

Action Network Statement

31 MAR 2019

QUINTANA ROO TOURISM BOARD RESPONSE TO CANADIAN TELEVISION REPORT WHICH RELIES ON CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND SENSATIONAL CLAIMS TO FALSELY STATE THAT CANADIAN TOURISTS ARE IN DANGER

Yesterday evening CTV, a Canadian media network, aired a report about the state of Quintana Roo and its tourist destinations that was clearly designed to be sensational in nature and paints a false picture of the typical tourist experience.

We respect the important role that media plays in reporting on issues facing society and there is no doubt that the State of Quintana Roo and its cities, like many around the world, have its share of challenges. Many cities in both Mexico and Canada are fighting the scourge of illegal narcotics and the criminal activity, increasing violence and unfortunate loss of

life that comes with it. Just one example, shared by many countries in North America, would be the opioid epidemic and what the Canadian government has declared to be a national crisis. But common sense would not link problems with drugs or violence between locals or a very rare case of violence involving a visitor to all tourists needing to be fearful to travel to the beautiful touristic destinations that exist across Canada, and the same logic should be applied when considering visiting the State of Quintana Roo.

This is exactly why the Canadian government and many international travel organizations seek to provide context and while sharing that crime exists in many locations around the world, they recommend practicing common sense approaches like avoiding high-risk or illegal activities, and being a smart traveler by following the advice of locals and travel professionals. And this is why there currently exist zero travel warnings or advisories by the Canadian government that recommend against travel to the State of Quintana Roo and its destinations. In fact, Canadians visitors grew faster than the global average in 2018 – and Canadians are some of the visitors who keep coming back the most, with more than 52% of them coming back for a second, third or fourth time in 2018.

The State of Quintana Roo government and its officials have repeatedly shared public updates about issues raised in this report, the actions being taken to address them, and have taken comprehensive steps to ensure that local citizens and visitors alike remain safe. As has been reported on numerous occasions and even referenced in this piece, the crime and

violence that takes place is overwhelmingly between criminals and takes place far from areas that international tourists frequent. The very few cases involving international visitors have been connected to those individuals putting themselves into high-risk situations, either by working as armed security staff or by engaging in illegal activity such as buying or selling drugs. While any case of harm or loss of life is tragic, to equate incidents where individuals put themselves in high-risk situations with the experience that a typical tourist would have is blatantly false and represents a lapse in ethical reporting.

It is due this report's questionable motives, sources and clearly biased arguments and language designed to attract ratings and not genuinely inform travelers that we are compelled to respond with facts, context and our perspective so that viewers can have more information with which to evaluate this reporting.

The report's use of phrases like "war zone," "tourists as collateral damage," "local law enforcement powerless," and "darkening future," are unfounded claims that are clearly designed to incite fear and unfortunately represent an example media's hunger for viewership and the competition that exists in their industry has escalated this kind of rhetoric.

As many online comments to this report have immediately begun to point out, the scripted nature of the questions and answers with those interviewed in the piece as key sources should cause any viewer to question their credibility. From a

reporter from a local media outlet known for spreading sensational stories and rumors in the pursuit of online clicks and advertising to a supposed member of a cartel that decides to go on camera at great risk for no apparent reason, the clearly biased and leading questions these individuals were asked and their clever responses that perfectly fit the false narrative of this report are an obvious signal that one should question the objectivity of this reporting. And even if one were to give some legitimacy to the comments of these sources, their very clear statements about tourist areas and tourists not being targeted or at risk are downplayed in the reporting whenever possible.

To provide more context, we wish to share some facts related to the beautiful State of Quintana Roo, its thriving international tourist destinations and the warm welcome that Canadian visitors should expect when they visit:

- The State of Quintana Roo has some of the world's most popular tourist destinations, including Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Riviera Maya, Holbox, Isla Mujeres, Puerto Morelos, Bacalar, Tulum, Mahahual, and Chetumal.
- In 2018, we welcomed more than 15 million international tourists, an increase of 5.5% compared to 2017.
- More than 1.1 million of these visitors were from Canada, and 8% increase over 2017, and 52% of them were repeat visitors to the State of Quintana Roo, clearly indicating the level of safety and satisfaction most Canadian visitors feel.

- The Government of Canada has zero Travel Warnings or Travel Advisories recommending against travel to Quintana Roo and its destinations. Instead, it recommends many smart traveler practices and avoiding risky behaviors in order to reduce issues while traveling, much like it does to most countries around the world.
- The State of Quintana Roo and its municipal government leaders are committed to maintaining the safety its destinations and will continue to take proactive steps towards this goal. This includes modernizing its police and security services, investing in technology including more than 1,000 cameras, upgraded operations centers, partnering with members of the tourism industry to share international best practices, and providing assistance to visitors whenever necessary.
- While our State faces issues of crime and violence, the overwhelming majority of incidents are between criminals and take place far away from areas frequented by tourists. The more than two-year-old, tragic incident involving a Canadian that was cited in the report pertained to an individual who was working as an armed security guard at a music festival that was known to attract drug dealing. This festival and others like it have been banned in the state since 2017 and this incident is an example of a high-risk activity that a typical tourist would not engage in.
- The State of Quintana Roo and its destinations have been repeatedly awarded as some of the highest quality, most popular and earning the highest visitor satisfaction in recent years by some of the world's most respected

travel organizations. Expedia Group, Apple Vacations, CVENT, Travel Weekly, Travel Age West, TripAdvisor, Condé Nast Traveler, Travel & Leisure, AFAR and others have all awarded Quintana Roo's destinations in 2017-2018 in these categories and this recognition combined with the increase in international tourist arrivals speaks clearly to the safety and incredible tourist experiences offered across the State.

By sharing this information and directly responding to this sensational report, we seek to provide more context as to the state of the tourism industry and the realities that tourists face when visiting the beautiful State of Quintana Roo.

We consider it extremely unfortunate that CTV would create such a report with an obvious objective of generating fear with conspiracy theories, stereotypes and incomplete information, instead of seeking to inform its viewers with balanced reporting that focused on telling the reality of the tourist experience and the steps in which tourists can take to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable vacation.

We ask all Canadians and the tourism industry to consider the facts above, weigh them when viewing this questionable reporting, and in the end, trust their own judgement, experiences, the recommendations from travel experts, and the millions of Canadians who keep coming back to the State of Quintana Roo each year.



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