

CRUISE LINES RETURN TO MEXICO



The swine flu causes tremendous harm to Mexico's tourism industry and Mexico's officials need to think about strategies to get back visitors.

Although the swine flu outbreak appears to be over by now it is further doing harm to the Mexican tourism industry. Due to the swine flu and its consequences the **Mexican tourism industry is expected to make \$4 billion less in 2009.**

By now the flu has reached about 66 countries but Mexico is the country which is still suffering. The tourism industry had already been struggling due to the impacts of the financial crisis but the flu made it even worse for Mexico. Flights to the country were nearly empty during the past weeks and the **hotel occupancy rate dropped down to 25 percent** in some places. Many hotels needed to reduce their room rates by 25 percent to 50 percent to attract at least some guests. Furthermore, Mexico tourism officials do not expect the industry to fully recover until the end of 2009.

However, recently the Center for Disease control in Atlanta reduced the Mexico travel warning to a travel precaution which might soothe the whole situation in a while. Mexico now wants to try to win back the visitors. The national tourism board is currently launching a **new \$90 million advertising campaign** which should educate the public about the facts and dangers of swine flu and bring visitors back to Mexico. Furthermore, hotels and airlines offer incredible deals to attract visitors. The swine flu also hit the cruise industry. Mexico is one of the top cruise destinations but in the past weeks **ships dropped the Mexican ports from their itineraries** to avoid guests carrying the flu on board. The launch of Pullmantur's Pacific Dreams already had to be canceled and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Ltd. even announced that due to the swine flu they fear their shares to go down by 22 cents.

To cope with the situation and to avoid new flu outbreaks Cruise Lines International Association Members use an enhanced screening procedure to help prevent the introduction or spread of Influenza A (H1N1) on cruise ships. According to restrictions all passengers must fill out a health questionnaire before going on board. If passengers are showing any flu-like symptoms the cruise line personnel can refuse to let them go on board.

However as everything is soothing down slowly the situation seems to come under control and as the warnings were reduced cruise vessels are now quickly returning to their original itineraries on which they will also visit Mexican ports again.

By Wiebke Wohlfahrt

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