

Ecuador Tourism Industry Is Vital for Improving Economic Sustainability

As a country, Ecuador is well known for its fantastic diversity in terms of history, biodiversity and culture. However, the country's tourism industry has suffered over the years due to severe economic crisis and lacking infrastructure and transportation system.

During the 1980's the local government provided very limited support for tourism initiatives leaving the many ancient ruins, colonial towns and regions of scenic natural beauty underdeveloped. According to statistics made available by the World Bank report that was published in 2012, the number of tourist arrivals reported in 2010 was 1,047,000. Between the months of January and October 2012 Ecuador reported a record total of 1,049,493 inbound tourists. In 2011, the country received only 935,165 tourists.



Located in North Western South America, the Republic of Ecuador has in recent times witnessed an increase in the number of tourists visiting the country. In the year 2011 alone, tourism in Ecuador generated revenue of \$1.2 billion. Among the most notable source countries are Colombia (285,306 tourists), the United States (207,808), Spain (55,210), Argentina (39,855) Chile (35,741), and Venezuela (31,673). Other important source markets in Europe include Germany (24,744), Great Britain (17,574), France (16,440) and Italy (12,207). The sudden boost in the influx of tourists can be attributed to numerous promotional strategies in both international events and festivals.

Tourists visiting the country can enjoy glaciated volcanoes, tropical rainforests, can participate in water sport activities such as water rafting on the famous Amazon river. After the petroleum and agriculture industries, the tourism industry in Ecuador is currently the 3rd largest economic sector.

Traditionally, the Ecuador tourism is mainly focused on the use of boats to tour the area covered by the Galápagos Islands. This posed a great challenge to the tourism industry as it placed limitations on on-land tourism due to the limited number of beds that could be made available to tourists.

Additionally, the Ecuador tourism industry faced a larger obstacle due to the fact that during the late 1990's, the country suffered from a severe economic crisis which caused more than half of the country's population to be plunged into poverty.

This situation subsequently resulted in high levels of locals migrating to foreign countries as well as an increase in the rural–urban migration within the country. However, in part due to tourism and numerous land based government tourism initiatives to improve the situation, the economy has since rebounded.



As a result of the recent increased tourism flow to the country, the Ecuadorian government cited tourism as one of the key sectors that would require investment for growth initiatives. Actions such as the eradication of visa restrictions were put in place in 2010 and 2011 in order to adequately capitalize on the heightened potential presented to the country through the tourism industry. Other additional initiatives include the elimination of the conventional use of scenic destination photography to advertise the country. Instead, advertising campaigns have opted to make use of words to raise tourist awareness on the numerous attractions in the countries.

The Andean region within the country has especially witnessed tourist operations try to promote the indigenous culture and beauty of Ecuador through the promotion of luxury tourism. The country's tourism has witnessed increased diversification to include more sophisticated options especially for the products and services that promote entertainment and relaxation being made available to tourists.



Luxury all inclusive tours and hotels have become increasingly popular while tour companies are paying keen attention to their customers' satisfaction with the main aim of ensuring positive word of mouth marketing. Furthermore, initiatives and concepts that promote ecotourism, which can be loosely defined as the responsible touring of natural areas with the aim of improving the wellbeing of the indigenous population as well as conserving the environment, have also have been elevated.

Although the improvement in Ecuador tourism has been noted to be one of the key factors aiding economic recovery and growth within the country, threats such as an unexpected increase in population growth, uncontrolled increase in tourism as well as the uncontrolled introduction of invasive species continue to plague the industry.

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