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Mazatlan: Ready For Cruise Ships to Return



Cruise ships are starting to return to Mazatlan, according to Frank Cordova, secretary of tourism for the State of Sinaloa. He told *Cruise Industry News* that Norwegian Cruise Line and Holland America Line will be calling in November (2013) going into the first quarter of next year. After that, it depends on how well they are doing, he added.

On that score, Secretary Cordova is confident: “We will be taking good care of the passengers. The cruise lines will be surprised how we have turned Mazatlan around and made it one of the most interesting and attractive destinations.”

Secretary Cordova said that the primary reason the ships left was security issues. “When we came into office in 2011, we had some serious security problems in the port area,” he explained. “We have since added more police officers; we have introduced new training for the police; and we have new security protocols we follow. In two years, we reduced the crime rate by 80 percent.

“During Carnival Week, we had 500,000 visitors and zero incidents. We also just finished a holiday weekend with 100 percent hotel occupancy and zero incidents.

“We have not had a tourist affected in more than two years.”

Secretary Cordova went on to say that more than 100 million peso had been invested in new technology, including video camera monitoring of the port, downtown and areas frequented by tourists. “If we see anything, we are on it immediately,” he added. “Our community is also involved with a community watch program.

“We could have thrown in the towel when the ships left in 2011, but instead we stepped up not only to improve our security, but also with 1 billion peso invested in new infrastructure and the reconstruction of the down area – into a ‘colonial city on the ocean.’” This includes a corridor from the port to downtown, with lights and cobblestones.

“We have 15 new restaurants, a new golf course – we now have five golf courses; and new hotels. New hotel chains are coming in and we plan to double our hotel capacity in five years.”

Mexican tourists have compensated for fewer international visitors, but Secretary Cordova said he also would like to build back up the international traffic. Already, Mazatlan hotels are fully booked for Mexican holidays for the next three years and also fully booked for this year’s vacation period in July and August.

“We will not do any promotion in Mexico this year, but instead focus on Southwest United States and Canada for the periods when Mexicans are not vacationing.

Cruise passengers used to spend about \$20 million a year, he said, representing about 5 percent of the tourism revenue as Mazatlan hosts more than 2.5 million Mexican and foreign visitors a year.

The ships, however, send a message, Secretary Cordova said. “It is status to have cruise ships calling,” he said. “And Mazatlan was one of the first ports to have calls. When they left, it was less of a punch to the stomach and more a psychological blow to the head. People noticed the second the ships left.”

Not only is Mazatlan now safe, Secretary Cordova said, the attractions go far beyond its beaches to adventure tours, archeological sites, cultural experiences, cuisine and what is considered the best opera house in Mexico.

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