



Russian tour operators foresee a 30% increase of tourist reservations for Catalonia

- In the presence of 80 Russian tour operators and agents, the Catalan Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs presented the Catalan tourist offer for the first time within the framework of the MITT, where Catalonia is present with a stand of more than 400m².
- The government of Moscow presented to Minister Huguet the new development projects of the Russian capital and invited him to promote the participation of Catalan companies.

Friday, 24 March 2006.— Russian tour operators foresee a 30% increase of tourist reservations for Catalonia. According to figures issued by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Tourism, Catalonia is the third most favoured destination by the Russians, behind Turkey and Egypt. Last year, 300,000 Russian tourists visited Catalonia and the forecast for 2006 is that the figure will increase by 30%.

Josep Huguet, the Catalan Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, presented today the Catalan tourist offer within the framework of Moscow's MITT international tourist fair, where Catalonia has been taking part for the last 15 years. Minister Huguet explained before more than 80 tour operators and tourist agents of the country, the family, cultural, gastronomic and health offer of the Principality, and underlined that ***“beyond the existence of our beaches, Catalonia has attractive alternative offers for any time of the year”***.

This was the first time that Catalonia took advantage of the MITT, the most important tourist fair in the eastern European countries and the third most important in the world, to gather tour operators and tourist agents and to present to them in detail ***“the cultural, gastronomic or health diversity that we can offer those who visit us”***, as the Minister said during his exposition.

“Catalonia has a top quality gastronomy, with chefs of international



prestige who work from the root of the autochthonous products, with identity; we have a cultural offer that ranges from the Romanesque of the Pyrenees to Dalí, Miró or the most modern and innovating architecture that is liked everywhere; and we have more and more health and wellness centres that open their doors throughout the year, and which therefore help us to diversify and lengthen the tourist season”, summarised Minister Huguet.

In this sense, the person responsible for the Catalanian tourist policy thanked the tour operators for their knowledge of the Catalanian reality. ***“You know full well what Catalonia is and what we can offer – that which is different and which makes us unique when compared to other tourist destinations of the world. Consequently, I am grateful for the fact that you appreciate our difference”***, the Minister told them.

Finally, the Minister gave assurances that they will promote through the ministries of Tourism and of External Affairs of the Spanish government the issue of a ‘multivisa’. ***“For as long as the tourists coming to Catalonia need a visa, we think it necessary that this should last for longer than two days; we must look to the French model and promote a visa that goes further, that includes a number of months, so that if they decide to come an visit us, they can do it more than just once”***, he explained.

Opportunities in Moscow

On the other hand, the Catalanian delegation, headed by the person responsible for the internationalisation of the Catalanian economy, met early in the morning with Valery I. Kuzin, the Government of Moscow’s Vice Minister for External Relations. The Catalanian Minister took an interest in the growth projects of the capital of the country, which concentrates great part of the economy of the Russian Federation.

Minister Huguet and Vice Minister Kuzin – who also presides over the Government of Moscow’s International Economic Activities Committee – looked at the possibilities that Catalanian companies, especially those in the services sector, come into the modernisation plans of transports, the rehabilitation of historical buildings, or waste disposal. In this sense, the Minister remarked on ***“the great experience that Catalonia has in such an important field and of such prestige as is architecture; we have more than 500 Catalanian architects working in international projects and we must take advantage of this know-how”***.

The Russian Vice Minister explained to the Catalanian Minister the plans to build two-hundred-and-fifty three- and four-star hotels in Moscow until 2010 to promote local and business tourism. These Moscow projects are framed under the names of *Moscow City 1* and *Moscow City 2* and they entail nearly 500 hectares of new construction and town planning.



“Moscow is under expansion and it is the great logistic platform of the country: a big opportunity to choose a strategic area to allow our companies to settle down in Russia and to take advantage in the future of the clear demand for services that the country will experiment”, concluded the Minister.