

Tourists from Canada up 60%

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Canadians are discovering Panama at a faster rate than any other group says Panama's tourism authority.

Visits from the far north so far this year, are up 60 percent and the growth is expected to continue. The recent cancelation of the planned health insurance program at Tocumen airport will likely not halt the flow, as Canadians are covered for up to six months by a generous extension of the country's universal health plan,

Visitors traveling from Ecuador have risen 20 percent and from the United States 14 percent.

The tourist flow will increase by some 150,000 visitors as compared to 2009, says Panama's tourism chief Salomón Shamah. "Panama is hot," he says, an understatement for those coming from sub-zero temperatures in Canada and Europe. Tourism income has surged 16.6 percent.

In the first nine months of this year tourism generated nearly \$246 million in Panama says the Tourism Authority (ATP) and with more hotels and facilities coming on stream, expect that figure to grow.