

CAYMAN ISLANDS' TOURISM TRENDS: GOING GREEN



Cayman Islands, the western Caribbean overseas territory of the UK, are above all known for the financial and tourism industry. The tourism industry is very important for the archipelago's economy as it generates approximately 70 per cent of the annual GDP of the Cayman Islands. The capital, George Town, serves as a major cruise ship port and the islands are also loved by those who enjoy diving. Nevertheless, the cruise tourism is currently experiencing a decline

in numbers of customers. According to the statistics released by the Department of Tourism, there have been only 176,154 visitors to the island in this year's (2008) February. This represents a 13.54 per cent drop when compared with the previous year (2007). The numbers are the lowest since 2003. This drop is probably not caused by the fact that the islands do not have a berthing facility but not having such facility could mean further troubles in future. The number of cruise ship tourists' arrivals is unlikely to rise in the upcoming months.

The air arrivals, on the other hand, have increased. Most "new" tourists have arrived from Canada, southeast and southwest USA, the United Kingdom and from Ireland. The occupancy rates during January have increased as well. The occupancy rates were 71.3 per cent in hotels and 51.8 per cent in other types of accommodation. These are definitely higher numbers than those of the previous year when the hotel occupancy rates were 68.7 per cent and the rates in other types of accommodation were just 40.5 per cent.

The Cayman Island's tourism players have noticed the "green" trend and they are reacting. Seven resorts in the island will launch a pilot program of the Cayman Islands Environmental Project for the Tourism Sector. This will include establishing environmental management systems for the facilities. There will be audits on occupancy, water and electricity consumption, and wastewater generation. These activities should help the resort to become more environmentally friendly and to achieve Green Globe 21 Certification.

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