

CUBA'S TOURISM GOAL 2022: 2.5 MILLION TOURISTS



Cuba is confident of maintaining its objective to receive 2.5 million tourists by the end of 2022, after quadrupling foreign tourist arrivals in January and despite the possible repercussions of the war in Ukraine.

Cuba's Minister of Tourism, Juan Carlos García, said last week that the country is not giving up on achieving its tourism goal of welcoming 2.5 million visitors during a meeting of the sector's trade union, according to a report by the state-run Cuban News Agency (ACN in Spanish).

To achieve this, according to the Minister, there are strategies to reactivate the outbound markets in Europe, **in addition to boosting the arrival of travelers from Latin America and the Caribbean.**

The number of international visitors accounted for 134,661 last January, compared to 35,842 in the first month of 2021, according to the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI in Spanish). In February, 185,749 visitors arrived to Cuba, which represents a 522.5 percent increase.

This increase, after the decline of the previous year, is attributed -according to the island's tourism authorities- to the measures against the covid-19, both in Cuba and in its main tourist-sending markets.

ONEI has reported that throughout 2021, 73,944 tourists visited Cuba, which was a 60% drop compared to 2020.

The Russian market became the leading source market of travelers to Cuba in 2021 and surpassed the Canadian market, which has traditionally occupied the first place.

But Russian airlines Aeroflot and Azur Air have temporarily canceled their flights to Cuba because of the war in Ukraine, a decision taken after most European countries closed their airspace to them, therefore specialists consider that this situation will affect the tourism sector of the Caribbean country.

Cuba, which reopened its borders in mid-November after the pandemic forced closure, has tourism as its second-largest source of foreign currency after professional services.

The Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) estimates that the tourism goal of 2.5 million foreign travelers should contribute some US\$1.159 billion to the Cuban economy this year.

The state's tourism industry expects to end this year with 84,906 hotel rooms, 5.7% more than in the previous year, despite the pandemic.

Cuba is going through a serious economic crisis due to covid-19, the tightening of U.S. economic sanctions and errors in their national macroeconomic strategy.

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