

Spain lures winter travellers with sun, sangria and snow

Spanish tourism chiefs have launched a new offensive to tempt holidaymakers in winter amid falling visitor numbers.

By Sarah Knapton

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The new “Winter in Spain” campaign is expected to ditch its traditional image of sun, sea and sangria in favour of snowy mountain ranges and outdoor pursuits.

“It’s a proposal by the government to attract people outside the usual summer holiday period. We are renowned for our sun, and that sun shines all year round,” said a Tourism and Industry Ministry spokesman.

The new campaign will be launched in earnest following a brainstorming meeting in Seville at the end of September.

It comes after the numbers of tourists from abroad dropped eight per cent in the peak month of July compared with the same period last year. In particular, the Swiss, French and Italian tourists stayed away, with top Spanish destinations of Catalonia, Andalusia, the Canary Islands, Valencia and the Balearics hardest hit by the downturn.

Even Spaniards have cut holiday spending by 30 per cent.

Jose Luis Zoreda, vice-chairman of the Alliance for Tourism Excellence, Exceltur said: “The drums of crisis have started to roll. The outlook is stormy. There’s nothing to indicate that the rest of the year will compensate for the fall in business that occurred in July,

“We need urgent measures to prevent us suffering the same fate as the construction industry, big financial injections to reconvert our deteriorated tourist areas.”

The Spanish government has pledged 500m euros to update tatty hotels and resort installations, but the effects will not be felt until next year.

It is thought many foreign tourists are abandoning Spain for Turkey, North Africa and Egypt, which are 30 per cent cheaper,

Spain is planning to set up tourism offices in Russia, China and India.