

# Jamaica becomes Virgin territory in July

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BY MARK CUMMINGS Observer staff reporter  
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**LONDON, England - Virgin Atlantic Airline will in July make its inaugural flight to Montego Bay, Jamaica, a move which the United Kingdom-based carrier is convinced will raise Jamaica's profile in Europe as a holiday destination.**

When the service begins on July 3, the airline will fly its 747-400 series planes twice weekly between Montego Bay and London's Gatwick International Airport on Mondays and Wednesdays.



Virgin Atlantic's 747-400 which will start flying the Montego Bay-London route in July.

Charles Spence, one of Virgin's sales and marketing consultants, is confident that Virgin will capture a major share of the market now being serviced by Air Jamaica, British Airways and several charter flights.

"When we enter into that marketplace we intend to give passengers more than what they expect, because we are a value-driven company, and so we are going to give quality service," said Spence, who has more than 15 years experience in the airline industry.

"We are not coming into the marketplace as a cheaper alternative, we are not coming into the marketplace as an expensive alternative; we are coming into the marketplace as a value alternative, where we know that passengers can travel in style and comfort."

Spence, who was speaking with the Observer last week in London aboard one of Virgin's A 340-300 aircraft, said that the airline would be targeting a wide cross section of the travelling public.

"We are going to look at the young professionals, returning residents, and business persons, particularly those who want to go to London and beyond," he said.

He added that Virgin, based on market surveys, has realised that there are a number of persons who are becoming increasingly interested in travel to the Far East and Africa. The airline, he said, intends to capitalise on that aspect of the business.

"What we really want to do is to break out of the traditional mode where people often go to North America for holiday and to do business," he explained. "People are now looking at going to places like Delhi, Dubai and Johannesburg."

Virgin Atlantic Airways, formed in 1984 by billionaire Richard Branson, is the second largest British airline and operates a fleet of 33 Boeing 747 and Airbus A340 aircraft with an average age of less than six years to 26 destinations worldwide.

Based at London's Gatwick and Heathrow airports, the airline's long list of routes includes Heathrow to New York, Boston, Miami, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Delhi, Mumbai, Lagos, Sydney and Dubai. Virgin also operates services from Gatwick to Orlando, Barbados, St Lucia, Las Vegas, Grenada, Cuba, and The Bahamas.

The airline was founded on the concept of offering a competitive and high quality upper-class and economy service. Spence told the Observer that on its long haul routes Virgin Atlantic operates a three-class system: Upper Class, Premium Economy, and Economy.

The Upper Class suite, he said, was launched in November 2003 and has won some of the most prestigious design awards in the industry. "This class is different to anything else flying today," Spence boasted. "The product has been designed to be separately both the most comfortable bed and the most comfortable seat in the air, and the service is superior to any other airline."

He also sang the praises of the other classes. "The service in the premium as well as the economy class is also excellent," Spence said. "What we are asking the travelling public to do is to fly with Virgin and you will never forget your first time."

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