

# THE MEXICAN CARIBBEAN TOURISM RECORDS PRE-PANDEMIC NUMBERS



In the Riviera Maya, people can be seen enjoying the holidays as if there is no longer a pandemic. This summer, Cancun registered its largest number of arrivals since February 2020, before the World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just in June, Mexico's most important destination for international tourism, welcomed more than 2 million visitors, the vast majority from other countries. The numbers have reached figures as high as those before the pandemic **even though Mexico is currently battling its third coronavirus wave.**

The latest figures for tourist activity in Cancun show a recovery of international tourism in the high season. Of the 2 million visitors who entered the Cancun airport, around 1.3 million arrived through international flights, says the latest report from Mexican airport ASUR. The rest, almost 800,000, did so from national destinations. Miguel Torruco, Secretary of Tourism, said the return of international tourists is due to the geographical position of the country, and the introduction of guidelines and protocols for COVID-19 in the private sector to protect tourists.

"International tourism suffered several changes after the pandemic. [People] will not travel in the next 3 or 4 years distances greater than 4.5 hours by plane and, due to its location, Mexico is privileged. In addition, tourists with high purchasing power who were not attracted before are now deciding to come, especially to Cancun, Baja California Sur and Nayarit," said Torruco. The secretary also assured that domestic tourism has played an important part in the reactivation of the industry, which has recorded 258 million visits so far this year, pushing the average hotel occupancy to 82% in the same period.

The fall of tourism in Cancun over the past year was significant. In 2020, the city only welcomed 6.8 million visitors, when during the two previous years it had exceeded 16 million. However, the collapse was worldwide, and despite the fact that the country was no exception, Mexico's president Andrés Manuel López Obrador pushed his strategy of not closing borders at any time, positioning the country third in international arrivals, behind Italy and France, according to the Ministry of Tourism.

The latest proof that Cancun still struggles with the coronavirus despite the appearances is the graduation trip of 500 students from two schools in Puebla. In images shared on social media, the students are seen dancing and celebrating in closed places without following guidelines to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Once they were back to their state, 30 of them tested positive for the virus, said José Antonio Martínez,

"When [the group] returned, we detected positive cases, so the epidemiological surveillance of the state began with identification and contact. Of these students, there is a young woman who already has pneumonia," said Martínez. The governor of Puebla, Luis Miguel Barbosa Huerta, warned that there is a "serious risk" of an outbreak in the state due to the students that came from Cancun. "We have located the majority who traveled but some are still traveling," the governor said.

**Coronavirus cases in Quintana Roo, right at the edge of the Mexican Caribbean, have been on the rise since April.** Recently, the state, one of the least populated in the country, surpassed 34,000 cases and 3,000 deaths. Many of the cases are not even added to Quintana Roo's numbers as they are tourists from different states, such as the case of the students from Puebla.

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