

TOURISM IN MEXICO LIKELY NOT TO RECOVER OVER THE WINTER SEASON



According to experts, the winter season will not mean the recovery of tourism in Mexico. Last summer, the numbers of trips did not increase as expected because many countries were still struggling with coronavirus outbreaks, so Mexico put all hopes of recovery to the winter season.

“Although the number of tourists, both national and international, is expected to increase, Mexico will not reach the 2019 levels and the amount lost in 2020 cannot be recovered,” said Francisco Madrid, director of the Center for Research and Tourism Competitiveness (CICOTUR).

“Entrepreneurs report that they already rule out a short-term recovery in Mexico this winter. They foresee it for 2023, as it is estimated worldwide,” said Madrid.

10 years ago, Mexico removed the visa requirement for countries like Colombia and Peru, which attracted travelers to the country. This year, with the ongoing pandemic, the fact that there were no entry restrictions on Americans has indirectly promoted the recovery of tourism.

Experts emphasize that hotel occupancy in Mexico is higher than in other countries in the region, such as the Dominican Republic, Curaçao, Aruba, Jamaica, Panama and Costa Rica. Between August and October, occupancy in Cancun, Riviera Maya, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta was 40% on average.

However, the entrepreneurs predict an international market 55% below the numbers of 2019, with the national market showing a 45% drop by the end of the year. In December 2019 alone, 4.7 million foreign tourists visited Mexico.

Costa Rica hasn't received travelers for most of the year and is opening with many restrictions. Meanwhile, Punta Cana, the famous Dominican Republic destination, has occupancy levels between 20 and 22%.

Jamaica is also below 20%, and in general, the Caribbean countries are slowly recovering, while Mexican island Cozumel is the destination where the highest occupancy rates, about 50%, were registered.

The domestic market could improve, but the director of CICOTUR did not want to reveal any numbers ahead of the season because there is still a lot of uncertainty surrounding the fight against COVID-19.

Destinations such as Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta and those that make up the Mexican Caribbean expect the arrival of American and Canadian travelers each year between December and January, but not in the same numbers as before.

Arik Staropolsky, general director of consulting agency STA Consultores, supports the theory that it will be national travelers who will move tourism in Mexico ahead, but rather slowly.

He recalled that in a recent study, July was expected to be the boom in travel, but that changed to

the August-October period. However, this expectation has not materialized yet and, according to the latest study, inbound tourism will be reactivated between December and January.

“When will we be able to travel safely? I don’t think anyone in the world can answer that. Everything will depend on whether there is another outbreak and the vaccine is developed,” said Staropolsky.

Francisco Madrid agreed that all the signs lead to a “very, very slow” recovery. Regarding purchases and reservations, he added that it will depend on the offers and promotions that are offered.

“It is normal that rates have to be cut; even if they know that later it will be difficult for them to recover rate levels. And it is to be expected that in a weakened market environment there will be a rates war,” explained Madrid.

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