|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pillar | Score | Ranking | Average Score | Best Performer |
| Infrastructure Quality | 0.48 | 17 | 0.65 | Panama |
| International Openness | 0.34 | 19 | 0.54 | Dominican Republic |
| Sustainability | 0.06 | 17 | 0.24 | Brazil |
| Taxes and Fees | 0.85 | 11 | 0.82 | Brazil |
| International Connectivity | 0.09 | 14 | 0.21 | Mexico |
| Operational Costs | 0.68 | 6 | 0.59 | Panama |
| Willingness to Travel | 0.54 | 15 | 0.61 | Bahamas |
| Total | **4.58** | **18** | **5.38** | **Panama** |

It is important that the country continues to work hand in hand with the industry on potential areas for improvement. For example, Belize remains a country with high taxes and fees compared to neighboring countries. Other countries in the Caribbean and Central America such as Aruba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Costa Rica have lower tax charges on international tickets.

Belize ranks 18th among the 20 markets analyzed in the ALTA-Amadeus Competitiveness Index 2023.

It stands out in relatively competitive operating costs, where it ranks 6th.

It is important to focus attention and efforts on areas with the greatest potential for improvement, such as taxes and fees, sustainability, and international connectivity to make the country more competitive.

Reductions in fees and taxes have led to significant advancements in the air transport sector across various countries: Chile's policy shift resulted in an 18% increase in traffic, Colombia's Cartagena airport experienced a tripling in traffic following fee reductions, and Ecuador saw a 22% surge in international passengers, marking its highest traffic since 2017. These examples underscore the potent impact of such financial strategies, boosting tourism and economic activities, and providing a model for other regions

After the reduction of the Eco Delta (ED) and Potencia Turistica (PT) rates as of June 01, 2023, a 22% increase in international passengers flying to and from Ecuador has been observed in the cumulative July, August and September compared to 2022 and is the highest number observed for the same months since 2017.

In the last 5 years, August 2023 has been the month with the highest number of international pax in Ecuador.

Belize is expected to reach its pre-pandemic international traffic levels by 2023, with domestic traffic still lagging behind.

According to ALTA forecasts, 104,608 domestic and 8,895 international flights will operate in Belize in 2023.

By 2023, Belize will have a total of 2.3 million passengers traveling through the 11 airports serving the country.

Belize International Airport (BZE) will carry the largest number of passengers, a total of 1.8 million.

Belize has a total of 13 airlines operating which makes it less competitive compared to some Caribbean and Central American countries, which have a similar number of total passengers, such as Aruba with 27.

In terms of international connectivity, with respect to 2019 in Belize 3 new routes have opened, but 3 have been discontinued. The most important one that has been discontinued is Belize-Fort Lauderdale, which had over 570 flights in 2019.

77.7% of the O&D routes in the Belize International market are direct flights, while 21% are single connection itineraries and 1.3% correspond to more than 1 connection. IAH is the main connecting point for international passengers to/from Belize with 117,176 connecting passengers during 2023.

**8 intra-regional direct routes in total**

The direct flights with the most O&D passengers to Belize are:

The most important direct intra-regional routes in number of O&D passengers are:

Desde Europa no se tienen vuelos directos hacia Belice, así como desde países de Sudamérica como Colombia, Venezuela o Ecuador.

Las rutas intra regionales más importantes en numero de pasajeros son

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Passengers O&D** |
| USA | 306,450 |
| Guatemala | 25,869 |
| Canada | 22,418 |
| Honduras | 10,315 |
| Mexico | 7,364 |
| El Salvador | 6,312 |
| Panama | 3,595 |

There are no direct flights to Belize from Europe, neither from South American countries such as Colombia, Venezuela or Ecuador. While from Panama there are direct flights, however, only one a week.

In addition, among some Caribbean and Central American countries, Belize is one of those with the fewest direct destinations, compared to others such as Aruba with 15, which have similar levels of traffic.

Belize's connectivity to global destinations is limited, causing travelers to opt for multi-stop travel, which drives up the price of a ticket.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Direct International Destinations** |
| Dominican R. | 46 |
| Cuba | 37 |
| Jamaica | 29 |
| Trinidad Tobago | 22 |
| Costa Rica | 19 |
| Curazao | 17 |
| Aruba | 15 |
| Barbados | 14 |
| Bahamas | 12 |
| **Belize** | **10** |

Belize relies heavily on tourism as one of its main sources of income. Given its abundant natural resources, historical sites, and cultural experiences.

Of the most important destinations for tourists from LAC, Belize represents less than 1% of arrivals.

During the last few years, air transportation has become increasingly relevant and important for the tourism industry in Belize. Almost 80% of tourists visiting the country do so by air, it is important to work on improving international connectivity so that foreign tourists interested in visiting the country have more options to do so.

8 out of 10 tourists arriving in Belize come from the USA and Europe, there is a great opportunity to diversify and increase the number of tourists from Latin America for which it is necessary to improve the connectivity of the country with countries in the region and make Belize a more attractive and competitive country (lower rates etc).

**The percentage of GDP per capita spent on fees and taxes of tourists from the USA visiting Belize is 0.11% while the percentage of GDP per capita spent on fees and taxes of tourists from Latin America and the Caribbean visiting Belize is 0.45%.**

Compared to other Caribbean countries, only the Bahamas, Aruba and Jamaica exceed Belize in international tourist arrivals from the United States (70%). Countries such as Guatemala and Costa Rica receive 8% and 5% of tourists from South America, so this is an area of opportunity to continue working on intra-regional connectivity.

1 out of every 3 dollars generated in Belize's economy is generated by international tourism and 2 out of every 5 jobs in the country depend on international tourism. This highlights the importance of the sector for the national economy, where aviation plays a fundamental role in bringing close to 80% of international tourists to Belize.

Hence the importance of public policies that encourage the country's competitiveness in the international arena and these positive effects can be amplified by promoting adequate infrastructure, investments in tourism training and the promotion of sustainable practices that protect the country's natural and cultural heritage.

Belize, thanks to its natural resources, has been a magnet for tourists from all over the world. However, to maintain and improve this influx, it is essential to ensure that the country remains an attractive and accessible destination. Airport infrastructure, direct flight connections and immigration facilities are crucial in this regard.

On average, during the year, 2 out of every 3 hotel rooms in Belize are unoccupied, leading to underutilized infrastructure. These rooms could be filled with more tourists from key source markets like the USA and Europe, as well as by diversifying inbound tourism by attracting more tourists from Latin America. However, it is crucial to enhance the country's competitiveness, particularly in the aviation sector, by implementing the following strategies and measures:

* Airport and Facility Modernization: It is essential to have modern and efficient airports that can handle a larger number of flights and passengers.
* Direct Connections: Establish more direct air connections with main and potential source markets, reducing wait times and making the journey more appealing.
* Joint Promotion: Collaborate with airlines to promote Belize as a tourist destination, offering special packages and deals.
* Competitive Fares: Analyze the market and establish competitive airfares to attract more tourists.
* Flexible Visa Policies: Ease the entry of tourists from various countries by reviewing and adjusting visa policies, especially for those Latin American countries with tourism potential. Currently, tourists from 104 source markets do not need a visa to enter Belize, while Ecuador has 172 visa-exempt source markets