

Tourists Travel to Saint Lucia in Record Numbers



Castries, March 18 (teleSUR-RHC) Saint Lucia is celebrating a record double-digit increase in the number of tourists staying on the island. It is good news for an island that is heavily dependent on the sector.

Lorne Theophilus, the island's tourism minister, says the work must continue. "We are 14 percent up over last year's records. That means that we're pacing in the right direction. I am going to continue focusing on the things that we need to do for the benefit of the country's tourism sector and the advancement of the creative industries," Theophilus told members of the press outside the Assembly.

Those who rely on tourism for income are encouraged by the figures. Peter Isaac, president of the Saint Lucia Vendors Association, whose members earn a living selling crafts and other local products to visitors, told teleSUR English that while the new numbers are truly impressive, it is not a given that more tourists equal more income.

"There was a projection that there would be more cruise ships and more people and I think we are really seeing more people. The only thing we really cannot say that is really happening in terms of that kind of influx of people coming to Saint Lucia is in terms of the spending," he said, adding, "we have a little situation there where it varies in terms of what people are seeing in terms of the trickle down effect."

While tourism officials are welcoming the overall increase, they say on the downside, the island recorded a decline in the number of people opting to visit Saint Lucia from the United Kingdom and Caribbean markets.

Looking ahead, tourist-board officials say the goal is to build on the industry's successes, which continue to be the lifeline of the local economy, accounting for 65 percent of the island's Gross Domestic Product.

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