

TOURISM

The tourist industry has continued the satisfactory progress which began when the Jamaica Tourist Board was re-organised in 1963.

2. In 1966 a total of 345,288 visitors came to the Island. This is an increase of 45,030 or 15.0% over the 1965 figure. Since 1963 the number of visitors arriving in the Island has increased by approximately 71%. The gross earnings from tourism increased by over 20% from £23.2 million in 1965 to £28 million in 1966. Bearing in mind the persistent deficit in our merchandise trade, these earnings are a vital source of foreign exchange in the country's overall balance of payments. With the increased use by the tourist industry of local agricultural products and other locally produced goods and services, the benefits of the industry are now more widely spread throughout the economy. The benefits of the industry are not confined to those who directly participate in it, since the expenditure by tourists indirectly provides employment in every sector of the economy.

3. Tourists staying in Jamaica one night or more totalled 228,411 in 1966, an increase of 20.7% over 1965. The number of cruise passengers rose last year by 18.30% to 66,806. Long stay visitors (those staying three nights and over) increased by 160.23% over 1965, to a total of 210,630. This is the group of persons who, on a per capita basis, are the biggest spenders.

4. An important statistic is the number of guest nights spent in the Island during the year, which measures the number of people who came and their length of stay. In 1963, Jamaica's total guest nights was 675,916 and by 1965 this had risen by 70.84% to 1,154,762. The figure in 1966 was 1,287,477, an increase of 11.49% over 1965.

5. Because of the rapid growth of the tourist industry since 1963, very few hotels now close during the summer season. This means that full-time employment is provided to the workers in the industry, many of whom were previously employed on a part-time basis. In 1966, there were 6,670 hotel beds, compared with 6,204 in 1965. Guest houses, resort cottages and apartment houses offered another 1,580 beds, making a total last year of 8,250 - an additional 3.8% over the total of 7,941 beds available at the end of 1965.

6. The Jamaica Tourist Board actively pursued its promotional activities overseas, both in North America and Europe. Because of the increasing importance of the Canadian tourist, a small Sales Office was opened in Montreal. The ground work was also laid for intensive promotion in Mexico, not only to encourage Mexican tourists to come to Jamaica, but also to get American tourists visiting that country to return to the United States via Jamaica.

7. A very encouraging aspect of overseas promotion has been group travel to Jamaica. In 1964 a Group Travel Bureau was set up in the Sales Department of the Tourist Board, and from 55 groups, representing 4% of tourist travel to Jamaica in 1964, the figures rose to 313 groups, representing 15.6% of total visitors in 1966. This is a good indication of the response to the Board's intensive promotion.

8. Locally, efforts continued to improve conditions affecting the tourist trade. The Hotel Value Guide which rates hotels in relation to value given for prices charged, has had a tremendous impact on the hotel industry, and many improvements have been made by hotels. Complaints lodged with the Tourist Board by tourists are receiving full attention, to see that they are genuine and in an endeavour to put a stop to their recurrence. Through the initiative of the Board, 30 specially-trained and uniformed "Red Cap" porters are now stationed at the two International Airports. This has considerably improved service to incoming and departing passengers.

9. Last year, a plan which is now in operation was formulated to offer lectures in the Island's Secondary Schools on the tourist industry and the career opportunities it offers. Thus, it is hoped to make Jamaicans more conscious of the many career opportunities which exist in the industry. It is hoped at the same time to create a greater general awareness of the benefits of the industry.

10. Over the past four years, a great deal of success has been achieved in re-organising and re-building the tourist industry. In particular, the proper image of Jamaica has been promoted in the travel markets of the world placing emphasis on our traditions, our history, our typical local products, our music and art, and our multi-racial society.

11. The tourist industry is capable of further substantial expansion but a number of problems remain to be solved. The basic problem now facing the industry is a shortage of accommodation. However, it was first of all necessary to fill the rooms available before embarking on putting up additional facilities. This has allowed us to identify the directions that should be followed in future hotel expansion.
12. It is now clear that Jamaica needs to concentrate on two distinct types of accommodation. First is the convention-type hotel which does not yet exist in Jamaica. The Sheraton Hotel was constructed as a convention-type hotel but it has been discovered that the number of rooms now available is not sufficient to accommodate even a modest size convention, which requires a hotel of not less than about 350 rooms. Accordingly, the Sheraton is being expanded and it is estimated that on this basis it will become a much more profitable operation. Proposals are being examined for other convention-type hotels; Jamaica will need 3 or 4 of these hotels in the near future to make a start in sharing in the highly profitable convention business.
13. Secondly, much cheaper accommodation must be provided to take advantage of the mass travel expected from the jumbo-jet age. The present luxury-type hotels cater to a high-income clientele and are far too expensive to build for rates to be attractive to the average traveller. It is clear, therefore, that we must seek to establish different types of accommodation such as resort cottages, apartment buildings, log cabins, motels and additional guest houses which can be rented far more cheaply than the typical luxury hotel.
14. Except for convention hotels, it is therefore proposed that tourist accommodation should no longer be constructed in a way which fragments beach lands, which should be available for common use by tourists and local people alike. This concept will be applied in the development of the Negril area where hotel construction will be so organised as to ensure that the beach lands will be available to serve the maximum number of persons - tourists as well as local vacationers.
15. It is fortunate that Jamaica has an area like Negril which can be planned and developed to take advantage of the jumbo-jet age. This area, which must be designed and developed as a whole, will require further expenditure to ensure that development gets underway. It must be clearly understood...

understood, however, that the Government is only prepared to develop the area on the basis that returns from such development are derived by the country as a whole and are commensurate to the public expenditure undertaken. The Government is determined that Negril should not become an area for mere land speculation and will be prepared to introduce appropriate legislation to ensure that the area is developed on an orderly basis.

16. The advent of the jumbo-jet age will mean that a wide range of additional facilities will be required, as well as streamlining of our landing and other procedures. Our airport and other facilities will have to be improved if we are to handle efficiently the much larger volumes of traffic expected to arrive and depart on each flight. This whole matter is now being studied.

17. In order to provide greater incentives for hotel construction, new hotels incentive legislation is being drafted. The Bill which it is proposed to bring before Parliament later this year will provide for substantial additional concessions compared with those now available under the Hotels Aid Law. Special provisions will be included for hotels which are built in areas deemed to be in special need of development. Hotel investors may be assured that the Government's policy for the new incentives legislation will be implemented as soon as possible.

18. It is also proposed to introduce legislation to provide incentives for the building of resort cottages. By this means it is hoped to provide more and cheaper accommodation quickly. Moreover, the building of cottages is a way of involving many more Jamaicans who may wish to invest in the tourist industry. Cottages which will be approved for incentives must be offered for ten and one-half months out of each year for rental through the Tourist Board. The type of construction and the rates to be charged will both have to be satisfactory to the Tourist Board.

A few sample log cabins have already been built in the Blue Mountains. The Government is now considering ways and means of having more of these cabins built in the hills, as another method of developing the interior of the country for tourism and other purposes.

19. Efforts are being made to develop the Portland area which has great potential for tourism. One of our finest tourist attractions -

rafting...

rafting on the Rio Grande - is being reorganised. It is proposed to establish an office of the Tourist Board in Portland in the very near future and to organise rafting on a proper basis so that the benefits of this sport will greatly assist Portland and the economy as a whole. Negotiations are taking place for other developments which could establish Portland as another important centre of activity in tourism in the Island.

ROBERT C. LIGHTBOURNE  
Minister of Trade and Industry  
13th June, 1967