{rokbox title=|Health Tourism.|}images/stories/turistainternacional/Quehacer/informeespecial/salud1.jpg{/rokbox}

Health Tourism

Through health tourism, many people from over the world travel from their places of residence to other countries in search of medical treatment and the attractions in the countries visited.

Despite the fact that several institutions in Colombia are in the middle of their international accreditation process, the potential is very large.

For the quality of its health care professionals, a good number of institutions devoted to health, and an immense inventory of natural and architectural sites, Colombia is projecting itself as one of Latin America's main destinations in terms of health tourism.

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Health Tourism

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According to *Luis Guillermo Plata*, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Colombia's health sector is strong - a good explanation for the increase in the number of patient-tourists who arrive, mainly for esthetic treatments.

International Caliber Tourism

Minister *Plata* has pointed out that expectations concerning the increase in the number of

health tourists in the coming years are high due to the excellent quality of medical care and the high cost of treatment in the United States and Europe, where the ratio to Colombia is seven to one.

Health tourism in Colombia has been deemed world class and is set to become an important source of foreign currency in a very short time. Although there are no exact figures, in terms of plastic surgery, for example, it is estimated that each month close to 20 foreigners arrive for procedures such as liposuction, rhinoplasty, and mammoplasty. Many of them come from the United States, Spain, Panama, and Mexico.

Preparing for the Future

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Health Tourism

In view of the increasing strength of the sector and in the process of waiting for health organizations to obtain their certification, the Joint Commission International (JCI) is already planning alliances between the health and tourism sectors to create packages that will include medical treatment, lodging, food, transfers, and tours according to the complexity of treatment.

Simultaneously with the growth in the health tourism sector, Colombia has short term expectations for institutions to offer health and welfare services on a par with five-star hotels. Yet while the infrastructure is being set up, Colombian medicine continues to gain prestige thanks to various direct and indirect promotions.

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A healthy way to promote Colombia

Close to 2.2% of the tourists who entered the country in 2008 came for medical treatment related to esthetic or bariatric surgery or smile design. Of that percentage, most are Colombians residing abroad. When they return to their country of residence, they become the best reference

on the quality of national health care professionals.

On the other hand, actors, actresses, models, and Colombian TV programs influence the increasing number of foreigners who come to improve their physical appearance and, by the way, to get to know interesting sites.

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Health Tourism

Recently, internationally renowned *Diego Armando Maradona*, spent time here for the purpose. The ex-soccer player and present technical director of the Argentine Selection undertook weight-loss surgery. He also turned over the design of his smile to expert Colombian hands.

The strategy of referrals, together with the certification of institutions, alliances with international clinics and hospitals, as well as the implementation of an infrastructure for bringing together the health and tourism sectors, will consolidate Colombia in the international context as an important destination for health tourism.

Implementing Further Services

Reasons for understanding that the risk in Colombia refers to wanting to stay are also found in operating rooms and doctors' offices, once a visitor becomes acquainted and enjoys the services provided.

In regard to the possibilities in this field, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism aims at consolidating health services as one of the categories for providing increasing income for the country, to the extent of investments made in the construction and outfitting of spas and esthetic centers.

While the sector is being implemented to obtain a major role for Colombia in the field of health tourism, cities like *Bogotá, Cali*, and *Medellín* reiterate their good name thanks to doctors,

dentists, and surgeons and the quality of the medical, surgical, and esthetical procedures performed.

Reasons for understanding that the risk in Colombia is about wanting to stay are also found in operating rooms and doctors' offices once a visitor becomes acquainted and enjoys the services provided.

If you are interested in health tourism, continue your navigation through sites that offer this product:

- *Bogota*
- *Cali*
- *Medellín*
- *Bucaramanga*
- And what about golf or Colombian gastronomy ?