

BOLSONARO EFFECT: ARGENTINA EXPECTED TO ATTRACT BRAZIL'S GAY TOURISM



The LGBT tourism sector in Brazil stays alert after the newly elected president's homophobic remarks. Jair Messias Bolsonaro is assuming the office on the 1st January, however even now Argentina expects an increase in their gay tourism numbers thanks to him.

Once Mr. Bolsonaro assumes the presidency, the local community fears that hate crimes will rise. Tourism experts predict that the LGBT tourists will opt for Argentina as their new destination instead of Brazil.

During the presidential campaign, a number of homophobic attacks were reported in Brazil, triggering an alarm in the gay tourism sector. "There's now a bad image of the country, the Bolsonaro effect. Whoever travels here has something more to worry about. These are troubling news, and that has an impact on the market," explained Ricardo Gomes, president of Brazil's LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, before last Sunday's elections. The triumph of Jair Bolsonaro poses a worrying scenario for the future in the neighboring country and, as a consequence, positions Argentina as an even more attractive alternative for "gay friendly" tourism.

At the Argentina Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (CCGLA), they expect that many tourists will lean towards visiting the country once Bolsonaro assumes presidency. "These are only speculations, but when we were in San Pablo (at the start of October), after seeing the kind of man that could win the elections, they showed real concern, and many even told me that they did not rule out leaving the country if he won. Brazil is the country with the most homophobic attacks per day in South America. This region is the most dangerous place to be LGBT. So if this happened before, what will happen now that they have 'free rein', so to speak," said Pablo De Luca, president of the CCGLA, adding that: "I think we are going to see the arrival of more gay tourism than ever, which is why we have to double the effort in education and awareness, so that those who are looking for a safe place, can find it. Being a 'gay friendly' city means that the traveling experience of the people is the same regardless of their sexual orientation. If they come and can live openly, that's good for us."

"I wouldn't be capable of loving a homosexual son. I will not be a hypocrite: I'd rather have a son that dies in an accident than for him to be involved with another man," the president-elect of Brazil commented during an interview. For his part, the president of Brazil's LGBT Chamber acknowledged that "those who felt hatred against gays, even against African-Americans and women, but stayed quiet because it was wrong to voice that kind of thought, are now the ones 'out of the closet'. Brazil already has records of violence that affect tourists' decision to travel here. This hate wave affects even more," mentioned Gomes amidst the run-off.

However, after Bolsonaro's triumph was made official, his remarks seemed more lenient. "It would be very hasty for us to speculate anything about gay tourism during the next government. We understand that, the same way he could force rulings against the LGBT public in the country, he could also let things follow their course." In the case of tourism, we have a cooperation agreement

signed with EMBRATUR and the Ministry of Tourism until June 2023,” said Gomes

Following a top-ten ranking published in the United Kingdom, Buenos Aires is listed as one of the preferred destinations of the LGBT community, next to Tel Aviv, Berlin, Copenhagen, and Madrid, among others. It is the only South American country among the top ten. “Four out of ten people who visit us come from Brazil. It is the most important market we have in Argentina. When it comes to gay tourism, we are the pioneers in the region, and we have to continue promoting it in the same way,” concluded De Luca, who along with other CCGLA members continues promotion of different destinations in the interior of the country.

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