

The city for those who live it and visit it

Tourism Economy

Panelists

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Director Puerta Cortés

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Carla Campos Vidal

Moderator

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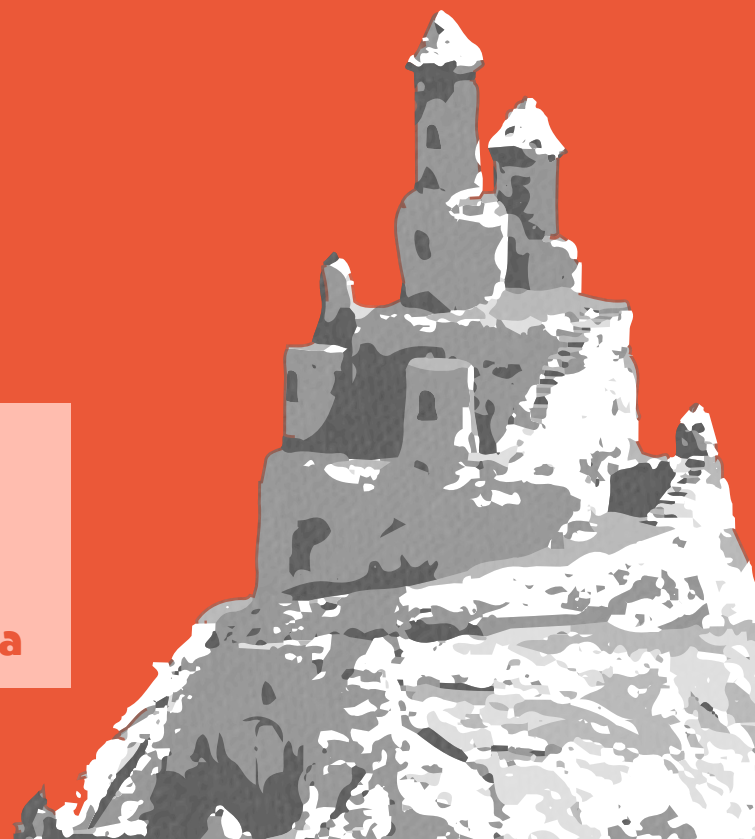
Baja California Sur's Tourism Boom

Fernando Ojeda

In August 2022, Baja California Sur received 351,300 visitors by air, marking a 24% increase compared to 2019, its best year so far. This state is positioned as the third destination in Mexico with the highest reception of international tourism, highlighting its relevance and competitiveness in the global landscape. Despite its international importance, it is crucial to mention that 80% of tourism in Mexico is domestic. Baja California Sur is home to 27,740 rooms in 465 hotels, with 77% of these rooms located in Los Cabos. Tourism promotion is fundamental to maintaining the region's visibility and competitiveness. In fact, an investment of 300 million pesos in tourism promotion generates an estimated annual economic revenue of more than 25 billion pesos. Likewise, the Undersecretary of Tourism of Baja California Sur emphasizes that actions must not only be promoted by the state, but also by the citizens, who must get involved and demonstrate that they are exemplary tourists.

Tourists should also contribute to the conservation of the places they visit.

Fernando Ojeda



Commitment to Sustainable Tourism: The Perspective of the Private Sector

Iván Martínez Ivanov

Iván Martínez Ivanov, director of Puerta Cortés, participates in the panel as a representative of the private sector, focusing his speech on sustainable tourism and the responsibility of the private sector to promote practices that respect and conserve the natural and cultural environment of La Paz.

La Paz is the ideal place to do things right and set an example for the world.

Iván Martínez Ivanov

Ivan emphasizes the need to change the way tourism is conducted, not only to avoid uncontrolled exploitation of resources (overtourism), but to ensure that tourism benefits the local community and the environment in a sustainable manner.

He promotes a vision of growth that is not only based on economic expansion, but on development that integrates sustainability from the outset.

Martinez also stresses the role of education and culture in promoting sustainable tourism, noting that new generations of tourists are increasingly aware and willing to pay more for experiences that respect their ecological conscience. This, he argues, creates a business opportunity that aligns economic interests with environmental and social ones, promoting a virtuous cycle of tourism development that benefits both the industry and the community and environment of La Paz.

Sustainable Development, Legality, and the Environment: The Perspective of Civil Society

Mario Sánchez

Mario Sanchez, Regional Director of the Northwest Regional Office of the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA), emphasizes that these intentions, both on the part of the state and the private sector, remain as such, only intentions. To achieve these objectives, he proposes a series of concrete actions that need to be taken by the state government, the private sector and finally, he highlights the power of civil society to push for these actions to be carried out.

From the perspective of CEMDA's Mario Sanchez, La Paz's environmental and tourism situation centers on the need for a more rigorous and systematic approach to sustainable development. He stresses that sustainable practices in tourism projects should not be

Baja California Sur will be as prosperous as its ecosystems.

Mario Sánchez

exceptional but the norm, questioning the effectiveness of current policies and the implementation of adequate environmental regulations. It stresses the importance of expanding these practices beyond individual projects towards a comprehensive transformation of the sector and the local community.

Mario Sanchez highlights the disparity in the budget allocation for the environment compared to tourism promotion, as he points out that the budget for the environment is extremely low, representing only 0.07% of the total budget of Baja California Sur while there is an allocation seven times greater for tourism promotion compared to the environment.

Therefore, he advocates for a significant increase in the budget for the effective protection of natural resources. He proposes the creation of an Environmental Secretariat, the allocation of at least 1% of the state budget to the environment, and the redirection of tourism resources to directly support environmental sustainability. He also emphasizes the need to study the carrying capacity of ecosystems and the costs of indirect impacts of tourism as these impacts, such as waste management and water use, can overburden local infrastructure and ecosystems if not properly managed. Consequently, as CEMDA's regional director, he urges the updating and enforcement of environmental regulations to ensure truly sustainable development that benefits the entire community, not just tourism projects, noting the obsolescence of local environmental laws, some of which date back to the 1990s and are not aligned with the most recent federal laws. This situation limits the region's ability to effectively manage its growth and ensure sustainable development.



State Actions

- Projects are being carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to integrate biodiversity into tourism in a sustainable manner. This includes the Cuxatur project, which seeks to sustainably harness local biodiversity and promote responsible tourism.
- A new program has been implemented that seeks to accompany rural communities to become professional and sustainable tourism service providers, ensuring that the benefits of tourism remain in these communities.
- They are working to regulate nautical tourism services in the Bay of La Paz in a comprehensive manner, ensuring that these activities are sustainable and respect the local environment.

In view of the state actions, Mario Sánchez points out that these actions are not sufficient, and demands that a more rigorous and comprehensive implementation be carried out.

Iván Martínez's Commitment to Responsible Management of Tourism Resources in La Paz

In his final commitment, Iván Martínez Ivanov stressed the importance of using the resources of the tourism trusts in a more responsible and community-directed manner. He made a personal commitment to insist on reviewing how these resources are managed, with the objective of ensuring that they are used in a way that contributes significantly to the environmental and social well-being of La Paz.

Introduction

Baja California Sur is a state with extensive coastal shorelines and diverse ecosystems, rich in marine life, landscapes, and populations that are delicately interconnected, creating a spectacle that attracts people from around the world. Currently, tourism in Baja California Sur is one of the main drivers of the state's economy; however, caring for this natural resource is critical not only for business owners seeking to attract more visitors but also for all local inhabitants, whether migratory birds, marine mammals, or residents of the towns in the mountains and along the coasts.

For this reason, a consensus has emerged regarding the desired approach to tourism in the state. Business owners, government officials, and civil society agree that the goal is sustainable tourism that not only leverages the state's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage but also contributes to the economic and social development of the region, balancing the conservation of natural assets with the generation of benefits for local communities. However, members of civil society organizations dedicated to environmental protection have noted that this vision remains far from being a reality for the area.

The focus of this panel is to bring together representatives of these three perspectives on tourism in the state, in order to help narrow the gap between current tourism practices and the model everyone desires.



“ *Why should it be exceptional for a tourism project to be sustainable?* ”

- Mario Sánchez



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