

Jamaica wants visitor arrivals to double in coming months

Seven mile beach in Negril, Jamaica

Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, says the island's tourism sector could see visitor arrivals double or even triple, provided the ongoing downward trend in crime continues.

His remarks come in response to a recent statement by Prime Minister, Andrew Holness' that crime remains the primary barrier preventing Jamaica from reaching 10 to 15 million visitors annually.

Addressing the St James East Central Scholarship Programme Fundraiser on May 3, Holness highlighted the critical importance of addressing crime to unlock Jamaica's full tourism potential.

But Bartlett, who is also Member of Parliament for the constituency, said the Prime Minister is absolutely correct.

"If we keep weeding out the bad apples and maintaining our focus on safety and security, we could see visitor numbers soar beyond what we have ever imagined.

The vibes are right; people around the world are telling us they want to come to Jamaica," Bartlett said, noting that the current decline in crime has significantly enhanced Jamaica's image as a safe and welcoming destination.

"What we're witnessing now in terms of crime reduction is not just good news for the tourism industry but also for our local communities. A safer Jamaica means a better quality of life for our citizens and a more attractive destination for travellers," he added.

Bartlett pointed to recent statistics indicating a steady decrease in violent crimes and other criminal activities across the island.

"Our crime rate has been trending downward, and this positive trajectory is reflected in the increasing number of visitor arrivals and revenue generated from tourism.

This is a testament to the effectiveness of our ongoing security initiatives and community engagement programmes," he said.

Furthermore, Bartlett said that the improving safety landscape could likely influence the United States Department of State's travel advisory, which is currently under review.

He pointed out that Jamaica's tourism industry is experiencing a robust recovery, with recent figures showing increased visitor arrivals and higher revenue.

Looking ahead, Bartlett reiterated Jamaica's commitment to sustaining the positive trend.

"We are investing heavily in security infrastructure, community-based patrols, and tourism-

specific safety protocols. Our goal is to create a seamless, safe experience for visitors from the moment they arrive until they leave.

“Our message to the world is clear: Jamaica is safe, welcoming, and ready to host more visitors than ever before,” Bartlett added.

Last year, Jamaica welcomed a record-breaking 4.3 million visitors, generating US\$4.3 billion in revenue for the tourism industry. This figure represents a significant increase over 2023, demonstrating the island’s strong tourism performance and positioning it on track to achieve its 2025 growth targets.

Speaking last week, Holness highlighted that Jamaica’s impressive economic indicators—including record-low unemployment rates—are fuelled by sustained foreign investments and strategic partnerships.

“It is through these foreign investments that we have been able to lower unemployment to historic lows which, in turn, puts more in-come into the pockets of ordinary Jamaicans.

Economic growth is not just about numbers. It is also about improving lives and creating opportunities for all,” the Prime Minister maintained.

Holness said the Government’s macroeconomic achievements have been pivotal to Jamaica’s development trajectory, adding that these milestones are essential in creating a foundation for sustainable growth.

“Our continued focus on prudent fiscal policies, attracting foreign direct investment, and fostering a business-friendly environment are vital in ensuring that the benefits of growth reach every Jamaican,” he stated.

Holness assured that the Government, “will continue to work diligently, balancing economic prudence with social progress.”

“Our goal remains to build a Jamaica where everyone can thrive — a nation that not only celebrates macroeconomic success, but also ensures that its people feel the tangible benefits of this progress,” he added.

Holness noted that while challenges persist, the country’s macroeconomic progress must not be sacrificed for short-term gains.

“While it is often argued that the ordinary man may not yet feel the full benefits of our macroeconomic successes, it is not right to suggest that these achievements should be sacrificed for political convenience,” he maintained.

The Prime Minister emphasised that the Government, “has exercised, and will continue to exercise, prudent and sustainable economic management.”

“This approach is vital in driving us toward the realisation of Vision 2030 — making Jamaica the place of choice to (live), work, do business, and raise families,” he added.

Acknowledging concerns that economic progress has yet to provide immediate financial relief for many Jamaicans, Holness reaffirmed the importance of these gains as fundamental pillars of the country’s longterm development.

“We recognise the disconnect that some feel between our macroeconomic milestones and their day-to-day realities. But I want to be clear... without a strong economy, we cannot create the jobs, increase incomes, or improve the social services that our people need,” he said.

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Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, in his remarks at the function, noted that the favourable climate cultivated by the Government has strengthened Jamaica's reputation as a prime investment destination.

“The environment created by this Administration is why we continue to see substantial foreign direct investment pouring into the hotel sector. Over the coming years, we expect to see more than 20,000 new hotel rooms built, which will significantly boost our tourism capacity,” he said. Minister Bartlett further underscored the sharp rise in investor confidence in Jamaica.

“The country has never been riper for investment, and that the level of confidence among global investors is at an all-time high. It is under the stewardship of this Government that we are seeing the road to a more secure and prosperous future.

The climate we have cultivated is enabling us to attract the capital needed to fuel our growth and development,” he added.

The East Central St James Scholarship Programme Fundraiser seeks to support and expand educational opportunities for local students, reinforcing the Government's broader vision of empowering Jamaica's youth through economic development and strategic investment.

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