



Mazatlán: Implementing Industry Requirements

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Mazatlán authorities are stepping up its efforts to assure cruise lines and passengers that the port is safe, accordig to Oralia Rice Rodriguez, secretary of tourism for the state of Sinaloa.

Rice told *Cruise Industry News* that she and Gloria Guevara, Mexico's secretary of tourism, had attended last month's cruise convention in Miami and met with Micky Arison, chairman of Carnival Corporation and Kevin Sheehan, CEO of Norwegian Cruise Line and chairman of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA).

"Our message (to the industry) is that we are ready for you to come back," Rice said. "We have implemented the security measures that the FCCA has asked for. Security is our number one priority.

"We now have visible security in all tourism areas during the high season and when cruise ships are in port. Security is also provided for shore excursion and at excursion destinations. In addition, you will see police on bicycles on our seawalk promenade."

Rice said while it is difficult to change perceptions, the industry needs to know that Carnival, for instance, has brought more than 250,000 passengers to Mazatlan, without incident. "During our 45 years as a cruise destination, nothing (bad) has ever happened to a cruise passenger in Mazatlan," Rice added.

Moreover, some 6,500 U.S. citizens live in Mazatlan, according to Rice, and "are the area's best ambassadors." In March, Mazatlan hosted what it calls an "international celebration" to honor all of its foreign residents.

The current safety efforts are coordination with local, regional, state and federal authorities, and are also coinciding with development projects on the Mexican Riviera and the Sea of Cortes. "We are looking to develop more high-end, small-ship traffic in the Sea Cortes," Rice explained.

Meanwhile, investments to spruce the old town in Mazatlan total more than \$5 million, while another \$4 million have been allocated to marketing. "We will help Mazatlan market its cultural aspects," Rice said. "There is a symphony and an opera – much more than just beaches and fun."



The value proposition is also important, according to Rice, who noted that Mazatlan offers a very good price to value relationship for visitors spending dollars.

Cruise ships have traditionally represented about 10 to 20 percent of the tourism traffic in Mazatlan and are thus an important part of the business for taxi drivers, restaurants and tour operators. “For 35 years, cruise ships have brought a lot of benefits to Mazatlan,” Rice said.

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