

Cologne's tourism on the path to success Focus on qualitative development of tourism

- **Increasing proportion of guests with above-average purchasing power**
- **Tourism revenue increased to 5.49 billion euros**
- **Around 4.2 million guests and more than 7 million overnight stays for the first time**
- **Digitalisation, sustainability and MICE as central fields of action**
- **Outlook 2025: Continuation of the tourism strategy and monitoring of developments with the help of qualitative parameters**

Tourism in Cologne remains a success story and, in addition to quantitative growth, is also focusing on **qualitative development**. In 2024, the cathedral city was once again able to achieve strong figures. The **tourist added value** continued to develop positively and amounted to **5.49 billion euros** – an increase of 5 % over the previous year. According to the state statistical office IT.NRW, Cologne recorded around **4.2 million guests** in the city's hotel businesses, which for the first time exceeded the **7 million overnight** stays mark with a total of 7.1 million. Compared to the previous year, in which the pre-coronavirus level of 2019 was reached again, this represents a significant increase of 8 % (arrivals) and 7.9 % (overnight stays). Dr. Jürgen Amann, Managing Director of KölnTourismus GmbH, rates 2024 as a great success: 'The record in tourism after difficult years makes us proud. Cologne once again presented itself as an attractive destination and not only achieved strong quantitative results, but also impressed in terms of quality, for example through an increase in the purchasing power of its guests. Above all, the qualitative parameters are essential for the sustainable development of tourism in Cologne.'

Growing international diversity in the guest mix, increased hotel bed supply, focus on qualitative key figures

Germany remains the most important source market with a 64 % share of total overnight stays – maintaining the growth trend in domestic demand is the **result of the successful strategic realignment and consistent targeting of the market**. The success of the target group work is also reflected in the two strongest foreign markets – the United Kingdom and the Netherlands have the same structure of Sinus-Milieus as Germany. In general, arrivals (+15.7 %) and overnight stays (+16.2 %) from abroad have increased, ensuring a more **international mix of guests** in Cologne. With 37,752 hotel beds on offer, the growth trend also continued in terms of supply, with bed occupancy reaching 55.8 %.

The **targeted approach to selected visitor groups as a central component of the strategy for the qualitative development of tourism** is showing success. The share of leading Sinus-Milieus among Cologne's guests, for example the post-materialists, has increased significantly in the last three years. The **proportion of guests with above-average purchasing power rose** significantly as a result. 'It is impressive to see that Cologne has not only welcomed more guests, but is also increasingly attracting a clientele with high purchasing power,' emphasises Max Derichsweiler, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Cologne Tourism. 'This development underlines the quality of the work of the Cologne Tourism Board and the strength of Cologne as a tourist brand.' The development of tourism in Cologne since 2020, when benchmarking with the Magic Cities* showed a 157 % increase, is a top figure among the cities concerned and, along with a RevPar of €93.21 in 2024, points to a **continuous qualitative development of the destination**.

Digitilisation, sustainability and strengthening MICE as pillars of success in the work of Cologne Tourism

Since 2020, the work of Cologne Tourist Board has focused on three central areas of activity: **digitalisation**, **sustainability** and **strengthening the MICE segment**. Cologne Tourist Board responded to the increasingly digital customer journey not only with the **newly designed, partially digitalised tourist information**, but also with the continued work on the topic of **open data**. Cologne Tourism continued to expand its **pioneering role in digital transformation** within the company and within the industry, for example by using and further developing the innovative corporate AI solution VisitKölnGPT. Its leading role in the use of artificial intelligence at DMOs was consolidated by its **participation in the central network of the AI think tank 'Klnk Tank'** to develop practical options for tourism, locations and living spaces.

Sustainability was also an increased focus in 2024. Guided by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, Cologne Tourist Board developed not only internal but also external measures. These include, for example, the **adjustment of the range in the Tourist Information shop in favour of sustainable and regional products** as part of the renovation and redesign of the Tourist Information.

Strengthening the MICE segment (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Events) was also one of the main priorities of Cologne Tourism in 2024. With continuously **optimised conference and congress capacities**, Cologne was able to further expand its attractiveness as an event location. A total of 42,300 events were held at 223 event venues, providing an outstanding setting for conferences and events with more than 7.1 million participants**. The **strategic orientation of the Cologne Convention Bureau (CCB) towards a knowledge hub** was also intensified. As part of the 'MICE-Lab Cologne', innovative workshops on the use of AI in the MICE industry were offered to CCB partners. Through these measures, Cologne is making a decisive contribution to creating an **authentic and distinctive MICE experience** that impresses both guests and partners.

Outlook for 2025: Strategy continuation and development of further qualitative indicators

In 2025, Cologne Tourism will continue to focus on the **continuous, qualitative development of tourism** and on **strengthening Cologne as a top destination**. The **tourism strategy, including the target group focus, will be consistently continued**, and the focus will remain on **sustainable and future-oriented topics**. In addition to attracting innovative and creative guests, this also includes developing Cologne as a city of art and culture. Another focus is on networked cooperation in the area of open data and the important goal of improving the quality of life for locals and guests. In addition, **further key figures are to be used to reflect the qualitative development of tourism in Cologne**. 'In the future, we will continue to focus not only on overnight stays,' explains Dr. Jürgen Amann. 'With a clear strategic orientation, we are laying the foundation for sustainable tourism that not only brings economic success but also appreciation in the Cologne community.'

Sources: State Office for Statistics IT.NRW, Magic Cities Germany, European Institute for the Conference Industry (EITW 2024), German City Travel Monitor 2023, CoStar 2025, dwif 2025

* Magic Cities Germany is the association of ten major German cities relevant to tourism for joint marketing in the long-haul markets.

**The large increase in the number of participants can be attributed to events in the leisure sector. In particular, events such as the European Championship matches or public viewing.