

Caribbean resorts need to be carbon-neutral

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Sun, sea and sand no longer enough?

The growth in the number of tourists jetting off from UK airports to Caribbean holiday resorts is likely to be effected by policies to tackle climate change, according to an Oxford University researcher. The study by Dr Murray Simpson, a Senior Research Associate at the School of Geography, was presented at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Annual Conference in London on Wednesday 27 August.

In his talk ‘International Policy and Market Response to Global Warming’, Dr Simpson revealed that the findings of his study show that fuel prices and aviation taxes, coupled with regulatory policies and carbon offsets will result in a slowdown in the growth of tourism in the Caribbean. The findings are based on interviews with those working in the regional tourism sector and an analysis of data on international

regulatory frameworks, national legislation and voluntary mechanisms.

Although the growth in tourism numbers will only be slightly dented in the next 10-15 years, Dr Simpson believes that in the long term the region could be significantly hit. He believes that holiday-makers in the Caribbean's key tourist markets in the UK, Europe and the United States will start to think twice about travelling on long-haul flights either because of the cost of air travel or because of their environmental impact.

So far, only the European Union (EU) is aiming to include aviation in its Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), to be accomplished by 2012, but similar developments may follow in other regions, such as North America. If climate policy as currently envisaged by the EU is implemented, there could be a huge hike in the cost of air travel by 2012. In 2012 air passengers could have to pay around £22 per tonne of carbon dioxide emitted, with that price increasing to around £38 per tonne of carbon dioxide by 2020. This would translate into an estimated decline in demand for holidays to the Caribbean by 0.6 per cent to 1.8 per cent in 2012.

Dr Simpson says the growth in demand for Caribbean holidays will continue to fall off slightly in the next 10-15 years, but beyond that there are real concerns about the survival of the Caribbean as a holiday resort, which he believes could be significantly affected in the long term by the physical impact of climate change as well as the financial impact.

He said: 'The vulnerability of the region to climate change, compounded by volatile oil prices, highlights the need for the local tourism industry to market itself differently. Tourists currently go the Caribbean for a sun, sea and sand experience, but to survive as a holiday destination, it will have to sell itself as a carbon neutral destination. In this way it mitigates against its contribution to climate change, while at the same time

marketing an image as an environmentally pristine and sustainable destination.'

'The Caribbean region is only responsible for about one per cent of green house gases globally, but aviation is responsible for 40 per cent of carbon emissions caused by tourism. This means that the region has to think about how to market itself differently to address holiday makers' concerns about cost and the environmental impact of long-haul flights.'

Provided by Oxford University

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