

# CENTRAL AMERICAN TOURISM EXCEEDING PRE-PANDEMIC NUMBERS



Central America and the Dominican Republic have recently announced that they have exceeded the number of tourists that visited before the pandemic. This presents an excellent opportunity for these destinations to showcase their heritage and attract more visitors. According to the Secretariat for Tourism Integration of Central America (SITCA), the European market accounts for only 2.7% of tourist arrivals in these regions. This shows growing potential in the region's many cultural and tourist attractions.

## **An overall increase in the number of visitors to the region**

Central America receives significant footfall from Europe, making it the world's seventh-largest market for tourism. The top European markets for Central American tourism are Spain, with 35% of the total share of visitors from Europe, followed by Germany (23%), France (17%), the United Kingdom (12%), Italy (9%) and the Netherlands (4%).

In 2022, the region welcomed 21.2 million visitors, recording a 214% growth compared to the previous year. This increase results from a 69% rise in day-trippers, contributing to an overall 89.3% increase in visitors.

Official data from each European source market indicates that for 2023, the tourism industry has recovered from the pandemic and surpassed pre-pandemic levels. This growth reflects the strength of the tourism industry and the region's appeal to global visitors.

## **Significant progress in Central American Tourism**

Tourism in Central America has been on the rise since September 2023. El Salvador has recorded a growth of 27% in the number of tourists, with a total of 2.4 million visitors. Guatemala welcomed 1.8 million tourists by the end of August. Honduras had a 42% increase in visitors in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, and a 4% increase compared to 2019, with a total of 685,772 visitors.

Between January and June of 2023, Panama welcomed 1.3 million international tourists, which represents a 55.1% increase compared to the same period in 2022. Additionally, between January and August of 2023, Belize experienced a significant rise in visitors, with 641,133 arrivals, reflecting a 60% growth compared to the same period in 2022.

Nicaragua has also returned to its pre-pandemic tourism levels, with the first quarter of 2023 seeing over 800,000 visitors. Similarly, Costa Rica experienced a 19% increase in tourism during the first half of 2023, with 1.3 million tourists visiting the country, surpassing its 2019 figures.

Finally, from January to August of 2023, the Dominican Republic received over 7 million tourists, marking a 25% increase from 2022 and a 31% increase from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

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