

CAPE VERDE TOURISM SECTOR AWAITING RADICAL CHANGES



a substantial change is likely to affect the Cape Verde tourism. Visa-exempted visitors travelling to the islands will have to register online in advance. This requirement is incorporated in a new decree that changes the country's legal framework for the entry and stay of foreigners, soon to be accepted by the parliament. The aim is to attract more tourists.

Coming into effect on January 1st 2018, the changes in the decree aim to accommodate the governmental decision to **require the visa-exempt citizens from the European Union and the United Kingdom to apply for a 30-day entry and stay visa**, whilst also foreseeing other visa-free situations in the future.

"Visa-exempted citizens are obliged to pre-register themselves, using a platform made available online, up to five days before the start of the trip," the bill proposes. Including ten islands and five islets, Cape Verde archipelago is known for its culture and specific customs and as such is a favorite destination for leisure travelers.

According to the National Statistics Institute in Cape Verde, the foreign visits in the archipelago have increased by 13.6 per cent last year, with tourists from the UK, Germany, Portugal and France choosing the most to spend their holidays on the islands. Tourism represents 21% of the country's GDP and is one of the main generators of employment.

Cape Verde's visa-free entry policy for European citizens was announced by the country's prime minister Ulisses Correia da Silva in April. The announcement aroused controversy and opposition from several camps, as it does not ensure a visa-free reciprocity for the entrance of Cape Verdean citizens in the European Union, and the potential loss of revenue that the country may have to endure.

The main aim of the government is to attract more visitors to the archipelago. Another region of focus is China. **Chinese tour operators estimate that around 100,000 Chinese are willing to visit Cape Verde, if the country makes the effort to build enhanced tourist facilities**, hotels for instance, but also improved road infrastructures. The geographic position of Cape Verde, off the northeast coast of Africa, and near the Canary Islands (Spain), Madeira and Azores (Portugal), is viewed as one of the country's key assets.

Recently, while visiting Cape Verde, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, promised that the Beijing government will unconditionally support the development of the country's maritime economy, as China has already established partnership with the future economic zone on one of the islands - São Vicente.

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