and six apartments; a 160-room property with conference facilities for 300 in Cerro Maggiore on the motorway to Milan Malpensa Airport; and the restored former Central Palace Hotel in Catania, offering 97 double rooms, six meetings rooms and a 180-seat restaurant.



Getting there

New low-cost routes to Italian cities from Europe, especially from new EU member states, will open this summer. To enable closer cooperation and comply with EU directives, Air France and Alitalia have agreed to surrender up to 42 pairs of slots between France and Italy. This will allow competitors to fly up to 21 more return flights a day on the affected routes.



When to sell

Italy's climate varies greatly from north to south and with altitude. The north and inland areas are very cold from December to February. Spring, autumn and even summer temperatures are mild, with July temperatures up to 29°C.



Useful contacts

- Italian Tourism Authority, www.enit.it
- Emilia Romagna Turismo, www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it
- Turismo Torino, www.visturin2006.com
- UNA Hotels, www.unahotels.it
- The Westin Palace, www.starwoodhotels.com
- Starwood Hotels, www.starwoodhotels.com
- Hotel Bauer, Milan, www.bauervenezia.com

