

## Cream of Caribbean tourism celebrates at World Travel Awards

Leading brands from across the Caribbean tourism industry have walked away with top honours from the World Travel Awards this evening following a gala ceremony in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

Senior tourism leaders, captains of industry and international media travelled from over 30 nations to attend the annual Caribbean & the Americas Gala Ceremony at Sandals Royal Caribbean Resort & Private Island. Jamaica's position as a leader in the global tourism arena was strengthened further as it was named 'Caribbean's Leading Destination' for the sixth year running. In a year that has seen visitor arrivals rise 5.7 per cent, the paradise island also picked up 'Caribbean's Leading Tourist Board' and 'Caribbean's Leading Cruise Destination'. Jamaican success in the cruise category was no surprise given the successful opening of the new cruise terminal in Falmouth earlier this year. It was also an evening of travel triumph for countries right across the Caribbean. St Lucia won the coveted title of 'Caribbean's Leading Honeymoon Destination', while Sir Richard Branson's Necker Island was voted 'Caribbean Leading Private Island'. In the 'Caribbean's Leading Resort' category, Casa de Campo (Dominican Republic) saw off stiff competition from the likes of Half Moon (Jamaica), Jumby Bay (Antigua), Four Seasons Resort (Nevis) and Sandy Lane (Barbados). Meanwhile Caribbean Airlines picked up 'Caribbean's Leading Airline'. Graham Cooke, president, World Travel Awards, underlined the remarkable resilience of the Caribbean's travel and tourism economy despite the challenges of the global recession. He said: 'The Caribbean is a textbook example of how the travel and tourism industry can serve as an engine for growth, with the ability to steer the region out of one of the most challenging periods in global financial history. It is during times of economic uncertainty that world-class brands come into their own, continuing to reinvent themselves and grow market share – traits all shared by tonight's World Travel Award winners.' 'Jamaica in particular has proved its credentials as a world-class tourism brand, thanks to its unrivalled mix of paradise beaches, luxury resorts and warmth of welcome. This is reflected in the number of honours won by Jamaica's top travel organisation at our Caribbean & the Americas Gala Ceremony,' he added. Jamaica's director of tourism, John Lynch, said: 'We are honoured to be recognised as the Caribbean's Leading Destination.' 'Jamaica is committed to providing travellers with an unparalleled experience. We all continue to develop our infrastructure and tourism product to ensure we maintain an edge in an increasingly competitive landscape.' Sandals Royal Caribbean Resort & Private Island, which features a private, offshore island and oozes colonial elegance, forms part of the growing portfolio of properties owned and operated by Sandals Resorts International. 'It is a true testament to our brand, and the team that supports it, to have won the highest number of awards in Sandals Resorts' history during our 30th anniversary year,' said Gordon 'Butch' Stewart, chairman of Sandals Resorts. 'We continue to invest in our product so that each year we can be proud to say we are Caribbean's Leading Hotel Brand.' 'Our number one priority remains to provide the best product and experience for our customers and we look forward to continuing to do so.' The Caribbean & The Americas Gala Ceremony marked the fifth and final leg of World Travel Awards 2011 Grand Tour, and followed heats in Dubai, UAE; Antalya, Turkey; Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt; and Bangkok, Thailand. The regional winners progress to the Grand Final, which takes place in Doha, Qatar on December 11th 2011. The event partners were the Jamaica Tourist Board, Sandals Resorts and WeClickMedia, while media partners included National Geographic Traveller, ABTA Magazine, ASTA Network, eTurboNews, Breaking Travel News, JaxFax and Travel Daily News. For a full list of winners at WTA 2011 Caribbean & the Americas Gala Ceremony visit the official website .