

Trying to Dispel Whorehouse Image Brazil Offers Discounts for Family Tourism

Contributed by Irene Lôbo
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The Brazilian Ministry of Tourism has been acting on three fronts to combat sexual tourism in Brazil, through awareness campaigns, training people to spot problems and working with foreign travel agents.

Since 2004 the "Brazil, if you love it, protect it" campaign distributes information in airports, restaurants, and bars to make people more aware of the problem of sex tourism, mainly when dealing with minors.

The ministry also helps to train people who work with tourism, teaching them what to do when faced with an instance of exploitation of children and adolescents.

Finally, the government works together with entrepreneurs in the tourism sector to demonstrate the importance of protecting children and adolescents from sexual tourism.

Sidney Costa, coordinator of the ministry's Program to Combat Sexual Tourism, says that there is already a campaign underway in Brazilian embassies to explain how to identify agencies that offer sexual tourism in Brazil.

"They are trained to show that Brazil is not a country that approves of sexual tourism and that exploitation of children and adolescents constitutes a crime in Brazil," he observes.

A pilot project in Italy, where a study discovered that sexual tourism was giving Brazil a bad name, began to provide incentives for new travel packages that convey the image of Brazil as a place for wholesome tourism.

"An agreement was signed with the UIL (Italian Labor Union) to benefit workers by offering discount packages for family vacations," Costa explains. He says that the same project will be tried in the Netherlands.

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