



CARIBBEAN
HOTEL & TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

CHTA Update on Efforts Related to Hurricanes Irma and Maria Impact September 21, 2017

The impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on Caribbean tourism is pervasive. Our hearts go out to those who are suffering the full brunt of its toll and we thank those from our industry who have stepped up to the plate thus far and are supporting relief efforts.

We are also seeing broader consequences of the storm throughout the more than 70 percent of the Caribbean that suffered little or no damage and is *'open for business'*, as they are reporting travel cancellations and a slowdown in bookings. Travel disruptions and cancellations also occurred because of flight cancellations due to the closure of South Florida airports and the San Juan Caribbean hub.

In the post-storm communication, it became clear that a large percentage of visitors to the region and a significant number of travel professionals were not knowledgeable about the geography of the Caribbean, which is why CHTA created a map highlighting the affected areas. Issues also arose from news anchors mispronouncing island names such as Barbuda, or wrongly referring to Barbuda as Bermuda or even Barbados. The United States sent out a post-storm travel warning, which included unaffected areas such as the Eastern Caribbean, but this was corrected after an intervention by the public and private sector representatives in St. Lucia. There is an ongoing need to keep educating visitors and travel professionals alike and our members should use every opportunity to be ambassadors for the region and each engage with their network of family and friends to educate and encourage continued support for the Caribbean - both travel to the region and relief for the affected destinations.

CHTA has been working on several fronts to assist with the situation, focusing on:

- Providing **Accurate Facts and Information**
- Assisting with **Immediate Relief** to the Hardest Hit Destinations
- Creation of the **Caribbean Tourism Recovery Fund** by the global Tourism Cares organization and CHTA to address longer-term support needs for our industry and those impacted
- An **Aggressive Media and Public Relations** effort to counter misinformation, calling for relief, and assuring the public that most of the region is *'open for business'*. Our coverage and interviews have included media outlets such as *The Wall Street Journal, CNN, NPR, The New York Times, Fox News, MSNBC, The Guardian, Associated Press, The Daily Beast*, the travel trade press, and many other Caribbean and international media houses. We've combined this with a social media outreach, which we are stepping up.
- **Stimulating bookings** through a *OneCaribbeanFamily* promotion initiative designed to also support the recovery fund while sending a powerful message of industry solidarity. The marketing campaign is centered around the following:
 - Special rates/promotion (each hotel would have their own) for travel now through 2018
 - A booking window of eight weeks
 - Participating hotels agree to a dollar or percentage contribution per booking to support the recovery effort. Note, we will reach out to tour operators to seek a matching donation



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- The participating hotels and tour operators will be listed on a special page on both caribbeantravelupdate.com and tourismcares.org/Caribbean.

Go to this [link](#) to download icons you can use on your website and communications encouraging support for relief and recovery. To indicate your willingness to participate in the OneCaribbeanFamily promotion and support campaign, please complete this [pledge form](#).

We have in place several online resources to provide information and support to our members, travel partners, the media and the general public. These include:

[Caribbean Relief and Recovery Info Hub](#) – a clearinghouse for detailed updates by CTO and CHTA, destination reports, links for how to assist with immediate relief and support, status reports on hotels, airports and airlines. Members have received periodic reports and links to the site and we've been providing detailed updates as well to the media, travel partners and tour operators. Go to: <http://www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com/knowledge-center/hurricane-center/>

[Caribbean Travel Update site](#) – providing quick visual links by destination throughout the entire Caribbean in two categories: *'Open for Business'* and those *'On the Path to Recovery'*. The 'path to recovery' links provide a summary of the situation at affected destinations and a hotel by hotel status report as has been reported to us; this changes daily. We need hotel representatives in destinations with whom we have not been able to reach to update their information through a form provided at the site www.caribbeantravel.com/update

In response to the many calls and messages we've received you can help by:

- (1) supporting immediate emergency relief efforts;
- (2) supporting our sustained recovery initiatives; and
- (3) traveling to the Caribbean.

That will continue to be our message.

Finally, there are many opportunities and lessons to be learned emanating from these storms. This discussion is an important one which we have begun with key partners, including the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the World Travel and Tourism Council. CHTA is monitoring the dialogue that has begun with insurance companies. Hurricane preparedness plans will need to be reevaluated by each destination. Rebuilding the Caribbean must be focused on rebuilding a more resilient region and must take into account climate change and the effect climate change and global warming have on weather patterns and the ferocity of storms. To make this happen, a massive capital injection will be needed and international aid secured. As we have seen in recent articles that refer specifically to British aid, there will be challenges ahead.



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Thank you for caring and being a partner with us and the Caribbean.

"While some may think that the obvious beauty of our nation has been lost in the destruction; I insist that you are the beauty – the power of our people, and the power of collaboration and kindness – and together, we are all the hope for a new tomorrow. We are all the Caribbean. We are one. We will overcome; we will grow together, we will prosper – may we all look forward to hope, and a brighter tomorrow." – Hon. William Marlin, Prime Minister of St. Maarten (Sept 15, 2017).

Sincerely,

Karolin Troubetzkoy
President

Frank Comito
CEO and Director General