

TOURISM IN CHILE FACES FURTHER SETBACKS AS INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS PLUMMET



Although the consensus is that lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed by the Chilean government to slow down infections continue to impact tourism activity in the short term, both the economic authorities and experts estimate that this year tourism in Chile will see a recovery.

Last week, the Central Bank of Chile revised its growth forecast for this year, going from between 5.5% and 6.5% in December, to between 6% and 7%, expecting a better starting point than what was announced by the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021 thanks to the positive international outlook and the rapid mass vaccination campaigns.

However, the institution specified that the performance of the different industries has been uneven according to the nature of each and the ability to adapt to the new working conditions as a result of the pandemic.

Latest Data

Tourism in Chile has been one of the most affected sectors by the pandemic. Between March 18 and November 23 of last year the borders were completely closed (only Chileans and expats were allowed to enter the country), meaning that, during the period, international arrivals for tourist reasons were zero.

This led to 2020 closing with a 75.1% decrease in foreign tourists compared to the previous year. In numbers, that is 3,395,104 less than in 2019, with a total of 1,122,858 visitors.

Even today, travel restrictions enforced both domestically and internationally continue to affect the industry. According to the most recent data from Chile's Undersecretariat of Tourism, the arrivals of foreign tourists to the country through the only international border open (the Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport) fell 93.5% in February compared to the same month of 2020.

This means that there were only 25,824 international arrivals in the country, or 373,958 less than in February 2020. In aggregate, as of February 2021, 53,177 international tourists were registered, which represents a drop of 94.1% compared to the same period in 2020.

Top Markets

Regarding the behavior of the most important markets for tourism in Chile, the sharp decline registered was the same across all markets. In February 2021, 6,546 Argentine tourists arrived in Chile. The figure is 96.1% lower than in the same month in 2020 (169,187). In aggregate, between January and February 2021, 13,341 Argentine tourists arrived in Chile. In this case, the drop is 96.3% compared to the same period of 2020 (363,501).

Regarding American visitors, in February 2021, 1,174 Americans arrived in Chile. The figure is 94.4% lower than in the same month in 2020 (20,969). In aggregate, between January and February

2021, 2,563 US tourists arrived in Chile. In this case, the drop is 94.69% compared to the same period of 2020 (48,279).

In February 2021, 76 Canadian tourists arrived in Chile. The figure is 98.31% lower than in Feb 2020 (4,503). In aggregate, between January and February 2021, 235 Canadian tourists arrived to Chile. In this case, the drop is 97.8% compared to the same period of 2020 (10,681).

Mexico and Brazil

In February 2021, 302 Mexican tourists arrived in Chile. The figure is 89.89% lower compared to the same month of 2020 (2,304). In aggregate, between January and February 2021, 746 Mexican tourists arrived in Chile. In this case, the drop is 88.48% compared to the same period of 2020 (6,473)

In February 2021, 1,234 Brazilian tourists arrived in Chile. The figure is 94.42% lower than the same month in 2020 (22,113). In aggregate, between January and February 2021, 2,962 Brazilian tourists arrived in Chile. In this case, the drop is 95.1% compared to the same period of 2020 (60,472).

Outlook

The Undersecretary of Tourism, José Luis Uriarte, says that the numbers were foreseeable in the current health situation and in line with what is happening in the rest of the world. The latest report from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows that in January of this year, international tourist arrivals went down 87% as countries tightened the travel restrictions.

However, Uriarte highlights that “despite the fact that the global reopening perspective remains uncertain since it is directly linked to the health situation, some recovery scenarios are being studied at the international level, mentioning July or September 2021 as the beginning of a gradual recovery for tourism activity.”

The undersecretary says that “tourism in Chile has made a very important effort to adapt to this new and complex reality, and provide visitors with safety and security conditions.”

Uriarte explains that **these efforts and the progress made with vaccinations in the country “open a window of hope** that allows us to believe that, in the second half of this year, if the health situation allows it, plans to restart domestic traveling gradually could be possible.”

Date: 2021-04-05

Article link: <https://www.tourism-review.com/tourism-in-chile-has-a-positive-outlook-news11962>