

NEW VISA WAIVER TO BOOST BRAZILIAN TOURISM



Brazilian president, Michel Temer, is seeking to attract more foreign investment and visitors to Brazil through a new visa waiver program. The aim is to help Brazilian tourism as well as the Latin America's largest economy out of its worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The Brazilian government is considering a **waiver of visa requirements for visitors from the United States, Japan, Canada and Australia to boost Brazilian tourism**, and the plan could eventually be extended to include China, according to a spokesman of the Tourism Ministry.

The proposal from the new Tourism Minister Marx Beltrão, could extend a visa waiver programme adopted for visitors from these four countries during this year's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro for a trial period of 12 months.

575,800 US citizens visited Brazil in 2015, less than 10 per cent of the total number of visitors to that South American country. Meanwhile, the number of Brazilians travelling to the United States rose to 2.6 million in 2014.

The new visa waiver program could become permanent if there is a significant increase in the number of tourists and the governments of the four countries implement reciprocal measures to remove visa requirements for Brazilian visitors, the spokesman said.

The minister's proposal still needs approval from other government departments, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which issues visas and which has called for reciprocity in the exemption of US citizens from applying for visas.

Visitors from most countries in Latin America and the European Union as well as Russia do not need visas to travel to Brazil, but US visitors are required to pay about \$160 for a visa to visit Brazil, an amount that is identical to the amount Brazilians are charged if they wish to travel to the United States.

The fee charged by Brazil was imposed in retaliation for the exclusion of Brazil from the US visa waiver programme.

The Ministry of Tourism is considering the inclusion of several other countries, China in particular, in the visa waiver plan, to try to attract some of the 100 million Chinese tourists traveling abroad each year, the spokesman said. Only 55,000 Chinese citizens visited Brazil last year but they might be a great boost to the struggling Brazilian tourism.

The Brazilian Tourism Institute (EMBRATUR) has predicted that the country will close the year with a total of 6.6 million international tourists, 4.8% more than at the end of 2015, and that they will generate an expenditure of \$2 billion (1.8376 billion euros).

So far this year, spending by foreign tourists has amounted to \$3.160 billion (2.9044 billion euros), 7% higher than in the same period last year. In the month of August alone the country earned 602 million dollars (553.3 million euros), according to the institute.

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