

# CUBAN TOURISM AUTHORITIES EXPECT BOOMING NUMBERS



Cuban authorities have declared their intention to boost tourism and reach 4.2 million visitors in the near future. Cuban tourism sector aims at becoming the leader in the Caribbean region.

The officials of the Cuban Tourism Ministry (MINTUR) announced that **by the end of this year 3.5 million visitors are expected to come to the island.**

In the Caribbean, Cuba is only surpassed by the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, however the tourism numbers might start growing fast as Cuba is opening its gates and welcoming visitors.

The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana, after more than 50 years of discord and restrictions, brings hope to the Cuban tourism sector. If the new agreements facilitate traveling more, the country is in good position to become the leader in the region.

However, one of the issues the industry needs to face is the lack of professional training of the tourism staff. This problem was highlighted recently at the Pan-American convention held in the Cuban capital.

The 26th convention of the Pan-American Federation of Hotel, Gastronomy and Tourism Schools (CONPEHT) in Havana strengthened the image of the sector, according to the president of the organization, Ramón Martínez Gasca. He said that Cuba is now essential to the world because of its sustainability and concern with development.

**Some 500 experts from 20 countries arrived in Cuba for the event, wanting to understand the country's complex system of tourism training and its support for the Cuban tourism industry.**

CONPEHT was founded in Mexico in 1991 and brings together 26 countries, including Cuba. Initially it consisted of 15 educational institutions, but that number has now grown to 110, and they have made a strong impact on the professional development of employees in the area's tourism industry.

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