

CUBA WELCOMED 1.8 MILLION INTERNATIONAL VISITORS BY SEPTEMBER



According to the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI), Cuba saw an increase of more than two-thirds in international visitors between January and September of 2023, with over 1.8 million tourists. However, this figure suggests that achieving the government's target of 3.5 million international visitors for 2023 may be challenging, as the first nine months, including the high season, have only seen just over half of that number.

During the period from January to September, a total of 2,373,455 people visited Cuba. The top tourist-sourcing countries were Canada, the United States, Russia, Spain, Germany, and France, with year-on-year increases ranging from 111% to 218%. The Cuban community living abroad contributed 269,890 travelers, while residents on the island added 559,305 flights to the total count.

Based on the ONEI data, the early months of 2023 showed better results than the corresponding summer months of the previous year. In January 2023, around 250,000 foreign travelers were registered, a substantial increase compared to the same month in 2022, when the number was less than 100,000. However, in September 2023, the recorded number was slightly over 147,000, a slight improvement compared to the same period in 2022, when the number was nearly 100,000.

During the last council of ministers, the head of Economy and Planning, Alejandro Gil, explained that the total number of visitors received in 2023 so far equals only 75.5% of the originally planned amount for this date. Additionally, it represents only 55% of the visitors who traveled to the country in the first nine months of 2019. This is concerning, as tourism is a key factor in the economic recovery of Cuba. The country has been struggling with a severe economic crisis for over two years, resulting in high inflation and a significant shortage of basic products such as food, fuel, and medicine.

The tourism sector is the second largest contributor to the country's GDP and the third largest source of foreign currency after professional services and remittances, according to estimates by various independent experts.

In 2022, Cuba received 1.6 million international travelers, which fell short of its objective of welcoming 1.7 million visitors. This target was readjusted from the initial forecast of 2.5 million due to the pandemic. Before the pandemic, the island received between 4 and 5 million tourists annually. Its situation contrasts with similar travel destinations in the region, such as Punta Cana (Dominican Republic) and Cancún.

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