

JAMAICA

Outstanding tourism offerings are second to none

Jamaica's award-winning tourism offerings have been extremely resilient and adaptable amid the various phases of the pandemic. Overseas arrival numbers have rebounded rapidly as visitors flock to a vibrant and welcoming melting pot of cultures.

Prior to COVID-19 casting its unwelcome shadow over Jamaica's sun-kissed shores, the popular Caribbean country had enjoyed strong, single-digit percentage growth in foreign visitor numbers and was on track to receive 5 million tourists in 2020 and generate \$5 billion in tourism-related revenue.

Like many nations reliant on the lucrative tourism industry, the outbreak and international lockdowns, border closures and reduced aviation activity diminished tourism operations and earnings, meaning government assistance and support to sector partners was vital.

With the international rollout of vaccines now in full swing and massive pent-up demand for holidays becoming evident, Jamaica is already enjoying an impressive rebound in tourism arrivals. Around 672,000 people visited between June 2020 and April 2021, taking advantage of robust health and safety protocols to enjoy all the exotic island has to offer, official data showed recently.

"The opening of the borders is important in the context of not just Jamaica's tourism, but Caribbean tourism," explained Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett. "We are very optimistic for a recovery, which will commence in earnest in winter 2021-2022. Most of our source markets are beginning to show signs of managing the crisis better and vaccines are now becoming far more available.

"Airlines and cruise lines had been chomping at the bit to get started and we are delighted to be welcoming them back now. We had all prepared ourselves for this: Jamaica has done marvellously in terms of preparatory work and the level of COVID-19 protection that has been put in place. Like all other destinations, we have not been spared the ravages of the virus, but we have certainly been able



Hon. Edmund Bartlett
Minister of Tourism

to minimize its impact on communities. All in all, Jamaica is ready for its recovery."

In turbulent times, tourism is in safe hands

Tourism is the lifeblood of Jamaica's economy as in the last five years, the sector grew to 4.3 million visitors per year, generating \$3.7 billion, which contributed directly to about 9.5 percent of its Gross Domestic Product and to around one-third of its GDP when indirect and induced earnings were included. The sector comprises a crucial part of national development and economic strategy.

Spearheading the national tourism effort is the Jamaica Tourist Board, an entity founded in 1955 and based in the capital, Kingston. JTB has offices in Montego Bay, Miami, Toronto and London, plus



Donovan White
Director of Tourism,
Jamaica Tourist Board

representative offices in Berlin, Amsterdam, India, Japan and Paris.

The proactive tourism body has an enviable track record of success, an asset underlined clearly in late 2020 when it was named the Caribbean's Leading Tourist Board for the 13th consecutive year in the prestigious World Travel Awards.

Judges also named Jamaica the Caribbean's Leading Destination for the 15th consecutive year, as well as the Caribbean's Best Spa Destination and the Caribbean's Best Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions Destination. Jamaica was also awarded three gold 2020 Travvy Awards for Best Culinary Destination, Caribbean/Bahamas; Best Tourism Board Overall and Best Tourism Board, Caribbean/Bahamas.

Of course, such success is easier to achieve when your tourism offering is as wonderfully diverse as that waiting to greet visitors, although it still requires a committed and dynamic organization to promote and package it in a vivid and imaginative format so as to secure the best and widest coverage.

"As we keep an eye toward other potential changes for international travelers, we are pleased with our destination-wide preparedness and our progress to make COVID-19 testing even more accessible," said JTB's Director of Tourism, Donovan White. "Jamaica is resilient, and we are actively doing our strategic reset and reviewing what the post-COVID-19 world will look like, what travel might feel like and how to position our destination in this 'new look' world.

"Our discussions include digital passports and vaccination cards and what these will mean for people taking the vaccine, wearing masks and having to protect themselves for some time in the future." Bartlett is eager to highlight Jamaica's impressive tourism resilience, with officials from his department and other government units working with counterparts and stakeholders to further such goals to tackle serious topics like natural disasters and pandemics that reach every corner of the world. Asked to describe his ministry's overarching strategy to propel tourism resilience and prepare the country for the rebound which has already begun, Bartlett underlined the importance of reliable and trusted international partners like Japan in preparing for the next global shock.

"We regard Japan as being the most resilient country. They have managed that process of recovery and building back and not only building back but growing. Japan has a great story to tell: we think that the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre here in Jamaica will do well in partnering with Japan, to inspire the world and teach it how to recover from disasters."

In early 2021, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan in Jamaica Masaya Fujiwara paid a courtesy call to Jamaica's Prime



It's always a good time to reconnect, relax and soak up the magic of this island gem. Bamboo rafting down a river is just one of the ways to experience Jamaica, the 'Heartbeat of the World'.

Minister Andrew Holness, which was an opportunity to discuss several key pillars in what is known as the "J-J" partnership. Tourism was one of the topics mentioned, with the pair exploring investment projects and opportunities in tourism innovation. "Japan is one of the leaders in global technology, and the transfer of technology is a big part of the contribution that nations like Japan can make to small- and medium-sized countries," Bartlett continued. "There is a lot of scope for us to share in this area—tourism technology is, again, a new area, but Japan has done a lot of good work there."

Gorgeous scenery tempts honeymooners

Jamaica has long been a popular honeymoon destination for couples seeking to celebrate the next chapter of their relationship. A new romance microsite — My Heartbeats JA — on the "VisitJamaica" platform allows couples planning weddings, honeymoons or romantic getaways to tap into a repository of solutions and options for their romantic journey.

"For a very long time, the Japanese came to Jamaica in droves because of their admiration of our culture and to celebrate love," White explained. "One of our strategies is to continue to engage the Japanese traveler in the whole business of romance, so that they can preplan their trip before they get here. Our job will be to make that experience extra special and to ensure that our Japanese visitors get the value they seek."

"We have sought to remain on the leading edge of technology and using that technology to innovate and reinvent the destination in many ways. Romance has always been one of Jamaica's niche markets. Even in the midst of a pandemic, love is not canceled as now more than ever people desire romantic trips. Globally, there is a trend among couples desiring microweddings and we are strategically aligned to meet those needs with customizable experiences," added White.

This report was produced by Global Insight and can also be read online at: www.japantimes.co.jp/country-report_category/jamaica-report-2021/ and www.global-insight.net

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