Rural and urban lodgings, shops, transportation, guides, and operators are all set and working on the last details to be ready for one of the longest weekends in 2009 – actually a mini-vacation season.

A week before the start of Holy Week, and even if positive expectations are still alive, most prayers are directed at Saint Peter, begging him not to allow the weather to water down vacation plans in the light of forecasts of persistent rain. According to Javier Antonio Mejía Ochoa, Director of Turiscafé (the association that groups rural lodgings) and President of the Colombian Chamber of Tourism, the only thing that keeps them awake at night is the rainy season, due to the fact that the greatest number of tourists who arrive in the Department of Risaralda and the Café Triangle make the trip by land, and rain may damage the roads.

Although the economy is not doing so well and the now evident deceleration will have an impact at this time of year, the worst thing is bad weather that would end up by keeping tourists away.

Go get some rest!

Weather is a key factor because most people who visit the region come to relax and, although Holy Week has its attractions, visitors from neighboring municipalities generally do not spend the night in the city.

"*People come to shop, to engage in tourism, to visit other municipalities, which is why we hope for good weather* ", indicated Mejía Ochoa.

There still are beds for tourists

In contrast to other vacation seasons, when rural lodgings did not have a single bed to spare, the situation is different at present. Right now, occupancy is only 50%, but there is hope that the situation will change next week. Prices remain the same because of the situation of the economy. "*Rural lodgings did not raise their prices this year; they were prepared. There are attractive packages that are definitely favorable* ," he added. A one-night stay can be found for $70,000 Colombian pesos (about US$ 35) and includes hotel insurance, breakfast, medical insurance, and excellent service.

Things are not different in urban lodgings. There are promotions with special packages just for the asking. Their owners want to benefit from a season when rural lodgings are in charge of the show. Thinking about the possible arrival of groups of families and friends, discounts in lodgings may be found at 50% for the holy days in single, double, and even triple accommodations.

According to explanations by María del Socorro Jaramillo, outgoing director of COTELCO (Spanish acronym for the Colombian hotels association), expectations are positive. As always, honors go to rural lodgings, with an occupancy rate of 80%; yet a rate of at least 30% is expected for urban lodgings.

Tourism activities

As in previous years, efforts will concentrate on the following three tourism activities:

Hot springs an increasingly professional service that attracts many visitors. Rural tourism, relaxation, swimming pools, and family Which attract the highest number of the region's visitors. Shopping and new shopping spaces An increasing feature in the region.