

CUBAN TOURISM BENEFITS THE MOST FROM CANADIAN VISITORS



Cuba has welcomed more than 2 530 000 international visitors so far, which is a good sign that this year's expected goal of 4 200 000 vacationers will be met, ensured José Daniel Alonso, the Ministry of Cuban Tourism's General Director of Development, Investments, and Business.

He reported that by the first half of June, the arrival of travelers had grown by 22% compared to the same period during 2016, when the country reached the record number of 4 million tourists.

According to José Daniel Alonso, Canada remains the country which sends the most tourists to Cuba, followed by the USA, whose citizens are only permitted to travel to Cuba under the 12 general licenses approved by Barack Obama's government for the "People to People" exchange, a privilege which is becoming restricted as part of the change in policy towards Cuba announce by Donald Trump.

"Mintur's" management also highlighted the rise of traditional European markets, citing Spain, France, Italy, and Germany as examples of countries that benefit the most to Cuban tourism.

According to the specialist, the island currently has 67 759 hotel rooms, a number which by the end of this year should be around 68 200 - with plans to build 100 000 new rooms by 2030.

He highlighted the recent opening of the "Iberostar Bella Vista" in Varadero, and of the "Gran Manzana Kempinski" in Havana, the first of a series of luxury establishments that will make their debut in Cuba as an expression of the interest of Cuban tourism industry in attracting ever more demanding segments of the market.

Regarding the alliance with the non-state sector, he said that there were already more than 22 500 privately owned rooms with accommodation services, making this type of holding second only to the "Gaviota" group, which has control over the most hotel rooms in the country (27 000).

Among the innovations contemplated within the scope of Mintur's business portfolio are hotel management contracts in cities linked to tourism circuits and cultural heritage, categories of tourism which are in ever increasing demand among travelers to Cuba.

Regarding this point, José Daniel Alonso also mentioned the recent establishment of hotels by the Spanish "Meliá" company in the cities of "Camagüey", "Cienfuegos" and "Trinidad" and by "Iberostar" in "Gibara" and "Holguín".

According to the Director, last year, **Cuban tourism contributed more than three billion dollars** to the economy, reaffirming itself as one of the country's main sources of foreign currency earnings.

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