

The results for 2023: Cologne's tourism strategy begins to bear fruit

Destination on track for success

- **More than 3.8 million guests and around 6.6 million overnight stays — tourism has rebounded**
- **MICE: Positive development of the event market**
- **Successful target group focus and a sharpened profile**
- **The focus in 2024: Continued development of tourism in terms of quality, with the involvement of Cologne's communities**

COLOGNE, February 29, 2024 As shown by the visitor results for 2023, tourism in Cologne remained stable and even grew significantly after rebounding in 2022. According to the State Statistical Office IT.NRW, Cologne recorded more than **3.8 million guests** and around **6.6 million overnight stays** in the city's hotels. Compared to 2022, the number of guests rose by 20.4 per cent and the number of overnight stays grew by 17 per cent. As a result, tourism in Cologne has returned to the level of 2019.

Max Derichsweiler, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Cologne Tourist Board, says, "I'm delighted that tourism in Cologne is developing not only in terms of quantity, but also and even more importantly, in terms of quality. The Cologne Tourist Board's tourism strategy plays a vital role in this progress and is helping to consolidate Cologne as an attractive city destination for the relevant target groups."

Return of promotable business travel, importance of local markets, increase in supply of hotel beds and conference venues

The change in the structure of tourism, which was already evident in 2022, continued in part in 2023. The local markets continued to be disproportionately important (with a share of 90 per cent). **The most important source market** is still **Germany**, which accounts for 66.6 per cent of the total overnight stays. The most important foreign market is the Netherlands, followed by the UK. The growth of supply in the hotel industry also developed favourably. The number of available hotel beds in Cologne was 37,616 in 2023 — 4.3 per cent more than in 2022.

Whereas traditional business travel remains persistently below pre-crisis levels, the promotable business travel segment is experiencing an upward trend. Several trade fairs were extremely well attended last year. The MICE market (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Events), which registered an increased average number of participants per event, is demonstrating the structural change in business travel. Another significant increase is expected for 2024 as a result of the opening of Confex. The operator and marketer Koelncongress has already received numerous bookings for the multifunctional convention and event venue, which has a capacity of more than 6,000 people on the Koelnmesse exhibition grounds.

Tourism strategy begins to bear fruit

Tourism in Cologne is successful not only in quantitative terms. In terms of quality as well, various parameters show an extremely positive development and suggest that the path taken by the Cologne Tourist Board to sharpen Cologne's profile and focus on target groups is beginning to bear fruit. For one thing, the

proportion of guests whose visit was prompted by a cultural event is higher in Cologne than in all other Magic Cities*. Secondly, gross sales amounting to €5.24 billion from tourism almost reached the 2019 level again in 2023, despite the war in Ukraine and the rise in the cost of living. Spending in the hospitality industry has returned to pre-crisis levels due to higher spending by leisure guests. The fact that Cologne's star hotel industry posted the highest increase in RevPar (revenue per available room) in the international benchmark (43.6 per cent compared to 2022) indicates an increase in demand and the quality of the destination. Here's another key indicator: A recent study by Brand Trust showed that Cologne's tourism brand is stronger than that of many of its competitors.

"The continued upward trend is cause for celebration," says Dr. Jürgen Amann, the Chief Executive Officer of the Cologne Tourist Board. "What is even more remarkable, however, is that we are also constantly improving in the area of quality tourism, and this is thanks to the tireless work of the entire team at the Cologne Tourist Board and our tourism partners in the city. The tourism strategy is starting to show results, and that is the best reward for our work."

The outlook for 2024: Continued digitalisation, new tourist information and many highlights

For the Cologne Tourist Board, the coming year will be characterised by continued digitalisation—in processes within the organisation as well as in tourism work and communication. In addition to working with and further developing the in-house corporate AI solution VisitKölnGPT, the continuous feeding of structured POI data sets into the Data Hub NRW and the GNTB's Knowledge Graph is a top priority. Hybrid products such as the *K wie Köln* magazine, new mindwalks like *Le Journal Belgique* and a new urban art map for a special city experience are also planned and will continue to cater to the target groups and their interests. The new Tourist Info, which is currently still being converted, will be a flagship project with many digital aspects that provides a contemporary framework for a personal consultancy experience. In addition, the Cologne Tourist Board will once again give Cologne residents and visitors access to the gallery on the first floor with a view of the cathedral, which was originally part of the concept developed in the 1950s. The opening, which is planned for the spring, will later also offer an important point of contact in the city for the guests traveling to the European Football Championship in the summer.

"Our course 2024 is still headed towards digitisation. We are focusing our attention on raising the profile of the Cologne brand, creating offers for our target groups and continuing the associated qualitative development of our destination. Especially with regard to our new and evolving products, I'm delighted that we are constantly working with local experts and communities, and thus creating together with our partners authentic Cologne experiences that are of interest not only to guests but also to the residents of our city," Amann explains.

Sources: State Statistical Office IT.NRW, Magic Cities Germany, Europäisches Institut für Tagungswirtschaft GmbH (EITW 2023) | Tagungsbarometer 2023, Deutscher Städtereisemonitor 2023, CoStar, dwif, Brand Trust.

*Magic Cities Germany is an association of ten major German cities relevant to tourism that conducts joint marketing in long-distance markets.

PRESS INFORMATION



Photographs and a presentation can be found at:

www.koelntourismus.de/service/presse/news/detail/bilanz-2023-koelner-tourismusstrategie-zeigt-erste-ergebnisse

About Cologne Tourist Board

Cologne Tourist Board is the official tourism organization of the city of Cologne and thus the first point of contact for visitors from all over the world, whether they're coming here on business or to spend their leisure time. Together with its partners, Cologne Tourist Board conducts marketing activities all over the world for Cologne as a travel destination and a convention venue. Its aim is to enhance the city's image and to position Cologne and its surrounding region as an attractive tourist destination and an outstanding convention location in the German and international markets. In the process, it aims to boost added value for the economy of Cologne and the surrounding region.

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