

New law on special forms of tourism

Greek parliament passed Law 4688/24.5.2020 on the “special forms of tourism and related provisions of tourism development” (the “Law”), seeking to modernise the current tourism framework; the Law is primarily aimed at the development of special interest tourism and the diversification of the tourism product in Greece.

The Law is structured into four sections. The first section focuses on the promotion of the untapped diving tourism in Greece. Among others, the law introduces provisions on the characterisation of diving parks and their concession of use, lifting in parallel long-standing restrictions on the visitability of shipwrecks and marine antiquities.

The second section streamlines a number of administrative procedures by amending special frameworks in place for the regulation of port infrastructures (marinas), Integrated Tourist Development Areas (ITDAs), condo hotels and composite touristic lodgings, while it also introduces amendments to certain town planning provisions applicable to tourism businesses and forest law provisions.

The third section aims at institutionalising the ever-growing trend of the travel industry, widely known as “glamping” (glamorous camping) –a concept blending the camping experience with traditional lodging amenities. The law maps out the framework for the development of glamping in Greece, introducing for the first time the glamping certification process for hotels and organised tourist camps meeting the qualitative criteria and therein designated specifications for the granting of the special glamping logo (valid for five years).

Finally, the fourth and final section of Law 4688/2020 modifies the existing regime on the concession of shoreline use seeking to facilitate seashore recreational activities, among others, rental businesses for sea sports, sea beds and chairs, benefiting seaside tourism lodgings.

In addition, the Law provides that by virtue of a special Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Tourism a new regulation governing the relationship between the tourism accommodation providers and their clients (at current art. 8 of L 1652/1986) is expected to be drawn up which will abrogate the existing regulation (art. 8 of L 1652/1986).

Furthermore, the Law amends a provision of the primary framework on tourist offices, clarifying that within the context of organised travel packages, the tourist offices may sell excursions to their group clients in the hotels with which they cooperate, through their own “employees” without the need of having a branch where the hotel is located (previous term “through their tour leaders” was repealed).

Finally, the Law provides guidelines for the special health protocols to be followed by the tourism enterprises in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, which will be further specified pursuant to a Ministerial Decision to be issued in this respect.

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