

VENEZUELA: WORST HOLIDAY SEASON OF THE LAST YEARS



Inflation, low minimum wage and a collapse of public services have caused hotel occupancy rates to reach record lows in Venezuela.

Despite receiving the Best Overseas Destination award presented this year in an international exhibition of the tourism industry held in Guangdong (China), **Venezuela recorded the worst holiday season in recent years, registering an occupancy decline in hotels of more than 50% compared to 2018.**

In this sense, domestic tourism is being affected by a crisis that Venezuela has been experiencing for years now. Authorized dealers without automobiles, bakeries without bread, and shops without merchandise are followed by this fall in hospitality where hotels have been left without customers, to the point that many have had to close their doors.

The record-high inflation that Venezuela is going through has caused many to change customs, from the consumption of goods and services to the number of days spent on leisure.

In this regard, Leudo González, director of the Higher Tourism Council, showed his concern following the lower hotel occupancy report in comparison to 2018's figures, a year with a poor performance for the hospitality industry.

"The figures released would be in order of destinations par excellence of 30 to 35% overall (...) last year, we had around 55% or 60% on average, that is to say we are talking about a steep fall, so it could be said that we are only at 50% of last year," he explained.

Given this situation, González defines the figures as a reflection of the "worst" holiday season in Venezuela in recent years.

"Could it be the worst year? I think so. The expectations for June or July, when the holiday season began, were bad. But I feel that this has been one of the worst years in occupancy across Venezuela," he said.

The economic situation of many Venezuelans has forced them to adopt new "trends" in relation to vacations since they are forced to reduce expenses, even if it means less leisure time.

"In the last seasons (...) overnight stays dropped from 15 days to 10, then to a week, and now to three or four days at most. In addition, there is now a trend of travelers looking for accommodations that allow bringing food and drinks in order to save on important expenses, although this affects the economy of these areas," he highlighted.

González also explained that short trips have become more prominent, commonly known as "ida por vuelta" (round trips), which does not generate enough profits for restaurants or local food places.

Lastly, it should be considered that several tourist destinations are affected by the lack of basic services, such as water, electricity, and fuel, which also slows travels.

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