

2017

YEAR IN REVIEW



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

CARIBBEAN™



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



2017 has been quite a challenging year and as we approach the start of 2018, some of our members are still recovering from the effects of historic hurricanes.

The hurricanes of this year devastated lives, careers and livelihoods. For several hotel and tourism sectors it has been catastrophic. Even those properties which were relatively unscathed by the storms were adversely affected, as consumer misconceptions about the extent of the damage led to cancellations and deep declines in reservations across the region.

Returning to some semblance of normalcy has been a struggle. To help our members in need, CHTA set up the Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund, in collaboration with Tourism Cares, to encourage tourism sector stakeholders, our supporters and our allies, to pool resources to help lift the vulnerable and devastated areas of the Caribbean back onto their feet.

Our fund focuses on destinations directly affected by the hurricanes, complementing recovery and empowering the tourism sector to combine and leverage resources to help them bounce back better and stronger.

Support for the fund has been strong. We have also been encouraged by the response to our One Caribbean Family initiative, which allowed hotels and other industry allies to help those who have been adversely impacted by the storms, while also highlighting that more than 70 percent of Caribbean destinations have not been affected and are ready to welcome visitors as usual.

The important task of educating the public not only on the status of destinations and properties impacted by the storms, but on which destinations were unscathed, has been a difficult one, and our marketing and public relations teams have been sharing stories of resilience with the media and our travel partners throughout the world. We also developed CaribbeanTravelUpdate.com to help relay the ongoing developments in the region.

Our struggle for full recovery continues, but we will succeed and we will build a stronger and more resilient tourism sector, if we continue to work together. This year we combined the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) with an expanded Taste of the Caribbean. The sold-out Caribbean 305 event in Miami testified to the fact that combining some of our endeavors can lead to expanded interest for all initiatives. We are happy to announce that Miami will once again play host to all three events in June 2018.

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association Education Foundation (CHTAEF) continues to invest in the future of our industry, helping our youth further their tourism studies by awarding more than \$130,000 in scholarships to Caribbean nationals in 2017.

Increasing the value of CHTA membership continues apace with our member database being completely overhauled to improve our internal communications. Our revamped website offers a range of data, reports and useful information for members. New benefits include a travel insurance feature tailored towards small- to mid-sized independent hotels. Allied members will see more opportunities for connecting with other hotels and resorts.

Now more than ever, in the wake of these terrible storms, we are committed to putting in place both an interim and a long-term comprehensive and realistic marketing plan, which takes into account the need for influencing public and private sector perceptions on the safety of our destinations while reclaiming our market share.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

We've added new features to Caribbean Travel Marketplace which early in 2018 will be held in Puerto Rico, demonstrating our industry's readiness and resilience in bouncing back from the recent storms while showcasing to the world the diverse and rich offerings of our incredible Caribbean.

We are working on enriching and updating the content on CaribbeanTravel.com and adding destination booking engines, and we are working on identifying a sustainable funding mechanism. We have long stated that our industry's greatest asset is our people, and now is the time to get really serious and increase education and training initiatives to give Caribbean people the tools they need to rebuild their lives and our tourism sector.

2017 was designated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and our commitment to sustainability was evident when we completed the second phase of the Inter-American Development Bank-supported Caribbean Hotel Energy Efficiency Action (CHENACT) project.

With the support of the United States Agency for International Development, a project called Caribbean Clean Energy Program (CARCEP) enabled us to bring additional training and support to more hotels throughout the region in 2017, including an online tool for members to assess and monitor their energy use.

The devastation wreaked by these hurricanes, which science contends was made unusually vicious because of man-made emissions changing the climate, means we will be more vocal on the issues of climate change and re-emphasize the vulnerability of our region to natural disasters and rising sea levels.

Our reinvigorated Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST) guides our efforts to conserve our environment, while capitalizing upon our natural resources, building economic linkages with tourism to reduce import costs, supporting local production, and including our diverse heritage and creative talents in our tourism offerings.

Hopefully, we will never again suffer from the devastation that visited us this year, but thanks to the overriding optimism of our members, we are convinced we can convert rubble into resiliency as we rise together in 2018.

Karolin Troubetzkoy
President,
Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association



REGIONAL RESILIENCY

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season stands in the history books as the fifth-most active season since records began in 1851, and the season with the highest number of major hurricanes since 2005. Ten hurricanes occurred in a row, the greatest number of consecutive hurricanes in the satellite era. It was also the most costly season on record, with a preliminary total of over \$369.86 billion (USD) in damages caused by the season's three major hurricanes: Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

In early September, Hurricane Irma became the first Category 5 hurricane to impact the northern Leeward Islands on record. In late September, Hurricane Maria became the first Category 5 hurricane to strike the island of Dominica. It later made landfall in Puerto Rico as a high-end Category 4 hurricane.

Caribbean Travel Update

In response to the urgent need for information in the aftermath of these violent storms, CHTA created [Caribbean Travel Update](#). This site offered members, the general public and the media alike information about the current state of the 11 affected destinations, as well as a ways to contribute to the relief and recovery effort. CHTA encouraged members and partner organizations to donate to a variety of local and international relief organizations to provide immediate support to survivors in all destinations.

The Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund

CHTA also realized, due to the severity of these storms, there would be an ongoing need for a sustained recovery effort. In the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, many were left not only without a home but without employment as well. Tourism employs 2.4 million people in the Caribbean. Without this powerful economic engine at full capacity, tourism and hospitality professionals would face unemployment or reduced work hours. In response to this growing need, CHTA created [The Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund](#) in conjunction with Tourism Cares. The Fund's primary objective is to restore and improve tourism resources and infrastructure in the affected Caribbean designations, to maximize destination appeal and get people back to work.

One Caribbean Family Initiative

The One Caribbean Family booking initiative allows hotels across the region to help those who have been adversely impacted while also highlighting that more than 70 percent of Caribbean destinations have not been affected and are ready to welcome visitors as usual. CHTA's "One Caribbean Family" movement has been developed to help the vital tourism industry get back on its feet and will serve as a hub for hotels, travel advisors and tour operators who would like to make a contribution through guest bookings. Donations made through the initiative are sent to the Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund.



LOOKING FORWARD

To prevent, mitigate and deal with the effects of severe tropical weather, CHTA has created the following initiatives:

- The Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund continues to work towards providing support to ongoing initiatives to improve the tourism product in the Caribbean to keep our people employed and able to support their families.
- In collaboration with Tourism Cares, we have committed to developing an infrastructure to facilitate Voluntourism opportunities in affected destinations.
- CHTA continues to circulate its [Hurricane Preparedness Manual](#) and an [Insurance Readiness Guide](#) to help organizations better prepare property and personnel from harm during an emergency weather situation.



REGIONAL TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



Perhaps the greatest impact the storms have had on the Caribbean as a region and on CHTA as the voice of that region, is that it has forced us to create resources under duress, and proper communications lies at the heart of it. The need to provide accurate information before, during and after the storms had passed became more important than ever. The Caribbean is an ample region comprised of over 30 destinations with varying languages and cultures, yet circumstances such as the one created by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, remind that in the face of this type of adversity we stand and fall as one.

Brand Caribbean

The storms also uncovered that the general public – starting with the weather media-- has no awareness of Caribbean geography, bringing urgent attention to the need for a regional marketing campaign. Brand Caribbean is now more important to us than ever, and will launch in 2018. Through a thorough RFP and selection process in collaboration with the CTO and several stakeholders from private and public sector, we have selected an agency to create a campaign to promote the expanse of the region. We are working diligently through the agreement process in order to present the winning concept at Marketplace. The campaign will focus on very targeted online marketing opportunities with heavy emphasis on content creation with emphasis on video for a massive social media push and PR campaign to include the unleashing of an influencer network throughout the region.



LOOKING FORWARD

CHTA has further focused its strategic vision and create more programs to address the growing needs for collective sales and marketing opportunities. We are launching the following initiatives in 2018:

- A social media contest platform through a partnership with Flip.to. Through our new platform we will be able to host multiple social media contests throughout the region to harness the collective reach of all participating tourist boards and hotels.
- A travel agent educational and communications program in collaboration with TravPro Mobile. The True Caribbean program is a mobile-first platform offering agents a multi-chapter journey throughout the Caribbean. The partnership also includes database building, management and direct communications to agents that actively book the Caribbean. A discount program will be offered to CHTA members that purchase their own marketing, education and database management program.



BREACHING THE PRIVATE-PUBLIC SECTOR GAP

CHTA continued its efforts to raise awareness and support for public policies and initiatives which can protect and enhance tourism's role as the region's top socio-economic development tool. This was most evident in the positive response received at two meetings with regional Heads of State by CHTA and CTO to advance a region-wide commitment by Governments and the private sector to marketing and developing tourism. Commitments were made by the Heads of Governments to advance efforts towards regional tourism marketing, removing obstacles to air travel, investing in human capital, strengthening linkages with other sectors of the economies, and improving research to better gauge tourism's pervasive impact.

Since last February, CHTA and CTO have gotten input on a proposed framework from their leadership, national hotel and tourism association representatives, Ministers and Directors of Tourism, the region's major brands, major developers, and representatives for multilateral organizations. Thanks to sustained efforts by CHTA and its partner CTO over the past decade to continually illustrate through data the value of tourism to employment, entrepreneurial activity, and tax revenue, we are seeing a new level of understanding and appreciation throughout the region. All consultations have resulted in expressions of strong interest and support for being part of a process to develop, manage and sustain a Caribbean tourism development and marketing initiative

Obstacles Identified and Recommendations Advanced for Fast-Tracking Future Recoveries from Crisis

Hurricanes Irma and Maria brought to light a number of areas where we must improve our readiness and response capacities. CHTA identified these in a report which was the basis for presentations and discussions with multilateral organizations in briefings and planning discussions. These were also part of discussions held at the destination levels with the NHTAs, business leadership and Governments.

Working with Expedia and TripAdvisor to Improve Relationships and Address Industry Needs

Nearly three years ago, in response to growing concerns and research results from members regarding challenges they were experiencing in working with Expedia, CHTA began a dialogue with Expedia to address them. These included reports of high commission rates, the need for improved communications with the business community to understand how to best maximize Expedia's relationship, and dissatisfaction with servicing. Expedia listened to these concerns and put in place a number of initiatives including increased investments to customer service and training, and working with hotels on ways to reduce their commission levels and increase yield. Complaint levels to CHTA dropped considerably based upon research CHTA undertook this year. Issues of accelerated costs, disagreement on how cost increases were being justified, resolving unsubstantiated negative reviews, and the need for better training for members about how to better utilize and work with TripAdvisor continued to be brought to their attention.

Zika Threat Diminished: Efforts Advanced to Remove Advisories

Although the threat to public health diminished considerably in 2017, perception remained a problem. Working with its partner the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) which has monitored the decline in cases, CARPHA released a statement to that effect last May. Both CHTA and CARPHA advised members and continue to advise members to not let up on vector management and education and training to diminish the threat of Zika and other vector related health threats. With new data in hand showing a decline in Zika, CARPHA has also requested that the World Health Organization revise its health travel advisories for most of the Caribbean. CHTA participated in planning meetings with CARPHA in the fall.

Sharing Economy: More Destinations Move Towards Regularization

We continued to counsel associations and jurisdictions to engage the sharing economy, particularly working with groups like Airbnb, while also advocating to regularize it through taxes, higher standards, data sharing and collaboration and engagement. More jurisdictions are moving to regularize the sector. A survey conducted by CHTA in the spring revealed that out of 18 jurisdictions responding; only two are taxing and regulating the sector.



BREACHING THE PRIVATE-PUBLIC SECTOR GAP (continued)

However, 11 were working toward this. Thirteen NHTAs were working with Government on the legislation/regulations, with six of them reporting that they were 'very involved'. A 'solutions oriented' session on the sharing economy was presented at CHIEF in June.

CHTA Begins to Broach LGBTQ

With CHIEF serving as the backdrop, an engaging panel of experts made a compelling case for our industry and CHTA to play a regional leadership role in advancing policies and business practices aimed at tapping into the lucrative LGBTQ market while creating a more welcoming environment in the region.

Research

Through its partnerships with companies like STR, MasterCard, Adara, CHTA continues to provide members with data to support their efforts. Throughout the year CHTA also conducted primary research on several issue areas including: assessing the hurricane's impact on bookings; the status of regularizing the sharing economy; the impact of Zika on existing and future bookings; and assessing the cost, servicing and other issues related to travel intermediary relationships. The organization also conducted its annual industry performance and outlook survey. CHTA is also working with the World Travel and Tourism Council and their research partner Oxford Economics, on a special project to assess the impact of the 2017 hurricanes on the industry and now and into the future.

Maintaining and Building Stakeholder Relations

The past year the organization continued its partnership commitment with other organizations at multiple levels to share information, leverage resources, and work on specific areas of mutual interest. Active partnerships in 2017 were with the Caribbean Tourism Organization, CARICOM, CARPHA, Caribbean Central American Action, CARIFORUM, CARCEP, the World Travel and Tourism Council, the UN World Tourism Organization, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the EU. New relationships were established with the Green Lodging News on research. Discussions commenced later in the year to formalize relationships with DEMA (Diving Equipment and Marketing Assn), the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), and the Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation (CARILEC).

Climate Change Position Reinforced; Initiatives Underway

Last June the Board adopted a resolution at its meeting reiterating its previous position in support of the Paris climate change agreement. This position was conveyed publicly and in communication with the United States government. Through CAST, we have also drafted an MOU which once finalized can be a document which the NHTAs and other tourism stakeholder organizations in the Caribbean and in the U.S. can sign on to pledging their support for policies and practices which minimize the environmental footprint and promote sound energy practices.

US-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act Moves Toward Implementation

Following up on the enactment of the Act last December, CHTA joined its partner Washington-based organization Caribbean Central American Action which organized a series of consultation sessions with US and Caribbean Government and private sector interests. CHTA advocated that tourism must be well considered in US policies and programs, arguing its economic importance both to the region and the US economy. CHTA has corresponded with the US State Department commending their initiative on this and their intention to create an ongoing dialogue on strategic matters as directed by the Act.



LOOKING FORWARD

- A commitment was made regarding Expedia and TripAdvisor towards the end of 2017 to work towards continuing to address these matters in 2018. The roll out of additional training, tools and resources for the industry to diminish the threat of Zika will be available this year. CHTA is looking to work with partners like Virgin Holidays to put in place LGBTQ diversity training for staff and share best practices with the region.



ENHANCED MEMBER BENEFITS

CHTA continued its efforts to enhance member benefits beyond our signature events and educational programs. In 2017, CHTA made a concerted effort to improve its digital capabilities and offer member, regardless of their distance or in-person accessibility, benefits that would positively impact their ability to engage with other members, improve their business operations and remain at the forefront of industry news and information.

New CHTA Digital Assets

Increasing the value of CHTA membership continues apace with our new member database and online portal.

Accessible via www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com, members can now log into carry out any of these functions:

- Update your company and individual profile
- Make membership payments online
- View complete member directory
- Access the Knowledge Center which includes the Data Center with travel statistics, white papers, position papers, webinars, and more.
- Access to the Caribbean Tourism Job Bank
- Registration to exclusive CHTA member webinars

In addition to the new membership portal, continued enhancements are being implemented on to the site itself which offers a range of data, reports, industry news and useful information for members.

Caribbean Tourism Job Bank

CHTA also created the Caribbean Tourism Job Bank to serve as a conduit to match hospitality professionals with seasonal/temporary/permanent work as we quickly realized the widespread devastation included a sudden and massive employment crisis at every level of our industry. We are actively updating the platform with any available opportunities found in the Caribbean, stateside and elsewhere. [CLICK HERE](#) to access to the portal to post a job or to find a job.

CaribbeanTravel.com

Building on the website changes made earlier, new content is being added to the site on a weekly basis through the Travel Log, which is a blogger network comprised of a group of prominent travel writers including Melanie Reffes, Brian Major, Bob Curley, Gay Nagle Myers and Sarah Greaves Gabbadon. These have been the main contributors, and others are welcome to submit articles for consideration.

Banner Ads and Premium Placement Opportunities are now available. CHTA and CTO have also formalized a partnership with the Digital Travel Network, a subsidiary company of Simpleview, to sell banner ads and premium placements on CaribbeanTravel.com. DTN, will manage the entire process from end to end, including sales, trafficking, tracking and billing, and CHTA/CTO will share in the revenue with the intention of reinvesting the profits into driving traffic to the site. An official announcement and kick off of the program will be distributed shortly.

CARCEP Energy Benchmarking Tool

The Caribbean Clean Energy Program (CARCEP) online benchmarking tool that aids hotels in measuring their energy consumption and serves as a resource for actions to minimize costs has been live on our website since June 2017. Seventy-nine hotels, as of early August, are registered to use the tool and CARCEP is running workshops to teach hoteliers how to use this valuable resource. [CLICK HERE](#) to access the Energy Benchmarking Tool.



ENHANCED MEMBER BENEFITS (continued)

Springboard Caribbean

The rollout of our partnership agreement with Springboard Caribbean late last year is beginning to accrue benefits to our members and National Hotel and Tourism Associations. To date, over 200 persons have participated in the various Management & Leadership workshops and HACCP training being provided to CHTA members at a discount by Springboard. The feedback we've received from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. CHTA entered into a training agreement with Springboard Caribbean after having reviewed their track record and affiliations attesting to their capacity to deliver the highest standard of training for our members at an affordable price.

Disaster Relief Preparedness Seminars

Caribbean Central American Action (CCAA) / Tropical Shipping: Disaster Relief Preparedness Seminars continue to run. Each year a variety of destinations are selected and are offered a half-day workshop with representatives from the private and public sectors that examine the threats (natural and man-made disasters) that could potentially impact economic activity. For more information on this program, [CLICK HERE](#).



LOOKING FORWARD

- CHTA is moving forward with proposals presented by insurance brokerages that will provide a pan-regional health insurance / pension offerings exclusive to members. Initial steps have been taken and a benchmarking study is underway to solidify this benefit by the end of the year.
- The Caribbean Wedding Industry Awards, produced by the Jamaica-based Events and Entertainment Services, will have its inaugural event in Montego Bay, Jamaica September 7 – 9. This first time event will feature destination wedding and honeymoon options from around the region, inviting top specialist travel agents and destination wedding planners from North America to attend educational workshops, a trade show, VIP island fams and authentic Jamaican celebrations. Brides-to-be are also invited to make it a girls' weekend and shop for wedding and honeymoon venues. CHTA members are offered a 10% discount to participate. An awards ceremony will recognize the region's top producing agents, planners, destinations, resorts and venues. CWIA is planned to be an annual event with a new venue destination each year.
- Trip (and cancellation) insurance is evermore a relevant and valuable sales tool - in collaboration with Trip Assure/Trip Mate, the CHTA will relaunch this program in 2018 offering a better combination of benefits to the traveler and participating hotel.
- A roadshow series in 2018. Born on the demands of our active hotel membership, we will present a proposal at the upcoming marketing committee meeting to create roadshow opportunities in a few key US markets in 2018. The goal is to facilitate live sales opportunities for hotels and destinations to engage and increase their reach with the travel trade and consumers.



CHTA SUMMER EVENTS

One of our proudest moments in 2017 was successfully combining CHIEF, Taste of the Caribbean, and the inaugural launch of our newest event, Caribbean305. Hosting them together in Miami in June of 2017 for the first time was no small feat, but our mission was clear. We wanted to offer our membership, that has faithfully flocked to [CHIEF](#) to connect, learn and share knowledge pertinent to the development and growth of our industry and the Caribbean, the opportunity to experience the excitement and pride of Taste of the Caribbean.

For over two decades, [Taste of the Caribbean](#) has gathered the best national culinary teams in the region to compete for the title of Best in the Caribbean. In addition to participating in this exciting competition, the teams unite to learn from each other, from the judges and from Taste's educational sessions on how to stay at the cutting edge of their field and continue to elevate Caribbean cuisine.

Since both CHIEF and Taste of the Caribbean brought the best of our region to Miami, why not throw the biggest Caribbean party in Miami. [Caribbean305](#) is a celebration of Caribbean culture, cuisine, music and spirit open to the South Florida community and lovers of all things Caribbean. Taste's National Culinary Teams from 15 Caribbean countries shaped the night's colorful journey by offering creative samples of their destination's food and drink. The rhythm of the music from across the region moved the crowd along. More than 1,000 people joined the celebration at Jungle Island.



LOOKING FORWARD

- With the challenges posed in the wake of the 2017 historic storm season, CHTA will lend its focus on creative ways of bringing some of our teams from affected destinations to Miami to compete in Taste/Caribbean305 2018, making it more than ever, a celebration in solidarity and unity.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016 - 2018

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Karolin Troubetzkoy, Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain Resort, St. Lucia

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Richard Doumeng, Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, St. Thomas, USVI

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- Cedric Nubul, Hilton Curacao
- José A. Rivera Campos, AMresorts / Apple Leisure Group
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- Alberto Abreu, Hospitality Director, PUNTACANA Resort & Club

CTO Secretary General

Hugh Riley – Caribbean Tourism Organization

President, Caribbean Society Of Hotel Association Executives (CSHAE)

Stacy Cox, Turks and Caicos Hotel Association

Strategic Partners

Neil Kolton, Interval International

Chairman, Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association Educational Foundation (CHTAEF)

Richard Kahn, President – Kahn Travel Communications (KTCpr)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Advocacy

Co-Chair: Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Bedfordbakergroup

Co-Chair: Stuart Bowe, Senior Vice President and General Manager

Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island

Staff Liaison: Frank J. Comito.

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Staff Liaison: Vanessa Ledesma

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Staff Liaison: Martha Valdivia

Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association Educational Foundation (CHTAEF)

Chairperson: Richard Kahn, President, Kahn Travel Communications (KTCpr)

Staff Liaison: Tracy Bell

Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism (CAST)

Chairperson: Denaye Hinds, Director of Sustainability, OBM International

Staff Liaison: Frank Comito

Caribbean Travel Marketplace

Chairperson: Warren E. Binder, President, Creative Travel Consultants

Staff Liaison: Vanessa Ledesma



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MEMBER RESOURCES

Engage and Follow

SOCIAL MEDIA



USEFUL LINKS

- [CHTA Events](#)
- [Membership Information](#)
- [CHTA News](#)
- [CHTA Education Foundation](#)
- [CAST](#)
- [Press Inquires](#)

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