

TOURISM IN THE BAHAMAS NEEDS VISITORS MORE THAN EVER



Tourism in the Bahamas was booming and on course to achieve record figures for the current year. However, then came hurricane "Dorian" which hit the Caribbean islands.

In particular, the island of Grand Bahama and the Abaco Islands were hit hard and the hotels and holiday homes there were largely destroyed. **More than 50 people lost their lives due to the natural disaster.** Worldwide shock and solidarity have been enormous.

About 160 kilometers away, on Paradise Island, where the world-famous Atlantis Resort is located, there was hardly anything to feel regarding the heavy storm. The capital, Nassau, has also not been affected.

Now, the Bahamas are facing two challenges at the same time: tourists must be persuaded to continue to travel to the country without trivializing the suffering on the affected islands.

"All donations are welcome, but people can also help us a lot by continuing to visit the Bahamas islands in the undamaged areas. We are open to tourism," said Ellison Thompson, Deputy Director-General of the Bahamas Tourism and Air Ministry.

The fact that tourism must continue in the island state is no coincidence, as it is the country's most important economic sector. Half of the annual gross domestic product is generated by tourism revenues, which, expressed in figures, amount to about 5.6 billion US\$.

As officially confirmed by the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism, all hotels and resorts on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama are closed. In total, they have around 3000 hotel rooms, which account for 19 percent of the total of 16,000 rooms in the Bahamas, according to Frank Comito, CEO of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. In addition, more than 600-holiday homes are registered on the islands via Airbnb and around 670,000 visitors travelled to the Cruise Terminal last year.

Carnival Cruise Line announced earlier this year that it was interested in a port development project in Grand Bahama - and still is. It is expected to be completed in 2021, creating around 1000 jobs and boosting the economy. If travelers continue to visit the undamaged islands, this will not only create jobs for hotel workers who will be transferred due to the destruction, but will also bring the much-needed money to the island state.

Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis recently announced: "One of the best ways for people around the world to show their support and solidarity is to visit our islands by plane or cruise ship".

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