



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM INVESTMENT CONFERENCE

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Caribbean Tourism's Official Investment Conference
PRESENTED BY CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION AND CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANIZATION

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OFFICIAL CARIBBEAN HOTEL & TOURISM INVESTMENT CONFERENCE ATTRACTS 349 ATTENDEES; UP 18% FROM 2009

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO (May 12, 2010) – The Official Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Investment Conference (CHTIC 2010) welcomed “a very gratifying attendance of 349 delegates” – a 18% increase over the 296 attendees in 2009, according to Alec Sanguinetti, Director General and CEO of the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA). The event was highlighted by a keynote address from Robert Crandall, former Chairman and CEO of AMR Corporation and American Airlines in which he called for a new regional marketing campaign and the easing of on-island taxation of the hospitality and tourism sector.

During CHTIC 2010 in Puerto Rico, CHTA announced the dates for the 15th Annual Official Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Investment Conference (CHTIC 2011), which will be held from May 10-12 in one of three Caribbean nations currently bidding to host the event. The annual conference draws hoteliers, developers, tourist office officials, lenders and others interested in Caribbean tourism.



Enrique De Marchena Kaluche, president of CHTA (pictured above), welcomed delegates on behalf of CHTA, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), Puerto Rico

Convention Bureau (PRCB), Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association (PRHTA) and Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC), and then introduced a specially prepared video from former U.S. President Bill Clinton about the Haiti initiatives that he and former U.S. President George W. Bush are spearheading.

President Clinton urged conference delegates to continue with their efforts to further develop Caribbean tourism and noted that he strongly believes that tourism will help Haiti recover from the recent devastation from January's earthquake.



Caption: Delegates at CHTIC 2010 were treated to a special video address by former U.S. President Bill Clinton

De Marchena agreed with President Clinton, noting that “Haiti tourism should once again become a leading industry for the country. We Caribbean people cannot forget Haiti and at every opportunity we need to pitch the Haiti agenda and support President Clinton’s initiatives.”

Puerto Rico Governor, the Honorable Luis Fortuño (pictured right), who is also the former head of the PRTC, expressed his strong support for tourism as the leading generator of funds for the fragile economies of the Caribbean nations.



Puerto Rico has been making a huge effort with marketing, promotions and investments, as witnessed by this state-of-the-art Convention Center which has enabled CHTA to have a variety of very successful conferences over the past few years.

Under Governor Fortuño, Puerto Rico is a perfect example of a Caribbean nation that understands the need for investment partners to raise the bar on the infrastructure and hospitality industry product to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

De Marchena then went on to look at the current recovery in light of growing opportunities in the region, saying, “Unfortunately, the 2010 recovery we had all hoped for since the onset of the recession seems to be taking its time.

“While RevPAR and room rates are up as compared to 2009 levels, they are still down overall from 2008. The good news is that we can now safely say that from this point on, the tourism industry appears to be stabilizing.

“2009 was one of the worst years our tourism industry has ever experienced. According to the U.S. Travel Association, travel spending was down 9% from 2008.

“Smith Travel Research estimates that occupancy fell to 55% in 2009, while RevPAR fell by almost 17% – a record-setting decline. Luxury properties took the hardest hit with a nearly 25% drop in RevPAR.

“The business market all but disappeared in 2009 as companies cut travel expenses in reaction to their diminishing revenues. Advances in teleconferencing technologies made it easy to eliminate many of the meetings from which the tourism sector would have benefited.

“The latest STR data for the Caribbean shows that while RevPar is up 9.6% for 2010 versus 2009 levels, year to date through February, in comparison to February 2008 levels, RevPar is actually down 16.7%.

“Similarly, ADR rose 10.5% in February 2010 compared to February 2009, however, when looked at from the perspective of February 2008, ADR is essentially down 8.7%. From February 2008 to February 2010, occupancy declined 8.9% for the Caribbean hospitality sector overall.

“I think we can all agree that things are gradually getting better, but its not happening quickly enough. And the tourism industry – both in the Caribbean and globally – will continue to struggle a little longer than many experts originally projected.

“Now is the time to start strategizing and rebuilding. Now is the best time for hoteliers, tourism officials and other entities to meet with investors and developers to create a game plan for the future.

“Now is the time to invest in tourism, not when occupancy is high and you can’t afford to close down wings of your property for expansion and renovation. Now is the time to look at the investment opportunities as it is crucial that we prepare for the return of the millions of visitors that traditionally vacationed in our nations.

“We must improve our infrastructures and our hotel product so that we will be able to compete with the global tourism industry as the economy improves and travelers have the money to vacation once again.

“We must also pay close attention to our human resource development and the education of both our current employees and the youth of our nations. The sustainability of our tourism in the Caribbean is closely tied to the development of our human resources.

“The final piece of the success puzzle is the marketing of the product from the individual hotels, to the countries and to the region. It is a monumental task for a small hotel in the Caribbean to promote itself to the world. Promotion of the Caribbean as a region is paramount to what we must first achieve. We need to ensure that the potential visitors know and appreciate that the Caribbean is the leading warm weather destination in the world.

“Once that is done, our diverse individual destinations need to find their niche and stand out from our small crowd of islands and nations in the region.

“And finally, it is then up to the individual hotels to make sure that they are seen as the best product for their particular vacationers so that they get their fair share of the tourism pie.”

De Marchena concluded with a challenge to the delegates consisting of hoteliers, tourism ministers and directors, developers and lenders with: “We need to immediately retool and rebuild our tourism industry in the Caribbean. We need to raise the quality levels of our infrastructure and our hospitality industry product.

“We need to turn the red tape into a red carpet and have the public and private sectors work together to succeed as we have done before. We need to do this now, while we have the opportunity to make a difference.”

For an expanded report on the success of CHTIC 2010, as well as updated information on CHTIC 2011, CHTA members are encouraged to monitor www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.

Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association

The Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) facilitates the full potential of the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry by serving members' needs and building partnerships in a socially responsible and sustainable manner. CHTA was founded in 1962; it is the voice of the Caribbean hospitality industry for the development of the region in the highly competitive and sophisticated environment of international tourism. Today, tourism is widely recognized as a pivotal industry in the economy of the region – and CHTA functions as the common denominator for this industry in a region of diverse nationalities, languages and styles, identifying mutual problems and marshalling the resources of the active and allied members to devise solutions. CHTA represents all facets of the hospitality industry with more than 725 member hotels and 525 allied members.

For more information, visit <http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com>.

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