HAVANA, Cuba. – No doubt, Cuba’s tourism crisis is getting worse as tourists seem scared at the possibility of traveling to a country that only a couple of years ago competed for becoming one of the principal sun-and-beach destinations in the Caribbean.

It’s not only that establishments are shut down or practically empty, and that foreign investors are fleeing from the island or reducing their presence in it (as is that case of the French company Accor, which recently opted to abandon what was its most precious jewel in Havana, the Paseo del Prado hotel), but also the disappearance of Cuba from Meliá Hotels International’s top destinations list on the company’s official page, where for years, Cuba occupied top billing along with Playa del Carmen, in Mexico and Punta Cana, in the Dominican Republic.

Evidently, starting in 2021 and to date in 2022, things have been going terribly bad for the Cuban dictatorship, which, between shortages, the pandemic, buildings collapsing, explosions, fires, blackouts, popular protests and general boredom, has vanished from other important tourist destination promotional lists.
This past July, Cuba went unnoticed in the Travelers’ Choice 2022 awards, which are given by the important travel site Tripadvisor, to recognize those companies, establishments and destinations that get high-rated and positive reviews most frequently on its webpage.

If it were not because the waters of Varadero – their natural beauty and not the services provided there – occupied second place on the “Best Beaches in the World” listing, Cuba would not have been mentioned in 2022 in this latest selection that recognizes 10% of tourist attractions most valued by clients. On Tripadvisor, the number of favorable opinions regarding the quality of clients’ stay and their overall satisfaction, has significantly diminished.

That notwithstanding, Varadero received no mention in the “Most Popular Destinations for Sun Lovers”, where first place went to the Cancun resort, followed by Bali, in Indonesia; Cabo San Lucas and Playa del Carmen, both in Mexico. Mexico was not the only sun-and-beach destination in Latin America and the Caribbean that Tripadvisor highlighted: the Dominican Republic, Aruba, Jamaica, Costa Rica and Ecuador were also included.

To make matters worse, no Cuban hotel managed to qualify this year for Tripadvisor’s Travelers’ Choice, since merits taken into consideration go beyond a good geographic location. The characteristics taken into consideration include: Client services provided, excellence of facilities, guarantee of reservation and payment methods, areas in which Cuba is behind when compared to other destinations in the region. Categories and sub-categories also include: “Attractions”, “Fashion Destinations”, Emerging Destinations”, “Popular Destinations”, “Destinations for Lovers of Outdoor Activities”, “National Parks”, “Small Lodging Facilities” and “Hostels and Rooming Houses”.

More recently, in late August, Cuba did not qualify for the list of “Fifty Most Beautiful Places in the World”, chosen from a study conducted at the money.co.uk website and published by Forbes magazine, which evaluated each of the categories that make countries “beautiful”, among them natural vistas, as well as the telecommunications, electrical and transportation infrastructures, the people and the culture.

This is a selection that cannot be accused of being “politically-motivated” or
“elitist”, as does the Cuban regime every time it is ignored, for countries like Venezuela and Nicaragua, which are at present ruled by dictatorial governments and are experiencing an acute crisis, did rate on that list among the top fifty countries, from a total of 175 that were analyzed.

Colombia ranked third worldwide, preceded by Indonesia and New Zealand. Then follow: Tanzania, Mexico, Kenya, India and France. Also ranked in Latin America were Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, Argentina, Granada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Venezuela, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Panama.

Without recommendations or awards, and poorly rated, the present panorama for tourism in Cuba is not encouraging; however, the regime in Havana continues to build more and more hotels, without any certainty that they will ever be filled to capacity, or heeding the advice of experts and ruining the economy further.

As a result, day by day the country is becoming, maybe irreversibly, one of the most unbearable places on the planet, with a dreadful and ancient technological infrastructure, without quality roads and transportation systems, without food production, and with all kinds of shortages, poor services, and poverty and repression everywhere.

ARTÍCULO DE OPINIÓN
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