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Costa Rican & Guatemalan Tourism Earnings In 1991

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 30, Costa Rican Tourism Minister Luis Manuel Chacon told reporters that tourism revenue in 1991 totaled US$336 million, an 18% increase over 1990. Chacon said tourism ranked second only to bananas as a source of foreign exchange, accounting for 17% of the total. According to the minister, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute (ICT) approved contracts for construction of 144 new hotels in 1992, which would increase the number of rooms available from 1,100 to 2,547. In addition, he said, four hotel chains Spain's Sol Melia and Barcelo, and Camino Real and Costa Rey of El Salvador would invest over US$150 million in construction of several luxury hotels. Chacon said that in 1992 two foreign airlines were scheduled to establish direct charter flights between San Jose and major cities in Germany on a weekly basis. Next, the ICT plans to further promote "eco-tourism" activities and will propose regulations to prevent environmental damage resulting from hotel construction and increased tourism activity. Included are ceilings on the height of new beachfront hotels, and prohibition of hotel sites inside national parks. Chacon also said the ICT will push for creation of a special police force charged with providing security to tourists. Alfonso Raimers, director of the Guatemalan Tourism Institute (INGUAT), reported that 500,000 foreigners visited Guatemala in 1991 and spent US$207.5 million, compared to US$185.2 million in 1990. He said 43% of the tourists were Central Americans, most of whom were Salvadorans. Another 26.1% were US and Canadian nationals, and 17.9%, Europeans. According to Raimers, the average tourist spent US$61.70 per day in 1991 compared to US$59.70 in 1990. Approximately 55,000 Guatemalans are employed directly or indirectly in the tourism industry. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, Agence France-Presse, 12/30/91)

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