

# *Influx of Tourists to Paraguay Expected During Visit of Pope Francis in Mid-July*

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Asunción, February 24 (RHC-EFE) – Pope Francis will visit Paraguay from July 10-12 on a brief trip to South America that will also include stops in Bolivia and Ecuador, the head of the Tourism Secretariat, Marcela Bacigalupo, announced on Monday, predicting a heavy influx of foreigners to the country.

Bacigalupo said that the most probable sites for the pope to visit, besides the capital, are the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Caacupe, 56 km (35 mi.) east of Asuncion, the main shrine to Mary for Paraguayan Catholics, and the ruins of the Jesuit missions located in Itapua province.

However, the Paraguayan Bishops Conference told the press last week that the official confirmation of the papal visit will be made public in a joint communiqué issued by the Holy See and local bishops, an announcement that has not yet come.

The Paraguayan government has created an inter-institutional committee to organize the pope's visit and it is maintaining contacts with The Vatican and the Bishops Conference to that end, Bacigalupo said.

Foreign tour operators have begun to contact the ministry, which anticipates that all available hotel rooms

will be booked during Francis's stay in the country, as well as during the few days prior and after his visit.

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