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Despite progress in diplomatic links between the US and Cuba, the former's embargo remains in place, which will affect Cuba's tourism industry that plays a major role in the island's economy, a Florida International University study found.

The development of Cuba's tourism industry following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States will be limited by conditions on the island, the report, titled "Future Hospitality and Tourism Business in Cuba: Opportunities and Obstacles" pointed out.

The FIU researchers estimated that certain areas could be expanded right now to exploit the hospitality business to its maximum even as the U.S. government ponders further steps, such as opening commercial flights to the island,

"Tourism in Cuba will certainly increase as restrictions for U.S. tourists are gradually lifted," John Thomas, an FIU professor and lead author of the report, told EFE. "To expand its tourism industry, Cuba must implement significant changes in infrastructure, in particular in transportation and communications."

Cuba needs to sort out bottlenecks such as limited banking and insurance services; a dual exchange rate system; and regulations that prevent foreign companies from acquiring real estate which stand in the way of tourism growth.

The Caribbean's largest island has all the attractions, such as beaches, mountains and nature reserves, as well as its culture, including cuisine, to make it a hot spot global tourism destination, the researcher said.

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