

Jamaican Hoteliers Introduce Energy Surcharge

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As Oil Prices Soar, Jamaican Hoteliers Introduce Energy Surcharge To Combat Rising Energy Costs

In a special communication to member hotels, the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association (JHTA) has announced its decision to support an occupancy surcharge intended to help its members combat the rising costs of energy.

Effective December 15, when Jamaica's winter season officially begins, hotels will have the option of adding a surcharge to their nightly room rates, with the amount to be individually determined by each property. Hotels are advised to base the amount on market assessment and cost structure, a maximum of US\$10 per room, per night, is recommended.

Threat to Profitability

JHTA president Wayne Cummings spoke in a recent meeting on the impending situation for hoteliers resulting from the ever-increasing price of crude oil and the consequent threat to the profitability of hotel businesses. "We have been experiencing increases in the price of a barrel of approximately 53 percent since January '07 alone," Cummings noted. He recommended that removal of the surcharge be addressed in the event that oil prices come down again.

Similar surcharges are in effect elsewhere in the world. Within the region, for example, The Bahamas has had a surcharge in effect for many years, and they are regularly applied by cruise ship lines to offset fuel costs. A standard surcharge for cruise passengers is US\$10 to \$12 per cabin, per night.

Offsetting Expenditure

In its communication with hoteliers, the Association has encouraged hotels to inform suppliers of their surcharge decisions with letters and circulars, and with announcements on websites and in brochures. JHTA additionally underscored the importance of taking all possible steps to increase overall energy efficiency and conservation, regardless of the surcharge application.

Alerting Travel Partners and Travelers

In an initiative to inform travelers and industry professionals about the surcharge, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) is working to publicize details with all possible speed. 'With the winter season imminent, we are making every effort to inform visitors via our partners about this surcharge prior to travel,' said Director of Tourism Basil Smith. 'There will be an announcement on our website and special alerts to our tour operator and travel agent partners. As JHTA members respond, we will communicate further with the trade.'

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