

THE CARIBBEAN HIT BY LACK OF TRAVELERS FROM THE U.S. AND EUROPE



The majority of Caribbean destinations has experienced considerable decline in tourism arrivals. However, Cuba, Jamaica and Cancun in Mexico recorded growth.

Affected by the global downturn all Caribbean countries - except Cuba, Jamaica and Cancun, Mexico - have witnessed decline in long-stay arrivals. According to the statistics from January and February 2009, the drops range from relatively small ones e.g. Grenada recorded only 4.6 percent decline), to more severe ones like in Antigua (14.3 per cent) or in Barbuda (13.7 per cent). Tourism arrivals to Anguilla even dropped by 21.4 per cent. **The Caribbean suffers especially because of the decreasing number of visitors coming from the US and Europe.**

Tourism revenue is vital for economies in the Caribbean as confirmed Jamaican Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, by stating that "it is the most tourism-dependent region in the world". Last year the industry contributed some US\$39.9 billion to the Caribbean GDP, which is approximately 14.8 per cent of the whole region's GDP. It is also an important employer providing 12.9 per cent or 2,148,000 of all jobs in the region.

Why is Jamaica doing better than other Caribbean destinations? It is supposedly the result of their aggressive marketing campaigns and collective efforts of Jamaican hoteliers. The Jamaican tourism minister claims it is also a result of good airlift. We should also mention **the positive impact the swine flu had on local tourism.** Some hotel groups diverted tourists from Mexico to Jamaica to avoid the infection.

Despite this rather positive news, the Jamaican tourism actually earned less money than the year before. According to the minister, tourism earned some US\$1.10 billion in the first half of this year, which is a decline, compared to the US\$1.17 billion earned during the same period in 2008.

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