

BOLIVIA BETS ON NATURE'S TOURISM TO REACTIVATE THE SECTOR



The surprising immensity of the Uyuni Salt Flat, the Lake Titicaca or the Sajama, the country's highest mountain, are the secrets with which the Bolivian tourism industry aspires to seduce visitors, said Bolivia's Vice Minister of Tourism, Eliana Ampuero.

The vice minister of Luis Arce's government said that since 2021 there has been a greater flow of Bolivians traveling to the country's tourist destinations, so **this year the government will continue to promote domestic attractions, especially nature's tourism and outdoor activities.**

"The tendency of today's tourists is to travel to open spaces where they can be in contact with nature and feel safe from covid-19," Ampuero said.

She also pointed out that last year 1.1 million people traveled to the country, generating a revenue of approximately US\$130 million.

Ampuero said that among some of the most visited tourist destinations in 2021 where the emblematic Salar de Uyuni, located in the Andean region of Potosi, the Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world shared with Peru, and the ruins of Samaipata in eastern Santa Cruz, declared a World Heritage Site by Unesco.

Also, popular destinations include the Gran Chaco, located in part of the departments of Chuquisaca, Tarija and Santa Cruz, the Cintis valley in Chuquisaca, as well as the Bolivian Chiquitania, and the route called Por los Caminos del Tio (Through the Roads of the Uncle) in the highlands of Oruro, which runs through some of the mining municipalities.

Reactivation of Domestic Tourism

The Vice Minister of Tourism highlighted the importance of increasing the number of Bolivian tourists and the incentives given by the Government to officials who promote the domestic destinations by visiting the places.

In this sense, she highlighted the "important effect" of the 2020 decree that motivates civil servants to buy tourist packages and pushes companies to give more vacation days to their workers if they travel to a destination within the country.

"If Bolivians keep visiting their own country, the economic dynamics will be distributed throughout the national territory, it is very important to generate knowledge, development and, on the other hand, that Bolivians feel empowered within their own country," she said.

She explained that this represents a recovery of around 70 % of the domestic travel in comparison to 2020, when tourism fell 74% and only 300 thousand Bolivians traveled due to the covid-19 restrictions.

She further emphasized that in 2019, prior to the pandemic, the domestic tourism numbers reached

1.6 million people.

Likewise, it is estimated that around 500,000 travelers arrived in the country in 2021, including Bolivians living abroad, generating a foreign exchange income of US\$179 million.

Most of the tourists arriving in Bolivia come from countries such as Argentina, Chile, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, China and Japan, Ampuero said.

Safe Tourism

The vice-minister emphasized that tourists do not have to undergo a 10-day quarantine as previously required, but **must show their vaccination certificates or PCR test, this measure is expected to contribute to activating the "incoming" tourist flow.**

She also said that they are seeking to identify other "emerging" destinations to promote this year, since 2021 they have been working with at least 55 municipalities to develop their "tourism products" and their biosafety protocols.

In addition, 391 tour guides have been trained and 342 companies have been certified as biosecure tourism service providers.

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