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2018: Record-Breaking Arrivals Continue for the Cayman Islands

Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands (25 Jan 2019) Following a rebound year for Caribbean travel with increased competition throughout the region, the Cayman Islands has maintained its market share with another year of record-breaking statistical arrivals. At the close of 2018, total visitation surpassed all previous years of recorded visitation including 2006, which previously held the record for the highest number of total visitors in a calendar year.

Total arrivals for 2018 in both air and cruise visitation was 2,384,058, which is an 11.05 percent increase over the same period in 2017 (237,211 additional persons). 463,001 stayover visitors, an increase of 10.66 percent—an additional 44,598 visitors—over 2018, is a year of exciting ‘firsts’ for the destination:

- The Cayman Islands welcomed over 450,000 stayover visitors for the first time.
- Arrivals in 2018 represent the highest number of stayover visits for a calendar year in recorded history (surpassing Jan-Dec 2017).
- As a double accomplishment in ‘firsts’ over 50,000 stayover visitors travelled to the destination within a single month, happening twice in 2018: March and December.

This significant increase in visitation positively impacted the local economy with an uptick in visitor spend, increasing by US\$98.1m over 2017. The estimated total visitor spend in 2018 was US\$880.1m, an increase of 12.5 percent.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Moses Kirkconnell shared, “The mandate of the Ministry and Department of Tourism is to facilitate annual growth in visitation and economic contribution; my Ministry pursues this strategically each year. Through creative promotions, partnerships, and continued collaboration with our industry stakeholders, we have maintained the significant accomplishment of continuous record-breaking years. Our government has committed to investment in our points of entry at the Cruise Port and Airports. These much-needed upgrades will benefit of tourism operators, businesses, visitors and residents. My focus is to ensure that all subjects in my ministry portfolio operate efficiently and effectively to support the tourism sector. These results are an excellent indicator of the work accomplished in 2018.”

In 2018, the USA, Canada, and LATAM had the most impact on arrival numbers. Specifically, the countries with the largest impact on the overall performance in 2018 were:

- United States: 13.01%
- Canada: 7.46%
- Jamaica: 7.63%
- Argentina: 17.54%
- Bermuda: 21.10%

The month of December is noted as the best on record, with a 6.15 percent increase of stayover arrivals with the destination receiving over 50,000 fuelled primarily by the North American markets. As with the overall statistical increase, the USA had the largest impact in the month of December having grown by over 2,600 additional visitors. This marks the 21st consecutive month of growth for this market which included an increase in capacity by national flag carrier Cayman Airways from JFK with daily flights in December 2018 compared to December 2017. Canada saw a 3.30 percent growth making it the best December in statistical history for Canadian stayover visitation. Adding to the success of December’s record-breaking numbers, Latin America also increased by 3.32 percent and is now the best month in arrivals history for that region.

“The Department of Tourism goal of source market diversification coupled with the ongoing development of new routes to the destination and innovative marketing plans has continued to drive the record-breaking successes for the Cayman Islands and will continue in 2019,” said Director of Tourism, Mrs Rosa Harris. “Noting that aviation is vital to driving visitation our global team remains committed to increasing capacity and are particularly excited to be officially opening the Denver Colorado route in March with Cayman Airways. As a gateway for the West Coast, we look forward to welcoming many new visitors from Colorado and new cities from the United States in 2019 to add to another year of success for the Cayman Islands. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all tourism partners for participating in our destination marketing campaigns, hosting of our visitors, journalists and travel agents in order to entertain, educate and transport the Cayman Islands brand worldwide.”

For more information and detailed arrival statistics, please visit the website: www.caymanislands.ky/statistics.

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