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Canary Islands aim for quick tourist testing to save winter season

The Canary Islands' hoteliers said yesterday they are in talks with regional and national authorities to set up quick coronavirus testing for tourists to try and save at least some of the winter season, after a poor summer season across Spain.

The Atlantic archipelago is a rare warm destination in winter in Europe, and that season accounts for half of its annual tourism revenues.

After a sharp drop in tourism amid worries over the COVID-19 pandemic, a UK quarantine and travel warnings from Germany, officials hope quick testing on arrival and departure could help.

"There are tests that are faster and much cheaper than PCRs. There are frequent meetings about it", a spokeswoman of the regional government tourist department said to Reuters, referring to the widely used PCR laboratory tests.

Hoteliers said they hoped results in less than 15 minutes could help lure tourists back. But with the idea for tests on arrival already floated a few months back, they feared their plan might take time to materialise. "It will take some time until it becomes a reality, so we are not going to save all the winter season, which begins on November 1, but at least a part of it," said Juan Pablo Gonzalez, manager of Asotel, an association of hotels.



CHRISTMAS ON HOLD

- Palma city council admits that festive season celebrations across the city could have to be cancelled as a result of the coronavirus.

- See Full Report Inside



Government anticipating problems, but return to school is "necessary"

- Balearic president Armengol said yesterday that the new school year will be "complicated" but that it is "necessary to guarantee the education" of some 170,000 schoolchildren.

- "We have given a high priority to returning to school in person," she observed. See Inside