

GAY TOURISM HAS GROWN 11% IN BRAZIL



A sector accountable for generating a revenue of US\$ 218 billion in the world has registered in 2017 a growth that surpasses Brazil's regular tourism revenue - the gay tourism sector.

Although President Jair Bolsonaro has stated recently that Brazil "cannot be a nation of the gay world, of gay tourism", a study conducted by the Brazilian Service of Support for Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE) reveals that **LGBT is one of the largest segments of potential economic revenue for the country's tourism**. According to the same survey, published earlier this year, Brazil is the Latin American country with the highest growth potential in terms of revenue when it comes to gay tourism.

In 2017, the sector registered a spike of about 11% in the country, while tourism, from an overall standpoint, only attained 3.5%.

According to the Out Now Consulting, LGBT tourism is annually responsible for US\$ 218 billion (R\$ 856,72 billion according to the current exchange rate). Another study, this one conducted in 2015 by the association Out Leadership, geared towards gay-focused initiatives, point that the financial potential for the LGBT segment was estimated at US\$ 133 billion (R\$ 418,9 billion according to the exchange rate at the time). Unleashing a barrage of criticism towards that tourist segment, during a breakfast with reporters at Palácio do Planalto, Bolsonaro topped his argument with the sentence "we have families". Bolsonaro added that tourists would be welcomed if they had different goals.

"Those who want to come here to have sex with a woman, they are totally free to. However, (Brazil) cannot continue to be a "gay tourism paradise," he confessed.

The SEBRAE study points out that gay tourism could foster the tertiary sector, including specific business models, such as cruises, parades, theme parties, and honeymoon trips. Since 2013, when same-sex marriage was approved, up until the end of 2017, Brazil has registered 19.522 marriages between two men or two women.

SEBRAE has also emphasized events that contribute to generate business opportunities focused on gay tourism in Brazil. The LGBT Pride Parade in São Paulo, for instance, is regarded as one of the world's largest. In 2018, about three million people joined the party, at Avenida Paulista, generating revenue of R\$ 190 million. Other national parties also attract tourists of different regions, such as San Island Weekend in Bahia, which welcomes about four thousand people; Miss Brasil Gay, which takes place annually in Minas Gerais; and Hell & Heaven, Brazil's largest electronic music festival focused on the gay audience.

"Companies must be ready and knowledgeable to serve and work with this public. Generally speaking, the gay tourist is regarded as more demanding when they are looking for some kind of service and/or product," the study emphasizes.

One of the SEBRAE concepts is the "gay-friendly" country. The term is used to make reference to places, policies, and institutions that provide an open, pleasant, welcoming and comfortable environment for the LGBT audience. In 2018, an agreement between the Ministry of Tourism, the

Brazilian Tourism Institute (Embratur) and the Brazilian LGBT Chamber of Commerce and Tourism was signed, projected to promote and support the dissemination of Brazil, nationally and abroad, as a "gay-friendly" destination.

“This initiative intends to raise awareness and educate those who provide tourism-related services to acknowledge the potential in this audience and, more than that, to respect and avoid any kind of prejudice while serving the LGBT community”, SEBRAE declares.

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