

Tourism may top 16% of Panama's GDP in 2026; financing fund for small firms

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Summary

At a Copa Airlines tourism forum, IDB experts said tourism could exceed 16% of GDP this year and highlighted a \$150 million guarantee fund with 19 banks to help small businesses get credit, including in the interior. Boquete's Hotel Panamonte was cited as an investment success.

Details (summary of the article)

La Prensa reports from Copa Airlines' tourism training forum that Panama's tourism sector generates about \$14 billion, roughly 15.5% of the economy, and supports some 423,000 direct and indirect jobs. IDB Invest's Daniel Arévalo forecast the sector could close 2026 above 16% of GDP, over \$15 billion, with visitor spending near \$9.7 billion, about 25% above 2019 levels; more than two million international visitors arrived between January and July 2026. The 9 October earthquake exposed how vulnerable small tourism businesses are, making access to credit important for recovery. Arévalo listed five obstacles: connectivity and infrastructure, lack of market data, poor coordination, financing, and sustainability. He pointed to the Hotel Panamonte in Boquete, which drew investment from Grupo Verde Azul in 2024 and grew from 14 to 33 rooms, as an example of an investable business. The IDB and Banco Nacional de Panamá run a \$150 million guarantee fund, operating through 19 banks, that can add up to 50% extra coverage so lenders approve larger loans for micro, small and medium firms. Businesses must be established in Panama with the required permits and can ask their own bank about using the fund; the IDB says it is especially keen to support tourism ventures in the interior.

Original (es)

Turismo podría superar el 16% del PIB en 2026

El BID impulsa el acceso al financiamiento de las mipymes, incluidas las turísticas, mediante un fondo de garantías de \$150 millones que opera con 19 bancos y ofrece coberturas de hasta el 50% para facilitar créditos y nuevas inversiones, especialmente en el interior del país.