

Montego Bay welcomes Excel Airways/Look Voyages

BY HORACE HINES Observer West reporter

MONTEGO BAY, St James

TOURISM Minister Edmund Bartlett is upbeat that last week's arrival of the inaugural Excel Airways/Look Voyages flight from France to Jamaica has positioned the destination to receive 10,000 French visitors annually.

Bartlett revealed that Jamaica now welcomes between 3,000 to 3,500 tourists from France per annum.

But he explained that with the weekly Excel Airways/Look Voyages service providing 290 seats to Jamaica, the country is estimated to receive 4,500 tourists from France during the current winter season which started last week.

"We are very pleased that on this occasion, Excel Airlines — in collaboration with Look Voyages — is giving to Jamaica that connectivity which will bring a number of rotations over the next four months — a total of some 16 flights that will arrive once per week and will bring a total of some 4,500 visitors to Jamaica over the period," Bartlett explained.

Additionally, Bartlett revealed that come October 2012, Excel Airways and Look Voyages are planning "to repeat this cycle so that we could have as many as 10,000 visitors from France in to Jamaica during 2012". The tourism minister was speaking last Friday at the Sangster International Airport, during a welcome reception to mark the arrival of the inaugural Excel Airways/Look Voyages charter flight from Parish with 262 passengers.

It was the second time last week that the minister was welcoming a maiden flight to the resort city, having ushered in the inaugural flight of Copa Airlines, with 45 passengers and crew members just days before.

He argued that the arrival of the flight from France was a direct result of the JLP's administration strategy "to secure the airlift capacity that would drive growth within our industry".

Meanwhile, Director of Tourism, John Lynch expressed his gratitude to Look Voyages for taking the bold step to provide the weekly service to Jamaica.

"I want to thank Look Voyages for having the courage to operate this flight because it is a huge risk and it is something that we welcome," Lynch said, adding that the flight represents a continuing quest to get Europe connected to Jamaica.

Meanwhile, French Ambassador Marc-Oliver Gendry was elated by the arrival of the visitors from his native land.

"I am very happy tonight because I think that never in the story of Jamaica such a big number of French people arrived in one day. I must say that I am grateful to Look Voyages."



Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett second right), greets Florence Martin (right), the first visitor to arrive on the inaugural Excel Airways/Look Voyages flight from Paris' Charles de Gaulle International Airport to Montego Bay on Friday. Also in picture from left are Davon Crump president of the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, French Ambassador, Marc-Oliver Gendry and Director of Tourism, John Lynch. (Photo: Horace Hines)

