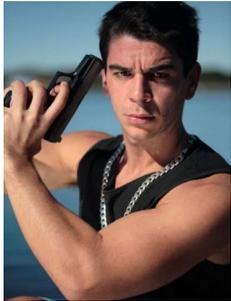


MEXICAN DRUG WARS SCARE OFF TOURISTS



Violent drug war in Mexico scares off tourists. Some US universities even warn their students against traveling to Mexico.

Mexicans fear their tourism industry may be hit by the drug war that has been going on in the northern parts of the country. Some 6,000 people were killed in drug related crimes last year. There were day time shootouts with government forces as well as beheadings and other murders. The authorities are afraid such news might affect the local tourism industry, which is an important source of foreign income.

Officials assure tourists that the so called drug war involves only gang members and the police. Tourists have not been targeted yet. Mexican officials step up security measures in tourism towns to protect foreign visitors.

Mexico is the 10th most popular tourism destination and it is especially popular with US citizens. Some 18 million Americans visited the country in 2008. Nevertheless, some US universities are recommending their students not to spend their spring break in here. The U.S. State Department even issued a warning where it recommends tourists to be cautious when traveling to the northern parts of Mexico, especially the border towns of Tijuana, Juarez and Laredo.

In the World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009 Mexico ranked 126th of 133 countries in the category of safety and security. Reasons for that were the bad security situation, violence, unreliable police and high number of deaths caused by road accidents.

The fact is that car accidents, falls, drawings, pickpockets and sexual assaults remain the major risks for tourists in Mexico. The U.S. Department of State recommends US citizens on vacation in Mexico to stay in contact with their relatives and inform them about their safety and whereabouts. Some spring breakers did actually change their minds and decided not to travel to this Latin American country. Nevertheless, according to data from last year the number of visitors to Mexico did not drop but quite the opposite, it has increased.

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