

CHILE EXPECTS TO WELCOME 4 MILLION TOURISTS IN 2013



Chile's government announced that by the end of 2013 foreign tourist arrivals to the country will reach four million people, which will advance by one year the President's goal, when in 2010 the country's leadership was assumed by Sebastián Piñera.

"When in 2010 the government of President Piñera arrived, we set out to reach the four million tourists mark by the end of 2014, but we are more likely to get ahead in almost a year," said Undersecretary of Tourism Jacqueline Plass.

Plass said that to reach that figure she is currently working on encouraging the arrival of travelers from Canada and Mexico, to incorporate them to the list of the main tourist source countries. That list currently comprises of Argentina, Brazil, USA, Spain, England, France, Germany, Peru, Colombia and Australia.

Chile received in 2012 a total of 3.5 million foreign tourists, a figure that represented a 13% increase over the previous year and was paramount in the sector.

"The past year marked a record for incoming tourism in our country. In two years we went from receiving 2.7 million tourists to 3.5 million. The country had not shown these figures of growth since 2005, when tourists increased 13.4," she added.

Plass acknowledged that this year's tourist arrivals "will be more moderate, not so explosive," mainly by the previous record in 2012. "The basis on which we are working is very high," she added.

Since the mid-1990s, tourism in Chile has become one of the main economic resources of this country, especially in its most extreme areas, although in recent years the central zone has positioned itself as a place to be visited by foreigners due to the wine industry.

Meanwhile, a report by the National Tourism Service (Sernatur), indicated that during the first quarter of this year, the number of foreign tourists in Chile registered an increase of one percent for a total of 1,189,279 people.

The majority of visitors comes from Argentina, with 533 thousand people, while the sharp rise occurred with Australian tourists, which between January and March of this year reached a nineteen percent rise. Spanish and Mexican are the other two nationalities that increased their share considerably, by twelve and eight percent respectively.

The number of Argentine tourists rose by 44% in March compared to the same month a year ago, due to the greater number of holidays during Easter in 2012. Furthermore, Sernatur highlighted a seven percent increase in Asian visitors in the first three months of the year.

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