

VENEZUELA: TOURISM INDUSTRY NEGLECTED



Venezuela has a large number of touristic attractions. Yet, the country relies on 'black gold' and tourism industry is neglected.

Venezuela has many problems with crime, inflation and political divisions. **But it is still a great place to visit, since it has a nice and warm climate, big national parks, amazing beaches, jungles and the highest waterfall in the world.**

Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, but there were only 780,000 international visitors last year. This was a twenty-five percent increase over the year 2011.

The government of Venezuela formed a tourism ministry in the year 2005. After that, the visits of the foreign tourists increased significantly, but the number of visitors is still lower than the amount of travelers exploring Venezuela's neighbors. Colombia is a synonym for drug trafficking for many people, but it has two million international visitors every year.

There have been many debates about moving from the oil to tourism. The socialist government was elected in 1998 and it has given more attention to the tourism than the previous governments.

Many of the travelers are worried about the political division inside the country. The presidential elections were held recently and the socialist politician Nicolas Maduro won with a slight advantage of less than 300,000 votes over his competitor Henrique Capriles. The supporters of the opposition protested against the results of the elections and there were some clashes with the government backers and the police.

Also, the country has economic problems that affect the number of visitors. There is fifteen percent inflation in the country. The bolivar is the currency of Venezuela and the official trade rate is 6.3 to US dollar. The exchange rate is 24 to 1 on the black market. This causes difficulties to the international visitors.

The price of a hotel in Caracas with four or five stars is between USD 250 and USD 500, based on the data from a popular travel website. This is twice more than the tourists pay for rooms in Bogota or Mexico City.

The international visitors pay USD 450 for an old and dowdy room. The hotel facilities haven't been renovated since the year 1970.

Knowledgeable travelers can find good bargains by trading foreign money on the black market. This way, they can pay for accommodation and meals in cash. However, most of the tourists don't like to negotiate with moneychangers. Caracas Hilton was recently expropriated by the government. Since then, many of the companies are reluctant to invest in new properties.

The domestic market is affected by the fact that many Venezuelans have difficulties in getting

foreign currencies that they need to travel abroad. Airlines and hotel operators are trying to attract the customers to the domestic travel arrangements. T

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