

# CANCUN EXPECTS ARRIVAL OF 80,000 SPRING BREAKERS



Cancun, the popular destination in southeastern Mexico, is expecting the arrival of between 70,000 and 80,000 US students during the six-week spring break season that has already started in this tourist resort, according to Laura Fernández Piña, head of Quintana Roo's Ministry of Tourism (SEDETUR).

"During the approximately 6-week spring break period this year - almost two weeks before Holy Week and Easter and two weeks after these dates - we are set to receive an estimated 80,000 young people," she announced.

**The official noted in an interview that the spring break market has evolved over the years since it began in 1989 as a result of the crisis caused by hurricane Gilbert which hit a year earlier.**

To quote the figures, this segment reached 100,000 spring breakers but started to decline from 2003-2004, recording 80,000, 60,000, 45,000 and even 25,000 visitors in recent years.

Lack of security and social problems affecting the port of Acapulco, which was once the main destination, have made spring breakers return to Cancun.

The poor behavior of US students reached a climax in the 90s when they created shock with their sex scenes in public, drunkenness in nightclubs and bars, damage caused inside the hotels or urinating in the streets. Between 2002 and 2003 all this led the municipal authorities and tourism sector to sign a Civility Pact in an attempt to curb their excesses.

After having been stigmatized and almost declared personae non gratae, the authorities have sought to advise them about behavior that is permitted and prohibited by handing out leaflets at the city's international airport, while business people have sought to steer them towards private parties on the beaches and at hotel bars or nightclubs. This is the approach used by the Oasis Group which organizes a series of events dedicated to this market segment.

"We hope to have a clean slate; the truth is that in the nearly two decades of receiving this type of tourist there has been great improvement in the behavior and attitude of the authorities, tourism business people and the visitors themselves, as well as in their safety," said Fernández Piña.

**At the municipal level, the Civil Protection Department increased the number of lifeguards in the beach areas to ensure the safety of spring breakers.**

In addition to 30 lifeguards, a dozen officers from the agency were assigned to patrol the nightclub areas, mainly on weekend evenings, which is when the young US students come to enjoy the resort's nightlife.

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