

# More tourists choose timeshare on the Costa del Sol

Hotels begin to offer timeshare as a way of surviving the crisis, especially during the slump of the off-season

By P. M.

**MALAGA.** The timeshare sector has grown in the last few years, inspiring more hotels to offer a mix of timeshare and regular hotel accommodation.

Of the 9.1 million visitors to the Costa del Sol in 2012, a surprisingly large number, 825,000, opted for timeshare accommodation. The concept is a way for hotels to survive the crisis, especially during the off-season, said the manager of the Costa del Sol Tourist Board, Arturo Bernal last week.

"It isn't competition for hotels, just another option for tourists. Even big chains like Meliá, Hilton and Marriott have started to devote rooms to timeshare, with great success," he said.

According to the Resort Development Organisation, there are 90 buildings used for timeshares on the Costa del Sol, a third of the total for Spain. Bernal pointed out that this is a good way to avoid empty rooms during the slow season.

The timeshare sector employs 7,000 people on the Costa del Sol, said Bernal. He estimated that families who choose timeshare holidays spend on average 2,400 euros during their stay here on restaurants, clothes, car rentals and gifts, among other expenses.

Recent figures from the tourism office show that timeshare is increasing at a greater rate than hotel bookings. For example, in 2011, 63% of tourists opted for timeshare; in 2012, it was 64%, compared to 60% choosing hotel accommodation. Apartment rentals were at 56% in

2011 and 55% in 2012. From June to October, the figure for timeshare occupancy ballooned to 88%, compared to a 70% rate of hotel and apartment occupancy combined.

Francisco Lizarza, vice president of RDO Spain, referred to Spain as one of the most promising markets for this industry, and highlighted its capacity for innovation and growth that has resulted in the development of new holiday products linked to timeshare.

Lizarza quoted figures that measure the economic weight of the timeshare industry, among them: The province of Malaga, with 90 timeshare complexes, leads, behind only the Canaries, the national ranking in number of complexes, housing units (6,187) and overnight stays (7.9 million).

Of those who own timeshare resorts located on the Costa del Sol, most are from the United Kingdom (31.4%), United States (14.7%) and Spain (11.8%), showing a rise in the last two years of Scandinavian and Russian visitors.

Timeshare came into being over 30 years ago as a holiday option which guaranteed its users' right to enjoy one or several weeks' holidays at a tourist resort, apartment, studio, country house, or hotel, for several years, without having to buy the property.

According to RDO, what started out as an accommodation right which could be enjoyed by its holder lent to relatives, rented out or exchanged, has evolved into a holiday style, a new approach to the way many enjoy their leisure time.

Timeshare now becomes available to the consumer through other systems, for example, point systems, that primarily focus on flexibility by making the timeshare not only available at a resort, but also by including cruises, hotel nights, and car rentals services.



Tourist Board manager, Arturo Bernal. :: SUR

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