

## **9 – TOURISM**

Following the marked upsurge in tourism in Sicily in the previous year, the year 2007 signalled a return to a time less positive trends as regards the flow of tourists. There was only a slight increase mainly as a result of tourists from abroad.

During the year there were 4,614,000 arrivals at hotel-type accommodation on the island of Sicily, 1.3% more than in the previous year, whilst the number of overnight stays remained stable when compared to 2006 (the total amounted to 14,591,000). After a 4.2% fall in 2002, the number of overnight stays remained sluggish in 2003, but registered a favourable progression in the last four-year period. The average for overnight stays in 2007 (3.2 nights) was the same as the figure for 2005 and 2006, but lower than the national average (3.9 nights).

Classifying the visitors by nationality reveals that the number of Italian tourists fell by 2.2%, with 8,671,000 visitors, compared to 5,920,000 foreign visitors (+3.8%).

Between 2002 and 2007 the number of overnight stays registered by Italians rose by 9.1%, whereas there was a greater increase in the number of foreign visitors (13.8%). These statistics bring about only slight changes in the percentage totals of these two tourist components, with the number of foreign visitors rising from 39.6% in 2002 to 40.6% in 2007 (43.5% was the corresponding total for the country as a whole).

Grading accommodation by type it emerges that hotels operating in 2007 provided accommodation for a little under 4 million tourists (39.8% of whom were foreigners) totalling about 12,300,000 overnight stays (the average length of stay was 3.1 nights). A comparison with 2006 reveals an increase in both arrivals and the number of overnight stays. Examining the statistics by nationality slight differences emerge with regard to Italians compared to foreign visitors. With regard to the former there was a fall in both the number of arrivals (-1.92%) and overnight stays (-3.2) with an average length of stay of 2.9 days per year. On the other hand, the increase in the number of foreign arrivals was more marked (+2.2% for arrivals, +3.8% overnight stays); the average length of stay was also slightly longer (3.3 days).

With regard to collective non-hotel accommodation in Sicily (camp-sites, tourist villages, holiday homes, agritourism accommodation, youth hostels etc), these registered 618,000 arrivals over all (+12.8% over 2006) and a little under 2,300,000 overnight stays, a 2.4% increase over the previous year. The average overnight stay for this category of structure is 3.7 days, a little longer than that for the hotels (3.1 nights). For collective non-hotel accommodation the percentage figures for arrivals (71.7%) and overnight stays (73.1%), for Italian tourists, are much higher than those for visitors from abroad.

On the Provincial level, in 2006 (the last year available for such assorted data), with regard to hotels, the provinces of Messina (3,573,000 overnight stays), Palermo (3,216,000) and, to a lesser extent, Catania (1,380,000) proved the most attractive destinations. Over the same time period more than a million overnight stays were recorded in Siracusa and in Trapani, whilst the Province of Enna finds itself at the bottom of the pile, with the number of stays not even equalling 1% of the overall flux. The average length of stay is highest in the Provinces of Ragusa (4.2 nights), Messina (3.8), Trapani (3.3) and Siracusa (3.3,) whilst the Province of Enna brings up the tail (1.9 nights).

With regard to collective non-hotel accommodation, the data for 2006 shows that tourists prefer staying in establishments situated in the Provinces of Messina, Catania and Trapani, which together account for 66.9% of overnight stays in the Region.

The average length of stay is above the Regional figure in Messina (5.3 nights), Trapani (4) and Catania (4).

With regard to figures for tourism, in 2007 there were 1,171 hotels in Sicily, (3.4% of the national total). Compared to the previous year the number of rooms attained 51,474 units (equipped with 49,966 bathrooms), an increase of 1,733 rooms. There were 113,749 hotel beds available in Sicily, 5.4% of the national figure; this was up by 6,027 units when compared to the previous year. Camp-sites and tourist villages reduced the number of sleeping places by 1,945, a fall that is amply compensated for by the increased availability of beds (2,456) in other non-hotel establishments. This decline is probably explained by the customers' growing tendency to explore new types of accommodation, such as agritourism and B&B.

The Province of Messina had the most hotels in 2006 (361 accounting for 31.8% of the Regional figure). Other Provinces in Sicily with a significant number of hotels were Palermo, in second place with 199 (17.5% of the hotels in Sicily), followed by Trapani with 160 (14.1%). The provinces of Enna and Caltanissetta bring up the tail, with their total of 35 structures, accounting for 3% of the total. Almost 53% of collective non-hotel accommodation in Sicily (with the relative number of available beds) were located in the Provinces of Messina, Palermo and Catania.

## **Glossary**

**Arrivals:** number of visitors, Italian and foreign, staying in holiday accommodation (hotel or complementary) during the period in question.

**Average stay:** ratio of number of nights' stay to number of visitors arriving at accommodation (**arrivals**).

**Hotels:** singly-run establishments open to the public, which provide lodging, usually meals and other supplementary services, in bedrooms in one or more buildings or a part thereof. They can be hotels categorised with from 1 to 5 stars, or other *collective tourist accommodation*.

**Hotel-type accommodation:** hotels (1 to 5 stars), villages, tourist villages, boarding-houses, motels, period residences, historical houses, beauty farms and all other categories of accommodation, which can be included in this category (on the basis of Regional regulations).

**Other collective accommodation (non-hotel):** duly registered Commercial Business Registry rented accommodation, camp-sites, tourist villages, agritourism, youth hostels, holiday homes, communal alpine refuges, other accommodation.

**Overnight stays:** the number of nights spent by guests in accommodation.

**Star classification system:** categorisation of hotels from 1 to 5 stars:

- 5-star luxury: luxury hotels of international class standard.
- 5-star: luxury hotel
- 4-star: first-class hotel
- 3-star: second-class hotels and first-class boarding houses.
- 2-star: third-class hotels and second-class boarding houses
- 1-star: fourth-class hotels and third-class boarding houses.

The minimum requisites for a hotel to be classified are: accommodation consisting of at least 7 rooms; at least one bathroom for every ten beds; a washbasin with (hot and cold) running water in each room; a common room; technological installations and an adequate number of qualified staff.

**Tourist:** whoever travels to a place differing from his usual environment and spends at least one night in that place.

**Tourist accommodation:** all hotels and other collective accommodation

### *Further reading*

#### Publications

Italian Statistical Yearbook – 2008 - ISTAT

Travelling in Italy and abroad in 2005 - ISTAT

Tourism statistics 2002 - ISTAT

Report on tourism in Sicily– incoming national and international fluxes 2005-2006

– Regional Department for Tourism, Communications and Transport

#### Internet

[www.regione.sicilia.it](http://www.regione.sicilia.it)

Tourist flux – 2007

[con.istat.it](http://con.istat.it)

Hotel figures

<http://www.istat.it>

Regional indicators for development policy

Italian Statistical Yearbook 2008 – Chapter 18: “Tourism”

Capacity and flux of tourist accommodation – 2005

Annual data for agritourism accommodation

[www.starnet.unioncamere.it](http://www.starnet.unioncamere.it)

Thematic area– Tourism – Analysis and data

[www.uic.it](http://www.uic.it)

International tourism analytical data  
Statistical bulletin

[www.isnart.com](http://www.isnart.com)

National Institute for Tourist Research – Data-banks  
Tourism observatory