

ECUADOR TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURISTS



The Government of Ecuador expects to surpass 1.6 million foreign tourists in 2019, increasing its international arrivals by 15% in comparison to last year's figure (1.4 million), taking into account the positive figures recorded up to May, when the number of foreign visitors rose by 7.5% in months labeled as low season.

One of the main tourist markets for Ecuador is Spain, according to the data published by the Minister of Tourism, Rosa Prado de Holguín. **She revealed the rapid growth (about 30%) in the number of Spanish travelers in the first five months of the year.**

Last year, the arrival of Spanish tourists to Ecuador grew by 75% compared to 2017, with the province of Pichincha becoming the most visited destination, following data released by Ecuador's Ministry of Tourism. In 2018, 105,000 Spanish citizens visited the country.

One of the main reasons for this increase has been the improvement of air connectivity with companies such as Iberia offering daily flights to Quito. Moreover, the airline will offer four weekly flights to Guayaquil starting in December. In addition to this initiative, the Plus Ultra airline will start operating as of July 12, and Air Europa will offer three flights a week. Furthermore, last May, Air France began to offer three non-stop flights a week.

Ecuador also expects to make a way in the American market thanks to direct flights from Canada for the first time: three flights a week that will take the Toronto-Quito-Toronto route.

"Ecuador is waiting with open arms for foreign tourists. We need the whole world to know our country," said the minister recalling that in recent months, numerous airlines have started their operations in the country, such as GOL, a new Brazilian airline opened last December; Aeromexico, which now offers four flights a week; JetBlue, which will start flying to New York; and Air France, resuming flights to Ecuador after 25 years, as well as Plus Ultra and Air Canada, both starting operations this December. "Ecuador is making a comeback," said the minister.

In 2017, the Government of Ecuador adopted an Open Skies policy that has given airlines a chance to operate within the country and to carry out domestic flights. Taking advantage of this policy, the Aeroregional airline will soon offer regular domestic flights within Ecuador.

In terms of competitiveness, the country is ranked 57 out of 136 countries, and the short-term goal is to reach 50th place. "We'll make every effort to make this happen this year," said the minister, **highlighting the development of new infrastructures in the country that the industry believes will attract more foreign tourists to Ecuador.**

She also stressed the importance of business tourism, conventions, and fairs in major cities such as Quito and Guayaquil, which she hopes will continue to progress. "That is one of the tourism sectors we are looking for, business tourism, which gives us a nice level of revenues," explained the minister.

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