



## **Plans to reduce coaches by 65% in Rome will inflict body blow to group leisure tourism sector**

- **Appeal to be heard Thursday 13 December 2018**
- **The 2019 New Tourist Coach Plan: <https://romamobilita.it/it/servizi/nuovo-piano-bus-turistic>**

Plans by Rome's tourism authorities to reduce coach access to the city's historical centre by two-thirds will inflict a body blow to the city's overnight group travel sector, which is worth well-over €1.65 billion, ETOA (the European Tourism Association) has revealed today.

An appeal is due to be heard in Consiglio di Stato in Rome on Thursday 13 December.

ETOA (the European Tourism Association) has released new figures, which quantifies the value and volume of the overnight group leisure travel sector provided by their members to Rome and finds that ETOA members' contribution alone amounts to 1.8 million overnight stays in Rome's historic centre each year.

Separately, a study on tourism buses in Rome by Sapienza University found that the average number of coaches in zone C is 600 per week - on average 85 per day. The new plans will reduce access to zone C to 30 a day.

ETOA and its members, many whom provide services (DMC and local operators; hoteliers; restaurateurs; attractions and museums) in Rome and tour operators who sell Italy worldwide, have called for a suspension of these new plans until either clear evidence is provided to show they would be beneficial or until there are more effective solutions developed which will have demonstrable long-term benefits for the local community, businesses and visitors. There are serious concerns about the practicality of the new plan as well as the harm it might cause.

ETOA's analysis of the value and volume of overnight group travel in Rome has found that 43% of tour operators considered there was no practical alternative to coach transport into the central zone and has assessed that overnight group travel makes efficient use of existing resources and contributes to both day-time and night-time economies.

In addition, it concludes that a coach takes up the space of approximately three cars, and hotel beds do not displace domestic accommodation supply.

Mario Bodini, Chairman of ETOA said: "Group tourism includes high-value business from developed markets worldwide. If Rome becomes operationally problematic, its status as a gateway to the rest of Italy for long haul tourism is in jeopardy. Unless the first-time visit to a destination is a success, travellers will hesitate before booking a second trip to Italy.



“We have already received reports that some operators are moving volume away from Rome for 2020 and cancelling included elements of their remaining programmes. We urge Rome not to implement the new coach access plan until a better solution is found.”

Brett Tollman, CEO of The Travel Corporation, which welcomes approximately 85,000 guests to Rome each year from Australia, North America, the UK and Asia under the brands including Insight, Trafalgar, Contiki, Luxury Gold, Costsaver and Grand European Travel, said:

“We believe passionately in preserving and protecting the destinations and communities we visit, and we completely understand the motivation of the City of Rome to put measures in place to safeguard the city for future generations. But the proposed changes here are counterproductive and will not only impact on its ability to cater for and manage visitors, but will also heavily impact its citizens.

“Group coach travel is actually one of the most efficient and sustainable methods of bringing tourists in to Rome and our holidays make use of local restaurants, hotels, guides, museums and attractions, even visiting local families, so we are contributing at every level of the tourism chain. We need a more consultative and collaborative approach between the City of Rome and tour operators like us, to come up with a longer term solution.”

Gerry Smith, owner and CEO of iGs (Italy Group Services Travel), a Rome-based B2B ground handler which offers tourist services to thousands of groups of travellers from the UK, North America and Australasia each year said:

“It is clear that Rome cannot afford to ‘bite the hand that feeds it’, both in the commercial and operational sense. ETOA has done a great job in unequivocally proving that the movement of coach-based tourists is far cheaper and more ecologically advantageous to the city per head than other forms of transport. My company looks forward to a re-think on the part of the authorities so that we can all continue to benefit from the influx of tourists that we, numerous other international providers, and thousands of hard-working Romans, bring to the ‘Eternal City’.”

Enrico Fraticelli, owner and CEO of SIT (Italian Transport Company), a Rome based company, which leases vehicles with up to 57 seats for groups to book transfer services, city tours, national and international tours, school trips and business groups, said: “At least 60% of our clients transport their guests into the centre of Rome and we work closely with hotels and restaurants in Zone C. Their businesses will be substantially impacted too. There has to be a better way forward.”

ETOA has extensive experience of working with destinations in addressing operational challenges to develop capacity management strategies. Adequate investment in public transport and traffic planning is essential to keep cities appealing places to live, work and visit. Consultation with industry to assess impact and develop smart solutions is essential.

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Ends



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### **About ETOA**

ETOA is a leading trade association for tour operators and suppliers in European destinations, from global brands to local independent businesses. Over 1100 members deliver more than €12 bn of business annually within Europe and include tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers; European tourist boards, hotels, attractions, technology companies and other tourism and business service providers.