

CUBA TO FOCUS ON ECO-TOURISTS



Cubans hope to bring more visitors to the island by promoting it as a destination for ecotourism. The authorities hope to boost the industry by diversifying it.

For years the Cuban economy has been heavily dependent on the tourism industry. Local officials hope to further boost the industry by diversifying the offer. The country's main attractions for tourists will remain the sun and beach vacations but there are also other possibilities. **Cubans want to lure more tourists by offering them an eco tourism experience.**

After all there is a lot to see for eco tourists visiting the "Island of Freedom." The country can even boast it releases very low levels of carbon emissions, which is nevertheless caused by the dire status of the island's economy. The industry is limited and so is the use of automobiles.

There is the Zapata Swamp, a national park near the infamous Bay of Pigs. The park is actually Caribbean's largest bioreserve inhabited by 354 species of birds and there are also 130 varieties of plants. **Another tourism attraction is the Boca de Guama crocodile farm.** Crocodiles are bred here since 1962 and 6,000 of them live in the swamps around the farm currently.

Recently Cuba hosted a conference to find ways how to boost the eco tourism that currently represents only a fragment of total numbers of visitors coming to the country. Deputy Tourism Minister Alexis Trujillo expects the number of visitors coming to the island to increase by almost 3 per cent this year compared to the year before. **Nevertheless, the global economic crises made the Cuban tourism sector decrease their prices to be able to lure tourists.** As a result the revenues are likely to be actually lower than in 2008. If the US embargo is lifted American tourists could possibly flock the island and bring the needed funds. Among them there might be the eco tourists who are generally staying longer and spending more than the regular leisure tourists.

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