

Jamaica's Tourism Scores Big at WTM in London

Jamaica was the toast of the 30th World Travel Market (WTM), which ended Thursday (November 12) at the Excel Exhibition Centre in East London, England.

The country kicked off a successful week on Sunday (November 8), winning an unprecedented number of awards at the opening ceremony at the Grosvenor House Hotel. The trend continued through the week, as the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) exhibition stand attracted sustained attention from travel industry professionals from across the globe. Tourism Minister, the Hon Edmund Bartlett, who led Jamaica's team to the four-day event, said this year's exhibition was its most successful to date. He added that it spoke volumes about the positive activities taking place in the country's tourism sector. He said he was particularly satisfied that the tourism product was receiving major recognition at a time when the global industry was suffering from the impact of the economic recession. "Jamaica has enjoyed top of place at this WTM, and we have had very brisk business activities with tour operators and travel agents. Teams from almost every part of the globe have been calling on our sellers here," the Minister told JIS News. He said the Expo allowed for interaction among leaders in the sector, and that important lessons were learnt that could be applied to the Jamaican scenario. "We have learnt, in detail, about the resilience of this industry. Notwithstanding the recession and the contraction in global tourism, the industry is not playing dead. People are fighting their way through, spending more and buying better, bringing new values to the table. The way forward for us is a new approach," he said. Mr. Bartlett said Jamaica would adopt a three-tiered approach in efforts to sustain growth in the industry, by building new markets, partnerships and marketing strategies. He identified the expansion of the brand into new markets, as key to sustainability. "The business of new markets is important to Jamaica, as we diversify into new areas such as China, Brazil and Russia, even as we strengthen the markets of North America and western Europe. Tourism has expanded and broadened and every country in the world is embracing tourism," he said. He said that Jamaica position itself to take advantage of the growth that will come with the upturn in the world economy. "We must create the infrastructure, in terms of airlift security management, product development and extensive marketing. In order to reach the world, we have to embrace technology, including social marketing, and reduce the costs associated with getting good value," Mr. Bartlett insisted. He said WTM 2009 gave a strong indication that the Brand Jamaica concept was working well, and opening doors for the country. "Brand Jamaica is very powerful. The strength is unbelievable. Here at WTM it has given us entree into areas we never thought possible. It has allowed us to be sought after for World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) activities, and we have been engaged by various regional groups and people who, through curiosity, alone have come to us to learn more about Jamaica and the brand and to see how they can reach Jamaica," he stated. Mr. Bartlett will meet with the Jamaican community in London Friday (November 13), before departing for China, where he will be engaged in a series of meetings aimed at attracting investments in the Jamaican tourism sector.