



The tourism industry will be the first beneficiary of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Approved by the US Congress on October 12th, the agreement began its implementation phase as it awaits the arrival of a significant flow of visitors from the US, which will increase with the force of the FTA. This increase in U.S. travelers is the result of a new phase of the relationship bringing an increase number of entrepreneurs and investors who come in search of businesses that will promote the FTA, said Vice Minister of Tourism Oscar Rueda García, saying that growth will be sustained and consolidated hereinafter the force of the Treaty

In his view, the opportunities offered by the Colombia agreement will help to keep building a world-class destination. According to the official, in recent years, the arrival of travelers from the United States has been rising. While 2009 saw 19% growth in the arrival of travelers from the US (314,860), the end of 2010 the increase was 11% for a total of 349,116 travelers.

"Colombia has been preparing for the opportunities now open by the FTA," said Rueda García, stipulating that, for example, only in recent years in Bogotá, 2300 rooms have been opened and this year there will be 1,770 more. Nationwide, the number of new rooms, until this year is 15,500. At the end of 2014, we will have 19,000 new rooms.

To this is added the El Dorado Airport will be ready when the FTA takes effect, which is expected to occur late next year. "This will allow us, undoubtedly, to increase operational capacity and convenience for travelers," he said.

In the preparatory phase, prior to approval of the treaty, the most important thing was to have changed the aviation agreement between the U.S. and Colombia, which now only allows to receive up to 91 weekly flights from the United States. With the signing of the "Open Skies," which took place in May, starting January 2013, there will be no limit on the number of flights, airline, or cities.

This greater choice of airlines and hotel rooms will have favorable impact on prices, which encourage a greater number of visitors to Colombia, Oscar Rueda affirms.

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