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BARBADOS RECORDS STRONG JANUARY-JULY PERFORMANCE

-Strategic marketing and product development initiatives lead to 5.2% growth in arrivals-

Chief Executive Officer of The Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI) William Griffith has revealed that based on the destination management organisation's review, the island has enjoyed a 5.2% increase in stay-over arrivals in the first seven months of 2019 in comparison to the corresponding 2018 period.

Between January and July 2019, Barbados welcomed **434,961** visitors through the enhanced Grantley Adams International Airport thereby accounting for an increase of **21,345** visitors. In the month of July, Barbados recorded an 8% growth over July 2018, while the annual Crop Over Festival was in full swing. As the island continues its recovery from the regional fall-out due to the 2017 hurricane season, the BTMI is aggressively pursuing new cruise marketing and product development initiatives, which have resulted in the months of February, March, April and July recording increased cruise arrivals. It is anticipated that these initiatives will contribute to longer term growth.

"This news augurs well for the future development of Barbados' tourism industry. To continuously record year-on-year growth as a mature destination means that we are moving in

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the right direction. We must continue to look for new opportunities to reinvent ourselves and remain relevant in this competitive market, while building the resilience of the sector.”

Of Barbados' major source markets, **Central and South America** recorded the highest growth for the first half of 2019 at 17.6% followed by the **United States** at 10.9%. **Germany** and the **United Kingdom** also performed favourably with increases of 8.5% and 7.9% respectively.

Griffith applauded the tourism team in Barbados and across all markets and attributed Barbados' favourable performance to their development of strategic initiatives. "Several of these efforts are bearing fruit and we must press forward in this light to conclude the rest of the year with a solid performance".

Increased Airlift

“One of the pivotal elements of guaranteeing the viability of our tourism industry is ensuring that the island remains easily accessible by land and sea. The BTMI has worked closely with our airline partners to maintain, and even boost airlift and this has contributed in part to our favourable increases in arrivals,” stated Griffith.

Barbados' deepening partnership with **Caribbean Airlines** saw the regional airline open more gateways to Barbados with the launch of the non-stop service between Kingston Jamaica, and Barbados in April 2019. With twice-weekly flights being provided, this service adds an additional 300 seats for business and leisure travellers and has allowed the island to welcome 3,012 passengers between April and July this year.

Around this same time, **JetBlue** expanded its seasonal weekly service on Saturdays to year-round service between Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) and Grantley Adams International Airport (BGI).

Exciting New Products and Accommodations

Acknowledging that providing visitors with new and exciting experiences in Barbados is paramount, Griffith said that “a number of new attractions have been added to our mix making it possible for us to further diversify our product offering. The BTMI has ensured that the new **Festive Fridays** experience has come on stream mainly for, but not limited to cruise passengers. This has exposed them to a unique and immersive experience in the form of a night market at Pelican Centre, just a stone’s throw away from the Bridgetown Cruise Terminal”.

Earlier in the year, Barbados welcomed the St. Nicholas Abbey Heritage Railway, which enhanced the existing St. Nicholas Abbey historic experience. This new attraction allows guests to take a trip back in time and experience a train ride on a restored locomotive, similar to the train which once serviced Barbados from 1880s until the 1930s.

More recently, Barbados opened its newest all-inclusive hotel on the south coast, which offers forty-four (44) spacious, luxury accommodations for adults. The Abidah by Accra opened its doors in June this year, with classic island view rooms and luxury ocean front suites with the latter boasting panoramic ocean views that stretch down the coastline.

International Recognition

Fresh from a record-breaking 2018, and continuing the growth trend in 2019, Barbados copped several international awards including three at the **2019 Travvy Awards**- Best Tourism Board Overall, Silver for the Best Destination Overall and another silver for Best Honeymoon Destination in the Caribbean/Bahamas. With the Travvy Awards being dubbed the Academy Awards of the travel industry these coveted awards are significant achievements for Barbados.

Over on the cruise side, for the third consecutive year, Barbados was ranked among the top five cruise destinations in the Caribbean. Last month, the island was named one of Cruise Critic’s Best Cruise Destinations in the Southern Caribbean based entirely on consumer ratings.

“Being recognised by the global travel industry, and also by consumers as being one of the best destinations, is indeed an honour for Barbados. These awards will continue to drive us to perform better and better every year to not only meet expectations, but to exceed them. We will remain committed to ensuring that we showcase the best that Barbados has to offer across all markets and to all visitors.”

Upcoming Opportunities

Looking ahead there are several initiatives geared towards cementing the island’s record performance for 2019, and in preparation for 2020. The BTMI is gearing up marketing and communications activities to invite all friends and family of Barbados to the island next year under the theme **We Gatherin’**.

"We are pressing full steam ahead with our deployments and activations in the market as we seek to drive more business to the island. In addition to ramping up efforts for We Gatherin’, we will be opening more gateways to the island. Starting October 28th, we will be welcoming the thrice-weekly **Lufthansa Group** flight directly from Frankfurt Germany, to really boost arrivals from Europe," he said.

Also coming up in October, will be the **10th Barbados Food and Rum Festival**, where the island lays its claim to being the birthplace of rum and the culinary capital of the Caribbean. The 10th edition is scheduled to take place from October 24 to 27 and will feature local and international award-winning chefs and mixologists.

Amidst Barbados’ independence celebrations, the BTMI is looking forward to the Barbados Mindful Living Festival this November 22 to 24 as a nod to 2019 as the Year of Wellness and Soft Adventure. This health and wellness festival will be the perfect segue into the 2019 Run Barbados Marathon Weekend from December 6 to 8, featuring a fun mile, 5k walk, 10k walk and run as well as the half marathon and marathon. Destination Barbados will be wrapping up

2019 with a burst of energy as we encourage travellers to *“Come for the run, but stay for the fun!”*.

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About Barbados

The island of Barbados offers the most authentic Caribbean experience with its exceptionally rich culture and history rooted in remarkable landscapes. Rated as one of the world's sexiest beaches in 2008 by Concierge.com; Barbados' Crane Beach in St. Philip stands as a premier destination for travellers. Barbados is also the first Zagat-rated Caribbean island and is known as the culinary capital of the Caribbean. Barbados has hosted several world class events including: The annual Barbados Food & Rum Festival; the 2006 PGA World Golf Championships-Barbados World Cup, the ICC Cricket World Cup Finals in 2007, the Sentebale Charity Polo match with Prince Harry of Wales in 2010, and the ICC Twenty20 Cricket Finals for 2010, and the Rihanna LOUD concert in 2012. Accommodations range from picturesque plantation houses and villas, to quaint bed and breakfasts and award-winning, five-star resorts. Grantley Adams International Airport offers even more non-stop and direct service from a growing number of U.S. cities, making Barbados the true gateway to the Eastern Caribbean. Barbados was voted eighth in the World by Trip Advisor's "2008 Travelers' Choice Destination Awards" in its Top 100 Destinations category. For more information on travel to Barbados, visit www.visitbarbados.org, follow on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/VisitBarbados>, via Twitter @Barbados.