

The Holiday Programm for the Elderly

Background information:

The “Holiday programme for the elderly” is included in the active aging programmes run by Imserso. It was created with the primary objective of combating loneliness by organising stays for elderly people in hotels during Christmas. Later, a more comprehensive vacation programme was designed for the elderly during the low season from October to June. It is funded mostly by Imserso, which allows elderly people to enjoy holidays at a price that is very attractive and affordable for them.

It offers variety in terms of trip types and lengths:

-Holidays in coastal areas. Trips can last 15, 10 or 8 days. This includes holidays in Portugal that last 8 days in Portuguese towns.

-Cultural tours, six-day routes.

-Nature Tourism, 5 days.

The beneficiaries of this programme are people over 65, people receiving retirement pensions from the Public Pension System, and other pensioners and early retirees who are 60 or older.

This includes people with Spanish nationality living in other countries. They can be accompanied by their spouse, and the spouse does not need to meet the age or pension requirements. They can also be accompanied by their disabled son or daughter who is handicapped to a degree of 45% or more.

The number of applicants is much higher than the number of places offered. Selection is made by Imserso, using criteria that evaluate, first and foremost, the age of the applicants, their incomes and whether or not they have participated in previous years.

Beneficiaries of this programme have the following services available to them:

-Round trip travel.

-Full board and lodging in a double room, or in a single room with an additional charge.

-A special diet, if needed.

-Complementary healthcare in addition to Social Security healthcare

-Leisure and free time activities.

-Learning about new technologies.

-Group insurance policy.

The holiday programme for the elderly has been awarded the “Jean Foucher” prize in Canada and the tourism merit plaque awarded by the Spanish government.

Aims (brief explanation):

-To promote active aging and prevent situations of dependence.

-To improve elderly people’s quality of life

-To boost elderly people’s social integration and to prevent loneliness

-To boost economic activities in various sectors

-To support the creation and maintenance of employment in the tourism sector during low season

Degree of implementation/progress status/current situation:

The programme began during the 1985-86 season, with 16,000 places. In view of its success and the demand created, it continued growing until it reached 1,200,000 during the 2009-10 season. Over the years, it has been modified on the basis of surveys of its participants on quality criteria. Thus, the offer in terms of activities and in terms of types of trips and lengths of stays was broadened.

The following are significant examples in terms of this programme's evolution and growth that show its importance: the 19 hotels that participated in the programme in 1985 has increased to 307 today; the 100 travel agencies has increased to 9,300.

According to the latest surveys taken of its participants, the degree of satisfaction with the programme is 92%, with 96% of these participants expressing their intention to participate again.

The 2007-2008 season's impact on direct employment was 12,928 people. Total employment created during the months of the programme is estimated at 80,000 positions. During the 2010-2011 season, total employment is at 105,000 employees.

It is an economically profitable programme. For every euro invested by Imsero, €1.50 is recovered. It is a programme with great social and economic impact, with a growing demand and geographical extension. In Portugal, a similar programme has been implemented at a national level, and there is an exchange system between the two countries.

Who is responsible for the information (i.e. ministry, organisation, person)?

The programme is organised by the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, through the Institute for Older Persons and Social Services (Imsero, in its Spanish abbreviation).

Who can be contacted in case of questions? (name, e-mail address)

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Please provide link or contact for further information:

www.imsero.es