

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC EXPECTS 4.8 MILLION FOREIGN TOURISTS THIS YEAR



The Dominican Republic expects 4,840,376 tourists at the end of this year, though still far from the 6,446,036 arrivals recorded in 2019 before the pandemic, according to forecasts revealed last week by the Minister of Tourism David Collado.

Collado said that between January and August, the country welcomed 2,938,200 foreign tourists, and added that from October to December, **“if everything continues within normal [levels] for the pandemic,” 1,552,621 visitors will arrive at national destinations.**

In August, 476,575 non-residents arrived to the Dominican Republic, a figure close to August 2019 (497,390 tourists).

“We are going to close the year at 4,840,376 [tourists], a number that we never imagined we would be able to reach in 2021. These are clear signs that tourism is recovering in a sustainable way in the Dominican Republic,” said Collado in his statement.

The Minister mentioned that with the normalization of entry for foreigners, the Punta Cana airport became once again the main hub for foreign tourists, accounting for 59% of the non-resident visitors who arrived in the last month.

Punta Cana is followed by Las Américas airport, which received 25% of the passengers of August; then Cibao International Airport with 9%, Puerto Plata with 4%, La Romana with 3% and El Catey with 0.3%.

Collado highlighted that 73% of the tourists stayed in hotels, explaining that the figure is an important one since last year the sector did not perform so well.

Technical Vice-Minister of MITUR, Jacqueline Mora, explained that in 2019 only 40% of visitors stayed in hotels, adding US\$ 420 million to the country’s economy.

“The average stay, which in pre-pandemic years was around 8 nights, with Americans staying 5 nights... we see that now Americans have an average of 7 [nights], and the figure is going to start to increase together with occupancy levels; since the longer they stay, and with the same tourist influx, the higher the occupancy rate and recovery for the hotel sector,” said Mora.

Of the 80,000 hotel rooms in the country, 20,000 remain closed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, although 40% of these have not opened yet over renovations.

Mora also projected that by the end of 2021, the Dominican Republic would be almost entirely open in the main tourist areas. However, she acknowledged that there are smaller hotels still recovering from the pandemic.

“There are destinations like Bayahibe and Puerto Plata that live off Italian and European visitors, which are opening now, even Canadian [visitors]; and that is why rooms are opening as destinations open,” she explained.

The Specialized Tourist Security Corps (CESTUR, in Spanish) will be re-planned and receive, with the participation of the private sector, more than US\$3 million, as announced by the Ministry of Tourism.

Collado said that the reform of the entity will be introduced to the tourism cabinet, providing it with the latest technology and facilities, hoping to strengthen tourist security across the country.

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