

CHILEAN TOURISM HURDLES: ENTRY REQUIREMENTS DISCOURAGE VISITORS TO COME



A survey conducted by the Chilean Federation of Tourism Companies (Fedetur) among more than one hundred global tourism operators, showed that 57% of those consulted believe that the approval of vaccines is the requirement that most discourages international visitors to come to the country, while 23% say that the random PCR test on arrival is the main obstacle.

The requirement of vaccines and the random PCR tests required to enter Chile **are the main obstacles that discourage the arrival of foreign tourists to the country**, according to the Chilean tourism stakeholders. The survey approached tour operators and travel agencies from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Peru and Brazil.

This is a scenario that Fedetur has been warning about since last year, when Chile opened its borders to the arrival of foreign visitors, but with a series of requirements that, according to the analysis, have slowed down the reactivation of inbound tourism.

A reality that can be seen in the numbers. Between December 2021 and February 2022, 240,000 tourists arrived in the country, while in the same pre-pandemic period (December 2019 to February 2020) 1,300,000 international tourists visited Chile.

Fedetur wanted to go further, and fact-checked its analysis with the opinion of tour operators and travel agencies at a global level, among whom Fedetur conducted a survey to determine what are the reasons that most discourage foreign tourists from coming to Chile.

The answer was overwhelming, 87% of the respondents stated that the entry requirements are the most discouraging factors to visit Chile. In the same line, 57% of those consulted attributed it to the requirement for the homologation of their vaccines and 23% to the random PCR tests requested upon arrival.

Another revealing piece of information from the survey was the response given by tour operators and travel agents in long-distance markets when asked which countries in the region they are most interested in visiting while taking into account the requirements for entry: Peru accounted for 59% of the total, Argentina 32% and Chile only 10%.

"This confirms what we have been insistently pointing out to the government authorities for quite some time now. As long as these two requirements are not eliminated, Chilean tourism will continue to be held back, and with this, tourism activity will end up sinking. We are the only country in the world that continues to require the vaccines and almost the only one that requires a PCR test upon arrival, whereas direct competitors, such as Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina have eliminated the test as a requirement," points out Ricardo Margulis, president of Fedetur.

The union representative is disappointed with the loss of competitiveness and the ground that Chile is ceding to other destinations that are direct competitors, because while most countries globally

and regionally eliminate entry restrictions, here we continue to maintain them without justification.

"We need those two requirements to be eliminated today, in a few more weeks or months it will be too late. We are not the only one setting of alarm bells, but also international tourism agents, who are desperate, among other aspects, because the snow season is approaching and there is no incentive for tourists to come to Chile because of the number of obstacles that are put in their way to enter the country," added Margulis.

"We hope that our demands will be taken into account in the next announcements related to reactivating the lagging sectors, because it is the only lifeline we have left," he stated.

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