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For immediate release

THE TOURIST BOARD GETS READY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE AFTER A CHALLENGING YEAR

With the global tourism outlook improving, overall tourist arrivals in the Falklands are forecast to increase by 17% in 2010.

New research unveiled by the Tourist Board this week highlights what a challenging year for Falkland Islands tourism 2009 has been. In what is likely to be remembered as one of the toughest years in history for the worldwide tourism industry, with the global recession, natural disasters, political tensions and A(H1N1) influenza pandemic, it is no surprise that international tourist arrivals fell by 4% in 2009.

For the Falkland Islands specifically, the tourism industry in 2009 mirrored the global situation with tourist arrivals dropping 17.7%. The cruise season was disappointing. The cancellation of vessels, largely due to adverse weather, led to a loss of over 17,000 passengers to the Islands. With the withdrawal of Norwegian Sun and Minerva in the 2010/11 season, cruise arrivals are expected to fall by over 16%.

It's not all doom and gloom. Despite the disappointing results, inbound tourist arrivals to the Falklands are expected to increase by over 17% in 2010, with 4,950 overnight tourists anticipated to visit the islands, spending almost £2.7 million. The latter part of 2009 (October – December) demonstrated positive signs of recovery with leisure tourism arrivals in 2009 exceeding numbers for the same period in 2008. This came as the international marketplace regained optimism with consumer confidence returning.

"Having faced a difficult 2009, I am confident that 2010 and beyond will witness improvement for the Falklands' tourism industry. Whether positive or negative, the Falkland Islands will be in the media spotlight in coming months and the tourist board will continue to implement its proactive marketing, advertising and PR strategy in priority source markets – Europe and America," commented Jake Downing, General Manager of Falkland Islands Tourist Board.

"Our objective is to build the cruise tourism market but a key focus will be encouraging visitor expenditure in the Falklands. Overall expenditure in 2010 by inbound overnight tourists, cruise passengers and domestic tourists is expected to total over £5.4 million – a small growth over 2009's figure. We are also keeping our fingers crossed for better weather in 2010!" added Downing.

According to the research, domestic tourism will continue to grow slowly but steadily at around 3% per annum, forecast to reach over 13,500 trips and generate over £1.15 million in expenditure in 2010.

Business tourism forecasts indicate a positive increase in 2010 for visitor arrivals, due to the oil industry activities. Over 2,250 business visits are predicted - an increase of 50% on 2009 figures.

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Further information: contact Jake Downing, tel 27019 or gm.fitb@horizon.co.fk or visit www.falklandislands.com.

**Statistics are taken from the Falklands Forecast produced by Acorn Tourism Consulting Ltd of UK, who worked with the UNWTO on the development of their 2020 Vision world tourism forecast publications. (www.acorntourism.co.uk)*



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