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CHTA HIGHLIGHTS THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS FROM CHIEF 2025, SIGNALING A NEW ERA FOR CARIBBEAN HOSPITALITY

*Climate resilience, smart sourcing, digital innovation and workforce evolution emerge as top priorities;
CHIEF 2026 scheduled for November 16–19, 2026*

Barbados – December 10, 2025 — The [Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association](#) (CHTA) today shared the leading insights emerging from the 2025 Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF), which recently took place in Barbados. CHTA also announced that **CHIEF 2026 will be held November 16–18, 2026**, running concurrently with Taste of the Caribbean. The annual event brought together hotel executives, policy makers and tourism partners from across the region to examine the strategies reshaping Caribbean hospitality and the operational shifts required for long-term resilience and competitiveness.

CHTA President Sanovnik Destang opened the program by acknowledging the region’s achievements while urging greater focus on innovation, resilience and preparedness for Small Island Developing States.

“CHIEF 2025 underscored that Caribbean tourism is entering a new era – one where innovation, resilience and people-first leadership are no longer optional, but essential. Our region is navigating a disrupted world with purpose, strengthening our linkages, accelerating digital adoption and preparing our workforce for the future. Even as we confront the realities of the climate emergency, the Caribbean continues to lead with action, collaboration and the unshakeable spirit that defines who we are,” said Destang.

Building on forum discussions, several clear themes emerged as priorities for the industry.

Top Takeaways From CHIEF 2025

The Climate Emergency Has Become a Business Priority

Climate resilience emerged as one of the region’s most urgent priorities, with a key takeaway that inaction carries mounting economic costs. Leaders stressed the vulnerabilities Caribbean destinations face and highlighted the importance of sustainability frameworks that protect both communities and the tourism workforce. The broader insight: resilience planning is no longer just an environmental imperative, it is a critical business strategy for long-term continuity.

Smart Sourcing Could Significantly Reduce Regional Costs

Smart sourcing and regional linkages emerged as a major theme, highlighting a clear takeaway: diversifying supply sources and strengthening local manufacturing can significantly reduce operating costs across the Caribbean. Expanding agri-based industries, exploring alternative sourcing models and boosting intra-regional production also helps reduce shipping dependence and stabilize hotel operations.

CHTA's linkages work supports this shift by connecting members with regional suppliers and service partners, helping keep more tourism spend within the Caribbean while strengthening operational resilience and economic impact across member destinations.

Digital Transformation Is Accelerating Across Caribbean Hospitality

Technology emerged as a key driver of competitiveness, with digital tools rapidly transforming hotel operations across the Caribbean. The takeaway: AI, automation and integrated data platforms can streamline both guest-facing services and back-of-house operations, reducing labor strain, improving service delivery and boosting profitability. CHTA continues to support members on this journey through resources such as its partnership with GAIN, the second edition of its [Artificial Intelligence Transformation Guide for Caribbean Tourism](#), and educational tools made available through its collaboration with the Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP), all designed to help hotels adopt technology effectively and responsibly.

Cybersecurity also stood out as a critical concern. Industry leaders emphasized that increased digital dependence creates real vulnerabilities, with high-profile breaches – such as the 2023 Las Vegas MGM ransomware attack, which cost nearly \$100 million – illustrating the stakes. The broader message: investing in robust technology strategies and safeguards is now essential for operational resilience and long-term success.

Direct Bookings and Digital Marketing Continue to Play a Meaningful Role in the Business Funnel

CHIEF referenced direct booking strategy as an important channel for driving business, with digital marketing and revenue leaders emphasizing the importance of optimizing websites, sharpening SEO and leveraging content-driven storytelling to strengthen hotel-owned channels. The clear takeaway: the region's digital sophistication is accelerating, and properties that invest in smarter online strategies are seeing meaningful returns. Across the board, CHIEF reinforced that storytelling, community-driven media and consistent digital engagement are now essential pillars of the Caribbean hotel playbook.

The Workforce of the Future Requires Bold Thinking

Labor emerged as a major theme, with conversations pushing leaders to rethink traditional work structures and explore forward-looking models, including options like a four-day work week that could help attract and retain talent. The key takeaway: hotels willing to experiment with flexibility and modern workplace design may gain a competitive edge in morale, retention and productivity.

Another strong message centered on long-term talent investment. Across multiple discussions, industry leaders underscored the importance of turning staff into true stakeholders through ongoing training, leadership development and intentional culture building. The overarching takeaway was clear: people strategy is now as critical as revenue strategy in shaping a resilient, future-ready workforce.

Strengthening Community and Cultural Alignment

CHIEF reinforced a rising industry priority: delivering more authentic, locally rooted guest experiences. A key takeaway was that hotels can differentiate themselves by integrating culture in meaningful ways — from partnering with local artisans and farmers to supporting community initiatives that reflect each island's identity.

Leaders emphasized that purpose-driven, community-aligned tourism isn't just a feel-good strategy; it deepens guest connection, strengthens local economies and helps ensure that the Caribbean's distinct cultural heritage remains central to its global appeal.

Personalization Is Becoming Even More Critical in the Age of AI

CHIEF discussions underscored a crucial industry tension: as AI and automation reshape hotel operations, travelers are simultaneously seeking more personalized, human-centered experiences. The key takeaway was clear — technology should streamline processes behind the scenes while empowering staff to deliver the warm, authentic service that distinguishes Caribbean hospitality.

Leaders emphasized that the real competitive advantage lies in striking the right balance: using digital tools to enhance guest engagement, not replace the personal touch guests value most.

CHIEF Partners

CHIEF 2025 was made possible thanks to the following partners, Platinum: ABA Global Marketing, GAIN Advisor Hovr, Inter-American Development Bank, Interval International, Lubeco, Mastercard and Wyndham Grand Barbados Sam Lord's Castle All-Inclusive Resort; Gold Partners: My Booking Rewards, taConnect; Supporting Partners: Maestro and the Anything Group; Baseline Partners: Alliants, P+O Cruises; Media Partner: Breaking Travel News. Partnerships for CHIEF 2026 are also open to those interested [here](#).

For more information and highlights from the event, visit www.CHTACHIEF.com.

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About the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) is the leading organization representing the interests of the Caribbean hospitality and tourism industry for more than 60 years. With 32 National Hotel Associations as well as 1,000 diverse members spanning hotels, resorts, tourism providers, and allied partners across the region and beyond, CHTA serves as a powerful voice, resource, and connector for the Caribbean's most vital industry. Through ongoing advocacy, professional development, industry insights, and market intelligence, CHTA helps its members thrive in today's competitive global marketplace. Organizations worldwide with interest in the Caribbean that want to increase their presence and connectivity in the Caribbean Hospitality and tourism industry are invited to join this dynamic community. To learn more about membership benefits and upcoming virtual and in-person events, please visit www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.