

Tourism booming in Jamaica

Visitor arrivals in Jamaica have been at a record high since the start of the year as its tourism sector continues on a firm growth trajectory.

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) projects that Jamaica will host 4.2 million visitors by the end of 2017, surpassing last year's 3.84 million visitors, setting a new record. According to preliminary arrival statistics, Jamaica's tourism industry earned US \$1.46 billion in the first half of this year, a 5.8% increase over the same period in 2016. In July, Jamaica welcomed over 234,051 stopover visitors, a 10.8% increase over last year for the same time period. Its cruise sector is also shaping up to host the highest number of cruise passengers on record: from January 1 to the end of July 2017, Jamaica received 1,088,718 cruise passengers, up by 4.9 percent over the same period last year. That growth trajectory is expected to continue, especially as Jamaica evolves into a leading cruise destination in the Caribbean with the support of its newly launched Cruise Jamaica initiative. "Jamaica is on to a very good path," says Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Edmund Bartlett. "We are getting more rooms, we are getting more airlifts, we are getting more visitors, and we are earning more." Due to Jamaica's tourism boom, the island is seeing both an expansion of existing hotels and new developments across the island, resulting in a significant increase in room stock. The destination is poised to obtain the 15,000 additional rooms projected by 2021 which will continue to propel growth for the sector with an increase in both arrivals and earnings. With this tourism boom and influx of visitors, the JTB maintains that its utmost goal is to ensure the destination continues to be a safe haven for visitors. The destination is heavily investing in both existing programs and critical new initiatives to further enforce a safe, secure and enjoyable experience including the District Constables Training Programme and the Destination Assurance Councils. The District Constables Training Programme was introduced last year by the Ministry through its agencies, the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) and the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF). It provides an added layer of security in resort areas to ensure the strict enforcement of the rule of law and to help effectively tackle tourist harassment. The Destination Assurance Councils (DACs) were launched in June 2017 for six resort areas, which are tasked with ensuring that the quality, standards and integrity of Jamaica's tourism product are maintained. The Destination Assurance Councils are expected to identify the needs of the industry and monitor the progress of developmental initiatives in resort areas. These initiatives and efforts all aim to ensure that Jamaica continues to provide an attractive, secure and enjoyable experience for all travelers and ensure its position as the leading destination in the Caribbean.