



Tourism

A Top Export Prospect for Haiti

September 2013

Overview

Tourism in Haiti has a long history, and is experiencing a resurgence. From the 1950s through the 1980s, Haiti was a popular Caribbean tourism destination. Many hotels were built in Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, and Cap Haitien, which benefitted from their colonial history and charming architecture. The Haitian handicraft and painting sectors developed in this period and remain active; they are focused in the southern city of Jacmel. Milot, near Cap-Haïtien, is the site of Haiti's most significant historical landmarks, the Sans-Souci Palace and the Citadelle Laferrière, both built in newly-independent Haiti in the early 19th century.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, instability led to the decline of the tourism industry. Most visitors to Haiti were American citizens of Haitian descent, international aid workers, diplomats, and business representatives meeting with local partners. The most successful tourism site is at Labadie, near Cap Haitien, where Royal Caribbean Cruise lines maintains a private beach for its cruise passengers.

Prior to the January 2010 earthquake, Haiti counted about 2,000 rooms, mostly in 3-star hotels, averaging USD 100 per night. Following the earthquake, the hotel supply counted only 773 rooms. Given the lack of hotel rooms, Haiti needed to rebuild its hospitality industry in order to revive the torn economy. Industry representatives were very committed in making an impact; and today Haiti has increased its room capacity to 2670, averaging USD 185 per night for a standard room.

International organizations, aid workers and non-profit organizations have kept occupancy rates at hotels in the capital in the range of 75 percent. A 240-room airport conference hotel, the Royal Oasis and Best Western Hotel, both in Petion-Ville, are operational as of 2013. Expansions of the Karibe Hotel, El rancho and the Ritz Hotel, also in Petion-Ville, are ongoing and should be complete by 2014. Choice Hotels International, owner of Comfort Inn, will franchise its brand to two hotels in Jacmel, a seaside town located 51 miles southeast of Port-au-Prince. Marriott Hotels & Resorts broke ground in the Turgeau area of Port-au-Prince, with the opening expected to be in early 2015 with 175-rooms.

Revival of the tourism sector is a Haitian government priority. The Ministry of Tourism has developed an ambitious program focused on three zones: the North (Cap Haitien and Milot), the South (Jacmel to Les Cayes), and the West (beaches north of Port-au-Prince). The plan

calls for development and/or restoration of destinations known for their history and culture. Specific locations significant to Haiti's rich history, such as Habitation Breda (Toussaint Louverture's birthplace and residence) and Bois Caiman (location of the first slave ceremony after the revolt) are scheduled for renovation.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

There are myriad opportunities for investment in and exports to the growing hotel sector, as well as in restaurants, transportation, and tourism services geared to international visitors. Improvement in basic infrastructure, such as roads, health services, and power supply, as well as construction of hotels throughout the country, is essential for tourism development.

See the latest State Department Travel Warning on Haiti:

<http://haiti.usembassy.gov/service/us-citizen-services/travel-warning.htmlb>

Opportunities

Beyond those mentioned above, opportunities in the tourism sector are also linked to other sectors described earlier -- telecommunications, electrical power systems, and transportation.

Web Resources

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