

UK visitors to Jamaica boosted since Olympic dominance

The world's largest tour operator, TUI has credited Jamaica's London Olympics dominance and the 'Jamaica House' impact, for the increase in UK arrivals to the island and the advent of the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner to the Caribbean.

Yesterday, Jamaica became the first country in the region to welcome the revolutionary aircraft through its partnership with Thomson Airways, a subsidiary of TUI Travel PLC.

The aircraft, which seats 291 passengers, touched down at the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, boosting hopes of access to parts of the world Jamaica has not tapped into.

"The Olympics had a real effect on customer demand from the UK. During the first few weeks of the competition, searches to Jamaica were up 32 per cent, they then continued to surge... peaking during your triple win in the 200m sprint final and when you smashed the 4 x 100m relay world record," TUI's head of external communications, UK and Ireland, Fiona Jennings, told the media during a reception at the airport.

"We have almost doubled the number of customers we have flown into the island since 2012 and are committed to continuing to expand both our beach and cruise programme from 2014," she stated, adding that as a result of the demand, from summer 2014, Thomson Airways will add another weekly flight to Jamaica, moving to five flights per week.

Her comments were bolstered by Minister of Tourism and Entertainment, Dr Wykeham McNeill.

He was particularly heartened by TUI's growth plan, which sees the tour operator having exclusive booking rights in the UK and Ireland, with a number of Jamaican hotels, including RIU Resorts and Couples Tower Isle and the new Royalton and Karisma properties which will open next month.

"TUI will also introduce a cruise ship, the Thomson Dream, the ship will call on two ports, Montego Bay and Falmouth, and will offer stay options which is expected to account for 30 per cent of their passengers," said McNeill.