

One in a million! - Record US stopover arrivals

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Minister of Industry and Tourism, Aloun Assamba (second right), and Director-General Carolle Guntley (right) greet the one-millionth visitor Tracy Groden (left) and her son Dylan, who arrived from New York on Air Jamaica 010. The family was escorted from the aircraft by Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook (background). - CONTRIBUTED

WESTERN BUREAU:

HISTORY WAS created yesterday when Jamaica welcomed its one-millionth stopover visitor from the United States, in a single year, at the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay.

Real estate broker Tracy Groden, who arrived with her family on Air Jamaica flight 010 from New York, made the one-millionth mark for the island. The family will vacation at Beaches Resort in Negril.

This is Mrs. Groden's second trip to Jamaica in 23 years, and she said the welcome reception in her honour was beyond her expectations. "I have always had great memories of Jamaica, always wanted to come back; the people here are so gracious," she said.

BEST YEAR EVER

The record-breaking figure indicates that 2005 will end with a four per cent increase over 2004, four per cent lower than the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) had projected, yet the best year ever.

"This means there is confidence in the U.S. market on the quality of the destination," said an ecstatic Minister of Industry and Tourism, Aloun Assamba. "There is such a wide choice to choose from, the competition is very stiff, yet visitors continue to select Jamaica," she noted.

Having come under fire earlier this year after a dip in the summer arrival figures, the JTB has been vindicated by the good news.

"The marketing efforts of the Jamaica Tourist Board is reaping rewards. The refocusing of the JTB confirms what the World Tourism Organisation said, which is that travel is increasing, notwithstanding the disasters and terrorism affecting the market," added the minister.

Mrs. Groden was presented with a return trip for four, courtesy of Air Jamaica, a vacation at the elegant Half Moon Hotel, a painting with the Jamaican national fruit - the ackee - and a gift package with Jamaican goodies.