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## **ARUBA DEFIES THE CREDIT CRUNCH AS EX-UK VISITOR NUMBERS SOAR**

The Dutch Caribbean island of Aruba defied the credit crunch in the first half of 2009 with a 77 per cent year-on-year increase in visitor numbers from the UK.

A total of 4,791 'overnight stay' arrivals from the UK were recorded from January to June, compared with 2,697 for the same period in 2008. Among Aruba's European markets the UK is now second only to The Netherlands in generating visitors to the island - and it is the only European market to show visitor growth for this period.

With an additional 50 per cent charter capacity for summer 2009, Aruba Tourism Authority UK director Joanna Walding is confident that the upward trend can be maintained.

"Thomson Airways' service from Gatwick increased frequency from fortnightly to weekly from May, which has clearly played a big part in boosting visitor numbers and stands us in good stead for the second half of the year," she said.

"However, this has not been the only factor in the island's success - we were proactive in going ahead with a major London-based advertising campaign from January to March and despite the economic uncertainty Aruba saw positive results almost immediately."

Last year Aruba broke into the top 10 Caribbean destinations from the UK market for the first time. More than 30 UK tour operators now feature the island.

Charter access is provided by a weekly service from London Gatwick and a fortnightly flight from Manchester, both operated by Thomson Airways. For summer 2010 the ex-Manchester flight will go weekly. Aruba can also be reached with KLM and Martinair via Amsterdam or with American Airlines via Miami.

The Aruba Tourism Authority operates a dedicated online training programme for travel agents, accessible at [www.ArubaAcademy.co.uk](http://www.ArubaAcademy.co.uk).

For more information on Aruba visit [www.aruba.com](http://www.aruba.com)

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**About Aruba**

Just 15 miles from South America, Aruba offers idyllic beaches in the south, rugged cliffs and black pebbles in the north, and an arid interior of red rocks and cacti. No rainy season, constant sun and cooling trade winds offer perfect holiday conditions all year round. [www.aruba.com](http://www.aruba.com)

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