

FASTEST GROWING CARIBBEAN DESTINATION? TURKS AND CAICOS



Out of all the Caribbean countries Turks & Caicos was, by far, the most prolific of them in terms of visitor arrivals in 2014. The Turks and Caicos Tourist Board (TCTB) reported a growth in arrivals of 31.6 percent compared to the year 2013.

Precise data shows that 971,838 tourists arrived by way of cruise-ship at the Grand Turk Cruise Center while 435,475 visitors landed at the Providenciales International Airport. **The two figures put together make for a total of 1,407,313 travelers hosted by the Turks & Caicos in 2014.**

While the increase in visitor arrivals is very impressive and places the islands in front of the Caribbean pack in regards to growth (as confirmed by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation), the number of tourists itself places Turks & Caicos in the middle as far as Caribbean destinations go.

If in 2013 only 290,587 overnight visitors arrived at the Providenciales International Airport, 2014 recorded almost twice as much traffic with 435,475 tourists. The increase is only 0.1 percent short of a round 50. While the TCTB statistics reveal a 49.9 percent growth, the actual number of overnight visitors might as well score higher since the Turks & Caicos Tourist Board does not include private aircraft arrivals in their assessment and such arrivals were also more numerous than in 2013.

The increase of overnight arrivals in the Caribbean is reported by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) to amount to 5.3 percent with 26.3 million travelers. The Turks & Caicos 49.9 increase is far above the whole region. Grenada, the second fastest growing destination in the CTO standings only managed 18.4 percent growth in 2014, so less than half.

Officials from the Turks & Caicos tourism sector cite climate as a main factor in the increase. The unusual cold weather in the United States, coupled with the great accessibility of air travel and strong links in transportation all over North America, influenced many tourists to choose Turks & Caicos as the preferred warm destination.

In regards to arrivals by way of cruise ship, Turks & Caicos ranked fourth out of 28 Caribbean destinations in 2014 with an increase of 24.8 percent. It trails after Trinidad & Tobago, with a 30.1 percent growth, Belize with 42.6 percent and Martinique with the largest increase of them all, 71.3 percent.

The number of cruise passengers that went through the Grand Turk Cruise Center in 2014 is 971,838, the largest the port has ever welcomed. The same year meant an increase of 32.9 percent in ship calls, from 2013's 258 to 2014's 343.

According to the TCTB, the majority of visitors are U.S. citizens, counting for 80.7 percent of 2014's overnight arrivals with 351,623 travelers and an increase of 51.8 percent. Canadians are responsible for 47,413 arrivals in the same year, registering a growth of 49.1 percent.

Turks & Caicos tourism officials intend to keep the positive trend going. Tourism director of the

TCTB, L. Higgs speaks of stronger and better marketing strategies. He also stated that the accessibility and powerful identity of the islands are also responsible for the benefits.

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