

NICARAGUA LACKS PROPER TOURISM STRATEGY



Throughout the last years, tourism in Nicaragua has been growing – both the number of tourists as well as the revenues have increased. However, according to local tourism stakeholders the potential is still not fully utilized.

“The key is in eliminating the obstacles in important sectors of the economy that allow it to become in growth engines”, says the chapter Tourism and its importance for sustainable development, included in the first report of the

One of the obstacles to further development of tourism in Nicaragua according to the Nicaraguan Foundation for the Economic and Social Development (Funides) is **the absence of a long-term tourism strategy that defines the goals and objectives of the country** in tourism and that declares the sector to be of national interest.

“It should be a stable strategy that does not change with the arrival of new authorities, although at the same time it should be realistic and adaptable to the changes of the markets and of the goals that are being achieved. To define such strategy, the relationship and consensus between the public and private sectors are essential,” said Funides representative.

Another obstacle to overcome is proper infrastructure. According to Funides, the country still needs more international airports, more and more agile customs for the entry of tourists, more port terminals, paved roads and better telecommunication services.

It is also important to increase the amount of arrivals by air, land or water. Considering that the high cost of the ticket is a major barrier to the arrival of more tourists, it is required that the country is connected with more destinations worldwide, but also that the fares of the tickets are lower. To Funides, the recent entry of low-cost airlines into Central America could solve “in part” this problem.

A third element to be addressed is education, as this is key to the development of the sector. Funides states that it is necessary to have more qualified staff who would provide better quality care. “In particular, bilingual education should be reinforced. The role of the national education system for this matter is fundamental,” the organization stated in a report.

It is also recommended that the tourism strategy should include promotion and financing of enterprises that provide services related to tourism, such as tour operators, vehicle rentals, maritime and lake transportation.

“The authorities, together with the private sector, must increase resources to further promote the country, present it at international fairs, publicize Nicaragua and enhance the image as a sustainable tourist destination,” says Funides report.

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