

Cuba Is Ready to Welcome Cruise Ships, According to Authorities

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MADRID, Spain. - During a press conference that took place last week at the Cuban Embassy in Madrid, Cuba's Tourism advisor in Spain, Niurka Pérez Denis, stated that the island is ready to welcome cruise ships.

"We have all the health measures and the required infrastructure in place. The conditions have been readied for welcoming those ships," added the official.

She also explained that Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba have already welcomed cruise ships from various destinations, although "not in the same volume as prior to the pandemic," according to *Excelencias* magazine.

Early last March, with the arrival of the British cruise ship Marella Explorer 2 in Havana, Cuban authorities had indicated that they expected to revive this tourism segment of the travel market.

Also, last March, it was learnt that a federal judge in Miami ruled against cruise

lines with links to South Florida, namely, Carnival, Norwegian, Royal Caribbean and MSC Cruises, due to their participation in “prohibited tourist activities” and “human traffic” by transporting passengers to Cuba and benefitting from the port installations in Havana that Fidel Castro’s government had confiscated.

The case will go to trial by jury this coming May, where damages the cruise ship companies will have to pay will be decided.

During the press conference, Pérez Denis insisted once again on the regime’s projections to welcome 2.5 million tourists in 2022. The statistics already show that the actual numbers will be much lower, especially due to the drop in the Russian market as a result of the cancellation of Russian airline flights due to the invasion of Ukraine. Russia is Cuba’s principal source of tourists.

As has been happening ever since the Cuban government announced the upcoming International Tourism Fair FITCuba-2022, this advisor again referred to this event as one to present to the world “the improvement to the tourism product that has resulted from investments in that sector that have accomplished 4,000 additional guest rooms in 4 and 5-star hotels.”

“As part of the Fair, we are developing a program that will not only address the “sun and beaches” aspect of tourism, but also cultural events, some of them to be held live and others dedicated to the business segment, in addition to a program for the airlines,” Pérez Denis explained.

Two weeks ago, Cuba’s Prime Minister, Manuel Marrero Cruz, considered that FITCuba-2022 “is a great opportunity to highlight “the benefits and strengths of the sector in the country, and also reinforce the strategic nature of this industry to the Cuban economy.”

For Cruz Marrero, “the event will serve to tell the world that -in his opinion- the country is alive, it is resisting, and it is making progress.”

The prime minister also stated that Varadero, the fair’s headquarters, needs “a transformation,” “a night-life, discos, retail stores and stores with extended hours,” as well as “a redesign of its products” to “infuse new life to the city.”

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