

MEXICAN TOURISM AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE



Mexican tourism contributes 8.5% to GDP and generates more than 9 million jobs in the country. The recent earthquake is feared to substantially affect the sector. The first reports are quite negative.

Before the earthquake, the hotel occupancy was over 65% in Mexico City. Now, it has dropped to 25% and is expected to drop to 10% in the coming days. **According to the locals, Mexico City is anything but a tourist attraction.**

Some events and conventions in the capital had to be cancelled which will greatly affect the Mexican tourism numbers. The efforts are focused on putting the capital back on its feet.

Travel professionals expect the coming weeks to see a substantial drop in Mexican tourism numbers. The first boost should take place in November with the third edition of the Mexican Formula 1 Grand Prix. Last year the races generated 12,000 million pesos.

Before the earthquake, the goal of the tourism authorities was to exceed last year's figures. Now, it would be a success if a similar figure is achieved. The same applies to the tourism at the end of 2017 and the first quarter of 2018.

The damages to the infrastructure of the sector are not the problem. From 300 tourist-quality hotels, only six were evacuated because of the damage. 15 more hotels are currently being evaluated.

Regarding Mexican tourism, the main problem is the perception: Mexico City had managed to position itself in the business tourism sector as well as a vibrant cultural hub. At the moment, the first feelings that the city produce are solidarity and empathy because of the hard times the people are going through. The inhabitants are not in the mood to show their hospitality to the visitors.

How long will it take to return to "normal"? The most optimistic estimate is at least a week. How long will it take international tourists to erase the tragic pictures from their minds and to re-associate Mexico City with joy, fun and parties? This will depend on how quickly the normalization process takes place in the city life, but also on how the image of Mexico is "exported" after the earthquake. For now, rubble images and human stories - with a bit of drama and heroism - prevail.

How much will the situation of the capital affect the rest of the country? There are reasons to be moderately optimistic because there are many destinations that have their own dynamics such as the Riviera Maya, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta, San Miguel de Allende ... **However, it should not be forgotten that Mexico City is Mexico's second most important destination right after Cancun.** In addition, Mexico City is the gateway for many tourists who go to other destinations.

Mexican tourism has grown 10% or more per year in the last five years and has become a driving force for other sectors. It brings more foreign currency income to Mexico than oil.

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