



# CARIBBEAN RESILIENCE AND RESURGENCE

## 2019 Activity Report



CARIBBEAN  
HOTEL & TOURISM  
ASSOCIATION

# CHTA 2019 Activity Report: Highlights of an Active Program Year

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## Message from the President

### *“Caribbean Tourism: Resilient and Adaptable”*



**A**s we enter a second decade of trendline growth for Caribbean tourism, many of us can't help but to wonder how long will this robust period last, when will the bottom fall out, and how will we fare? The lessons from the past decade should give us optimism about the industry's capacity to weather diversity. Looking back at the trials some of us faced – hurricanes, diseases, health, safety and environmental threats – all showed the incredible resilience and adaptability of our industry.

While the final score is yet to be tallied, we likely will have closed 2019 with a record number of stopover arrivals. Most hotel indicators have set records. And visitor spending should've reached an all-time high. All cause for cautious optimism.

Amidst change and the essential need to persist, adapt and innovate, the need for an overarching purpose and objectives and goals for individuals, companies and organizations like CHTA, has not changed. This is our constant.

CHTA is guided by our Strategic Plan 2018–2021 entitled *Blueprint for the Future*. Our stated purpose is to *provide leadership, tools, resources and knowledge aimed at helping members to grow their tourism business and fostering an environment which celebrates, enriches and sustains tourism to the benefit of the industry and its stakeholders*. Six primary areas of focus and nearly one hundred goals and strategies guide our work.

In reviewing CHTA's activity over the past year, I am pleased to report that, despite ongoing challenges, we have continued to transition the Association forward so that it remains relevant, communicates more effectively, delivers better value to its members, builds a more impactful regional presence and improves its capacity to deliver benefits to the members.

This report provides an in-depth overview of CHTA's work over 2019. I encourage you to review it and I'm certain that you will agree that *'your'* CHTA is working with diligence and dedication to help make a positive difference for our industry and our region.

Investments in new and upgraded hotels, infrastructure and tourism product, additional airlift, the strength, determination and hospitality of our people and the diversity of our product have all played their part in the continued desirability of our region.

While a robust global economy is a key driver of the record performance, one cannot discount the work of industry, associations, tourism boards, governments and other stakeholders to continue to develop and improve tourism. These efforts are ongoing, often under the radar, and stakeholders should be recognized for the difference they are making.

Looking ahead, I am conscious of the fleeting of time. I am conscious also that CHTA is a 57 years old association, and that the world that we live in is changing faster now than ever before and in ways that provide real and serious threats to our region and our industry.

Issues related to climate change and the environment, crime, health threats, political unrest, rapidly changing travel trends and ever increasing competition, all require our region to speak with a strong collective voice, to be able to provide sound, relevant data to support our advocacy, and to ensure we have strong partnerships with those in the public sector and the international tourism landscape.

As the regionally recognized voice of our industry, we have a rich history of affecting positive change when we work together. A membership organization is only as strong or effective as the members who are its DNA, its life force. You - our members, volunteer leadership, companies, AE's and NHTAs are the vital organs of the body that is the CHTA and like a human body it cannot survive or thrive without healthy organs. A healthy, vibrant, sustainable CHTA is impossible without the engagement of the wider all in our industry.

My fervent desire as we continue the work of transforming your association to face the challenges that affect us all, is that you relook at the manner in which you or your local association engages with CHTA. How can you play a more active role in shaping our industry's future? This is your association – *you ARE CHTA.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Affonso-Dass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "D".

Patricia Affonso-Dass  
President



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## Industry Performance: By the Numbers...

### **CARIBBEAN TOURISM IS ROBUST AND RESILIENT**

- Most Hotels Experience Strong 2019
- Residual Impact of 2017 Hurricanes Evaporating
- Several Destinations Weather Unexpected Challenges
- Strong Investor Interest Continued

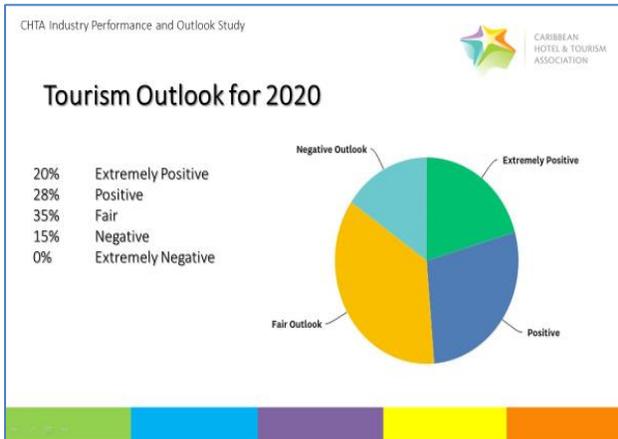


A tone of continued optimism rang throughout the 2019 Caribbean Hotel and Resort Investment Summit last May in Miami Beach as one of the largest delegations in the event's history gathered to take stock in the industry's performance and review future investment prospects. Opening the summit with insights and data (left to right): Jeff Higgley, CEO for the Burba Group, a Northstar Travel Group company; Frank Comito, CEO, CHTA; Emile Gourieux, Business Development Executive, STR; Sanjay Amin, Director, BCQS International; and Gary Brough, Managing Director, KPMG.

### **CHTA Industry Performance and Outlook Survey: Key Results**

In January 2020 the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association conducted its fifth annual Industry Performance and Outlook survey. This was undertaken to assist the organization with gaining a better understanding of the state of the tourism economy, its outlook, and the degree to which a number of factors impact or may affect the tourism industry. Following is a summary of key findings:

**Assessing Hotel Performance in 2019 vs. 2018, outlook for 2020:**

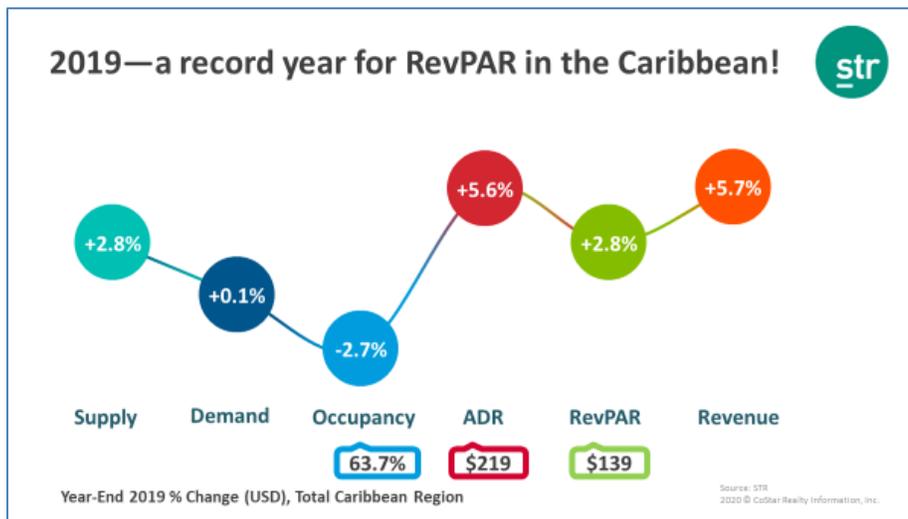


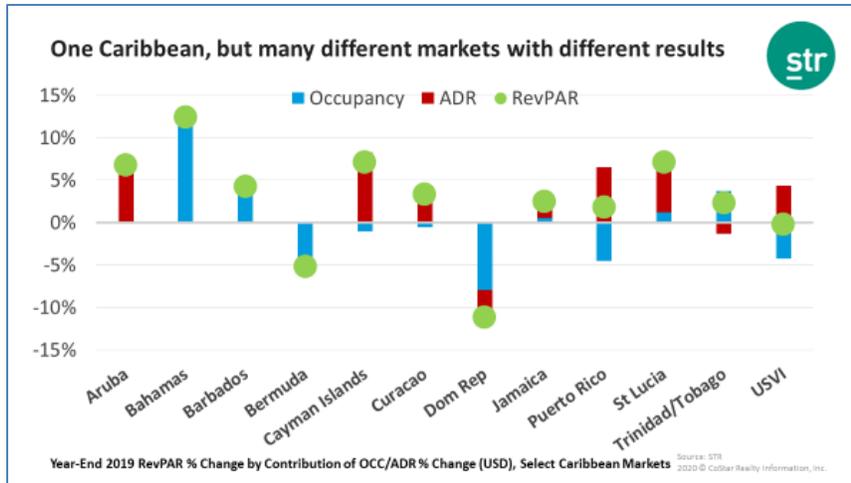
- Tourism Continues to Stimulate Job Creation - nearly 49% reported employment up, 35% reported maintaining existing levels
- Sales/Revenue - 60% reported sales/rev up, down from 76% last year
- Capital Spending Up for 9<sup>th</sup> Consecutive Year - two-thirds reported an increase in CapEx (increase over last year, where 61% reported an increase)
- Most hotels reporting some increase in ADR and occupancy
- Profit expectations about the same as last year 79% expect net profit, 21% expect loss

- Outlook for 2020...Remains strong

**Record ADR, RevPar and Revenue in 2019**

According to STR, the region experienced a record year’s performance with ADR topping \$217, up 6.9 percent from 2019 while RePar increased by 3.3 percent and overall rooms revenue was up 5.7 percent. More than half of the destinations also experienced an increase in occupancy rate. Here are the performance results through 2019:





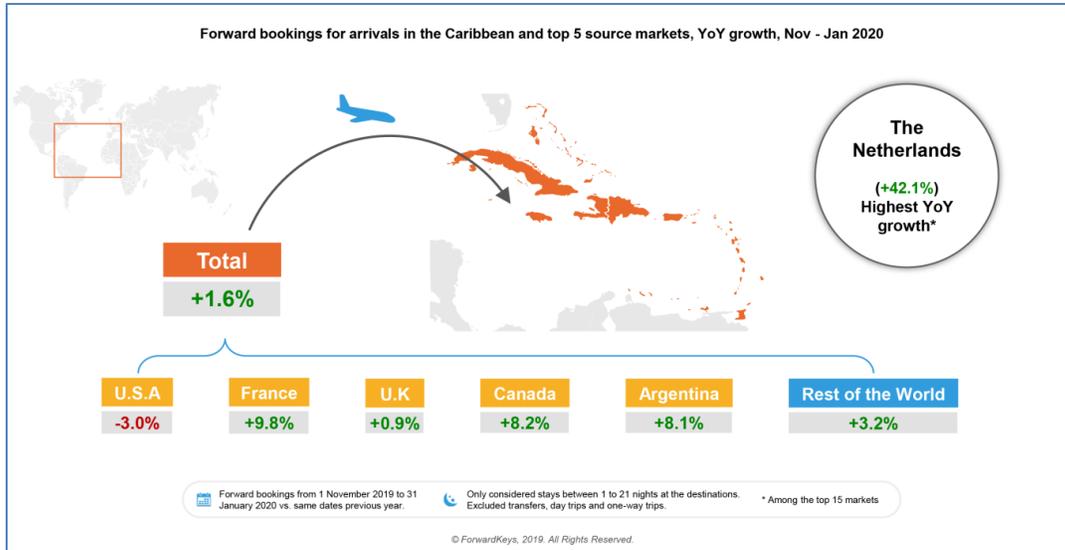
### International Arrivals to Region on Track for Record Year

Stopover visitor arrivals to the region were expected to once again top the 30 million mark. Final results from the Caribbean Tourism Organization are not expected until the first quarter 2020, but the year’s trendline points to a likely record year. As of November 2019, international tourist arrivals growth was recorded in 22 destinations, while declines were recorded in four. Three of the five reporting destinations registered increases in international tourist trips of 91.0% (St. Maarten), 7.6% (Saint Lucia) and 2.3% (Grenada). The remaining two destinations, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, registered decreases of -8.5% and -1.5%, respectively.

### Airlift Continued to Grow in 2019 and Modest Growth Anticipated Early 2020

With more than 10,000 new hotel rooms added to the region’s inventory in 2019, plus an estimated 80,000 vacation home rentals, airlines tapped into the increased demand, adding new flights and increasing aircraft size. Data from OAG indicates that demand for travel to the Caribbean during the first quarter of 2019 increased in available seats by 1.2%. The region attracted 12.4 million international seats attracted to the region during this time. The fastest Q1 growth destinations for airlift were: St. Maarten, up 88.9%; the U.S. Virgin Islands, increasing by 48.7%; Puerto Rico, showing a 16% jump; St. Kitts & Nevis up by 11.8%; and Jamaica growing 9.8%.

The tracking group Forward Keys also forecasted at year’s end continued growth in airline bookings, showing an increase of 1.6 percent.

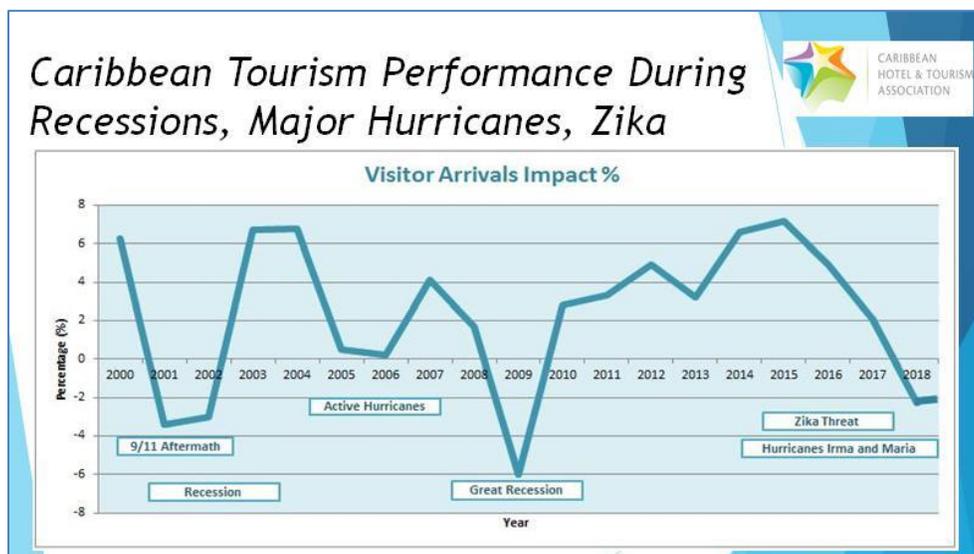


### Caribbean Room Supply Growth

According to STR, as of December, 2019 the Caribbean’s tourism-grade room supply stood at 259,335 up from 256,823 in 2018. At the close of the year approximately 29,703 rooms were in various stages of development, with 13,033 room under construction and 10,380 in final planning.

### Tourism Performance Impact from Recessions, Major Hurricanes, Zika...

Overall, the Caribbean experienced an exceptional 2019, with air arrivals and hotel performances exceeding the global average. Downturns are cyclical and the industry must be better prepared to mitigate their impact. The chart below shows the industry's performance over 20 years, illustrating what has happened to visitor arrivals when faced with recessions, major hurricanes and a periodic health threat like Zika.



## Highlights of an Active Program Year

2019 was an exceptionally active and eventful year for CHTA, with the association engaging with its members and partners in numerous forums, events and gatherings.

### CHTA Events: Connecting People and Partners...

#### **Jamaica Hosts Successful 2019 Marketplace**

Undaunted by the opening day's rain, it was all sunshine and smiles indoors as Jamaica welcomed a record 64 new buyers and one of the largest delegations of attendees in recent years at the 2019 Caribbean Travel Marketplace. CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass, Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, and Jamaica Hotel and Tourism Association President Omar Robinson opened two-days of intense buyer-seller meetings. Attendees reported one of the most successful events in recent memory, foreboding the start of a strong 2019 season for most of the region's destinations.



*CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass and CEO Frank Comito join Jamaica's Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett (center) on the selling floor at 2019 Caribbean Travel Marketplace.*

#### **Bahamas and Baha Mar Welcome Marketplace 2020**

Marketplace returns to The Bahamas in January 2020 where buyers and suppliers will experience the Caribbean's newest mega-resort Baha Mar. Undeterred by hurricane Dorian, which affected the northernmost part of the archipelago nation, and with over 90 percent of its hotels operating, most never impacted by the storm, the CHTA and Bahamas planning teams anticipate a highly successful Marketplace. By the end of 2019 nearly 800 delegates had registered from 26 supplier (hotels, attractions, DMOs, and destination tour operators) destinations, and over 200 buyer representatives hailed from seventeen countries. The 38th edition of Caribbean Travel Marketplace is taking place from January 21-23, 2020, in collaboration with the Bahamas Ministry of Tourism and the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), with the support of the Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board and Baha Mar.



*(L-R) Fred Lounsberry, CEO, Nassau Paradise Island Promotion Board; BHTA President Carlton Russell; CHTA CEO Frank Comito; CHTA First Vice President Karen Whitt; Bahamas Minister of Tourism and Aviation Dionisio D'Aguilar; and Graeme Davis, President, Baha Mar at press conference.*

## **CHRIS Attracts Largest Contingent, Sir Royston Hopkin Recognized**

Last May's Caribbean Hotel and Resort Investment Summit, conducted by the Burba Group, a Northstar Company, with patron support from CHTA, moved to Miami Beach where over 450 attendees spent two-days planning for investments in the region. In 2018 the Caribbean added over 10,000 new hotel rooms and, which was repeated in 2019.

CHTA CEO and Director General Frank Comito provided the opening presentation, setting a tone of optimism with supporting data, while also challenging attendees to invest beyond the physical plant. "Protecting and enhancing your investment in the Caribbean needs to go beyond the plant investment. Greater attention must be given to ensure there are public and private sector investments in human infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and protecting and enhancing the environmental infrastructure to help protect your long-term investment," he advised.

CHTA's Past President and Hotelier of the Year Sir Royston Hopkin received the CHRIS Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding work as an investor, developer, industry leader, and owner/operator of the award-winning Spice Island Resort. He challenged the region to continue to work together to develop the industry and specifically to address the cost of airlift, which he indicated is a major inhibitor to even greater regional growth.

Photo credit: Spice Island Beach Resort



*Sir Royston Hopkin (center) receiving award at CHIEF. Also pictured are Jim Burba of Burba Hotel Network (left) and CHTA CEO Frank Comito.*

## **CHIEF 2019 Content, Engagement Lauded by Attendees**



Travel expert Doug Lansky kicked off the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) event at the Hyatt Regency Miami, from June 21 to 23, 2019, challenging attendees to redefine how they engage guests. He called on tourism stakeholders to develop smarter spending strategies for wealthy travelers, and recommended tactics to improve the customer experience so visitors can take away positive experiences from the destination.

“You need to treat every guest as if they are a travel writer, influencer or just crazy rich,” he declared, and advised industry employees to go the extra mile to “overfix (a) problem ... and don’t ever say ‘no’.”

CHIEF celebrated its fifth year, welcoming more than 400 hospitality and tourism professionals from the Caribbean and the Americas and with more than 15 sessions over two days featuring expert speakers and presenters on timely travel and tourism topics.

Lansky, a travel author and editor, is a tourism development leader who advises destinations and tourism companies in several countries on strategic branding, marketing, the visitor experience, industry trends and sustainability. His 20 years of writing experience spans publications ranging from National Geographic Traveler to The Guardian, Lonely Planet and Skift.



CHIEF's lively and informative agenda focused on tourism's trending topics, including adapting to new booking solutions, maintaining a productive environment in a multigenerational and diverse cultural workplace; what's hot and trending in food and beverage; what guests are seeking in a Caribbean vacation today; trends, opportunities and challenges facing businesses and the region over the next five years; and understanding guest diversity to more effectively market and maximize return on investment.

General sessions included speakers and panelists from top-tier travel brands, focused on "Tomorrow's Talent Today: The Dynamics of Human Capital"; "Turning Imagination into Reality: What Guests will be Seeking in a Caribbean Vacation"; "Who's Got Umami and How Can I Get Some?"; and "Cannabis to Crypto - Are you Ready for What's Next?". CHIEF 2020 returns to Miami on June 26-28, 2020.

## **14 Teams Vied for Honors at 2019 Taste of the Caribbean**

The region's top culinary event continued to stimulate and celebrate excellence and the unique flavours of Caribbean cuisine and libations. Now a June Classic event, since 1993 the Caribbean's best chefs and culinary teams have united at Taste to compete, demonstrate their skills, learn from each other and offer the general public a scintillating exhibition of the most delectable culinary treats of the islands. Competing teams hailed from: The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curaçao, Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos.



*Barbados took the number one team spot at Taste of the Caribbean.*

Barbados was named the Caribbean National Culinary Team of the Year, while Jason Thomas Ao of the Cayman Islands was crowned Caribbean Chef of the Year.



*Jason Thomas Ao of the Cayman Islands is the 2019 Caribbean Chef of the Year.*



*Hazen Rolle of the Bahamas was named Caribbean Junior Chef of the Year. From left are CHTA's CEO Frank Comito, President Patricia Affonso-Dass and judge Peter Olsacher.*

Hazen Rolle of the Bahamas was crowned Caribbean Junior Chef of the Year; Rajasekar Ravindran of Turks and Caicos Islands was named Caribbean Pastry Chef of the Year; while Bonaire's Dhanesh De Kok and Elise Weerstand took home the glory in the beef and chocolate competitions, respectively. The Cayman Islands' Dimuth Munasingha reigned supreme in the seafood category.



*Caribbean Bartender of the Year Jurnick Merced of Curaçao celebrates in Miami.*

The Caribbean Bartender of the Year award went to Jurnick Merced of Curaçao, and his nation also won Best Vodka Drink. Trinidad and Tobago won Best Non-Alcoholic Drink, St. Lucia captured Best Rum Drink, while Cayman Islands won Best Mystery Bar Drink.

Grenada won the Josue Merced-Reyes Spirit of the Competition award, while Floris van Loo of Bonaire took home Tony Mack Spirit of the Competition honors.

"We congratulate this year's Taste of the Caribbean participants, their national hotel and tourism associations, team managers and sponsors for an exhibition of excellence, competitive spirit and camaraderie," said Patricia Affonso-Dass, President of CHTA. "The future of food and beverage in the region is undoubtedly in good hands."



*Rajasekar Ravindran of Turks and Caicos Islands was named Caribbean Pastry Chef of the Year. From left are CHTA's Frank Comito and Patricia Affonso-Dass, and judge Augusto Schreiner.*

Taste of the Caribbean's host sponsor was Interval International, while House of Angostura® was the Bartender of the Year sponsor. Event sponsors included The Best Dressed Chicken, Certified Angus Beef®, Figment Design, Food Export USA - Northeast, Marketplace Excellence, MasterCard, OBMI, RAK Porcelain, U.S. Meat Export Federation, U.S. Pork, and the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism. Product sponsors included Angostura® Orange Bitters, Certified Angus Beef®, Food Export USA - Northeast, Halperns' Purveyors of Steak and Seafood, PromiseLand, RAK Porcelain, Superior Farms, U.S. Meat Export Federation, and U.S. Pork.

## **Caribbean305 Features 16 Destinations Showcasing Diverse Culinary and Cultural Offerings**

After two years and a growing crowd with an appetite for Caribbean food, drink, music and culture, CHTA moved Caribbean305 to Miami's trendy artistic district at the Mana Wynwood. Sixteen destinations, including noted chefs and bartenders from 14 competing in the Taste of the Caribbean culinary competition, featured over 70 unique Caribbean tapas items and drinks. Attendees also

sampled a dozen different versions of roast pig, courtesy of U.S. Pork which sponsored the new addition to Caribbean305. CHTA conceived the consumer event three years ago, piloting it in South Florida with the view of expanding it to other key markets for the Caribbean. The aim as well is to weave in a consumer buying element to help promote summer and fall travel to the region.



United States Virgin Islands Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte Offers Encouragement to Industry Professionals

## Investing in People

### **Over 200 Employees from 2017 Hurricane-Impacted Destinations Prepped for Return**

As the 2017 hurricane-impacted destinations mostly bounced back in 2019 with new and upgraded hotel properties, CHTA partnered with the National Hotel and Tourism Associations in Anguilla, St. Maarten, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to provide 'come-back' training. CHTA training partner Springboard Caribbean conducted sessions for over 200 employees focusing on customer service and supervisory skills.

### **CHTAEF Broadens Outreach with Training Reaching Over 700 Employees**

- *Interval International and Virgin Holidays Back New Certificate Training Thrust*

Caribbean tourism professionals honed their skills in cutting-edge customer service training sessions and diversity training presented by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association Education Foundation (CHTAEF). The Foundation introduced certificate training for industry professionals in the fall of 2018 in Barbados and Aruba. In 2019 sessions were presented in St. Lucia, St. Maarten, Grenada, Tobago and St. Kitts and Nevis.



*(From left) St. Maarten's Minister of Tourism Stuart A. Johnson; CHTAEF Chairperson Karolin Troubetzkoy; Neil Kolton, Interval International's Director of Business Development for the Caribbean and Southeast U.S. and CHTAEF board member; Ricardo Perez, Vice President of the St. Maarten Timeshare Association; and Wyb Meijer, Executive Director of the St. Maarten Hospitality & Trade Association.*

CHTAEF Chairperson Karolin Troubetzkoy said the workshops recognized the natural hospitality of Caribbean people and how it could be enhanced to meet the changing needs of today's traveler. The sessions also presented participants with new skills to master as they strive to surpass guest expectations.

With support from the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) and the Saint Lucia Hospitality & Tourism Association (SLHTA), CHTAEF assembled more than 160 St. Lucian hospitality workers to help polish their skills in a series of guest service training sessions, conducted by Louise John and Suzanne Shillingford-Brooks of Talkabout & Earth Solutions.

Dubbed 'Heartfelt Guest Care to Welcome the World', the training - launched by CHTAEF in partnership with Virgin Holidays - gave hospitality team members, supervisors, managers and owners the knowledge and the skills needed to best serve a new and diverse generation of customers.

In St. Maarten, with the support of Interval International, individual training workshops were created for professionals working at the front office, the engineering and housekeeping departments, and supervisors.

CHTAEF, with support from Virgin Holidays, also returned to Barbados for another round of 'Heartfelt' training by Talkabout & Earth Solutions.



### **23 'High Flyers' Kick Off First Young Leaders Forum**

The CHTA Young Leaders Forum (YLF), a brainchild of CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass, was formalized at the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) in 2019 to:

- Help develop the next generation of local and CHTA leadership while supporting their professional development within their company;
- Create a place within the organization where young leaders could have a voice; strengthen their professional network; present fresh new ideas to grow, diversify and strengthen their national associations and the CHTA;
- Provide a real opportunity to harness the knowledge of our past leaders and exemplary hoteliers, providing an avenue for their active continued involvement within the Association in a mentorship type program.

The YLF's program of activities are being led by CHTA member and GM for The Landings in St. Lucia, Paul Collymore. He is being assisted by Sanovnik Destang from Bay Gardens in St. Lucia. Both are playing an active role in guiding the young leaders. A special WhatsApp forum provides day-to-day interaction.

The Young Leaders participated in CHTA’s Board of Directors and Membership meetings in June and also underwent leadership training prior to CHIEF, where they were actively engaged in the various professional development programs. They also participated in a roundtable discussion with some of CHTA’s ‘seasoned’ leaders, in an exchange of ideas, experiences and information. In 2020, CHTA will continue to support their professional development.



### **Diversity Training: Antigua Prepares for Non-English Speaking Arrivals**

Over 35 industry representatives from the Antigua and Barbuda Hotel and Tourism Association participated in a half-day diversity training workshop conducted by CHTA as part of their readiness initiatives to prepare for an anticipated increase in visitors from non-English speaking countries.

Conducted by CHTA CEO Frank Comito, who conducted similar preparatory training in The Bahamas in the past, the workshop was titled *“Diversity and Adaptability: Tapping Into the Growing Global Tourism Market”*. Participants were provided with an overview of the changing global tourism marketplace, with emphasis on the growth and interests of the Latin American traveler. Attendees discussed the opportunities presented to Antigua to diversify its market appeal, and the cultural and communications needs of the Latin American traveler. Best and worst practice lessons were shared, and factors were identified which improve the ability to generate high levels of Latin American guest satisfaction and likelihood to recommend. Attendees were tasked with identifying personal professional strategies they can undertake to grow and diversify the Latin American market.

### **CHTA Members Participate in 2019 Webinar Series**

Several hundred CHTA members took advantage of CHTA webinars offered in 2019, which included:

- Travel Without Plastics (Travel Without Plastic) – March 27
- How to Access Exclusive CHTA Marketing Services & Tools (7 Pillars) - April 17
- Opening the Cookie Jar (Rainmaker) - July 24

- Maximizing the Guest Experience Through Social Media (BCV) - August 7
- Hotel Trends in the Caribbean (STR and CHTA) – September 25
- Top Myths About Short-Term Rentals and How They’re Affecting Your Market (TravelClick) – October 16
- Maximize ROI on Destination Marketing Spend (Arrivalist and CHTA) – November 13
- Special invitation by the Inter-American Development Bank’s Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility (CCPF), the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) – December 4
- Travel Trends-Hotels Performance & Consumer Travel Insights (STR) – December 11

## Caribbean Tourism Job Bank Continues to Grow



Established by CHTA in late 2017 to assist tourism employees displaced by hurricanes Irma and Maria with finding temporary employment while freshening their skills, the Job Bank continued to grow in usage by both employers and job seekers throughout the region. This fall CHTA added another outreach component to the Bank, adding a feature and reaching out to support tourism-related employees displaced by hurricane Dorian in Grand Bahama and Abaco. Following is an overview of the usage for the online tool between September 2019 and early January 2020:

JOB BOARD STATS 2019	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Job Exposure	29,323	52,199	27,842	17,646	8,790
Job Views*	1,638	2,689	3,090	2,572	1,785
Resume Views	-	-	-	-	-
Apply Now Button Clicks	164	167	49	51	22
<b>REGISTRATIONS</b>					
Job Seeker Signups	53	78	24	21	5
Resume Postings	15	57	15	10	5
Job Agents Sent	1,229	1,846	1,199	1,233	494
Employer Signups	7	10	2	3	-
Job Postings	33	24	15	11	5

## Recognizing Excellence

### John Bell Receives Distinguished Caribbean Icon of Hospitality

Veteran tourism executive John Bell received the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association's Icon of Hospitality Award at the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF). The Trinidad-based Bell, CHTA's first executive director, was the guiding force of the CHTA (formerly CHA) for 29 years. His framing of the key role of tourism in the economies of the Caribbean elevated the organization from its status as a traditional trade association to being the premier tourism organization for the Caribbean's private sector.



The Icon of Hospitality Award was established in 2017 and is CHTA's highest honor created to celebrate the careers and lives of extraordinary leaders whose work in Caribbean hospitality has stood the test of time and left its mark on CHTA and the region. The association's Hospitality Icon award honors legendary professionals who have not only achieved phenomenal business success but have also mentored and molded those aiming for excellence in the region's leading industry.

CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass stated: "Like so many others, John's vision, enthusiasm and knowledge guided and inspired me to want to be part of this dynamic industry. Reflecting upon his many contributions and achievements, I could think of no more fitting person to recognize."

Bell joins company with the first distinguished recipient, Professor Heinz Simonitsch of Jamaica's famed Half Moon resort.

### **2019 Hotelier of The Year – Sunil Chatrani**

Sunil Chatrani, who served as Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Elegant Hotels Group,



was recognized as the Caribbean's 2019 Hotelier of the Year. The Guyanese-born, Barbados-based hotelier received the top honor at the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association's (CHTA) 37th annual Caribbean Travel Marketplace in Montego Bay.

Chatrani worked in hotel operations for more than 20 years, most recently presiding over Elegant's operations of seven hotels. He also served as Chairman of the Barbados Hotel and

Tourism Association and presently is Chairman of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI) and the Barbados Tourism Product Authority (BTPA).

"It is very overwhelming. The truth is all of us in the industry work very hard on a daily basis and so many other hoteliers are deserving of this," said an elated Chatrani, who thanked the team at Elegant Hotels and his family for their support. CHTA President and Barbados colleague Patricia Affonso-Dass stated: "Sunil is a true Caribbean success story. His professional accomplishments have been outstanding, and his commitment to staff and community development is nothing short of exemplary."

### **2019 Hotel Association Executive of the Year – St. Maarten’s Wyb Meijer**

Wyb Meijer, Executive Director of the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA), was named the 2019 Caribbean Association Executive of the Year by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) and the Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives (CSHAE) during the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) at the Hyatt Regency Miami last June.

Meijer, who was recognized as a professional who excels in association operations, destination marketing and community affairs, helped properties and association members recover from the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma in 2017, positioning the trade association as a key thought leader. Along with the association, he provided detailed briefs to World Bank officials and local government, and he continues to generate new ideas and initiatives for the industry, and for the improvement of the local community and region.



*Wyb Meijer accepts award from CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass and Stacy Cox, President of the Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives.*

## Caribbean Employee of the Year – Aruba Renaissance Resort & Casino’s Berlinda Engelhardt

Berlinda Engelhardt from the Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino earned the Caribbean Employee of the Year title. Joining the Renaissance team in 2007 as a casino host, Engelhardt became a hotel concierge hostess within one year, before becoming lead guest experience supervisor, the position she has held for the past 18 months. Hailed for her impeccable guest service skills and for creating an inclusive environment, Engelhardt volunteers at Hands 4 Addicts, a local organization which helps provide grooming and hygiene care for drug addicts.



## Caribbean Supervisor of The Year – El Conquistador’s Luis de Jesus



The Caribbean Supervisor of the Year distinction, honoring private sector hospitality employees who display excellence in leadership and management, went to Luis de Jesus, Security Supervisor at El Conquistador, the Waldorf Astoria Resort in Puerto Rico. De Jesus, who currently oversees 25 employees, previously served as an engineering supervisor. He was cited for his team spirit, reliability, and willingness to act as a resort ambassador, across several departments.

"These Caribbean professionals are incredible ambassadors of Caribbean tourism, exemplifying the spirit of excellence that is required for us to remain competitive in our industry," said Patricia Affonso-Dass, CHTA's president, as she congratulated this year's recipients and thanked industry stakeholders at all levels for their daily commitment to strengthening the Caribbean guest experience. "Let us ensure that we continue to applaud the men and women who shine their light every day, sharing with the world what wonderful Caribbean hospitality is all about," she stated.

## CHIEF Awards Recognize Outstanding Company Efforts



*Paul Collymore of The Landings Resort & Spa in St. Lucia is congratulated by (from left) CHTA's Frank Comito, Patricia Affonso-Dass and Bill Clegg.*

Leading tourism stakeholders from the Bahamas and St. Lucia took top honors at the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association's (CHTA) annual Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) Awards Celebration last June at the Hyatt Regency Miami.

Hotels, attractions and tourism stakeholder organizations from throughout the Caribbean were evaluated in four categories: Business Operations, Environmental Sustainability, Sales and Marketing, and Social Responsibility.

In the Business Operations category, The Landings Resort & Spa captured first place, as judges were impressed with its outstanding success in turning around the resort's fiscal performance.

In the Environmental Sustainability category, Small Hope Bay Lodge in Andros placed first. The Bahamian property launched a major re-engineering and upgrade initiative focused on solar power, as part of its refurbishments following the 2016 hurricane season.

Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort in Aruba was honored with the Environmental Sustainability "Hall of Fame" award for ongoing leadership and excellence in this category.



*(From left) CHTA's Frank Comito and Patricia Affonso-Dass, Dean and Barbara Spychalla of Valentines Resort & Marina, and Bill Clegg of CHTA.*

Valentines Resort & Marina on Harbour Island in the Bahamas took the top spot in the Sales and Marketing award category. Through new social media and email marketing initiatives, the property saw significant increases in room revenue.

In the category of Social Responsibility, Sandals Resorts International took first place for its efforts in Jamaica. Last year, the Sandals Foundation launched its Whitehouse and Bluefields Solid Waste Reduction Project with funding from the United Nations Environment Program. This project seeks to educate and provide residents on Jamaica's South Coast with a structure for solid waste management through effective waste separation.



*(From left) CHTA's Frank Comito and Patricia Affonso-Dass; Liz Kaiser of The Sandals Foundation, Veronica Vilaro of Sandals Resorts, and CHTA's Bill Clegg.*

## CHTA Cautions Against Eliminating Investment Incentives for New and Upgraded Hotels



Citing the high cost of developing and operating hotels in the region and the comparatively lower profit margins to operations elsewhere around the world, CHTA's CEO Frank Comito reinforced the importance of Government incentives to stimulate tourism investments at the Inter-American Monetary Fund's Caribbean Forum held in collaborations with the Government of Barbados and the Caribbean Development Bank in Barbados on November 6, 2019. Comito's comments were made during a panel session on Improving Tax Policy in the Caribbean. Participants included Caribbean Heads of Government and their equivalent Ministries of Finance.

Comito used the occasion to reinforce the broader socio-economic impact of tourism on employment, business activity, and tax revenue and pointed to the high cost of hotel operations in the Caribbean, exacerbated by tourism's growing competitiveness to attract tourism-related investments. Rather than look to reduce or eliminate tax incentives as some in the IMF have advised, he urged greater collaboration between investors and local governments to identify how investments can help to further improve the destination's tourism product and competitiveness. Areas for collaboration he cited included airlift development, joint marketing, environmental safeguards, and investments in education and training.

Comito unveiled data showing the low gross operating profit for a brand operation throughout the Caribbean versus that of similar sized operations and accounting systems in the United States. The gross operating profit for U.S. operations was 45.1% versus 28.7%, representing a 57.1% difference. He further cited the global environment to attract tourism-related investments with incentives, with many jurisdictions in the U.S. and throughout the world offering inducements. The IMF representative on the forum panel acknowledged this indicating that within the IMF 'two schools of thought' have emerged regarding incentives.

## CHTA Continues to Advocate for Taxing, Regulating, and Engaging the Sharing Economy Accommodations Sector

- *Caribbean Presented with Over \$175 Million in Tax Collections Opportunity*
- *Lack of Regulations Could Damage Industry and Destination Reputations*
- *Greater Engagement Would Benefit All Parties*



CHTA continued to push for regularizing the sector which now has over 80,000 host properties throughout the Caribbean. A growing number of Caribbean destinations are now taxing vacation home rentals, with a handful having put in place regulations. CHTA released its latest findings and recommendations during a recent webinar where it joined the UN World Tourism Organization, the Organization of American States and AirBnb representatives directed at senior level government tourism representatives in Latin America and the Caribbean. The purpose was to provide an overview and update on the growing sector and share how other parts of the world are working to both capitalize and regularize it. The UNWTO announced at the webinar the release of its

report titled: *New Business Models in the Accommodation Industry: Benchmarking of Rules and Regulations in the Short-term Rental Market*. It's a first comprehensive benchmark of rules and regulations on short-term home rentals from best practice destinations around the world. For a summary of the report contact CHTA. The full report can be purchased by visiting: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284421084>.

## **Zika Threat Diminished But Some Government Websites Still Urge Travel Caution**



While Caribbean Government Health Authorities have reported no new cases of regionally sourced Zika, prompting at the request of the Caribbean Public Health Agency the World Health Organization and US CDC to reclassify threat levels, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Public Health England are still indicating a higher risk level for travel to most Caribbean destinations than we believe is warranted. CHTA has written to

CARPHA expressing concerns and reinforcing facts and measures in place to reduce the risk levels substantiated by data. CARPHA has followed up with the UK and Canadian Governments.

## **Booking.com Modifies Commission Arrangement, Tips and Grats Part Remains Unresolved**



Following up on concerns expressed by members regarding Booking.com's new policy announced last May whereby commissions would be applied to all fees – i.e., energy surcharges, levies, enhancement funds, gratuities, etc. CHTA voiced concerns and requested clarity to the mega online agency. CHTA had been advised that taxes would be exempt and continued to advocate for taking other fees out of the mix.

At its June Board meeting, members asked that a survey be conducted by CHTA to gauge the levels of concern, impact, and approaches hotels considered given the policy. This was undertaken and the results shared with members, the industry and Booking.com, again reiterating concerns, in particular for enhancement funds, promotional funds, and on tips and gratuities being subject to commission.

CHTA reiterated these concerns in writing and communications with Booking.com, which this summer agreed that enhancement funds and other collective promotional funds would not be subject to commission, and that further consideration was being given to addressing tips and gratuities. Booking.com indicated it was still reviewing the matter. Reports to CHTA from members seem to indicate the matter of commissions on tips and gratuities is being considered by Booking.com on a case by case basis.

## Marketing the Region

### **Jamaica Shines as 2019 Caribbean Travel Marketplace Host**

An unusual day-long pounding rain deluging Montego Bay during the opening day and evening of Marketplace did not dampen the spirit of attendees as they experienced one of the most successful events in recent years. Over 60 new buyers, half from China and India which have the world's fastest growing travel class, joined over 1,000 delegates for several days of intense meetings aimed at showcasing and selling the Caribbean. There was no denying the 'sense of place' as Jamaica went all out to showcase their unique culture and range of tourism offerings on the selling floor and at their opening and closing parties. In particular, destinations on the rebound from the 2017 hurricanes reported strong interest in booking travel to their recently or soon to be refurbished properties. Thank you to Jamaica for being such a wonderful host!



### **Study Underscores Importance and Opportunity for Caribbean Branding Strategy**

- *Impact of Hurricanes and Crisis Situations in One Part of the Region on the Entire Region Underscore Brand's Strength and Vulnerability*



In 2018 CHTA and CTO formed the Caribbean Coalition for Tourism (CCT), a working group created to steer the implementation of the *Rhythm Never Stops* public relations and social/digital marketing campaign and to guide the development and implementation of a Caribbean brand platform. The \$400,000 jointly funded public-private sector campaign was well received in the marketplace, and was one of several factors which helped set the stage for the region's success in 2018.

As a result of stakeholder discussions brokered by the Clinton Foundation's Caribbean Hurricane Recovery Initiative in 2018, support secured from the Expedia Cares Foundation to work with the CHTA and CTO CCT working group. Expedia Cares recommended they work with a noted brand development company, the Kindustry Group, to develop the strategy. Planning meetings were held to map an approach for engaging public and private stakeholders in developing a sustainable new overarching Caribbean brand entity to market and protect the Caribbean brand.



This resulted in consultation meetings being held in Jamaica and Miami to secure feedback on brand strengths and messaging. Over 100 public and private sector representatives provided feedback. Kindustry officials also conducted a series of in-depth individual interviews. The CCT's collaboration was interrupted in mid-2019 with the departure of CTO's Secretary General and a realignment of priorities by CTO's leadership to address their transitional matters. CHTA then facilitated final interviews and discussions with Kindustry in the fall of 2019.

Kindustry has released a comprehensive report with its finding and recommendations, describing the opportunities with the Caribbean brand, its strategies, and reinforcing the case for an organized, funded effort to protect and promote the Caribbean. Discussions on next steps will be held during CHTA's January 2020 meetings.

## **Caribbean Travel and Life Returns Fall 2020**

- *Showcasing the Entire Caribbean*
- *Exclusive Opportunity for CHTA Members*

CHTA and Bonnier Corporation, one of the world's largest special interest publishing groups, have teamed up to produce a special print and digital edition of Caribbean Travel and Life this fall. Utilizing its



extensive distribution channel of newsstands, online and mail subscriber lists to their various related publications, and travel specialists, the publication will feature each of the region's 33 destinations and provide ample editorial and ad exposure for the industry. CHTA members will receive a 10% discount on promotion offers. The special publication aims to dispel notions by the travelling public about the region, its geographic expanse and range of offerings. This aims to counter the negative contagion

effect which often occurs when one part of the region faces a crisis which many travelers perceive to be affecting the entire Caribbean. The CHTA/Caribbean Travel and Life partnership will officially launch at Marketplace 2020 in The Bahamas.

### **Caribbean Tourism Stakeholders Supported Travelers Impacted by Thomas Cook Dissolution; Shored Up Anticipated Shortfall**

Expressing concern for the thousands of travelers, employees and businesses impacted by the closure of British travel group Thomas Cook, CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass commended the region's and global tourism industry stakeholders for moving swiftly to support impacted travelers. The organization also thanked industry partners for proactive measures to identify alternative opportunities for travelers who were originally planning to travel to the region through Thomas Cook last fall and this winter. The world's oldest travel agency, Thomas Cook, announced last fall it was forced to dissolve due to mounting financial losses. This created an immediate scramble by the region's tourism stakeholders.

The Caribbean was expecting over 400,000 travelers from the UK and Europe this winter through Thomas Cook, representing a significant portion of the region's 30 million annual overnight visitors. In the weeks following the closure, the German government agreed to shore up Condor Airlines (which is part of the Thomas Cook group) by approving a €380 million six-month bridge loan, which would restore over 200,000 airline seats to the Caribbean. Barbados and other destinations impacted by the closure also were able to quickly mobilize to reroute many of the impacted travelers and shore up airlift from other carriers.

While many of the travelers caught in the Thomas Cook dissolution were protected for some of their expenses through ATOL (Air Travel Organisers' Licensing) - established by the British Government to protect most air package holidays sold by UK-based tour operators - private travel insurance and credit card settlements, the CHTA president lamented that these services do not cover all expenses or the inconveniences caused when plans are disrupted. She pointed to the importance of travelers' considering insurance protection for unforeseen circumstances. CHTA partners with Trip Mate which gives its member hotels the option of making travel insurance available to consumers at affordable rates.

The Barbados-based hotelier underscored the seriousness of the loss to the industry but also pointed to the achievements of the world's oldest travel agency: "In these sad days, our hearts go out to those who will have suffered from the collapse but at the same time, I would like to recognize how Thomas Cook, for almost 200 years, managed to open up the world to millions of people. One could argue that the Caribbean's success as one of the world's most desired vacation destinations was made possible because of the business model which they developed years ago."

## **Members Offered New Tool to Connect with Travel Agents, Profile Company**

Travel Pro Mobile and TA Connect have teamed up with CHTA to provide members with a new opportunity to showcase their property on their Caribbean platform and connect with a growing number of travel agents with interest in selling the Caribbean. There was a soft launch of the program in 2019, with an all relaunch set for Caribbean Travel Marketplace in The Bahamas in January 2020. To learn more about this new opportunity go to: <https://vimeo.com/331282690> and <https://truecaribbeanpartner.com/>.

## **Communications and Public Relations**

### **CHTA Steps Up Trade and Consumer Outreach When Crisis Strikes**

Building upon its ongoing outreach to the trade and consumer media and thru social channels around the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017, CHTA kicked into gear its communications outreach during 2019 in the aftermath of hurricane Dorian which affected the northern Bahamas, high levels of sargassum affecting parts of the western Caribbean, and untimely deaths by several visitors to the Dominican Republic.

CHTA remained in close contact with those destinations directly affected, getting facts and time sensitive information, which was shared with the media along with statements by CHTA. The outreach included interviews and releases with many of the industry's travel media as well as leading consumer media.

### **Overview of CHTA 2019 Media Exposure**

Through its public relations and communications agency Marketplace Excellence, CHTA used both traditional and social media to share news and information to its varied constituents in 2019. Highlights of these activities include: 1,182,027,201 impressions and 3,390 placements, which reached more than 1 billion individuals. Public relations activity generated ad and PR values of US\$405.6 million and more than US\$1.2 billion, respectively.

## **A More Sustainable, Resilient Industry**

### **CHTA and The Nature Conservancy Forge Ties**

*Agreement Inked to Protect the Environment and Promote Tourism Sustainability*

CHTA has teamed up with one of the world's leading environmental organizations, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), to help create a more resilient Caribbean where tourism thrives while communities' benefit and natural resources are used sustainably.

"It's a perfect match which brings together CHTA's private sector members and The Nature Conservancy's enormous science-based capacity for protecting the lands and waters on which all life and our industry depends," said CHTA's CEO and Director General Frank Comito, who together with Marci Eggers, The Nature Conservancy's Deputy Director of the Caribbean Division, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) this summer.

TNC, a nonprofit organization, is currently active in 17 Caribbean countries and territories, where it is committed to protecting the ocean and coasts, safeguarding against the impacts of climate change, and restoring and conserving coral reefs.



*From left: CHTA First Vice President Karen Whitt; CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass; The Nature Conservancy's Caribbean Deputy Director Marci Eggers; CHTA's Immediate Past President Karolin Troubetzkoy; and CHTA CEO and Director General Frank Comito.*

The MOU aims to broaden awareness of the value of coastal and marine resources and to promote education, both for tourists and the tourism industry, on the importance of protecting and restoring these resources for the well-being of future generations in the Caribbean. The agreement is a platform joining the collective power of the two organizations and their networks to help restore and protect the Caribbean's natural resources, upon which the tourism industry and communities in the region depend.

Eggers asserted: "It is in the best interests of both our organizations to work together to educate the broadest constituency on the value of preserving the beautiful coastlines, reefs, and waters of the Caribbean for future generations. The agreement with CHTA advances these efforts through collaboration, communication and activity implementation."

The organizations are in the process of developing action plans together and leverage staff, budgets and funding to implement them. The MOU will remain in force until June 30, 2021.

## **IDB and GTRCMC Hold Regional Policy Dialogue on Tourism and Disaster Risk Management: CHTA Leads Session on ‘Experiences, Capacity Building, and Readiness’**

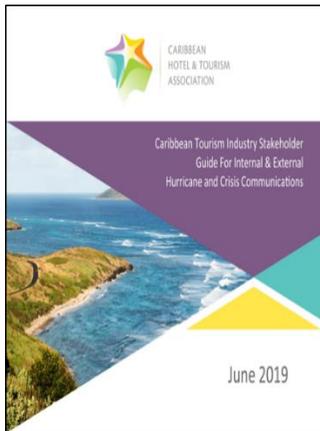


As part of a review process to assess the industry’s challenges in preparing for and responding to crisis, the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) teamed up with the Jamaica-based Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) for two-days of review and recommendations with over 100 attendees from throughout the region. CEO Frank Comito, drawing upon CHTA’s experience with crisis management and communications and over ten years as the private sector tourism lead in The Bahamas on crisis management, offered recommendations to help mitigate a crisis’ impact and manage risks. These included:

- Ensuring Broad Representative Stakeholder Engagement and Commitment in the Planning Process and on a Crisis Management Team
- Crisis Management and Communications Plan Should be Planned, Coordinated, Funded and Managed
- Shoring up local/regional institutional capacity to facilitate crisis management and communications with designated staff and volunteer support
- Ensuring a Comprehensive Database and Technology Support infrastructure with redundancies which is foundational to target and extend reach.... before, during, and after a crisis situation
- Having Systems in Place to Quickly Assess Damages and Situations based upon facts.
- Developing Sound Relationships with the media.
- Providing Ongoing messaging to stakeholders and media which is timely, empathetic, balanced, not defensive, transparent
- Carefully Determining Who is Your industry’s Spokesperson or Messenger(s). They should be well-coached and convey a sense of calm and trust
- Utilizing Multiple Communications Mediums with added focus on social and digital - Local Print, Electronic, Travel Trade, Social and Digital Media; Consumer Media, Electronic Media; Influencers; Blogs
- Being nimble and adaptable.

The IDB is reviewing the information and recommendations coming out of the forum to assist in making decisions regarding how best to support the industry going forward.

## CHTA Crisis Communications Guide Updated and Expanded



Created in 2018 in collaboration with CHTA's PR partner Marketplace Excellence to provide quick, the guide provides updated information in support of local readiness and recovery at the local (33 destinations) and regional levels before, during and after a potential disaster. The 2018 guide was based on the experience of the 2017 hurricane season. Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which devastated several Caribbean destinations. It caught many by surprise and highlighted the shortfalls in general preparedness across the region for such a natural disaster.

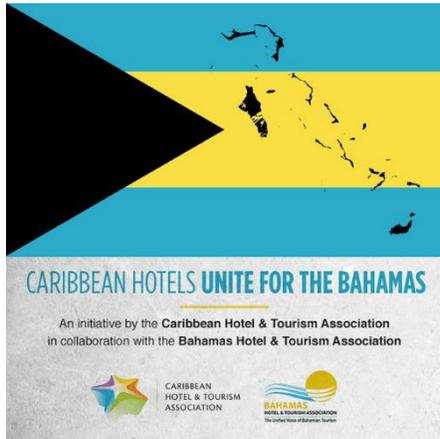
New to this year's guide is the inclusion of a section on social media, since among the tools of communication, responsible use of social media can mitigate the effects of a crisis by positively influencing the actions of residents, travelers and tourism stakeholders. Communication templates, talking points and press release guidelines have also been included.

This guide contains an update of many important points of contact which may be used in the event of an emergency. New contacts include Cartagena, Colombia as well as regional shipping and cargo contacts. The United Nations Regional Coordinators have also been included as key partners to be in contact with during disaster response and recovery. As changes occur, we ask to be notified via email at [update@marketplaceexcellence.com](mailto:update@marketplaceexcellence.com). CHTA commits to updating this guide annually and thanks the support of the National Hotel and Tourism Associations who assist in reviewing and updating the information.

## CHTA Partners with Tropical Shipping on Disaster Management Workshops

For many years CHTA has supported annual workshops conducted by Tropical Shipping which rotate to new destinations each year, working with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and the local agency, along with the local hotel and tourism association. This year's workshops were held in April in Grand Bahama and Abaco, which unfortunately experienced unprecedented destruction from Hurricane Dorian five months later. While a disaster of that size is difficult to prepare for, one cannot help but wonder the extent to which their readiness was able to mitigate the impact. CHTA also circulated its readiness information to members prior to the start of the 2019 hurricane season.

## CHTA Members and Industry Partners Help Drive Support for Abaco, Grand Bahama



The Caribbean tourism industry and its many friends around the world responded generously to the call for support for the storm ravaged islands of the northwestern Bahamas - The Abacos and Grand Bahama. CHTA and the CHTA Education Foundation appealed to its membership, travel industry partners, national hotel and tourism associations and all Caribbean tourism interests to support the islands of the northwestern Bahamas following the devastation wrought by Category 5 Hurricane Dorian. The response was overwhelming, with Caribbean residents and friends of the Caribbean in the region and abroad providing contributions of cash and supplies.

CHTA reminded the Caribbean and global tourism interests, as well as friends of The Bahamas and the Caribbean, of the tremendous outpouring of support the tourism industry has provided during times of need. This support was instrumental in delivering critical emergency relief to storm damaged Caribbean destinations in the past, including The Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, St. Maarten, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Our people respond with great generosity both to the immediate and long-term recovery needs. Caribbean people are extremely resilient but need help to bounce back as quickly as possible," states CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass.

Through online auctions made possible by generous room donations from over 100 member hotels, an online stay raffle for Jade Mountain and Anse Chastanet by the Education Foundation, direct fundraising appeals by some hotels and national hotel and tourism associations, nearly \$250,000 was raised to support the long-term recovery needs.

CHTA and the Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association have established a framework for assessing need and disbursing funds. Two initial projects include a special outreach through CHTA's Job Bank to match dislocated tourism employees with available jobs elsewhere in The Bahamas and Caribbean; and a special project by Bahamians, including several impacted by the hurricane, to manufacture the conference bags being used at the 2020 Caribbean Travel Marketplace in Nassau.



## **CARPHA Continues to Build Programs, Support Materials for Hotels to Support Health and Safety**

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), a CHTA partner organization, is now entering a second phase of an IDB supported program to support the health and well-being of visitors and locals. Phase one involved the establishment of Tourism Health Information Systems (THIS) and the Tourism & Health Program (THP), which includes a website for hoteliers and a range of brochures, information, videos and guides to assist hotels with monitoring and reporting health incidents which could affect the health and safety of visitors and employees and reputation of hotels and destinations.



Over 185 hotels are using the web-based system, which to date has helped to identify incidents which were quickly addressed to safeguard the health of the victims and others. CARPHA has also trained over 500 employees on food safety.

As CARPHA moves to Phase II of its tourism-related initiatives, there will be focus on increasing hotel enrollments and usage, recognizing best practices, and putting in place support legislation which strengthens industry reporting. CARPHA has worked closely with CHTA and in the coming months the two organizations will develop a communications plan to further educate and engage the industry in this important undertaking.

To learn more about the THP, its videos, training guides and to register to be part of the THP, visit <http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Tourism-and-Health-Programme>

## **Monitoring Droughts, Climate Conditions, and Sargassum Through CIMH**

The Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) and CHTA have renewed their partnership to help tourism businesses and policymakers identify and prepare for favourable or inclement climate conditions in the Caribbean and source markets, before they occur. CIMH has created periodic bulletins which industry can use to forecast climate changes and recently added sargassum monitoring as well. CIMH bulletins are being shared with members through the CHTA newsletter and can also be used to inform strategic and operational decisions related to the use of environmental resources, marketing, and enhancement of the visitor experience. For more information visit the Regional Climate Centre at: <http://rcc.cimh.edu.bb>.

## CHTA CEO Provides Keynote at GTRCMC 2nd Annual Meeting



CHTA's CEO and Director General Frank Comito was the keynote speaker at the second Tourism Resilience Summit of the Americas held at the UWI Regional Headquarters on, October 9, 2019. He spoke about ways the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) could mitigate the challenges and threats faced by environmental factors and the role stakeholders could play.

## On the Ground: Working with NHTAs and Destinations

### CHTA Welcomes and Supports New Association Executives

A number of destinations experience staff leadership changes in 2019. CHTA congratulated each of them, provided support information about CHTA, CSHAE and the role of an association executive. And in some instances, worked closely with the new executive on specific needs they had and/or issues of concern to their association. Specifically, we welcomed:

#### Association Executive

Patrice Simon  
Ilechia Flowers  
Veroesjka de Windt  
Jay Ehrhart  
Arlene Friday  
Veronique Legris

#### Association

Antigua and Barbuda Hotel and Tourism Association  
Belize Hotel Association  
Bonaire Hotel and Tourism Association  
Cayman Islands Tourism Association  
Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association  
Association des Hoteliers de St. Martin

### Cartagena Tourism Association Joins CHTA as First New Destination in 15 Years

Cartagena, the colonial port city on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, represented by COTELCO Cartagena, joined the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) as its 33rd destination and the first commercial association to join the regional association in more than 15 years.

COTELCO Cartagena, a chapter of Colombia's hotel and tourism association, has 56 affiliated hotels and more than 4,000 hotel rooms, including brands such as GHL Hotels, Hilton, Intercontinental Hotels Group, Karisma Hotels and Resorts, Movich Hotels, Radisson Hotels and Resorts, Sofitel and Hyatt. In Colombia, COTELCO Nacional has 900 affiliate hotels throughout the country with a presence in 23 departments.

We are absolutely delighted that COTELCO Cartagena, which represents the jewel in the crown of Colombia, has joined CHTA with its brilliant fusion of Caribbean and Latin American culture adding

enormously to the rich diversity of our organization. The Caribbean port of Cartagena de Indias was founded in 1533 and its old walled city and fortress, called colonial city, once repelled invaders and pirates. These days, thanks to the efforts of COTELCO, the charming city now welcomes visitors to its tiled roofs, balconies, flower-filled courtyards and lively social life.



*Monica Mass Tinoco, Executive Director of COTELCO Cartagena (left), greets Jamaica's Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett during Caribbean Travel Marketplace in Montego Bay. Also pictured (from left to right) are Frank Comito, CEO of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association; David Noel, President and CEO of Scotiabank Group Jamaica; and CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass.*

## **CHTA Leadership Visits Eleven Destinations in 2019**

Keeping its ear to the ground, providing needs-based support and expertise, property site visits, and engaging in productive dialogue with members and public sector leaders in destinations about issues CHTA is working on to support local efforts were the primary goals of an outreach by CHTA's volunteer and staff leadership to eleven destinations in 2019. Destinations visited included Anguilla, St. Maarten, Antigua, Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Turks and Caicos, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

## Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives (CSHAE) Update



CSHAE President Stacy Cox kicked off the year with a leadership session in Jamaica led by former Barbados NHTA Executive Sue Springer. The group reviewed the Association Operations Manual developed by CHTA and CSHAE in 2006, going over the basics while identifying areas where the manual can be updated. At the session the AEs also identified priority advocacy topics to work on with CHTA, including continuing to work on advancing the taxation and regulation of the sharing economy, and sharing data and information particularly on labor-related matters. The exchange was particularly

helpful for AEs who have recently come on board.

CSHAE revised the selection process with CHTA for the annual Association Executive of the Year. The 2019 award went to Wyb Meijer, Executive Director of the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association and was presented at the opening of CHIEF in June.

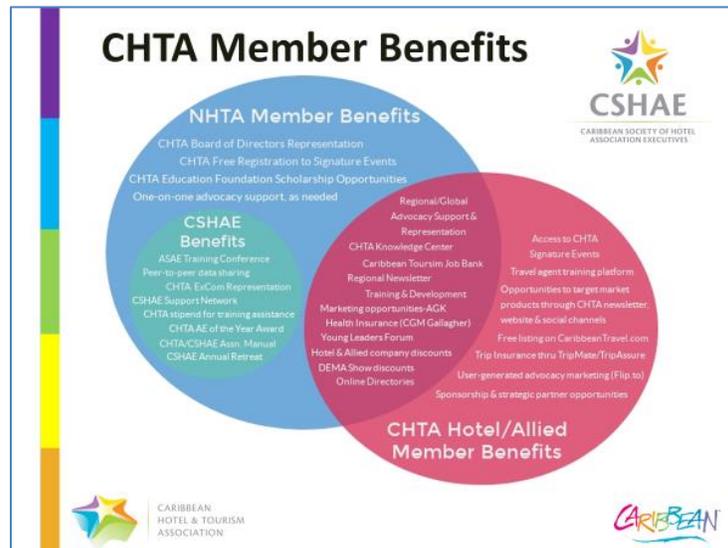
CHTA shared with CSHAE and ultimately all members its new member benefits communications and encouraged them to reshare with their own members who may not be CHTA members to encourage them to take advantage of broader benefits. Relationships were also expanded with STR representatives who have offered incentives to the NHTAs members who are not benefiting from participation in the STR STAR reporting to do so. CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass encouraged each association to designate a CHTA representative who can report and liaison with their local Board and leadership to ensure greater two-way engagement with both CSHAE and CHTA.

Stacy and the Turks & Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association, with support from Karen Whitt, CHTA President Elect and rep for the Hartling Group, hosted AEs to a two-day retreat in October focused on assessing the role of CSHAE and the NHTAs, identifying ways to work better together, and how to better engage with CHTA. CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass and President Elect Karen Whitt joined the AEs for part of the discussions where commitments were made by both the CHTA and CSHAE leaders to actively work to improve the communication and interaction to increase the level of engagement and grow membership. CHTA convened regular update calls with the NHTAs following this, with two held prior to the end of the year.

## Operations and Governance

As CHTA has expanded its scope of work in recent years and addressed several long-standing internal operational challenges, the organization's leadership continued to assess its needs, fiscal and operational challenges and opportunities to realign and expand its resources to be more effective and responsive to member's needs. Key initiatives undertaken in 2019 include:

- ✓ **Expanding Member Benefits** – best illustrated on this graphic:



- ✓ **Improving Communication and Connectivity** – through destination site visits, expanded social media reach, periodic reports to members, events, collaboration with partner organizations like CARPHA, TNC, CREST, CTO, the GTRCM Centre, IDB, OAS, IMF, OECS, the WTTC, and family organizations including the NHTAs and CHTAEF.
- ✓ **Development of an Onboarding Guide for Directors** – providing a one-stop document to orient directors about the organization and its scope of work.
- ✓ **Updating of CHTA Articles of Incorporation** – Following a two-year review, over 80 amendments were made to the Articles, key ones being the restructuring of the Executive Committee and Board, the allowance for electronic voting, and the formation of Councils to expand the engagement of key membership categories – i.e., Chains, Airlines, Allies and Independents.
- ✓ **Establishment of Virtual Committee Meetings** – using Zoom Meetings technology to conduct committee and other meetings. By conducting virtual committee meetings, CHTA is able to better plan for Executive and Board meetings, securing feedback through the committee calls well in advance. More members are also able to participate, and travel costs are reduced by eliminating a day of in-person meetings in January and June.
- ✓ **First Dues Increase in Fifteen Years** – Following a review of dues schedules by similar organizations and consultation over a six-month period with EC and Board members and NHTAs, CHTA adopted a 15 percent increase in dues for hotel members. This took effect with the 2020 billings which went out towards the end of the year.
- ✓ **Reorganization, Creation and Implementation of a Transition Plan** - Following last June’s membership meeting in Miami and internal discussions at the Finance and Executive Committees, the President formed a task force to review with the CEO options for reorganizing the staff structure within CHTA. A primary objective was to assess how additional resources, financial and staffing, could be developed to support the organization’s growing agenda and build upon recent success in

improving member communications and engagement. By August, a new support structure was put in place, underpinned by the creation of a Membership and Partner Development Unit, to be headed by a Director.

As CHTA went through this process, a realignment of staffing occurred as well. Effective August 30, 2019, Matt Cooper, after serving more than four years as the organization's Chief Marketing Officer, left the organization to start his own consultancy business. Matt has been a part of raising CHTA's profile and expanding its program of activities, helping to forge valuable relationships and showcasing the association and the industry throughout the region. We wished him success in his new endeavors, as he continues to play an important role with CHTA and Caribbean tourism.

Unfortunately, CHTA also lost the services of its Membership Development Director Martha Valdivia who assumed a senior level position with one of the world's leading hotel brands. With these changes, the Transition Task Force and CEO worked closely to realign and expand the organization's resources by:

- Eliminating the Chief Marketing position and Creating a Membership and Partner Development Unit to be headed by a Senior Director and include the current member support coordinator Claire Roberts.
- Reassigning Alexis Capellades to the new unit and elevating her position to 'manager' with broadened responsibilities to provide dedicated support on all partnership and sponsorship activities.
- Filling a newly created Member Services Coordinator position to also support events. Angelica Vasallo was hired in October.
- Securing a temporary (four month) consultancy to support the sponsorship renewal and acquisition, focused on Marketplace.
- Undertaking a process to hire a Director of Membership and Partner Development (commenced in November).
- By the end of the first quarter, plans are to also fill a full time Program and Events Development and Support Coordinator position.

During the transition period Frank Comito became the primary point of contact for strategic partnerships and Vanessa Ledesma for membership matters.

## National Hotel and Tourism Associations

The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association is a Federation of Associations encompassing national hotel associations from around the region. The diversity that characterizes the federation of CHTA throughout the Caribbean offers its members the opportunity to benefit from the strengths of its colleagues from other countries and other national hotel associations.

Anguilla Hotel & Tourism Association  
Antigua Hotels & Tourist Association  
Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association  
Bahamas Hotel and Tourism Association  
The Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association  
Belize Hotel Association  
Bermuda Hotel Association

Bonaire Hotel & Tourism Association  
BVI Chamber of Commerce & Hotel Association  
Cayman Islands Tourism Association  
COTELCO – Asociacion Hotelera y Turistica de Colombia, Capitulo de Cartagena  
Curaçao Hospitality & Tourism Association  
Dominica Hotel & Tourism Association  
Asociación Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes de la República Dominicana  
Grenada Hotel & Tourism Association  
Association des Professionels de l’Hôtellerie et du Tourisme de la Guadeloupe  
Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana  
Association Touristique d’ Haïti  
Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association  
Le club des Professionnels du Tourisme en Martinique  
Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association  
Asociación de Hoteles de Cancun y Puerto Morelos  
Association des Hotels et Villas de Saint-Barthélemy  
St. Kitts & Nevis Hotel & Tourism Association  
St. Lucia Hotel & Tourism Association  
St. Maarten Hospitality & Trade Association  
Association des Hôteliars de St. Martin  
St. Vincent & The Grenadines Hotel & Tourism Association  
Suriname Hospitality and Tourism Association  
Trinidad Hotels, Restaurant & Tourism Association  
Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association  
Turks & Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association  
United States Virgin Islands Hotel & Tourism Association

## Special Appreciation to Our 2019 Strategic Partners

CHTA is deeply indebted to its strategic partners and sponsors for their ongoing support and commitment to the association’s mission, values and goals.

### Strategic Partners





### Strategic Educational Partners



### CHTA Leadership

#### 2018-2020 Executive Committee

**President,** Patricia Affonso-Dass, Group General Manager, Ocean Hotels, Barbados

**Immediate Past President,** Karolin Troubetzkoy, Executive Director, Marketing & Operations, Anse Chastanet & Jade Mountain, St. Lucia

**Treasurer,** Jim Hepple, Tourism Analytics, Aruba

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President,** Karen Whitt, The Hartling Group, Turks & Caicos

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President,** Alberto Abreu, Hospitality Director, PUNTACANA Resort & Club, Dominican Republic

**3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President,** Pablo Torres, General Manager, Caribe Hilton, Puerto Rico

**4<sup>th</sup> Vice President,** Gregor Nassief, Managing Director, Fort Young Hotel, Dominica

**5<sup>th</sup> Vice President,** Nicola Madden-Greig, Group Director, The Courtleigh, Pegasus, Knutsford Court, Holiday Inn, Jamaica

**Ex-Officio:** Frank Comito, CHTA CEO and Director General

**Regional Vice Presidents:**

- Bill Clegg, Regional Director, Best Western
  - Federico Moreno-Nickerson, Vice President Development, Apple Leisure Group / AM Resorts
  - Jeremy Jones, Director, Corporate Services, Sandals Resorts International
  - Carlton Russell, Vice President, Operations, The Cove at Atlantis, Bahamas
  - Ewald Biemans, Managing Directors/Owner, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba
- Caribbean Tourism Organization**, Neil Walters, Acting Secretary General and CEO
- Caribbean Society of Hotel Association Executives (CSHAE)**, Stacy Cox, President and CEO, Turks and Caicos Hotel Association
- Strategic Partner Representative**, Neil Kolton, Director, Caribbean & Florida, Resort Sales & Services, Interval International
- Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association Educational Foundation (CHTAEF)**, Karolin Troubetzkoy, Chairperson
- Committee Area Chairs:**
- Advocacy, Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Bedford Baker, Bahamas
- Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism, Co-Chair, Karolin Troubetzkoy, St. Lucia
- Marketing, Karen Whitt, The Hartling Group, Turks and Caicos
- Membership, Bill Clegg, Best Western
- People Development, Paul Collymore, The Landings, St. Lucia



## CHTA Board of Directors

### National Hotel and Tourism Association Directors

Anguilla	Kevin Carty	Anguilla Great House Beach Resort
Antigua and Barbuda	Alex DeBrito	Galley Bay Resort and Spa
Aruba	Tisa LaSorte	Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association
Aruba	Edgar Roelofs	Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa
Aruba	Ewald Biemans	Bucuti & Tara Beach Resorts
Bahamas	Carlton Russell	The Cove
Bahamas	Stuart Bowe	Atlantis Paradise Island Resort
Bahamas	Dean Spychalla	Valentines Resort & Marina
Barbados	Patricia Affonso-Dass	Ocean Group Hotels

Barbados	Stephen Austin	Port St. Charles
Barbados	Rudy Grant	Barbados Hotel & Tourism Association
Belize	Illechia Flowers	Belize Hotel Association
Bermuda	Bushara Bushara	Newstead Belmont Hills
Bermuda	Stephen Todd	Bermuda Hotel Association
Bonaire	Veroesjka de Windt	Bonaire Hotel & Tourism Association
Cayman Islands	Jay Ehrhart	Cayman Islands Tourism Association
Cayman Islands	Marc Langevin	Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman
Curaçao	Maylin Trenidad	Renaissance Curaçao Resort
Curaçao	Robbin Vogels	Avila Beach Hotel
Dominica	Gregor Nassief	Fort Young Hotel
Dominican Republic	Alberto Abreu	Puntacana Resort & Club
Dominican Republic	Andres Marranzini	Asociacion Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes
Dominican Republic	Luis Rodriguez Amiama	Casa de Campo Resort & Villas
Dominican Republic	Joel Santos	Coral Hospitality Corporation
Dominican Republic	Simon Suarez	Puntacana Resort & Club
Grenada	Arlene Friday	Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association
Guadeloupe	Daniel Arnoux	La Creole Beach Hotel & Resort
Guyana	Mitra Ramkumar	Roraima Airways
Haiti	Fred Pierre-Louis	Le Plaza Hotel
Jamaica	Wayne Cummings	Sandals Resorts International
Jamaica	Nicola Madden-Greig	The Courtleigh, Pegasus, Knutsford Court, Holiday Inn
Jamaica	Clifton Reader	Moon Palace Jamaica Grande
Jamaica	Evelyn Smith	Tensing Pen
Jamaica	Carolyn Wright	Rondel Village
Mexico, Cancun	Marissa Setien	Asociacion de Hoteles de Quintana Roo
Puerto Rico	John Dennis-Brull	Acacia Boutique Hotel
Puerto Rico	Clarisa Jimenez	Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association
Puerto Rico	Pablo Torres	Caribe Hilton
Puerto Rico	Miguel Vega	Holiday Inn & Tropical Casino Mayaguez
St. Barthelemy	Vanessa Panza	Association des Hotels et Villas de Saint-Barthelemy
St. Kitts & Nevis	Tawanna Wigley	St. Kitts and Nevis Hotel & Tourism Association
St. Kitts & Nevis	Richard Williams	Richard Williams & Associates
St. Lucia	Karolin Troubetzkoy	Jade Mountain & Anse Chastanet
St. Lucia	Sanovnik Destang	Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa
St. Lucia	Ross Stevenson	Cap Maison
Sint Maarten	Wyb Meijer	St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association
Sint Maarten	Ricardo Perez	Oyster Bay Beach Resort
St. Martin	Patrice Seguin	Le Beach Hotel
St. Martin	Stephen Wright	Grand Case Beach Club
St. Vincent/Grenadines	Fitzroy Glasgow	St. Vincent & the Grenadines Hotel & Tourism Assn
Tobago	Christopher James	The Green Palm Resort Hotel
Trinidad	Brian Frontin	Trinidad Hotels, Restaurant & Tourism Association
Trinidad	Hassel Thom	Cara Suites and Conference Center
Turks & Caicos	Stacy Cox	Turks & Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association
Turks & Caicos	Karen Whitt	The Hartling Group
U.S. Virgin Islands	Richard Doumeng	Bolongo Bay Beach Resort
U.S. Virgin Islands	Joel Kling	Emerald Beach Resort

U.S. Virgin Islands

Vicki Locke

The Buccaneer

Allied and Partner Directors

Neil Kolton	Interval International
Warren Binder	Creative Travel Consultants
Bill Clegg	Best Western International, Inc
Robert Clements	American Resort Development Association (ARDA)
Emile Gourieux	STR
Ana Torres de Navarra	The New York Times
James (Jim) Hepple	Tourism Analytics
Javier Morales	Social Caddie
Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace	Bedford Baker
Peter Vittori	American Airlines, Inc.
Stacy Cox	Turks & Caicos Hotel & Tourism Association
Gilda Gumbs-Samuel	Anguilla Hotel & Tourism Association
Lisa Hamilton	U.S. Virgin Islands Hotel & Tourism Association
Neil Walters	Caribbean Tourism Organization
Hon. Dominic Fedee	Caribbean Tourism Organization
Carol Young	Caribbean Association of Industry & Commerce
Annaleen Lord	International Air Transport Association
David Jessop	Caribbean Council
Paul Collymore	The Landings Resort & Spa, St. Lucia

Past President Directors

Enrique de Marchena	DMK Abogados Central
Richard Doumeng	Bolongo Bay Beach Resort
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Sir Royston O. Hopkin KCMG	Spice Island Beach Resort
John Jefferis	Coco Reef
Emil Lee	Princess Heights
Edward Malone	Aruba Tourism Authority
George Myers	The Myers Group
Peter Odle	Mango Bay Hotel
Berthia Parle, MBE	Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa
Chris Sharpless	
Prof. Heinz Simonitsch, CD	Grandhotel Lienz
Earl Bernard Smith	
Simon Suarez	Puntacana Resort & Club
Ralph Taylor	The Soco Hotel
Anders Wiberg	Cable Beach Manor Apts.
Michael Williams	The Loren

Honorary Directors

John Bell  
Jag Mehta  
Alec Sanguinetti, CD

## CHTA In-House Team



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## About CHTA

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the Caribbean's leading association representing the interests of national hotel and tourism associations. For more than 55 years, CHTA has been the backbone of the Caribbean hospitality industry. Working with some 1,000 hotel and allied members, and 33 National Hotel Associations, CHTA is shaping the Caribbean's future and helping members to grow their businesses. Whether helping to navigate critical issues in sales and marketing, sustainability, legislative issues, emerging technologies, climate change, data and intelligence or, looking for avenues and ideas to better market and manage businesses, CHTA is helping members on issues which matter most.

## Contact CHTA

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