

COLOMBIA BECOMES POPULAR CONVENTIONS DESTINATION IN LATIN AMERICA



Colombia is becoming an attractive destination for the meetings and conventions industry, not just because of its infrastructure and the added value of its cities, but because of its commitment to the environment and local communities.

Colombia is now the third country hosting the highest number of events and conventions in Latin America and is increasingly regarded as an important conventions destination. This was highlighted by Flavia Santoro, President of ProColombia, who pointed out that, according to the ranking of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), **Colombia hosted a total of 142 events last year, and ranked second with the largest number of attendees.**

According to the same ranking, Bogotá was the Colombian city that carried out the most events that year, placing it above Washington, Rio de Janeiro, New York and Chicago. The country's capital climbed up seven positions in the regions of South America and North America.

Mexico, the United States, Ecuador and Peru are the countries with the most outbound travelers to events held in Colombia. This has been a rising trend, which in 2017 increased by 12.7%, 11.2%, 8.1% and 8.1%, respectively, compared to 2016; and only between January and July of this year the number grew by 6.3% compared to the same period of 2017, registering almost 80,000 visitors according to figures of the Colombian Immigration office for these cities.

On the other hand, Cuba (60.2%), Panama (17.1%) and Costa Rica (12.4%) reported the largest increases in travelers arriving in Colombia due to events in 2017, in comparison to 2016.

According to Santoro, over the last five years, the arrival of visitors for events and businesses to the country increased by 15.4%.

Moreover, the director of ProColombia highlighted that, according to the average expenditure estimated by the ICCA for 2017, the impact of this industry in Colombia exceeded 853 million USD.

In 2017, expenditure of an event traveler amounted to 28% more than in 2016, according to figures from the ICCA.

“Business and convention tourism in Colombia is a very important sector of the economy, because much of the tourism entering the country is corporate, so this sector not only boosts hotel occupancy but also the use of complementary services,” said Gustavo Toro Velásquez, executive president of the Colombian Hotel and Tourism Association (COTELCO).

It is noteworthy that, according to the Monthly Hotel Show of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), last July, the main reason for travel of guests staying at hotels was leisure (46.2%), followed by business (42%), conventions (5.9%) and “other reasons” (5.8%).

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