

FIJIAN TOURISM HIT BY STORMS AND FLOODS



Storms and consequent floods hurt Fijian tourism badly. Tourists are canceling their bookings. Hotel employees have to work less hours. The government hopes to improve the situation by aggressive advertising campaign.

Fijian tourism industry was severely hit by unexpected floods caused by tropic storms at the beginning of this year. Thousands had to be evacuated, eleven people died and tourists got stranded. Houses and other infrastructure were destroyed. The government declared state of emergency in order to deal with the situation. A tourism center, the city of Nadi was severely damaged. Roads, power lines, water pipes and other infrastructure must be repaired.

The media naturally reported the situation, which caused a significant **drop in bookings** for this season. Combined with the global economic crisis and destroyed infrastructure this drop is a very bad news for the island nation. Fiji is highly dependent on tourism, despite majority of Fijians work in agriculture. Sugar industry as an important source of foreign exchange (it earns approximately \$300 million annually) was also severely damaged by the floods.

Fijian officials try to fight this drop by **aggressive promotional campaign**. According to Fiji Islands Hotels Association's president Dixon Seeto, Nadi recovered remarkably well and many of its businesses are back and running. He says it is vital to inform the tourists about the improvement. The most important source market for the island tourism industry is Australia and New Zealand. Fifty percent of tourists coming to Fiji are from these two destinations. Just now the tourism witnesses, in Tourism Fiji chairman Patrick Wong words, a situation that is "the worst since the industry"s formation". Nevertheless, interim Minister for Tourism Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum claims that all resorts in Fiji are now fully functional. However, the impacts of the drop in demand and cancellations of bookings force the hospitality players to reduce working hours for their employees. The country needs its tourism industry to recover ... and very quickly.

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