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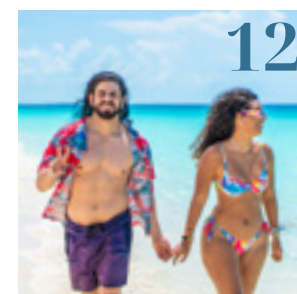
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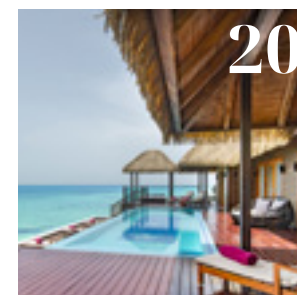
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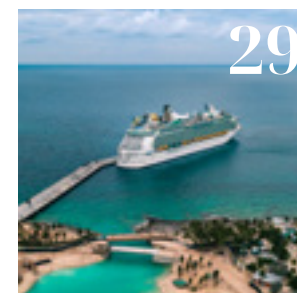
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EDITORIAL NOTE

With the slogan "The world of travel lives here," which seeks to visually establish Berlin as the epicenter of travel and tourism, comes a new edition of the ITB Travel Trade Show.

Representatives from aviation, hospitality, IT, communication, tour operators, cruise lines and other companies will meet in the German capital with proposals related to luxury tourism, sustainable travel and future innovations. The latest trends, established players and new companies converge in this hub of the leisure industry between March 4 and 6.

Specialized media indicate that this edition will mark new milestones in the Travel Technology segment, consolidating itself as the global epicenter of innovation in the travel sector. Exhibitors from more than 40 countries will also arrive in Berlin to access the technology exhibition, which promises to be more extensive and international, according to the show's organizers.

Keynote speeches, round tables and high-level presentations, including those of industry giants such as Amadeus, Sabre, Travelsoft and its allies ATCORE Technology and Traffics, Ypsilon.net; meetings for startups and innovations and much more will take place during the event.

Travel Trade Caribbean also joins the event with its 307th edition, as an ally to promote tourism in Cuba, the Caribbean and Latin America.

UN Tourism estimates in its most recent Confidence Index confirm positive expectations for 2025. Experts predict a "better" or "much better" year compared to 2024, after international tourism revenues registered strong growth in the previous year: 3% more than in 2023 and 4% more than in 2019.

With these forecasts, we wish success in this and other similar events.

All the best,

Alfredo Rodríguez,
General Director.



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Cuba as one of the most popular destinations among German travelers

BY DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS ARCHIVO TTC



Analysis and statistics indicate that the 2025 outlook for the travel sector in the German market is positive. Bookings for international getaways could reach 9% compared to 2024, with package tours sold for a value of close to 2 billion euros. The data confirms Germany's influence in driving this sector in Europe and globally.

Long-haul destinations and ocean cruises are among the top choices of a population eager to discover new horizons. Patterns demonstrate German travelers' interest in sunny, culturally rich places with sustainable solutions on offer.

In this context, a diverse and representative Cuban tourism delegation arrives at ITB Berlin 2025, an essential platform for the generation

of business and the consolidation of trade agreements, networking, the establishment of strategic alliances and the presentation of new products.

"For Cuba it is a unique opportunity to present new tourism products and services in the most relevant B2B space of global tourism; carefully designed by our national receptive and hotel groups to increasingly satisfy the interests of potential German and European travelers, in the broadest sense," states Orlando Ramos, tourism counselor of the Caribbean country, speaking from the German capital.

The island's entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the event to present new excursions, hotel openings and other extra-hotel offers, with a sustainable approach committed to activities that are friendly to the

natural and physical environment, reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, and prioritize the incorporation of social and community projects and their contribution to local human development, Ramos adds.

Despite the complex scenario in which Cuba strives to maintain its tourism offers, judging by the statistics and the opinion of the counselor, 2024 showed that the country remains among the travel preferences of the German market. Tour operators, travel agencies and distribution channels maintained connections and avoided cancellations.

"These were tense moments that only a historical relationship of mutual trust and willingness to seek alternative solutions could save. This is demonstrated by the

emission figures at the end of 2024, which place Germany in fifth place among the top 20 markets and number one among the traditional European markets, despite the limited air connectivity with direct flights. This decelerating trend in terms of falling numbers with respect to previous periods or plans is maintained so far in 2025," the Cuban tourism representative in Berlin explains.

During their stay in Cuba, German travelers, regardless of the way they organize their trip, prioritize national tours, which they usually combine with sun and beach options. "The circuit modality is undoubtedly the most preferred; they appreciate the great advantages it offers to get closer to the Cuban reality, enjoy its tourist, historical, cultural and patrimonial resources and make contact with Cubans."

Ramos also confirms that the deep-rooted travel culture among Germans allows them to appreciate with very clear criteria and contrast and evaluate their experiences with respect to other destinations. "In the case of Cuba, a very high opinion of safety, the possibility of moving freely and the guarantees of medical assistance in case of illness prevail. Visitors highlight the richness and diversity of the landscape, the culture, especially the music and dance expressions, but above all, they recognize the Cuban identity as the distinctive attribute. Most of them describe their experience in Cuba as an enriching and unrepeatable life lesson."

The suspension of Condor airline flights represents a strong blow to that relationship of empathy. At the moment, a series of measures are being evaluated as part of a strategy to recover direct flights from Germany to Cuba in the medium term, the counselor notes. "The early announcement of the withdrawal of the destination in next summer's schedule represented a challenge for tour operators, who protected reservations with alternative routes using the possibilities associated with the main European scheduled airlines and others."

Despite obstacles and challenges, 2025 will be a year to recover demand and growth in visitor numbers. "In this regard, of particular importance are the introduction of new hotel projects in Havana, Cayo Cruz and Holguín, just to mention a few; continuing to promote MICE, nature and historical-cultural tourism; working toward the growth of cruise ship operations; and taking advantage of opportunities identified for the development of multi-destination tourism, based on the air capacity of direct flights from Germany to the Caribbean and Central America.



Orlando Ramos, Cuban Tourism Counselor in Berlin.

Forecasts ratify Germany's potential as an outbound market, hence the importance of continuing to work to stabilize the competitiveness of the Cuban tourism product, boost demand and recover direct flights."

"The circuit modality is undoubtedly the most preferred; they appreciate the great advantages it offers to get closer to the Cuban reality, enjoy its tourist, historical, cultural and patrimonial resources and make contact with Cubans."

Statistics and challenges for 2025 in Cuba

BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Cuba seeks to diversify its outbound markets from the Americas, Europe and Asia. While in 2024 Canada confirmed its number one position in the table of arrivals, accounting for 39% of travelers visiting the archipelago, countries such as Brazil and Peru grew by 11% and 25%, respectively.

In a meeting with the press at the beginning of the year, Gihana Galindo Enríquez, commercial director of the Ministry of Tourism of Cuba, pointed out that China increased by 48%,

Specialized products that have always been a reference in the Caribbean region, such as diving, nature, adventure and rural tourism, are being promoted

Türkiye by 12%, and Portugal broke its historical record for 2019, reaching a 20% increase in tourist arrivals.

Even though maintaining and increasing air operations represents a challenge for Cuba, the restart of Avianca airline operations was announced, which allows for an expansion of this diversification strategy in the Latin American area. From Canada, Sunwing Airlines started flights to the international airports of Cienfuegos and Manzanillo; while World2Fly and Iberojet operated direct flights from Lisbon to Santa Clara and Jardines del Rey, and from Madrid to Santa Clara.



The director highlighted the fifth frequency of Turkish Airlines, an element that favors the growth of this market in 2025; the fifth of Latam Airlines and the third of Copa Airlines to Cayo Santa María.

Air China remains part of the hub in Madrid, which allows the connection of other markets in Europe with this route to Havana. World2Fly also began direct air operations from the Czech Republic.

Cuba is also making a notable effort to digitalize its entire system of tourism offers, including e-commerce, diversification of distribution channels, operations associated with corporate

tourism and multi-destination programs.

By the end of 2025, the authorities of the sector expect to reach the figure of 2,600,000 foreign visitor arrivals. In order to achieve this goal, foreign investment projects are being implemented, the export of health, wellness and quality of life tourism services is being boosted, efforts are being made to expand offers in alliance with the private sector, and specialized products that have always been a reference in the Caribbean region, such as diving, nature, adventure and rural tourism, are being promoted.



Santiago de Cuba

THE CITY OF SIX LANDSCAPES

510 years of history and culture

BY OMAR LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ, CONSERVATOR OF THE CITY OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Once born, the city does not stop, it grows and develops according to the vicissitudes of time. This latent process across all latitudes is particularly fecund in the region we know as the insular Caribbean, where for more than five centuries migrations, the gathering of diverse cultures and the eagerness of different powers to appropriate territories brought development experiences that manifested themselves in multiple

forms in the political, economic, social, and especially cultural, spheres.

Today, the most complete expression of patrimonial enjoyment and appropriation is in the interpretation of the city and its surroundings through its cultural landscapes; this allows contact with the territory and its landscape, linked to human creation. In this case, we propose to approach the city of Santiago de Cuba through the six cultural landscapes that identify and complement its patrimonial values: the historical city, the patrimonial cemetery of Santa Ifigenia, the associative landscape of El Cobre, the

archaeological landscape of coffee plantations, the Castillo del Morro site and the shipwrecks associated with the naval combat of the Spanish-Cuban-American War.

There are a series of aspects to understand the city from the origins of the Hispanic presence in the American continent. One such aspect comes with the genesis of the Hispanic Caribbean and leads to Cuba and the historical event that we want to highlight: the 510th anniversary of the founding of the Villa of Santiago in the east of the island. This event forces us to go back to the beginning of the 16th century,

The Fiesta del Fuego is a genuine expression of the spirit of the most Caribbean of Cuban cities.

when the Spanish monarchy entrusted the conqueror Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar with the mission of colonizing the island of Cuba and founding villas that would serve as centers of power and control over the territory and the indigenous population. This process, initiated in 1510 with the foundation of the first villa of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Baracoa, culminated years later with seven villas. The last one, founded in 1515, was called the Villa de Santiago due to the devotion to the Patron Saint of Spain. In 1522, it was granted the seat of the Bishopric of Cuba and was recognized as a city. Its main temple became a cathedral, and in the 18th century, Cuban music was born from the hands of the Chapel Master Esteban Salas.

As a port city, its protection made it necessary to build the Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca, or Morro Castle at the entrance of the bay, along with other fortifications that allowed it to face the attacks of corsairs, pirates and enemy powers. The imposing castle was declared a World Heritage Site in 1997, as one of the most important fortifications of the Caribbean to have been built in the colonial centuries. At the end of the 18th century, the revolution in Saint Domingue



We propose to approach the city of Santiago de Cuba through the six cultural landscapes: the historical city, the patrimonial cemetery of Santa Ifigenia, El Cobre, the archaeological landscape of coffee plantations, the Castillo del Morro site and the shipwrecks associated with the naval combat of the Spanish-Cuban-American War

The Plaza Carlos Manuel de Céspedes is the central founding square of the city of Santiago de Cuba.



The Sierra Maestra is the most important mountain range in Cuba.

A city that lives clinging to its traditions but determined to secure a future of modernity and the capacity for transformation

(Haiti) brought French immigration to the southeastern coast, accompanied by their slaves who developed the coffee industry in the mountain ranges surrounding the city. They brought their habits, customs and art to the galleries, bringing a new dimension to commerce, culture and local recreation. This culture, dislocated by the eastern mountains, saw a full development that gave origin to the Archaeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations, which in the year 2000, due to its accumulated values, achieved the status of World Heritage of Humanity.

Touring the city is an attractive experience given its varied forms, where urban planning and architecture in suggestive dialogue create unique spaces, exclusive visual angles, as well as

the possibility of enjoying a popular culture full of music due to its special status as the cradle of the Cuban bolero, trova and son. Popular festivities fill streets and squares and the bearers of this ancestral culture can be appreciated in the Conga, the Tumba Francesa, the Carnivals, the Fiesta del Fuego and its multiple festivals, which make it an unforgettable place for the enjoyment and knowledge of the best traditions of a Caribbean people.

Place of origin of the light rum Santiago de Cuba, the city carries with it the aroma developed thanks to the expertise of the rum masters whose knowledge is recognized today with the category of World Heritage. Having a drink is part of a deeply-rooted local culture, which serves to provide the necessary drive to start the day, or to toast to celebrate a festivity of any kind.

Its status of Hero City ratifies the patriotic and independent essences of its people, cradle of heroes and martyrs, with multiple scenarios of events that sealed the destinies of the Cuban nation. The historic city is also reflected in the fact that its cemetery is considered the altar of the homeland, a propitious place for the veneration and encounter with the most important personalities of Cuban history and culture.

The history of this city of 510 years summons up memories and calls on us to continue to be inspired by the legacy of our ancestors and in the struggle to which we are committed, to remember virtues and glories, joys and longings of this people, whose ideal has been invariably full of patriotism and love for freedom. A city that lives clinging to its traditions but determined to secure a future of modernity and the capacity for transformation. Its heritage and cultural attractions bestow it with a privileged status for the development of cultural and nature tourism, associated with the enhancement of its various world heritage components. UNESCO recognized Santiago as one of the places where conservation management is an irreversible priority of its population.

Visiting Santiago in the year of the 510th anniversary of its foundation offers an encounter with history, with living culture, with the recognized heritage of a Caribbean city that lives between the sea and the mountains, musical par excellence, as aromatic as its rum, diverse due to migratory contributions, rebellious given its traditions of struggle and always hospitable in its eagerness to reach the heart of every visitor who ventures to experience the intimacy of the deep and authentic Cuba.

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Cayo Largo del Sur

A paradise in Cuba

BY DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS BLUE DIAMOND

Cayo Largo del Sur, located in the eastern end of the archipelago of Los Canarreos, in southern Cuba, is an attractive sun and beach tourist destination that, due to its remote location, looks like a desert island.

To enjoy a quiet vacation, in direct contact with unspoilt nature, Cayo Largo del Sur is the ideal option. Twenty-five kilometers of white sands stretch before the eyes of visitors.

The coral reef formations that border the key outline an impressive submerged scenery. In full harmony

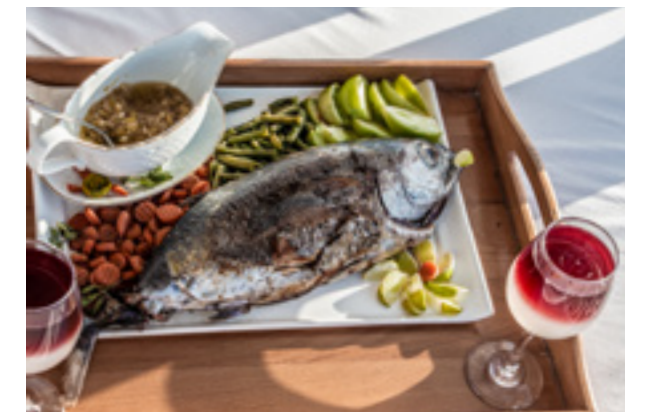
**TO ENJOY A QUIET
VACATION, IN DIRECT
CONTACT WITH
UNSPOILT NATURE,
CAYO LARGO DEL SUR IS
THE IDEAL OPTION**

with the ecosystem, there is a modern hotel, a marina, a diving center and an international airport.

The Sirena and Paraíso beaches, dream sites, stand out among the most preserved in the world, according to National Geographic magazine.

Travel guides highlight that it is one of the few places in Cuba where tourists will find hotels with beach sections clearly identified as optional to enjoy a "topless" tan. Cayo Largo has been awarded the title of the most beautiful "Au Naturel" beach in the "UK Bare Beaches" guide.

Other leisure and adventure activities are offered, such as tours to see colonies of iguanas that coexist with hutias, sparrow hawks and seagulls, or swimming in shallow natural pools inhabited by starfish. Air excursions and specialized nautical activities (diving, deep-sea fishing) can also be included in the travelers' program.



**The Sirena and Paraíso
beaches, dream sites,
stand out among the most
preserved in the world,
according to National
Geographic magazine**



A celebration of Cuban rural tourism in September 2025



Cuba is organizing the 10th Ibero-American Rural Tourism Meeting, to be held from September 29 to October 5 in the western part of the country.

The event was officially presented at FITUR's International Press Center by the Secretary General of the Ibero-American Institute of Rural Tourism (IBEROATUR), Juan José Salado Sánchez.

Raúl Naranjo Aday, director of Ecotur, an agency specializing in such travel options, presented the concept of the event, which is based on sustainable development

The organization decided to award Cuba the honor of hosting the event given its long experience in this type of tourism, which makes it a benchmark for the region, according to the secretary general.

Raúl Naranjo Aday, director of Ecotur, an agency specializing in such travel options, presented the concept of the event, which is based on sustainable development.



Typical rural fiestas (guateques), visits to agro-ecological farms, meetings in academic centers, exchanges with entrepreneurs and the presentation of scientific topics related to the advancement of agro-tourism, sustainable local tourism, climate change, community tourism and others will also feature as part of the program of this tenth edition of the event.

The Agricultural University of Havana and the National Botanical Garden will host the main activities of the meeting and the preparations have already begun.

IBEROATUR brings together representatives of the 22 countries of Ibero-America, among them entrepreneurs, universities and associations.

Tourism as a driver of rural empowerment



across rural areas worldwide. Together, we have sown the seeds for a more inclusive and sustainable future."

Placing tourism firmly on the rural development agenda and ensuring that it is fully integrated into rural development financing and infrastructure planning, is an essential element in moving forward on this path.

The importance of cross-sector partnerships to ensure that tourism drives economic growth while also preserving cultural heritage and natural resources is increasingly evident. Transformational strategies to boost rural tourism as a driver of sustainable development, developing effective public standards, addressing infrastructure, and fostering public-private partnerships to expand local initiatives are issues that cut across initiatives worldwide to increase rural tourism as a travel option.

The importance of cross-sector partnerships to preserve cultural heritage and natural resources is increasingly evident

BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

The impact of rural tourism in creating jobs, safeguarding nature and cultural heritage, and promoting social inclusion, with special dedication to the empowerment of local communities, women and youth, is increasingly valued. International meetings taking this mode of the leisure industry as their focus have even discussed policy frameworks for its development, increasing synergies between agriculture and tourism to drive sustainability, market access and integration, innovative digital tools and funding mechanisms to support rural destinations, entrepreneurs and community-led initiatives.

In December 2024, Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism organized the first Conference on Tourism for Rural Development in the historic city of Hoi An. It brought together government officials, international and regional financial institutions, development agencies, tourism professionals, rural community leaders, researchers and NGOs to discuss standards and strategies to maximize these travel options.

Opening the Conference, Executive Director of UN Tourism Zoritsa Urosevic stated: "This landmark event has demonstrated the immense potential of tourism to transform rural communities. By placing people and planet at the center of our discussions, we have fostered meaningful connections and actionable strategies that will ripple

Diverse organizations including the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Mekong Tourism, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), and companies such as Fliggy, Intrepid Travel, Japan Travel Bureau (JTB), Meta, Planeterra, and Traveloka shared valuable insights on advancing rural tourism during the conference in Hoi An. They highlighted the critical role of sustainable tourism in fostering economic resilience, protecting cultural heritage, and creating equitable opportunities for rural communities. Discussions provided key takeaways on integrating tourism with agriculture, ensuring inclusivity, and leveraging partnerships to drive long-term impact in rural destinations.

FITCUBA 2025

See you again in Havana

Havana has attractions to fall in love with at any time of year: when winter arrives, the sea decorates it with white fans of foam that bathe the traveler who admires it from the Malecón; in summer, the light is a flash that warms and envelops the memory. Spring and autumn pass too quickly on the streets of this city, but without a doubt they are seasons in which the air is fresher and the city rhythm is also more tranquil.

The capital of Cuba opens up between colonial squares surrounded by buildings converted to modern life: museums, schools, art galleries, restaurants, cafes, shops, hotels grow within centuries-old walls. Returning use value to the ancient is a gift that the wise men and women of this country have passed on to present and future generations and to those who come here from any part of the world.

BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF
 PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

IN A SMALL CITY INHABITED BY MORE THAN A MILLION PEOPLE, THE CENTER OF THE ECONOMY OF A COUNTRY SURROUNDED BY SANCTIONS AND DIFFICULTIES, THERE ARE VISIONS TO DESIRE ANOTHER BETTER REALITY

Tour operators, travel agencies, airlines and hotel chains continue to invest in the expansion of their activities here

In a small city inhabited by more than a million people, the center of the economy of a country surrounded by sanctions and difficulties, there are visions to desire another better reality and also others to marvel at so much effort of beauty and perseverance. Squares, palaces, theaters, galleries and more flourish despite everything.

That is why Havana does not lose its charm. The people who live there prefer color, music, joy and cordiality. It is difficult to escape from this spell and the tourism industry takes advantage of it. A favorite destination for international visitors who cross the borders of the archipelago, there are offers and pastimes for all tastes.

Tour operators, travel agencies, airlines and hotel chains continue to invest in the expansion of their activities here. One more reason why Havana will once again show its charms at the next International Tourism Fair in Cuba in May of this year.

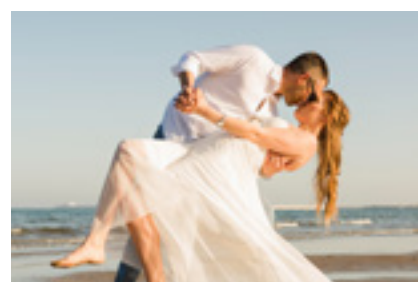


“Motivos Cubanacan”: a new chapter of Cuban tourism for the German market

BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Cubanacan Hotels, one of Cuba's most emblematic hotel chains, announces the launch of “Motivos Cubanacan”, an event that aims to mark a milestone in the promotion of tourism on the island, designed specifically to attract Italian travellers.

Set for next April, the first edition of Motivos Cubanacan offers an exclusive commercial exchange for its sales network, where the catalogues of products and services aimed at Italian travel agents will be updated. This event will allow visitors to learn about new developments and improvements in the chain's offerings and will present a new image for both B2B and B2C.



By 2025, Cubanacan aims to boost the wedding and event segment, as well as promote nautical tourism

“Motivos Cubanacan” represents not only an opportunity to relaunch the Cubanacan Hoteles brand in Italy, but also a commitment to the sustainable development of tourism in Cuba. The chain seeks to attract more visitors from that country, while contributing to local economic growth and the preservation of Cuba's cultural heritage.

With its extensive network of hotels spread throughout the archipelago, this company offers visitors a diverse and enriching experience. From the paradisiacal beaches of Varadero to the vibrant culture of Havana, passing through the tranquility of Viñales and the

natural wonders of the Sierra Maestra, it is positioned as the ideal option for Italian tourists looking for adventure, relaxation and culture.

By 2025, Cubanacan aims to boost the wedding and event segment, as well as promote nautical tourism. German couples dreaming of an idyllic destination for their marital union will find the perfect setting: an extraordinary environment and a team of professionals ready to take care of every detail. In addition, those interested in aquatic activities will be able to explore the impressive seabed that adorns the Cuban coasts.



Gaviota Tourism Group launches exclusive and luxury services in beach hotels

BY YOANNA CERVERA HERNÁNDEZ - DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE



With two new products — Playa Kids and Playa Luxury — in four of its hotels, the Gaviota Tourism Group marks a new milestone in hospitality in Cuba.

Located in attractive destinations such as Playa Pesquero in Holguín, Cayo Guillermo, Cayo Santa María and Varadero, the facilities that debut the Luxury brand raise their standards and create a unique experience.

The Group's President, Carlos M. Latuff, emphasized that Playa Luxury is more than a service; it is a promise of excellence. "This concept represents the best of luxury in

Cuba: exclusivity, personalized attention and unique experiences, always in harmony with our surroundings and the warmth of our people," he said. Every detail, from design to services, has been carefully thought out to exceed the expectations of the most demanding guests.

This concept represents the best of luxury in Cuba: exclusivity, personalized attention and unique experiences, always in harmony with our surroundings and the warmth of our people. Every detail, from design to services, has been carefully thought out to exceed the expectations of the most demanding guests.

Conceived for adults, in peaceful surroundings, each Playa Luxury guest can enjoy a series of benefits that distinguish them from others. From the moment of their arrival, they are greeted with an early check-in and a distinctive wristband that grants them access to a private reception, located just off the main lobby. Here, they are introduced to their butler, a personalized concierge service that manages every detail of their stay: from booking dinners and massages, to arranging activities and transfers.

In Cayo Guillermo, for example, the new proposal offers a variety of accommodation

options, from exclusive cabins over the sea (palafitte-style) to elegant villas with private pools and rooms with privileged views of the sea and the surrounding nature. Each space has been designed to maximize comfort and privacy.

This responds to "The idea of offering something different, something that not only impresses, but also makes each guest feel as if they are in a unique place," according to a press release from the Gaviota Group.

The launch is part of the "Siéntelo" campaign, which seeks to offer sensory and exclusive experiences to showcase Cuba as a luxury destination in the Caribbean.



Playa Kids is an option for the enjoyment of children and their families.

Meanwhile, Gaviota is redefining its offers with the Playa Kids brand, an option for the enjoyment of children and their families.

In mid-February, the first of its kind was inaugurated at the Hotel Playa Cayo Santa María, located in the renowned tourist resort of the same name in north-central Cuba. In addition to its usual spaces, the facility now includes new areas and 60 rooms with this profile.

This exclusive offer includes a specialized butler service, personalized themed rooms, children's areas, recreational activities and the attention of a trained team available 24 hours a day.

Director of Playa Cayo Santa María, Erik Machado Cano, emphasized that the hotel is the

perfect scenario for children to fulfill their dreams and experience unforgettable moments, while the family enjoys comfort and happiness.

"Gabi y Sofi," a creative group from the Cuban private sector, brought life to the aspirations of the hotel chain.

According to Latuff Carmenate, following the launch of these rooms in Playa Santa María, the product will be extended to the eastern region of Cuba, in another emblematic facility: the Hotel Playa Pesquero in Holguín.

"The project reiterates our commitment to excellence and innovation by offering a service that turns each stay into a unique memory," the president stressed.

BarLady in Cuba: Women bartenders celebrate and compete



Mirtha de las Mercedes, bartender.

In the midst of the celebration of International Women’s Day, Cuba will host the second edition of the “International BarLady Competition 2025,” a contest that endorses the creative level and skills of women in the elaboration of the most diverse cocktails.

From the headquarters of the National Association of Bartenders in Havana, its organizers informed the press about the event, which has confirmed participants from 17 countries and several continents.

The President of the Organizing Committee, Rihder Fuentes, commented that the emblematic Hotel Nacional de Cuba will host the participants and the activities, which will take place from March 7 to 9. The extensive program includes competitions in 5 categories: Long drink, Sparkling, Latin Style,

Classic and National, in which the participants 2 minutes for the mise en place, and a further 10 minutes for the demonstration and presentation of their proposal.

Also announced among the activities are the Master Classes of Cuba Ron S.A., Bodegas Torres, El Floridita and La Bodeguita del Medio, a special toast for Women’s Day and the awards ceremony on the evening of the 9th.

The President of the renowned association in the Caribbean country, Eddy Naranjo Castillo, pointed out during the exchange that, “The idea of holding this championship in Havana came after the first edition, where Cuba shone with its participation. We then invited Nafsika Mouzakiti, a Greek host with experience in cocktail contests, who founded BarLady

BY YOANNA CERVERA PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

to empower women in this field, the main organizer of the international contest, to verify Cuba’s possibilities as an event host and she was convinced that it would be a great venue.” He added, “Since then we have been preparing to surprise the participants in the organization and everything we are going to offer.”

During the meeting, it was also revealed that Mirtha de las Mercedes González, a worker at the Brisas del Mar Cultural Center of Artex, in Varadero, is the representative for Cuba in the long drink category. With a track record of participation in events, a deep love for mixology and awards that gave her a pass to this championship, such as the National Varadamas and the “Fabio Delgado in Memoriam” contest, the Matanzas native is preparing with the

The Cuban Bartenders Association currently has 1,582 members, 40 percent of whom are women

support of maestros and colleagues who provide her with knowledge, strengthen her skills and especially the language.

Visibly excited, she said that she is getting ready with the sponsors to make a good cocktail. She explained that she is preparing surprises to give a real show of the worth of Cuban women and added: “It is a privilege and honor to represent Cuba and the women of my country.”

With more than a century of united work and results, the Cuban Bartenders Association currently has 1,582 members, 40 percent of whom are women. The International BarLady Competition 2025 promises to be a true spectacle, where creativity and the art of bartending will come together in a celebration of bartending, culture and friendship.

Salvadoran “mysteries”

BY MARINA MENÉNDEZ PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE



The recognition of El Salvador as one of the world’s nations to have seen the greatest increase in the number of tourists in recent years forces us to take a look at a territory that was not previously famous for being a vacation destination.

According to the most recent World Tourism Barometer, published by UN Tourism, the nation registered an 81% increase in visitor arrivals, followed by Saudi Arabia, with a distant 69%.

A brief look at its geography explains the reasons why the smallest country in Central America, lacking abundant hotel facilities, has also been the Latin American and Caribbean nation that most quickly surpassed the visitor numbers it received in 2019, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. From then to date, tourist arrivals rose by more than 40%.

A land of lakes and volcanoes, known as the “Tom Thumb of the Americas” due to its small size, offers an extraordinary panorama for vacationers unaccustomed to contemplating the roaring craters of mountains in whose interior magma boils. Some 20 such volcanoes exist throughout the country. But fear not, as no volcano has erupted here since 1917.

Equally seductive are the country’s lakes, formed over the centuries and where the water, always static like a mirror, comes from runoff or underground channels. For this reason, the waters are always cold, offering a revitalizing dip in the summer heat.

Although this is where its exclusivity lies, El Salvador is also attractive for its beaches, and for the rich heritage of its capital. The city’s buildings offer culture as well as pieces of the past, making them historical

sites. Some bear sad memories, such as the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Savior.

Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero officiated here, always with a word of encouragement for the dispossessed and defending the persecuted. His assassination by paramilitaries in 1980 made him a symbol.

According to Salvadoran sources, among the most visited sites so far this year are the National Library, La Libertad port and Balboa National Park.

Although there are plenty of attractions, local experts attribute the growth in tourist arrivals to the renovation of spaces to accommodate them, and the greater security in the country. By the end of 2025, it is expected that the number of visitors will exceed 4 million. Perhaps you will be one of them.

Investments in the leisure industry

A topic for discussion at ITB 2025

BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF
PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Statistics indicate that the number of international tourist arrivals has returned to pre-pandemic figures and that tourism export earnings have reached record levels.

The recovery of international tourism in 2024 highlights the sector's potential to induce change. With 1.4 billion international tourists registered worldwide and total tourism export revenues exceeding a record US\$1.9 trillion, up 3% on 2019, this momentum is expected to continue in 2025. Expected growth could be between 3% and 5% in international tourist arrivals.

UN Tourism specifies that between 2019 and 2024, 2,242 foreign direct investment projects were announced in the global tourism sector, with an expected value of US\$122.1 billion (an average of US\$54.4 million per project), which is expected to result in the creation of more than 295,000 jobs.

The data undoubtedly attests to the resilience of the

The recovery of international tourism in 2024 highlights the sector's potential to induce change



sector and its ability to drive economic growth, and could channel resources into tourism to ensure that it remains a driver of sustainable development and peacebuilding. Prioritizing investments is no longer an option, but an imperative.

According to the international organization, the sector stands out for its uniqueness in fostering inclusive growth, creating links between communities and generating opportunities, even in the most challenging environments. When communities are integrated into the tourism value chain, they derive tangible benefits that defuse conflict and promote cooperation. Investments in tourism infrastructure, services and destinations not only bring economic benefits, but also forge the foundations that support social cohesion and resilience.

"Strategic investment in tourism infrastructure, sustainability initiatives, and destination development will not only attract private-sector participation but also lay the groundwork for long-term economic resilience," a UN Tourism press release emphasizes. "By fostering partnerships across borders, integrating local communities into the tourism economy, and ensuring that investments align with global sustainability goals, decision-makers can harness tourism as a force for good," it continues.

In line with these ideas, the high-level ministerial discussion

Participants are expected to examine viable solutions, foster cross-border partnerships and recognize the crucial role of governments

that will take place at ITB 2025 will have as its theme "Enhancing Investment, Ensuring Peace: Harnessing Growth, Shaping the Future." The aim: to provide decision-makers, opinion leaders and investors with a unique space in which to discuss the opportunities and pressing challenges facing the tourism sector.

Participants are expected to examine viable solutions, foster cross-border partnerships and recognize the crucial role of governments when it comes to ensuring that tourism investments remain an engine of economic resilience, peace and sustainability.



Prioritizing accessibility in tourism planning and product development



BY TTC EDITORIAL STAFF PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

UN Tourism and AccessibleEU have joined the champions of accessible tourism to promote policies, standards, incentives, capacities and business strategies that make inclusion a reality for millions of people.

The latest report on the subject, Advancing Accessible Tourism for Destinations, Companies and People, presented at FITUR 2025 and commissioned with the Government of San Marino and AccessibleEU, proposes 25 good practices in accessibility, promoted by Belgium, the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, San Marino, South Africa, Turkey and Uzbekistan. It also provides information on how

to improve accessibility in cultural, nature and shopping tourism, festivals, pilgrimage routes, urban and rural experiences, sports, mass events and transportation.

The seminar “Accessible Tourism: Harnessing the Benefits of Inclusive Destinations for Companies and People” was held during the same important event for the travel industry worldwide, with the participation of high-level policymakers from UN Tourism Member States, such as Ecuador, Italy and Portugal, together with leading accessibility organizations from Malaga and Berlin, members of UN Tourism’s International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO).

Both governments and promotion authorities emphasized that it is essential to improve information and communication on accessible offers

in order to increase the comfort, safety and length of stay of visitors; strengthen transnational cooperation to assess the size of the global accessible tourism market and monitor its continued growth; promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the sector; and use innovation and data to raise awareness and attract investment.

Meanwhile, UN Tourism Affiliate Members and strategic partners in the sustainability agenda, such as the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (WSHA), along with leading tour operators and transport companies such as IMPULSA Igualdad (Spain), Sage Travelling (USA) and Holmeswood Coaches (UK), called for harmonization of accessibility standards and simplification of their application across the industry; leveraging technology and universal marketing platforms for the promotion of accessible experiences; measuring the impact of accessibility developments on employees, customers and key stakeholders; and incorporating accessibility into core business strategies.

The seminar “Accessible Tourism: Harnessing the Benefits of Inclusive Destinations for Companies and People” was held during the same important event for the travel industry worldwide

Dominican Republic announces it’s annual tourism exchange “DATE 2025”

The 25th edition of the Dominican Annual Tourism Exchange (DATE 2025) will be held from May 14 to 16 at the Barceló Bávaro Convention Center, according to the Dominican Association of Hotels and Tourism (Asonahores).

Juan Bancalari, president of Asonahores, announced that this event comes as the country’s tourism industry works to surpass the record figure of 11 million tourists in 2024, which reaffirms the Dominican Republic’s position as a regional leader in attracting visitors.

“This growth has not been a coincidence, but the result of the efforts of the private sector and the support of public policies that have boosted the country’s competitiveness. We have diversified our markets and are committed to high-value segments such as sports tourism, MICE, adventure tourism and ecotourism,” he said.

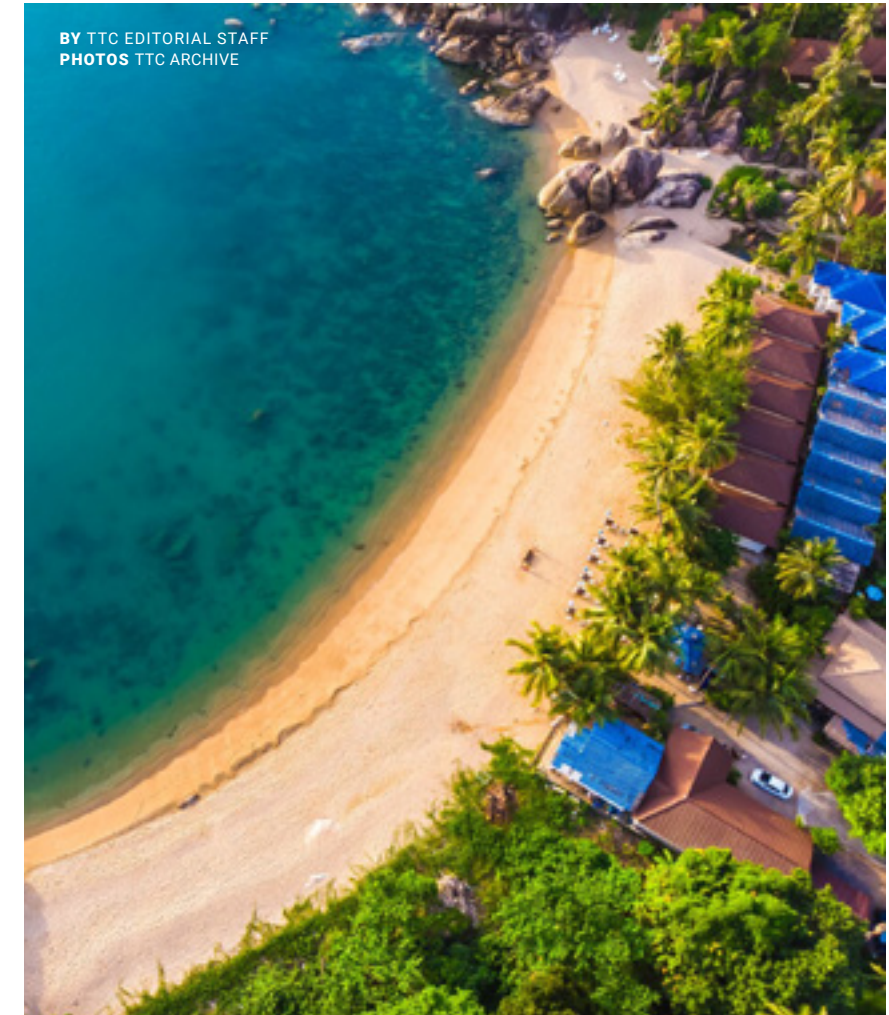
He specified that Asonahores takes on the challenges of the goal set for 2025



of “reaching 12.5 million tourists” and continuing to consolidate the Dominican Republic as the number one destination in the Caribbean, working with innovation, sustainability and diversification as the cornerstones of its offer.

Agüie Lendor, executive vice president of Asonahores, explained that the goal of the exchange this year is to exceed the 8,000 requests for appointments made in the last edition by implementing new distribution channels to promote the event, such as trade missions established in the Dominican Republic, as well as those representing the Dominican community abroad.

“This fair not only drives business, but also projects the future of Dominican



tourism, committed to excellence, adaptability and continuous growth. For this DATE 2025, we are focusing on driving the public-private agenda of promoting destinations and their tourist attractions in Santo Domingo, Pedernales, Miches, Puerto Plata, Santiago, Punta Cana and La Romana-Bayahibe,” she said.

Since its creation, DATE has been the strategic meeting point for the tourism sector that brings together hoteliers,

investors, tour operators and key allies to connect markets and explore new trends.

DATE 2025 is sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Punta Cana Resorts, Barceló Hotel Group, Bahía Príncipe Hotels & Resorts, Meliá Hotels International, Banco Popular Dominicano, Banreservas, Banco BHD, Coco Bongo, Palladium Hotel Group, Consorcio Energético Punta Cana Macao (CEPM) and Therrestra.

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Peru and Havana united with Avianca flights

Avianca offers a new opportunity for Peruvian travelers to connect, via Bogota, with their new destination in the Caribbean: Havana. The airline offers a daily frequency to its customers in the Airbus A320, with a capacity for 180 passengers, which represents a total offer of more than 2,500 seats per week between the two cities. The proposal is structured as follows: travelers from Peru will be able to travel from Lima to Bogota taking advantage of the 35 weekly frequencies available on the Lima - Bogota route or the seven weekly frequencies available on the Cuzco - Bogota route.



Air Europa to directly connect Madrid with Guayaquil and Quito

Starting in June, Air Europa will activate direct routes between the strategic hub of Madrid-Barajas and the Ecuadorian airports of Guayaquil and Quito. After seven years covering both destinations by means of triangular flights, the company consolidates its offer for the Andean country by expanding its services and its seats aboard its Dreamliner fleet. As of June 24, the airline will operate three weekly frequencies to each of these cities on a permanent basis. Until then, it will maintain its triangular route from Madrid.



Antigua and Barbuda launches multimillion-dollar cruise ship project

Among its priorities, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda seeks to boost tourism and create new jobs. With this in mind, it has launched a cruise port expansion project. Construction of the new terminal, which will be accessible to ships, visitors and residents, will begin in March 2025 and will cost US\$40 million. The 150,000-square-meter expansion will include new passenger terminals, commercial space, restaurants and entertainment facilities.



Royal Caribbean to debut its third Icon Class cruise ship in 2026

Royal Caribbean will debut its third Icon Class cruise ship, which it has named Legend of the Seas, in November 2026. This new ship will sail from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Legend of the Seas will offer 6-night Western Caribbean and 8-night Southern Caribbean itineraries, including Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day at CocoCay in the Bahamas.



Euroairlines inaugurates new route between Paris and Punta Cana

The new route is expected to bring some 10,000 passengers to the Dominican Republic this spring, significantly increasing the number of direct flights from France. The route is already operational and was made possible thanks to a strategic alliance with Spanish airline World2fly. Flights will depart from Charles de Gaulle International Airport in Paris, arriving at Punta Cana International Airport, operated with 388-seat Airbus A330 units. In total, 26 flights will be operated in this initial phase and operations are expected to resume between November 25, 2025 and May 26, 2026.



Iberojet resumes direct flights to Santa Clara this summer

Spanish airline Iberojet announced direct flights between Santa Clara and Madrid for this summer 2025 on its website. This offer returns for the second consecutive year and is one of the best options to travel from Spain to central Cuba. This direct link between Santa Clara airport and Spain's Madrid-Barajas has been maintained thanks to the tourist package offers to Cayo Santa María, close to this city's Abel Santamaria Airport. In addition, the city is the gateway to this region of the Caribbean island, and is only an hour and a quarter away from the northern keys (Cayo Las Brujas, Cayo Ensenachos and Cayo Santa María), with beaches considered the most spectacular in the Caribbean.



Curaçao to expand infrastructure to receive cruise ships

Curaçao handed over a land reserve to the Port Authority (APC), marking an important step toward boosting the island's cruise industry. The move will facilitate the expansion of the cruise terminal's logistical capacity, and thus allow the island to create more infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of visitors, according to Loop Caribbean News. In 2024, the Caribbean country saw a record of more than 834,000 cruise arrivals, which represented a 17% increase compared to 2023, and 4% more than initial estimates for the year.



Explora Journeys unveils its winter 2026-2027 itineraries

Cruise line Explora Journeys has unveiled its 2026-2027 winter itineraries. This new season encompasses some of the world's most captivating regions, inviting guests to experience the extraordinary aboard Explora I, Explora II and Explora III. The brand continues its expansion into new regions, unveiling extraordinary routes and inaugural ports that promise an immersive and unforgettable experience. Explora I will allow guests to discover diverse Caribbean islands and tour the cultural landscapes of Central and South America between November 2026 and March 2027, and in February 2027 will enter the breathtaking wilderness and biodiversity of the Amazon.

Cuba: a destination for events in 2025



BY DAILY PÉREZ GUILLÉN PHOTOS TTC ARCHIVE

Cuba seeks to position itself as a top destination for events, meetings and conventions (MICE). It has all the conditions to do so in its convention centers and hotel facilities. With that purpose in mind, the Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) has once again presented the Calendar of Events for 2025.

Yanet de Armas, MINTUR director of events, noted that as of January, 235 events have been registered all over the country. Those related to cultural, medical, educational, scientific-technological and

environmental, sports, recreational and tourism issues stand out.

As regards the travel and leisure industry, the International Tourism Fair of Cuba will take place in the first five days of May, while the National Botanical Garden and the Agrarian University of Havana will host the 10th Ibero-American Rural Tourism Meeting, from September 22 to 27.

Also noteworthy in the annual program are the initiatives of the Ecotur Travel Agency with the "Red Trails" Project "Les chemins rouges" Chemin de Grande Randonnée, scheduled for March; the World Championship of Accessible Diving will be held in April; the

International Underwater Photography Event 2025 (Fotosub 2025) toward the end of July; and the Song Festival for the Visually Impaired will run from June 17 to 21.

The Cubasol Business Group added a new event: the Festival de Maridaje de Clásicos Tropicana & Autos, combining classic cars and the famous cabaret. Meanwhile, it maintains its usual events in the country's different tourist destinations: the 73rd edition of the Ernest Hemingway International Billfishing Tournament; the 15th Varadero Gourmet International Festival; Asia-Havana; 15th Edition of the Cuba Golf Grand Tournament 2025; Experience and Traditions; Jardines del Rey Big Game Trolling; and the Meeting of Friends of Partagás.

The Gaviota Tourism Group will host the seventh edition of Destinos Gaviota in Cayo Santa María in October, and maintains Digital Nature in Topes de Collantes from September 18 to 22, and IMASUB in Pinar del Río in July.

The calendar of events closes with the III International Seminar on Tourism Law in December.

**The Gaviota
Tourism Group will
host the seventh
edition of Destinos
Gaviota in Cayo
Santa María in
October**



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