

TOURISM IN HONDURAS - NEW LAW, HOTELS, AND A PORT



Tourism in Honduras awaits a new bill to be passed. With the approval of the Law of Incentive for Tourism more than 250,000 jobs will be generated in the next two years. Intensive development in the hotel and cruise sectors are expected to boost the arrivals.

President Juan Orlando Hernández asked the National Congress to pass the new Law of Incentive for Tourism, which **aims to revitalize the sector, as a part of the transversal axes of the Honduras 20/20 Plan and generate 250,000 jobs** in the next two years, according to information released by the Honduran government.

New Tourism Law

With the presentation of the proposal by the executive branch, the law focusing on the development of tourism in Honduras is expected to be promptly discussed and approved to begin its implementation by the National Congress.

The law is an initiative framed in the National Program of Economic Development 20/20 and the study prior to its elaboration states that tourism in Honduras is growing the least when compared to other countries in the Caribbean region.

Nicaragua, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and other countries, despite having similar problems like Honduras or even more serious, are growing, which shows the importance of the adoption of the new tourism law.

Hotel Development

While the tourism infrastructure is in need of development, several hotel chains announced entering the country. Last month, Hilton reported on the signing of a management agreement with Desarrolladores Asociados de Honduras (DAH) to operate a new 173-room Hilton Garden Inn hotel in Tegucigalpa, the country's capital and largest city.

Hilton Garden Inn will form part of a mixed-use complex that will be home to the Real De Minas Mall, office space and entertainment options.

Within the next five years G6 Hospitality will also bring a Motel 6 or Studio 6 property to Honduras, with an investment of approximately US\$4.5 million according to a development agreement signed in January.

In 2018, Marriott International will open its first Courtyard by Marriott property in San Pedro Sula. This will be the portfolio's second hotel in the country after the Tegucigalpa Marriott Hotel.

In addition to Hilton and Marriott, hotel groups such as InterContinental Hotels Group, Hyatt Corporation, La Quinta Inns & Suites and Choice Hotels (CHH) have long been present in the main metropolitan and resort areas of Honduras.

New Cruise Port

To further boost tourism in Honduras, the country also plans to open a new cruise port in 2018 on Isla del Tigre (Tiger Island). The Amapala cruise port will be the fourth cruise port in Honduras joining Roatan, Trujillo, and Puerto Cortés.

Honduras has seen an increase in cruise passengers over the past few years.

With the recent addition of three new cruise lines now stopping in the country, 18 different lines now stop in Honduran ports of call.

In total, 341 cruise ships called at Honduran ports last year, 6.6 percent more than the 320 ships that docked in the country in 2015. The largest of these cruise ships carried 6,882 passengers. Per-passenger average cruise spending reached US\$80 in 2016.

Tourism in Honduras

The country offers pristine beaches, wild rainforests, colonial cities and pre-Hispanic archeological sites. **The Bay Islands are among Honduras' most important tourism attractions for their world's best beaches, dive sites, ports and places to retire.** Visitors especially enjoy the chance to swim with the largest fish on the planet, the whale shark.

The country is also a world-class rafting destination, with the Rio Cangrejal, one of Central America's most accessible and beautiful rivers. Nature lovers can explore 91 protected areas and national parks collectively accounting for 27 percent of the country's territory. History buffs usually head to the Mayan archaeological site of Copán, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Spanish colonial cities of Gracias and Comayagua are also among the highlights of tourism in Honduras.

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