



CHRISTMAS BALANCE

Tourist apartments outnumber pre-pandemic occupancy

The covid has not affected the influx of tourists, but has caused numerous job losses

Some accommodations have experienced fewer visits, although billing has increased

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Tourist apartments increased by 5% to 10% occupancy during the Christmas holidays compared to 2019, according to data released by the President of the Association of Tourist Accommodation Companies (AEAT), Alex Ruiz.

«We moved between 85% and 98% of employment from December 25th to January 10th,» Ruiz said. In fact, the forecast a week before the start of the Christmas festivities was that the occupancy would be full in the tourist apartments of the Principality, so the figures that the association predicted are confirmed. In addition, in some cases, those in charge of the accommodation were faced with situations of overbooking in which the supply had to assume a demand above its possibilities. «Gi-

The sector has found data ranging from 85% to 98% of full beds during Christmas.

ven that 2019 was a record year in terms of full beds, this season we have experienced cases that place billing above pre-pandemic data,» the AEAT president stressed.

Regarding the effects caused by the pandemic, Ruiz stressed that «the covid has not been a problem in relation to the influx of guests, who have made cancellations that have been offset by new "last minute" reservations. However, the virus affected the staff of the accommodation, which was largely affected by the numerous infections that the whole country experienced during the Christmas weeks. According to Ruiz, «every day we register two or three workers who leave for covid and this affects the perception of tourists, who complain about the lack of ser-



► Customers of the Ordino Arcalis station, during the Christmas festivities.



ALEX RUIZ
PRESIDENT OF THE AEAT

«We have received last minute cancellations which have been offset by new bookings»

«Every day we register one or two workers unable to work due to the virus infection»

vice in many cases.» Thus, in some cases, the workers, despite having overcome the disease, «return to work tired from the consequences of the virus,» said Ruiz.

On the other hand, tourist accommodation experienced fewer visits in some cases while billing more, compared to before the pandemic. This is due to the price increase policy that some apartments pursued during the Christmas holidays. As Ruiz mentioned, «it should be noted that we have received customers with a high social standard.»

Regarding the origin of the tourists, the president of the AEAT stressed that «the Spaniards and the French are still the main visitors to our apartments, but we were surprised by the large number of Chinese who came.»

83% of beds are full during the Three Kings week, according to the UHA

► In the last days of the Christmas holidays, coinciding with the feast of the Three Kings, it has left an average occupancy of 83.66%. This is clear from the data published yesterday by the Hotel Union of Andorra (UHA), where it is observed that during the last weekend, the figure rose to 86.90% of full beds. «This year has coincided very well with the holiday to later facilitate a long weekend, leaving a very good set,» said the director of the UHA, Jordi Pujol, who also highlighted the employment data of the set of parties Christmas: 79.62%. A figure that, he stressed, is «virtually identical to those of pre-pandemic.» And in the coming weeks, the UHA is optimistic, as Pujol said that there is a considerable volume of bookings for the weekends in three to four weeks, as well as a number of English customers from Monday to Friday. However, the industry is looking forward to the evolution of the incidence of omicron.

In addition, 50% of English tourists who went on holiday to their apartments had to cancel their bookings due to the unfavorable evolution of the pandemic in the United Kingdom, which caused major contagions across the country, but these vacancies were offset by new guests who in many cases «paid a higher price than previously established, which has also benefited the accommodation,» said Ruiz.

As a result, the sector has far exceeded expectations for the Christmas season, which is notable for the increase in consumption and visits to the Principality. Given that the country was at a relatively high point of contagion during the holidays, this fact has not been a hindrance for visitors, who are getting closer to the pre-pandemic figures. ≡

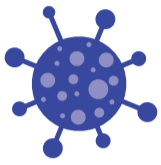
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GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The CEA points out that the impact of covid casualties is «transversal»

The employer assures that there are «dysfunctions», as in the granting of discharges to those who can telework

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The Andorran Business Confederation (CEA) says that the impact on companies due to the proportion of staff leaving for coronavirus «is widespread in all sectors». This was pointed out by its manager, Iago Andreu, who, although he shared that the problem began in mid-December with a special impact «on the hospitality and trade sector», now «the impact is transversal». As an example, Andreu referred to construction, stating that «activity resumes after Christmas and some companies have told us that there are workers who have not rejoined because they are positive cases». Overall, the CEA places around 20% the losses in the workforce of the country's companies.

For his part, the director of the Andorra Hotel Union (UHA), Jordi Pujol, stated in this regard that, «to reduce the leave to 7 days has made possible to accelerate the return of the workers, and we won some days» but in some specific places is «difficult to fill», as could be the case of the reception staff. In fact, Pujol predicted that this situation «is the dynamic that we will maintain these weeks because it is what we are seeing with the omicron variant: more and more people will pass by and we will have to cheat.»



MARICEL BLANCH

►► A mechanical workshop worker.

The difficulty adds to the lack of staff for months, and forces to make «balances» with the available staff

In the same vein, Andreu emphasized that «it is very difficult to know how long it can take, but the situation does not seem to have to improve immediately», given that the latest variant «is very contagious».

On the other hand, both agreed that this lack was added to the «shortage of staff», as Pujol assessed, that the services sector has be-

IAGO ANDREU
CEA MANAGER

«In the way that CASS automatically terminates, it should be just as easy to register»

JORDI PUJOL
DIRECTOR OF THE UHA

«It's the dynamic we're going to maintain because that's what we're seeing with the omicron: we're going to have to cheat

en living in recent months, which according to Andreu means that companies must do balance with the remaining staff»

DIFFICULTY IN MANAGING AFFILIATION // At the same time, employers are also putting obstacles in the way of managing employers' affiliation when it comes to managing the affiliation of workers, both at the end of the sick period and if they choose to work telework. «There are some management problems, although we are understandable and we understand that the administration is overwhelmed,» said An-

dreu, who referred to the existence of «dysfunctions» also because «the system is not designed for to have so many casualties and so many highs at once». In any case, he pointed out that in the same way that the CASS automatically withdraws when the positive is confirmed, «it should be just as easy to register», especially for those who want to continue working electronically.

However, the director of the employer pointed out that there are specific cases where, through casualties, «a certain inequity» is generated, due to the fact that «the period of isolation and termination is shorter than when you are vaccinated». In other words, according to Andreu, «the person who is initially irresponsible because he is not vaccinated, if he is also irresponsible with his job and prefers to be off work, will be given a longer leave». Thus, the CEA insisted on providing mechanisms to companies, enabling a legal framework, to be able to know the vaccination status of workers and make decisions in this regard. «It's not the same risk that you take on putting a worker who is vaccinated in front of the public as one who is not,» he said. Ultimately, the director asked the Executive to «adjust the management of the pandemic with economic activity as far as possible» and, in particular, to consider shortening sick leave times as much as possible always guaranteeing the health and safety of the citizens".

Health detects more than half a thousand new cases in the last 24 hours

3.5% of the 1,300 screened students test positive for coronavirus

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Health has detected 559 new positives in the last 24 hours. The total number of cases since the onset of the health crisis is 28,542. In addition,

344 new discharges have been registered since Monday and the number of active cases has increased by 215 to 5,342. On the other hand, the number of people who have overcome the disease is 23,059. As for deaths, they remain at 141.

Despite the increase in cases, hospital pressure has dropped since Monday, with four fewer people. Thus, there are 14 people left on the floor and

12 in the Intensive Care Unit, eight of whom are under mechanical ventilation. In addition, there is still one person admitted to the Covid plant in El Cedre. Also, since the beginning of the vaccination plan, 142,311 vaccines have been administered - 57,616 first doses, 56,662 second and 28,033 third.

As for the school population, there are 10 classrooms in active surveillance, one in total and nine in part. In this



ARXIU ANA

►► Archive image of the hospital.

sense, the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Ester Vilarrubla, recalled that «from day one, schools have made an effort to be very safe and with many protocols» and stressed the importance that children and young people can go to class in person. «We know that the price to pay is very high, not only in learning, but also in emotional health,» she said. Of the 1,300 tests conducted in schools across the country on Monday, 54 students tested positive, a figure of 3.5%. «This is a not inconsiderable fact, but we must look at the positive side of the detection of cases thanks to screening,» said Vilarrubla.

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