



## FALLING VISITORS NUMBERS – OPINION

# The end of the story depends on us



Photo: Ashotel

↑ A warning, but also motivating words from Jorge Marichal

*By Jorge Marichal  
President of Ashotel  
(Tenerife province Hotel and  
Holiday Association)*

Almost all of us were aware that tourism in the Canary Islands would not always boom and we have already seen that the situation is beginning to normalise.

What we didn't expect were the current circumstances, which are tantamount to a positive tornado of problems. We knew that Brexit, or rather one-doesn't-know-when-Brexit, would significantly affect the British travel market for Tenerife and Lanzarote. We could have guessed that the great demand for Turkey, which is

currently reviving in Germany, will be reflected in the Canarian sales figures and the loss of the airline Germania has not exactly helped. Islands such as Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria are currently experiencing a significant drop in bookings, with double-digit declines for the coming summer and winter seasons.

However, what nobody really expected and that has caught us wrong-footed, was the collapse of the Nordic market. It was a surprise to us. And not only us, but also to the tour operators, who are looking at each other and wondering if anyone knows what's happening, because one thing is clear: something is happening, especially in Sweden.

The managing directors of the major tour operators mention some possible motives: warmer temperatures this winter, the devaluation of the Swedish and Norwegian krona/krone with the associated reduction in purchasing power and concern about the environmental impact of one's holiday.

We must be careful, this last point may sound banal, but we should take it very seriously. The other points are self-regulating

- bad weather or a better economy. But if the environmental idea is strengthening in people's minds, we must be prepared and have answers. We have to be careful and as hoteliers we have to be aware that our environmental footprint should be minimal. That is why our authorities should also support initiatives in this direction.

Ashotel strongly supports the installation of a photovoltaic plant that will allow us to become more competitive. Not only in terms of energy savings, but also in terms of being able to claim that we are the first holiday destination whose hotels cover their energy needs thanks to our wonderful sun. This should be seen as a national strategy and we should not waste time.

But back to the tornado. It's true that the situation has deteriorated, but it's no less true that we still have very good figures

- results that we would have thought spectacular five years ago. How quickly we got used to the good times! And what nobody can deny, not even the tour operators, is that despite the fact that we all know that the situation is stabilising, Turkey is strengthening, flight connections are falling and the European economy is suffering ... the truth is that the hotel infrastructure on the islands is much better prepared than during other crises.

We have made a great effort to renovate our hotels, to differentiate ourselves, to improve our hotel offer and also the complementary offer. All this allows us to be optimistic and to confirm that at the end of the film this ship won't sink, but will write another success story with us as protagonists. ■

## THIEF CAUGHT AT THE PORT

# Expensive hug

A 26-year-old Romanian man was recently arrested at the Santa Cruz port after he arrived on a ferry from Gran Canaria.

He is suspected of stealing from an 85-year-old holidaymaker in the south of the island, and to do this, he supposedly approached his victim under the pretext of asking for directions. After the tourist had given him the information, he pretended to be so grateful that he spontaneously took him in his arms. At that moment, he quickly



Photo: Policía Nacional

↑ The suspect had a previous criminal record

loosened a valuable chain from the victim's neck and disappeared. Apparently a little later he set off for Tenerife. In the meantime, the National Police in Gran Canaria had already identified

the suspected thief and were aware that he had boarded the ferry. They therefore informed their colleagues in Santa Cruz who intercepted and arrested the man on his arrival. ■

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