

# MEDICAL TOURISM IN ARGENTINA REACHING HIGHEST POSITIONS



Medical tourism is not seasonal, it is distributed all over the year and the whole of the national territory; more than 20% of revenues go towards hotels, recreational activities and tourism agencies. It is the segment of tourism which directly generates the biggest amount of foreign currency as well as jobs, according to Miguel Cané, President of the Argentine Chamber of Medical Tourism.

Medical tourism in Argentina is growing in importance for the economy. In 2016, according to data of the Chamber, **Argentina welcomed 14 000 foreign medical travelers who spent around 300 million dollars on medical services and tourist activities.**

Most common treatments included curative medicine (48%), cosmetic surgery (34%), and wellness treatment (18%). Consequently, the most requested medical practices were - traumatology, cardiology, liposuction, bariatric surgery, dentistry / ophthalmology, breast implants, abdominoplasty, weight management / medical check-ups, and transplants.

## **From Buenos Aires to Mendoza**

“Of the most frequently visited medical tourism destinations, 37% are located in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, 19% are situated in the province of Buenos Aires, 15% in Córdoba, 10% in Mendoza, 7% in Santa Fe; the combined total for the rest of the provinces represents 12% of total visitations,” Cané explained.

It was also noted that 47% of the patients are Latin American, 24% are from the United States and Canada, 22% are European, and the remaining 7% are from other countries.

## **Fourth Best Medical Tourism Destination**

The goal of growing and positioning Argentina as a major medical tourism destination has been achieved over the last 7 years. “When we first started investing in medical tourism in Argentina in 2010, the country did not even appear in the ranking of health travel destinations,” Cané said. However, in 2015, the country was already among the Top Five Latin American destinations. Currently, according to the Medical Tourism Index, Argentina occupies the fourth position, following Columbia, Panama, and Costa Rica. The indicators which are used for these rankings are: environment / country, medical tourism industry, and infrastructure / services.

According to the Chamber of Medical Tourism, the obstacles to further growth are the exchange rate and taxes.

“The exemption of the VAT for the accommodation expenses of foreign tourists is moving ahead, but **it is necessary for us to revise tax charges and for our exports of professional medical services to become like all other VAT exempted exports** - as is the case in other countries, some of which even have medical tourism laws which encourage investments and benefit domestic medical care,” according to the Chamber.

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