

CUBA TO BOOST INTERNATIONAL TOURISM WITH FREE TESTS



Cuba entered its third phase of reopening its borders, and while international tourists cannot enter the island through Havana, which is still in phase 1, tourist activity is allowed in the cays of the north-central zone and Largo del Sur Cay.

Juan Carlos García Granda, Cuban Tourism Minister, said that free PCR tests will be carried out for all tourists to keep the coronavirus in check. Cuba seeks to promote itself as a peaceful, healthy and safe tourist destination.

Currently, three Cuban airports are operating to receive international flights - Cayo Coco, Cayo Largo del Sur and the "Abel Santamaría" of Santa Clara. The normalization of regular flights to Cuba will only be possible when Havana, the country's capital, enters the third phase.

International tourists can now visit the cays, where the hotels have certifications according to established security and health protocols, but they cannot move within the island. Although several countries have taken measures to discourage international flights, **the Minister has stated that precautions are being taken to guarantee the safety of travelers.**

"We will give all tourists arriving from other countries with a free PCR test. In addition, there is the certainty that the workers are healthy and there is a doctor, a nurse and an epidemiologist in each hotel," said the Tourism Minister.

"100% of the destinations have restrictions. Tourism must have time to return to normal and will not start to recover until the end of the year, and it is estimated that 2019 [performance] levels will not be reached worldwide until 2022," said the Minister, after informing that Canada, the main source market for the island, extended travel restrictions until August 31, despite the fact that many tourists already had booked trips to the island.

Despite this, he reported that Russia, the third market, "did add Cuba in the safe country list and we have already received requests to fly to the cays with a weekly frequency for the second half of next month."

As for the European countries, the Cuban minister pointed out that Cuba maintains its prestige as a safe country and that is why "we're ready to start promoting the next winter season. We can completely assure that we will maintain the conditions reached so far. However, the international tourism situation is moderate."

Cuba currently waits for being included in the list of countries considered safe by the European Union (EU), in order to reactivate an essential sector of its economy. Air France is one of the airlines that will resume flights to Cuba. The original plan was to reopen the Paris-Havana route in July, but due to delays by the Cuban government, flights were postponed until September.

The island also wants to revive its domestic market, which is why Minister García Granda announced on Cuban television the possibility of selling all offers in fully convertible currency through accounts backed by magnetic cards. This alternative should be available to all next month.

“We will also keep all the options in CUC (the Cuban Convertible Peso), but if someone wants to pay in foreign currency, they can do so. To encourage this option, we will give a 10% discount. **On the other hand, stores dedicated to international tourism will also sell in foreign currency, always in compliance with the provisions of the country,” he said.**

Once the coronavirus crisis has been overcome, one of Cuba’s goals is to seek “a greater alliance with culture, as well as tourism specialized in diving, nature and quality of life.”

Until now, Cuba had accumulated 2,449 cases of coronavirus patients, 2,321 recovered and 87 died. The prolonged closure has hurt its economy, which has international tourism as an important source of income (US \$ 3.3 billion in 2018).

Date: 2020-07-27

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/free-tests-to-attract-more-international-tourism-to-cuba-news11649>