

CUBAN TOURISM HEAVILY RELIES ON CANADA AND USA



Cuban tourism authorities announced record number of tourists for the last year. The country welcomed more than 4 million visitors most of them coming from the North America.

Dalila Alba González, deputy director of marketing for the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) reported that Cuban tourism ended the year of 2016 **with more than four million visitors for the first time which means an increase of 13% compared to the previous year.**

“That growth rate of the number of tourists has been maintained during the whole year. During the first trimester, more than one and a half million guests have visited the country which represents a 15% increase with the same cycle as the previous year. It must be noted that in March of this year, one week before, we welcomed the one millionth guest.”

North America continues to be the main source market with a total of 45% of visitors coming to the country. Canada holds the highest number of tourists while the United States is growing significantly in spite of the limitations still imposed by the trade embargo.

On the other hand, the Old World contributes 33% of foreign tourism where Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom are the most significant markets. Latin America represents only 16% of the tourism market.

Experts predict that in the course of the next 15 years, the number of tourists staying in hotels will triple, with a potential of 10 million tourists per year which will generate an income exceeding 9,000 million dollars.

Centering on development programs for the Cuban tourism sphere and the array of products, the experts say, “besides focusing on the product, brand, and destination, under the concept umbrella of territories with tourism preferences, which is one of the functions of Mintur, focus must also be on hotel lodging, nature, marine and navigational tourism, recreation, real estate development, camping and the entities that support those activities.”

Hotel lodging is a fundamental program for the increase in the number of rooms built for lodging and the construction of new hotels. It is predicted that by 2030 the number of rooms will increase by 100,000 mainly in Habana, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Sancti Spíritus, Ciego de Avila, Camagüey and Holguín.

In short term, highlighted for the marine and navigational programs, are the projects of Marina Gaviota Varadero, the improvements on the Navy Base of Chapelín, the swimming resort of Varadero; the Hemingway Marina in Habana, the Cienfuegos and Cayo Largo Marinas in Ensenada de Bautista, Cayo Coco, and the same for Júcaro, Ciego de Avila.

Also predicted are the expansion and modernization of Marina de Santiago de Cuba, the largest Caribbean city Cuban destination. The recreation project is underway with construction and

production of adventure and nature parks, water parks, and amusement parks; as well as routes and paths with inherent natural and cultural heritage, and recreational areas.

Actual priority is focused on ground-breaking projects of recreational parks in Varadero, the Northern part of Holguín and Jardines del Rey, where the first climbing park was inaugurated. The groundbreaking cable car and wakeboarding activities will open.

As for real estate development associated with Cuban tourism, it is pointing mostly toward the construction and production of golf courses. Currently, there are 13 projects for this program, of which two are already established joint ventures (Carbonera in 2014 and Bellomonte in 2015); another two (El Salado and Punta Colorada) are in the approval process and the rest are in various stages of negotiation.

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