

CUBA WELCOMED 23% MORE FOREIGN VISITORS



Cuba expects to earn USD1.5 billion in tourism revenue for the first half of the year. The island welcomed more than 2.66 million foreign visitors, up 23.2 percent compared to the same period in 2016, according to the Tourism Minister, Manuel Marrero.

The increase in tourism revenue represents more than 9 percent compared to the same period in 2016, while per-day tourists increased by 11.8 percent, said Marrero in a report presented to the deputies of the Commission of Attention to Services of the National Assembly.

The Cuban minister also said that the government expects 4.7 million foreign visitors to arrive in the Caribbean this year, which means a growth of 16.5 percent compared to 2016, when Cuba achieved for the first time the record of 4 million of foreign visitors.

Canada remains the leading source market for the island after recovering from the decline experienced in 2016, while the "traditional" European markets such as Spain, France, Italy and Germany show "positive" figures, according to the minister.

With respect to visitors from the United States, their number increased by 150 percent, even though Americans cannot come to the island as leisure tourists, but they are eligible for one of the twelve travel licenses approved by the administration of former President Barack Obama (2009-2017).

This dispensation, which softened the travels for different reasons such as religious, cultural, educational, humanitarian aid or personal exchanges with the Cuban people, will be restricted according to the change of policy towards Cuba announced by the current US President Donald Trump.

The tourism minister also said that by 2018 Cuba intends to receive 5 million foreign visitors, and confirmed the plan to expand the country's accommodation capacity.

Right now Cuba has 67,769 hotel rooms, a figure that the minister hopes to raise to more than 100,000 by 2030 in order to meet the high demand in the main tourist centers such as Havana, the resort of Varadero, the eastern province of Holguin and the Cayería Norte and the city of Trinidad, in the central area.

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