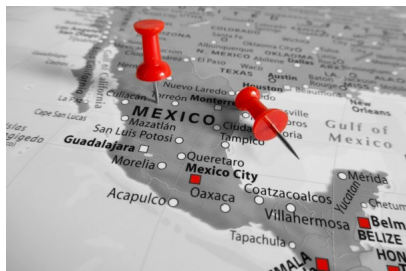


U.S. TRAVEL ALERTS HARM TOURISM IN MEXICO



Travel safety alerts regarding Mexico issued by the United States government are causing a slowdown in tourism in Mexico especially with respect to tourism revenue and the number of international travelers.

According to the Bank of Mexico (Banxico), the country received 418 million dollars for the arrival of international travelers last October, an increase of 2.5% compared to the same month in 2016.

It is the lowest growth in the last five and a half years, since April 2012, when at that time there was a null variation of income from tourism.

The Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy of the Anáhuac University director, Francisco Madrid, said that the low growth in revenue for international travelers is due to the update of the travel safety alert to Mexico issued by USA.

Last August 22, the US Department of State updated an alert to its citizens about travel and safety conditions in Quintana Roo, Baja California Sur, Baja California, Guerrero, Chiapas, Colima and Veracruz.

These seven states concentrated 65.5% of foreign travelers who spent the night in hotels in Mexico last year; only Quintana Roo received 51.5%, according to figures from the Ministry of Tourism (Sectur in Spanish).

The president of the Confederation of Tourist Organizations of Latin America (COTAL in Spanish), Armando Bojórquez, agreed that the alert substantially affected the tourism revenues.

“The alert scared the providers of tourist services, which caused a decrease in the rates of hotels and airlines, since many foresaw an impact on the arrival of tourists to the country,” he said.

Bojórquez explained that the alerts mainly impact tourists with high purchasing power in the US, Canada and Europe, who opt for another country instead of Mexico.

In contrast, travelers from Latin America are less susceptible to security warnings, like the Mexican tourist, he said.

Betting on South Americans. Bojórquez mentioned the importance of betting more on the Latino market, which usually goes out shopping and does not stay up in the all-inclusive hotel like the American and European visitor.

He commented that many South Americans want to visit Acapulco. However, the lack of connectivity complicates their travels.

Bojórquez explained that the depreciation of the peso against the dollar also caused a lower growth in income from tourism in Mexico, given that there are still many services that are charged in pesos, such as restaurants, taxis and car rentals.

Eight out of every 10 dollars that Mexico receives for international visitors come from incoming tourists because their spending is considerably higher than that of other travelers due to the more extended stay they have.

Thus, the incoming tourists spent a thousand and 153 million dollars in October, an increase of only 0.5% compared to the similar month in 2016 and meant the smallest increase since April 2012.

They stigmatize the sector. The head of the Sectur, Enrique de la Madrid, said that the travel safety alerts issued by the US are also affecting the hotel chains and airlines from that country that have businesses in Mexico.

“We do not think that the way they release the alerts to our country is right, because they stigmatize, disorient, and affect the tourism sector; and they also affect themselves, because many of the hotel companies in the US have large businesses in our country,” he said.

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