

COSTA RICA ENCOURAGING RECOVERY OF THE TOURISM SECTOR



pandemic in 2019.

Tourism-related activities in Costa Rica have shown great recovery and dynamism prior to the relaxation of measures to contain Covid19. According to data from the Costa Rican Tourism Institute, during the first quarter of the current year, around 632 000 tourists entered the country by all routes, which represented 63% of international tourism visits in comparison to the beginning of the

At the national level, there are positive signs showing the recovery of the tourism sector, recreation and gastronomic activities. This is increasingly noticeable with the rise of people visiting restaurants, resorts or events such as concerts and soccer games. **These data are corroborated by different local media that estimated a high level of hotel occupancy in both the Pacific and the South Caribbean of Costa Rica during the summer.**

According to data reported by the National Chamber of Tourism, hotel occupancy in sun and beach hotels during Easter Week this year reached 93%, while the Costa Rican Chamber of Hotels reported up to 98% occupancy.

The indirect industries related to the tourism sector (ranging from air transportation, domestic transportation, restaurants, hotels, guides, sale of handicrafts, tickets to national parks, tickets to resorts) confirm how essential it is for the country to maintain adequate conditions for both international and domestic visitors. According to the Central Bank of Costa Rica, tourism employed 245,253 people in 2018 which represented about 10.5% of the Economically Active Population (EAP), so the direct and indirect effects generated by the activities associated with tourism also have an impact on the recovery of employment in Costa Rica.

Several conditions must be maintained or improved to guarantee a quality tourism experience and thus ensure sustained demand for tourism activities. Costa Rica's most important factor for attracting international tourism is the biodiversity the country has within a framework of natural resource protection. However, other aspects must be improved, mainly concerning security. Crimes against foreign tourists that have occurred in recent years in both the South Caribbean and North Pacific regions of Costa Rica have been reported internationally by the European and U.S. press (the country's main tourism markets). Therefore, a recovery of the tourism sector requires, necessarily, an improvement in the conditions of personal safety in the tourist regions of Costa Rica. Greater vigilance and efficiency are required on the part of the institutions responsible for guaranteeing safe spaces, as well as greater efficiency in the attention to the affected persons and penalties for the guilty parties.

The recovery of certain regions has been slower or the tourist, especially national, has lost interest in visiting certain areas of the country. An alarming case is the Central canton of Puntarenas; this region with high levels of inequality and poverty was traditionally an important destination for domestic tourists. Tourism Authorities gradually encourage the development of large-scale artistic activities such as concerts and sporting events with an international seal within the canton in such a way that these activities can attract national and international tourists to boost trade in the region. However, this requires inter-institutional coordination to ensure the health and safety of those

attending.

Another aspect that could be enhanced in the future and looking for the gradual relaxation of the entry of tourists to the country, is the increase in the visits of digital nomads. Since August 11, 2021, Costa Rica has had the appropriate legal framework for attracting remote workers and international service providers. Law No 22,215 allows establishing favorable conditions and appropriate regulations for the country to compete internationally in attracting that type of visitors, which could increase in the future and would generate significant demand for services such as accommodation and related services (food, internet, among others).

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