

## Russian airline begins service to Jamaica January

Russian airline Transaero will begin a non-stop service from Moscow to Montego Bay, Jamaica on January 1, 2013, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr. Wykeham McNeill has announced.

The flight is being organised by Russian tour operator Biblio Globus in association with Transaero airlines which will operate a 300-seat Boeing 777, and will run for three months initially. However, Dr. McNeill told a press briefing at the ministry's offices in New Kingston today that "we are in discussions with them to continue into the summer and to provide the service for the entire year." He added that "we are also formalizing plans to fly in a group of Russian media representatives to help promote destination Jamaica in Russia." The arrangement is part of a strategy to woo more airlines to Jamaica and followed the Minister's trip to Moscow last weekend. He was accompanied by Pat Samuels, Jamaica Tourist Board regional director for Europe. "We are very optimistic that the Russian market will provide significant returns as the minimum stay by visitors from that market is 10 nights, which is twice the average stay of visitors from traditional markets such as the US," Dr. McNeill said. Transaero is the second largest airline operator out of Russia. It flies to 40 countries on 130 routes and has hubs in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. Dr. McNeill said they have also confirmed service out of the Czech Republic for this winter. Exim Tours, owned by German tour operator Meir's Velt Reisen, will operate a charter from Prague to Jamaica starting December 28. The flight is to be shared with Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic, with 100 seats designated for Jamaica and will have 10 rotations. "In support of this flight we will also have 100 travel agents coming in from Europe for a week, to tour the entire island in the last week of November," the Minister said. This winter Jamaica will also have non-stop service out of Paris, France, operated by French tour operator Look Voyages, providing 350 seats. "Prior to this year, we shared this flight with the Dominican Republic. However it is now a direct flight to Jamaica and we will benefit from the full complement of 350 seats, bringing 100 additional seats to Jamaica," Dr. McNeill said.