

GUATEMALA'S TOURISM SET TO GROW BY 13%



By the end of the year, Guatemala expects a 13% growth in the number of arrivals compared to 2017, according to the INGUAT. In 2019, the Guatemala's tourism sector will host various international meetings to help promote the country.

In 2017, 2,113,270 visitors entered the country, representing an increase of 11% compared to 2016.

Last Wednesday, the director of the Guatemalan Institute of Tourism (INGUAT, in Spanish), Jorge Mario Chajón, said that 2018 is set to close with a 13% growth.

This performance would mean the arrival of 274,725 more visitors than last year, setting the number at 2,387,995 by the end of this season.

These forecasts suggest that in Guatemala, each foreign tourist has a daily average expenditure of 96.63 USD, with an average stay of 8 days.

In 2017, the income of Guatemala's tourism generated by foreign currencies was approximately 1,212.7 million USD (around 93,325 million GTQ). In 2018, the figure is set to surpass the 1,600 million USD mark.

"We have seen a double-digit growth for two consecutive years, which is important for the country's economy," the official said.

Faced with encouraging data, the offer of hotel rooms remains limited. According to Marcia Méndez, responsible for Trade, Investment and Tourism of the Embassy of Guatemala in Spain, the hotel offer in the Central American country grows only 2% annually. The existence of this gap between the growth of tourists and the hotel offer represents an investment opportunity for hotel chains and companies linked to this sector.

In addition, a spike in direct flights has been reported by different airlines. "An effort and a risk that they are undertaking, but they are doing it because there is growth in demand," Chajón said.

By 2019, there are high expectations to maintain these levels. For this, the country will be promoted as a destination at 40 international tourism and travel fairs. It will also support promotions, both in foreign media, as well as billboards, taxis, buses, and international events of cities in the main issuing markets, namely the United States and Europe.

Earlier this year, promotion was also taken to taxis and airport billboards in several cities of Russia during the month of the World Cup.

Next year, there will also be a window to show Guatemala's tourism sights as attractive destinations during four international tourism activities that will take place in the country. In 2018, several congresses and conventions attracted foreigners and revenues. With the Ibero-American Summit of both businessmen and Heads of State, held earlier this November in Antigua Guatemala, tourism

was revitalized and generated foreign income of 2.7 million USD (about 21 million GTQ).

Chajón said that they should continue working with discipline, based on the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP).

“We have strictly followed the master plan finding a lot of support from institutions that are seeing tourism as an axis of development, but we also had to engage other public and private institutions to be able to keep them within the master plan”.

"It's the only way that Guatemala will be able to recover its lead in tourism, as it had in the 1980s. And it's the only way to create opportunities for communities adjacent to tourist sites and offer them a decent life," the official added.

Annual performance

-According to the reports of the INGUAT, in 2016, there was only a 4% growth.

-In 2017, Guatemala's tourism grew by 11%.

-By the end of 2018, the figure is expected to reach a 13% growth.

-In 2019, the institute predicts that the sector will continue to grow at the same pace.

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