



SWITZERLAND



GERMANY



NETHERLANDS

## NETHERLANDS, GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND STRUGGLE HARD TO BOOST GLOBAL TOURISM



## FIERCE COMPETITION FOR TOURIST DOLLARS IN EUROPE



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Although Europe's tourism is still enjoying good health, the competition is getting fierce.

According to the 2013 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), Switzerland, Germany and Austria lead the world in terms of travel and tourism competitiveness. Seven other countries in the top 10 were Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Canada and Singapore.

Tourism competitiveness is an important economic indicator.

In most European countries, global tourism is among the largest employers.

On our recent trip to Europe, we found a number of factors continue to hinder its development.

Many European countries are not spending enough to upgrade tourist accommodations and infrastructure, particularly roads.

Some of the regulations to protect consumers have to be updated. Visa bureaucracy also needs to be updated. Britain has already taken steps to by relaxing visa requirements, particularly for visitors from China and other Asian and African countries.

Some of the hotels desperately need to be upgraded or brought up to reasonable standards.

Encouraging travel boosts consumer and business confidence.

European tourism leaders meet on a regular basis to look at ways to attract more international travelers.

Many experts say Europe needs to get its act together on regulation and quality of service because the long-term health of European tourism is less rosy.

A hotel owner in Switzerland said Europe generated the biggest international tourist receipts among the global regions. But when measuring how much of tourist receipts are generated by each tourist, the continent is well behind Asia-Pacific and Americas, and also trails the Middle East.

The hotelier who preferred to remain anonymous said world tourism continues to rise mainly because of growing armies of travelers from India, China and other emerging markets.

"We now have scores of tourist agencies mainly dealing with tourists from India and China," he said.

The second leg of our European tour took us to Netherland, Germany and Switzerland.

Netherlands has produced many of the world's famous artists from Rembrandt, Vermeer to Van Gogh. It continues to attract visitors from all corners of the globe.

Almost 20 per cent of the total area of the Netherlands is water.

Netherlands is one of the world's most densely populated countries in part reclaimed from the sea with almost half of its land lying below sea level.

Many tourists only come to the Netherlands to visit Amsterdam.

But, Holland has plenty to offer outside its capital.

Tourists and visitors are immediately impressed with classic windmills and other tourist spots sprinkled across the country.

During springtime the flower gardens become the great tourist attractions in the country providing a spectacle of vivid colours.

Tourists are fascinated visiting dairy farms as well as cheese making and clogs making operations.

Madurodam is the famous miniature world. Here you feel like a giant amidst models of palaces, canals, windmills, harbours and airports. The best way to see this captivating country is taking a cruise along its canals.

Germany is the seventh most visited country in the world.

The majority of tourists come from the Netherlands, the United States and Switzerland.

Also more than 30 per cent of Germans spend their holidays in their own country.

Germany, like other parts of Europe, has many castles and palaces as well as historic churches.

The country's landscapes offer a wealth of options for a holiday you cannot forget.

Germany has the largest number of steam trains. The country also boasts 27 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Germany, world famous Eau de Cologne, has a lot to offer to tourists.

The Cologne cathedral is a must see. This 515 feet tall gothic cathedral took six centuries

to build and Germany's most visited monument.

The cruise on River Rhine takes you through medieval castles, vineyards and quaint little towns. Many of the cuckoo clocks are made in Germany.

Our final stop was in Switzerland known for its spectacular mountain scenery, sparkling lakes and folklore traditions.

We journeyed to Switzerland through the legendary Black Forest region of Germany.

At Schaffhausen we visit the mighty Rhine Falls, Europe's most powerful waterfalls.

This is a small falls when compared with the world famous Niagara Falls in Canada but it is still something to see and admire.

Zurich is Switzerland's largest city and financial centre.

No visit to Switzerland is complete without experiencing Mount Titlis, which at 10,000 feet is the highest peak in central Switzerland.

Lucerne is one of the six most frequently visited cities in the world.

Some of the attractions not to be missed at Lucerne are the Lion monument carved from limestone and a stroll across the Kappelbrücke which is the world's oldest covered wooden bridge originally built in 1333 over river Reuss.

While in Lucerne you can pick up Swiss army knives, chocolates, watches and other souvenirs.

Switzerland is a landlocked mountainous country which because of its political stability is regarded as one of the world's wealthiest countries.

### SWISS ALPS

