



CARIBBEAN TOURISM ORGANISATION

Guide to Doing Business in the Caribbean

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If you want to work hard and play hard in one of the most captivating locations on the planet, then the Caribbean is the place for your business event, be it a conference, meeting or incentive trip.

The islands and countries of this corner of the world are famous for their tropical charms and can lend a glamorous cachet to any corporate gathering.

But when it comes to getting down to business, they can easily rise to the challenge of providing first-class hotels and first-rate facilities in addition to a fabulous array of tempting leisure pursuits.

The West Indies has an enviable reputation of hosting major sporting and business events that stretches back decades. From high-profile gatherings of heads of state to company functions and group incentives, the region has all the right ingredients to make such occasions a success.

The biggest and most modern facilities tend to be concentrated on islands such as Jamaica, the Bahamas, Barbados, Aruba, Martinique, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

These not only have impressive conference centres equipped with the latest high-tech facilities, but they also have the modern hotels and infrastructure to cope with such events.

Some conference centres are attached to established hotels, making it easy to concentrate conference events, and their delegates, in one place.

Alternatively, smaller groups planning business meetings or seminars can opt for more atmospheric, intimate hotels that they can completely take over for a function.

But when it comes to incentive groups, the Caribbean really comes into its own with its varied menu of activities amid beautiful surroundings that few other destinations can match.

Another of the region's strengths is its location, within easy reach of America, Europe and Africa with numerous direct flights to many of the islands, making it easy for participants to fly in from all directions.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING ISLANDS

This is, by far, the largest group of islands in the region, stretching in an arc from the Gulf of Mexico down to the northern coast of Venezuela. These islands range from some of the largest in the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, to some of the smallest, such as the Grenadines or the British and US Virgin Islands. But they all share a similar history and heritage, which for most of them is borne out of links with Britain that date back hundreds of years. Some islands, including Anguilla and Montserrat, are still British Overseas Territories, while others are more American-influenced.

Getting down to business

The islands share many attributes with Britain, which greatly helps to oil the wheels of business. The official language is English, though some islands also have their own patois. Locals also drive on the left as we do in the UK, which adds to the general air of familiarity. The bigger islands tend to be better equipped to host larger meetings and conferences as they have more facilities and business-orientated hotels, but smaller groups looking for somewhere off-the-beaten-track, which they can have to themselves, can take over a small hotel or even their own tiny island resort. Many of the larger islands are served by regular direct flights from the UK, continental Europe and the US and there is also a good network of regional flights and, in some cases, ferry routes. Most of the islands have their own currencies, but they also accept US dollars and many prices are quoted in this.

Northern Caribbean islands

These include the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Jamaica and the Turks & Caicos islands which all have direct flights from the UK.

BAHAMAS

This archipelago, just off the coast of Florida, makes up a powerful package for business groups who can opt for the swish sophistication of Nassau and Grand Bahama Island with their sprawling casino resorts and lively atmosphere or the laid-back rustic appeal of the Out Islands.

Conference venues

There are several to choose from led by the huge Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island. Its conference centre is said to contain the largest ballroom in the Caribbean, which stands at 50,000 sq ft. There is more than 30,000 sq ft of pre-function space including 26 break-out rooms, two boardrooms and a large staging area. There are also 20 outdoor locations for functions, bringing the resort's total meeting space to over 300,000 sq ft and accommodating up to 4,000 guests.

The country's second-largest facility is on Grand Bahama at the Our Lucaya Resort which comprises two hotels, The Westin and a Sheraton. The resort has its own conference centre comprising 95,000 sq ft of indoor and outdoor meeting or function space.

The Wyndham Nassau Resort & Crystal Palace Casino on Cable Beach, Nassau, has 30,000 sq ft of function space, including a ballroom, while the Sheraton Cable Beach boasts more than 25,000 sq ft in its own facility. The Nassau Beach hotel has 10,000 sq ft. The Nassau Palm Resort & Conference Centre has more than 5,000 sq ft of meeting space while Sandals Royal Bahamian has its own facility of nearly 9,000 sq ft and SuperClubs Breezes also has a ballroom and meeting rooms comprising nearly 4,000 ft.

Meeting facilities

Properties on Nassau with meetings facilities include the Paradise Island Harbour Resort with more than 3,000 sq ft; the British Colonial Hilton which has 7,500 sq ft including a ballroom and five meeting rooms; and the Comfort Suites with nearly 1,500 sq ft. Others include Old Bahama Bay on Grand Bahama and the Viva Wyndham Fortuna Beach on Grand Bahama. On the Out Islands, Club Peace and Plenty on Exuma has function/meeting facilities along with the Four Seasons Resort on Great Exuma. The Abaco Beach Resort on Abaco also has two venues.

Incentive options

Groups in the Bahamas can dive with dolphins, swim with sharks or ride the waves on a Powerboat adventure, party Junkanoo style and shop 'til you drop. The sky's the limit and groups can even hire their own private island.

Getting down to business

With regular flights from the UK and numerous services from the US, the Bahamas are easy to get to and inter-island flights and ferry services mean it is easy to travel between the islands for different events. The Bahamas' main conference centres also boast the latest technological facilities, such as the ability to set up live TV links.

JAMAICA

The rugged interior holds treats for business delegates looking for action and adventure, while the growing number of new, modern hotels makes the island well equipped to offer all the hi-tech touches that business delegates need.

Conference venues

The Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston is the main stand-alone venue in the capital but an alternative is the Mona Visitors Lodge and Conference Centre on the campus of the University of the West Indies. It has more than 6,000 sq ft of meeting space in different venues. On the north coast, the Sunset Jamaica Grande Resort in Ocho Rios is regarded as having the most extensive meeting and conference facilities on the island with its own conference centre which includes a Grande Hall which has a maximum capacity of 2,500 and two other rooms that can take 1,000 and 500 delegates. In all, there is 30,000 sq ft of meeting space.

Meetings facilities

Key hotels with meeting rooms and/or banqueting facilities include the Ritz-Carlton Rose Hall, Half Moon Resort, Wyndham Rose Hall, Grand Lido Braco, Round Hill Hotel & Villas, Sans Souci, plus Sandals Dunns River Golf Resort & Spa, Sandals Negril Beach Resort & Spa, and the Sandals Whitehouse resort. There are also smaller hotels that can be hired out in their entirety. Kingston hotels with meetings facilities include the Jamaica Pegasus and the Knutsford Court.

Incentive options

Take a canopy tour through the forest, try river rafting or tubing. Swim with dolphins, take a catamaran cruise, a jeep safari or simply stride out on one of the island's many golf courses.

Getting down to business

Jamaica is enjoying a wave of development that is bringing new hotels and new roads, increasing the range of accommodation and making it easier to travel around.

CAYMAN ISLANDS AND TURKS & CAICOS

Business travellers to the Cayman Islands can choose superlative diving and a combination of sophisticated hotels and rustic lodges; while the Turks & Caicos offer stunning beaches and upmarket hideaways.

Conference venues

In the Cayman Islands the Ritz-Carlton on Grand Cayman has more than 13,000 sq ft of meetings space and its ballroom can take up to 900 guests. Outdoor locations catering for a further 1,000 guests can also be used. The Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa has two ballrooms that can seat up to 650 and 300 delegates, and seven breakout rooms for up to 400 people.

Meetings facilities

*In the Turks and Caicos the main hotels with meeting facilities include Beaches Resort; Regent Palms, with capacity for up to 150; and The Somerset on Grace Bay, which can cater for up to 200, on the main island of Providenciales; and the Meridian Club on Pine Cay.

* The Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort has six meeting rooms plus an outdoor venue for up to 650.

Incentive options

*In the Caymans, choose from swimming with stingrays at Stingray City, exploring Boatswain's Beach adventure park and turtle farm, along with boat trips and visits to the less-explored sister islands of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac which have resorts that can cater for smaller groups..

*In the Turks & Caicos islands, groups can take part in yacht regattas, beach Olympics, watersports competitions and even sandcastle-building contests! Alternatively island rallies, gala dinners at local hotels and spa treats can also be arranged.

Eastern Caribbean islands

This is where you'll find most of the English-speaking islands, including some of the best known spots such as Barbados, Antigua and St Lucia. Here's a guide to what the main islands offer along with some of the smaller ones.

Anguilla

The island's fabulous beaches make a stunning backdrop to any business event while its range of luxury hotels and villas provide plenty of good venues. Then there are the excellent restaurants, for which the island is famed as a gourmet paradise; the choice of watersports and rich birdlife that add to its appeal.

Conference venues

Anguilla's first conference centre is due to open in 2009 as part of a major resort development on the island. The Royale Caribbean Resort & Conference Centre will comprise more than 200 rooms, plus a swimming pool and spa complex. The conference facility will offer 57,000 sq ft of meeting space, with two main halls each able to accommodate up to 600 delegates. There will be eight break-out sections, board rooms and other meeting rooms, plus two restaurants.

Meetings facilities

The following properties can cater for the following maximum size groups (numbers in brackets): Cap Juluca (50), Malliouhana Hotel & Spa (80), Paradise Cove (75),

Rendezvous Bay Hotel & Villas (140). The plush Altamer Resort can take 60+ delegates in its state-of-the-art centre while Cusinart Resort & Spa can hold gatherings of 100 and La Sirena can take 25.

Incentive options

Groups can have private dinners at some of Anguilla's best restaurants or hire their own islands such as Scilly Cay or Prickly Pear for a themed dinner or beach barbecue. Golf tournaments can be arranged at the island's golf course or tennis contests at its new tennis academy. The tourist office promises that anything's possible.

Getting down to business

There are regular local flights, taking one hour from San Juan or Antigua, or a short hop of seven minutes from St Martin or 20 minutes by ferry.

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

Excellent air links and a good range of hotels and activities make Antigua perfect for business get-togethers, while its sister island Barbuda offers a perfect retreat to recover.

Conference venues

The island's new and impressive Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, which holds 10,000 people can be used for events. Among the hotels, the Sandals Grande Antigua Resort & Spa has a state-of-the-art facility comprising 9,000 sq ft of meeting and banqueting space. This includes a 3,200 sq ft meeting room that can seat up to 300 people.

Meetings facilities

Hotels include Carlisle Bay which can host up to 30 people and has a 45-seat cinema for private screenings; the Sticky Wicket Bar at the Stanford Cricket Ground has a meeting room; the Royal Antiguan hotel has a meeting room that can take up to 400 people; Curtain Bluff can take up to 60; and the Jolly Beach Resort can accommodate up to 500. The Hawksbill by rex resorts hotel in Antigua has a meeting room for up to 50 while sister hotel Halcyon Cove by rex resorts can accommodate up to 100 in its meeting room.

Incentive options

Swing through the trees on a zip wire, swim with rays at Stingray City or take a trip to English Harbour – home of Nelson's Dockyard and its collection of restored Georgian buildings. Antigua lends itself to numerous watersports, especially kite-surfing and sailing while Barbuda is a quieter haven known for its birdlife and peaceful atmosphere.

BARBADOS

This sophisticated island boasts a modern infrastructure with sophisticated facilities and communication links, a superb range of hotels in all categories and some of the best restaurants in the Caribbean.

Conference venues

The 164,000 sq ft Sherbourne Conference Centre is one of the Caribbean's top venues for intra-regional and international events. Its largest exhibition space holds up to

1,200 people and the second-largest space can take up to 800. There are also break-out rooms and a business centre with high-speed internet access.

An alternative facility is the Frank Collymore Hall which has a main Grande Salle that can be used for exhibitions and meetings, plus another meeting room that takes 70. A new conference centre is due to open at the end of 2008 at The Crane Resort with three rooms offering nearly 3,000 sq ft and accommodating up to 150.

Meetings facilities

The Barbados Hilton is the main business hotel on the island and has 10,000 sq ft of meeting space with a ballroom, meeting rooms and business centre. It also has executive floors. Sandy Lane offers various meeting venues for groups of between 10 and 50 and it can cater for special events of around 100 people.

Other hotels with meetings facilities include (max capacity in brackets): Almond Beach Village (250), Amaryllis Beach Resort (200), Accra Beach Hotel (250), Barbados Beach Club (125), Grand Barbados Beach Resort (212), Kings Beach (70), Southern Palms Beach Hotel (100) Discovery Bay Hotel (40), The Savannah Hotel (175), Glitter Bay (100), Royal Pavilion (100), Silver Sands Resort (40), Peach and Quiet (50), Blue Horizon Apartment Hotel (70).

Incentive options

Swing out on the island's championship golf courses; take a Jeep safari to the hilly Scotland area in the north and down the rugged and unspoilt east coast to Bathsbeba; visit one of the many rum distilleries; take in a cultural show; explore historical plantation houses or go under the waves in the Atlantis submarine.

Getting down to business

Alternative venues for themed parties, tournaments or dining events can be arranged on a party boat, yacht or catamaran. The spacious Harbour Master boat holds 700 passengers on four decks; the Jolly Roger pirate ship can take 300; and the Ocean Mist, a 60ft catamaran can be chartered for smaller groups.

GRENADA

Grenada offers unspoilt surroundings for any business event, with the benefit of modern communications. Besides its scenic beauty, the island's hotels offer a good range of meetings facilities while the rainforested terrain, the capital St George's (renowned as one of the prettiest towns in the Caribbean) and its lively spice markets adds an extra dimension to business groups looking for a more authentic Caribbean experience.

Conference/meetings facilities

The Grenada Grand has the island's largest facilities with a ballroom that can take up to 600, plus seven meeting rooms that can accommodate up to 125. The Spice Island Beach Resort has a conference room that can seat up to 70 while the Grenadian by rex resorts has up to five meeting rooms for up to 150. The Flamboyant Hotel has three meeting rooms, one of which can be divided into two, and together they can accommodate more than 200.

Incentive options

Hikes through the tropical terrain, boat trips to the sister islands of Carriacou or Petite Martinique, trips through spice plantations or cocoa factories and bathing under waterfalls are some of the back-to-nature activities on offer.

Getting down to business

There are regular direct flights from the UK and Germany.

ST LUCIA

This beautiful island has much to offer meetings delegates looking for tropical thrills and spills with its rugged lush terrain in the south of the island and golden sandy beaches in the north. The island has a mixture of hotels, ranging from larger, modern properties offering meeting facilities to smaller boutique hotels that are perfect for companies to take over for a rustic retreat.

Conference/meetings facilities

There are a string of hotels offering meetings facilities, including the St Lucian by rex resorts which has one meeting room for up to 150 while its sister hotel the Royal by rex resorts has two meeting rooms for up to 170 and 25. The Almond Morgan Bay has one meeting room (100 people), Anse Chastanet (50), Coco Resorts (200) and the Discovery at Marigot Bay has two venues (110 and 80).

Incentive options

Groups can go horse-riding through coconut and banana plantations on to the beaches; fly through the trees on a zip wire; play golf; go jungle biking; enjoy a formal dinner at a historic Great House; or enjoy a carnival-themed party with special carnival outfits especially made for all those taking part.

Getting down to business

The island benefits from numerous flights from the UK and US, making it easy to get to. The range of hotels, from modern all-inclusive resort to tiny hideaways perched on the Pitons, also lend themselves to groups of different sizes.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

These sister islands are like chalk and cheese. While Trinidad has more of a commercial centre in its capital Port of Spain, Tobago is much more sleepy and the prettier of the two islands. With its large modern hotels, Trinidad lends itself more to large business gatherings while Tobago is good for smaller groups looking for a more relaxing pace. The combination of the two islands is a perfect choice for those wanting the sophisticated facilities of Trinidad and the rustic beauty of Tobago.

Conference venues

Trinidad has a number of conference centres attached to hotels. The Hilton Trinidad Hotel & Conference Centre can cater for up to 1,000 people while the Cascadia Hotel & Conference Centre can accommodate 1,000 in the main ballroom. The Hyatt Regency Trinidad is the newest addition, having opened in January 2008, with more than 43,000 sq ft of meeting space, including two ballrooms. The Cara Suites Hotel and Conference Centre has several meeting rooms, the largest of which can hold 400 people.

Meetings facilities

Trinidad hotels with meetings facilities include the Crowne Plaza Trinidad, which is one of the island's main business hotels. It has 10 meeting rooms that can cater for gatherings of between 10 and 550. The Kapok hotel on Trinidad has four meeting rooms. Hotels in Tobago with meetings facilities include Le Grand Courlan Spa Resort, with four meeting rooms taking approximately 20 people in each, and the Mount Irvine with two meeting rooms, and Coco Reef Hotel which has more than 3,000 sq ft of convention and meeting space and can handle events up to 200-strong.

Incentive options

Groups can jump between the two islands easily, and combine the cultural mix and liveliness of Trinidad where visitors can go golfing, sailing and bird-watching to the sleepy surroundings of Tobago. This island is a place for rainforest treks, boating trips, bird-watching and island tours.

Getting down to business

Trinidad is used to hosting major regional and international meetings and conferences and new business hotels are adding to its accommodation options. Both islands are well-served by international and local flights, particularly Trinidad which is a key Caribbean transport hub. There is also a fast ferry service between the two islands.

OTHER ISLANDS

These comprise smaller islands such as the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Montserrat, Nevis, St Kitts, St Vincent & the Grenadines and the US Virgin Islands.

Conference venues

*The Four Seasons Resort on Nevis has three conference rooms which can cater for up to 300 delegates while the Mojnt Nevis Hotel can take 100 and the Old Manor Hotel can take up to 35.

*Dominica's Fort Young hotel, in the capital Roseau, is the most geared to meetings with a conference room that can take up to 130 people. There is also a smaller meeting room for up to 15 people.

*The Montserrat Cultural Centre on Montserrat, opened in 2007 by legendary music producer George Martin, is the largest building on the island and has a conference room as well as a 500-seat auditorium.

Meetings facilities

*The British Virgin Islands (BVI) have a handful of properties offering meeting facilities, notably The Bitter End Yacht Club and Long Bay Beach Resort which can both cater for events of up to 200. Groups can also enjoy a castaway experience by hiring private islands such as Necker, which can cater for 26 people; Guana Island, 40; and Peter Island Resort, 130.

*The Mount Nevis hotel on Nevis can accommodate groups of up to 100 while the Old Manor Hotel can take up to 35.

*For a meeting with a difference, opt for Montserrat. The island's Tropical Mansion Suites has a meetings room for up to 25 people.

*In the USVI's hotels offering meeting space on St Croix include The Buccaneer, the Divi Carina Bay Resort, the Carambola Beach Resort, the Hotel Caravelle and the Palms at Pelican Grove. On St Thomas, hotels catering for this market include the Best Western Emerald Beach Resort, Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Marriott Beach Resort, Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, Holiday Inn Windward Passage, Ritz-Carlton St Thomas, Palms Court Harbourview, Wyndham Sugar ay Resort & Spa. On St John, they are Caneel Bay and the Westin St John Resort & Villas. Other meeting venues include the St George Village Botanical Garden on St Croix; the Coral World Ocean Park, Mahogany Run Golf Course, Yacht Haven Grande marina and the Villa Botanica at the Plantation Crown and Hawk Botanical Gardens.

*In St Vincent and the Grenadines, the Raffles Canouan on the island of Canouan has the largest facilities meeting venues and a grand ballroom, while the boutique hotel Grenadine House can cater for smaller groups.

Incentive options

*In the BVIs activities include sailing, any kind of watersports, power-boating, and fishing, plus helicopter trips and seaplane flights.

*Dominica, which describes itself as the "Nature Isle" of the Caribbean is well-placed to offer more rugged back-to-nature style activities. These include guided rainforest hikes to the Boiling Lake, river tubing, sea kayaking, quad-biking, a boat trip along Indian River (one of the filming locations for Pirates of the Caribbean II) and a visit to a Carib Indian cultural village.

*Due to its active volcano Montserrat offers more novel diversions such as volcano tours and trips to the volcano observatory. Other activities include diving, snorkelling, hiking and nature walks.

BERMUDA

The quaint British-based culture and pink sand beaches of this island make an idyllic backdrop for any business event, while world-renowned golf courses, plush hotels and first-rate spas provide plenty of opportunity to unwind.

Conference venues

New hotel Tuckers Point, due to open in spring 2009, will offer a 5,000 sq ft conference centre which includes a ballroom and individual meeting rooms.

Meetings facilities

The Royal Naval Dockyard offers more than 20,000 sq ft of space for a group event while the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum and Zoo also offers meetings facilities with lecture rooms catering for up to 100 people. It can also be used as a novel venue for dinners (for up to 80) or cocktail receptions (up to 150). Meeting, function spaces, multimedia auditorium and full service restaurant and café are available at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute.

The island offers meeting facilities in its main hotels such as the Elbow Beach, which offers 10,000 sq ft of function space; the Fairmont Hamilton Princess, which can cater for between 20 and 300 attendees in its meetings rooms and private terraces; and the

Fairmont Southampton, which can cater for up to 1,500. Alternatively, the more intimate cottage resorts offer a cosier alternative for smaller groups.

Incentive options

Spas and golf are two of the main activities on this island and it boasts excellent facilities to cater for both. There are pretty pink sand beaches, the setting for numerous watersports, good restaurants and shops.

Getting down to business

The island's Corporation of St George can provide a public address system, floodlights, staging and tents for events, while receptions can be staged at the Bermuda National Gallery (for up to 300); the Bermuda Maritime Museum and Commissioner's House.

FRENCH-SPEAKING ISLANDS

If you want to add some French flair to your business, then these are the islands to come to. With their smart hotels, sophisticated restaurants and enough upmarket designer boutiques to rival the Champs-Elysees, the islands of St Barthelemy, Guadeloupe, St Martin and Martinique offer the best of France, combined with a tropical landscape and stunning white-sand beaches underpinned by centuries of colonial history.

Getting down to business

As fully-fledged French Departments, the islands boast an infrastructure similar to France with good roads and communication networks. French is the official language, but English is widely spoken and euros are the official currency. As it is a French territory and part of the European Union, no immigration landing cards are needed for EU citizens and the same reciprocal health care arrangements as in France are in place. European mobile phones work here as the island is on the same networks as France. There are regular flights via Paris, but none from the UK.

Conference venues

*Martinique has the modern Madiana Palais des Congres is said to offer some of the most advanced facilities in the Caribbean. On the ground floor, its lobby and exhibition hall is 45,000 sq ft and also contains restaurants, a book and record store, pharmacy and extra on-site business services. On the second level are 12 theatres with between 125 and 500 seats, a VIP lounge, 645 sq ft banquet hall, modular meeting rooms and a terrace overlooking the sea. The L'Atrium cultural centre offers an alternative and has four meeting rooms and two auditoriums that can accommodate nearly 900 delegates.

*Guadeloupe's main venue is the World Trade Centre Complex (CWTC) which has interior and exterior exhibition halls, meeting rooms for up to 450 people and an amphitheatre with 220 seats. The island's Arts and Cultural Centre can be used for congresses and seminars in three rooms which have capacity for 115, 350 and 250 people. Another venue is the L'Artchipel national theatre, the Remy Nainsouta cultural centre and the Lakasa Musik concert hall.

Meetings facilities

*On Martinique the La Bateliere hotel has its own large conference and reception area capable of handling 600 delegates. This can also be converted into four meeting rooms and there is a large semi-covered terrace outside with views to the sea. The Valmeniere hotel has meeting rooms for up to 350 people while the 17th century Leyritz Plantation can cater for up to 750 people and has exhibition space of up to 7,500 sq ft. Other hotels (Max capacity in brackets) include the Sofitel Bakoua (60), Hotel Carayou (250), Baie du Galion (100), Hotel Squash (200), and Les Amandiers (200).

*Guadeloupe offers a selection of novel meeting venues, ranging from a sugar refinery and a fort to rum distilleries and botanical gardens. There are also several hotels catering for the meetings market.

Hotels with capacity for larger groups include Hotel Arawak (250), Hotel Karibea Beach Resort (300), Hotel Fleur d'Epee (250), La Creole Beach Hotel & Spa (220), Club Med La Caravelle (400), Hotel Eden Palm (350), Salako Beach Resort (200) and the Hotel Paladien Manganao (400).

These hotels can cater for smaller groups: Karaibes Hotel (30), Village Soleil (25), Hotel Canella Beach (120), Sofitel Auberge de la Vieille Tour (80), La Toubana Hotel (50). Residence Pierre & Vacances (70), Domaine de l'Anse des Rochers (150), La Plantation Resort Golf et Spa (150), Hotel Fort Royal (150), Hotel Le Duc'ery (15) and the Hotel Saint-Georges (100).

Incentive options

On Martinique these range from cultural outings to historic monuments and museums (including the plantation where Empress Josephine grew up); tours to the ruined city of St Pierre, the "Little Paris of the West Indies"; visits to rum distilleries, and shopping trips. On Guadeloupe, visitors can explore the coral reefs, go on a tropical tour to discover the island's heritage, take a sightseeing flight and go on a sea-kayaking safari.

DUTCH-SPEAKING ISLANDS

These islands are a proverbial melting pot of extreme contrasts and cultures with their own distinct flavour that comprises Dutch heritage with an American twist. The ABC islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao offer a combination of casino resorts, long sandy beaches, excellent diving and distinctive Dutch-style houses. St Maarten is part of the smallest island in the world which is shared with the French territory St Martin. The Dutch part is a hub of lively commercialism with casinos, dance clubs duty-free shopping and casinos.

Getting down to business

Aruba has the best conference and meeting facilities of the Dutch islands housed in a string of modern hotels stretched out along its long sandy shoreline, boasting up-to-date facilities. The official language of the islands is Dutch, but English is widely spoken, while the currency varies between

Conference venues

In Aruba the Renaissance Convention Centre, housed at the Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino, is one of the largest and most modern in the Caribbean, with 22,000 sq ft of meeting and function space with its own dedicated team of conference

services staff. Its main ballroom can cater for up to 1,600 people and an outdoor breakout area provides another 6,858 sq ft of meeting space.

*On St Maarten, the Sonesta Maho Beach Resort & Casino has more than 16,000 sq ft of meeting space including an 11,000 sq ft theatre and seven function venues. It can cater for events of up to 1,000 people. The Westin St Maarten Dawn Beach Resort & Spa has 10,000 sq ft of meeting space that can accommodate up to 1,000 attendees.

Meetings facilities

In Aruba a string of hotels along Aruba's beaches have meetings space:

*Holiday Inn Sunspree has three rooms catering for up to 50, 70 and 550 delegates; Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort & Casino has nine meeting rooms, outdoor function space and a ballroom that holds up to 600. Marriott Resort and Stellaris Casino has 11,000 sq ft of meeting space with seven meeting rooms and two ballrooms that can be divided into smaller sections. Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa boasts more than 15,000 sq ft of indoor space and 24,000 sq ft of outdoor function space including a 14-acre retreat. Its ballroom can cater for more than 900 guests. Westin Aruba Resort has six salons that can be altered according to the size of the event, but at their largest size they can cater for 140 guests maximum.

Other properties with meeting facilities include the Riu Palace, Divi Phoenix Beach Resort/Divi Aruba, La Cabana All-Suite Beach Resort & Casino; Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, Occidental Grand Aruba and the Tierra Del Sol Resort Spa and Country Club. There is also additional meeting space at the Aruba Surfside Marina which has four banquet rooms.

*On St Maarten, the Little Divi Bay Resort can accommodate up to 500 people while the Sonesta Great Bay Beach Resort & Casino can cater for up to 150.

Incentive options

*In Aruba events can be arranged at local forts, museums or even on one of Aruba's golf courses.

*St Maarten offers a lively menu of novel activities. Groups can take part in America's Cup style races on ocean-going yachts that were used in the actual race; jump on a Harley-Davidson motorbike and take off around the island; go for a tall ship adventure on a traditional rigged vessel; visit the island's butterfly farm or pedal off on a mountain bike adventure.

SPANISH WEST INDIES

These vibrant Latin lands are heavily influenced by their Spanish colonial heritage which lives through their buildings, language, culture, music and dance. Puerto Rico is least known to the British market while Cuba's turbulent history of revolution and its mix of Caribbean Communism are unique. The Dominican Republic is popular for its beautiful beaches and rugged interior which lends itself to action and adventure.

Getting down to business

Revolutions and business may not always mix – but Cuba is the exception with its good choice of city centre hotels in Havana and all-inclusive hotels that hug its shoreline, while the Dominican Republic is benefiting from a string of ambitious developments that are providing the country with more business-orientated facilities.

Conference venues

*The Dominican Republic boasts one of the Caribbean's largest conference facilities with the Barcelo Bavaro Convention Centre, catering for nearly 3,500 people, including 2,538 in the main auditorium.

The country's luxury Casa de Campo resort has two convention centres offering more than 15,000 sq ft of meeting space. Its El Flamboyant centre can handle more than 900 people, including 500 in the ballroom, while the El Cacique can handle nearly 800.

*The Puerto Rico Convention Centre, which opened in 2005, has more than 580,000 sq ft of meeting space and one of the largest ballrooms in the Caribbean at 39,500 sq ft. It sits in an area surrounded by hotels, shops and entertainment venues.

*Cuba's International Conference Centre is situated in Havana and can seat up to 1,500 people. In the beach resort of Varadero, the Plaza America Conference Centre can take 500, the Bolivar Conference Centre in Villa Clara can accommodate 800 and the Heredia Conference Centre in Santiago de Cuba can take nearly 2,500 delegates.

Meetings facilities

Most of the Dominican Republic's hotels have meeting and event facilities, while those that can accommodate gatherings of more than 700 include the Barcelo Gran Hotel Lina, Dominican Fiesta, Hilton Santo Domingo, Renaissance Jaragua Hotel & Casino, V Centenario Inter-Continental, Paradisus Palma Real and the Gran Teatro Cibao.

Other venues include the Casa San Pablo (1,200), Central Bank auditorium (723), National Theatre (2,200), Bellas Artes Palace (525) Foreign Affairs Ministry (1,050) and Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (1,500).

*Several hotels in Cuba can cater for meetings. There are 13 in Havana, including the Melia Habana Hotel, Oasis Panorama Hotel, Occidental Miramar Hotel, Habana Riviera Hotel, Hotel Nacional de Cuba, NH Parque Central Hotel and Saratoga Hotel. In Varadero there are eight, including the Melia Varadero Hotel, Paradisus Varadero Hotel, Iberostar Tainos Hotel, Playa Alameda Hotel and Tryp Peninsula Varadero Hotel. Hotels also offer meeting facilities in Cienfuegos, Villa Clara, Trinidad, Jardines del Rey, Holguin, Granma and Santiago de Cuba.

Incentive options

Combine beautiful beaches with the thrill of exploring the rugged interior on all three islands. Cuba offers beautiful scenery mixed, a revolutionary history and the chance to witness a lifestyle not really touched by commercialism. In the Dominican Republic, groups can explore its rivers and mountains on hikes, white-water rafting trips and mountain-biking rides. Puerto Rico offers waters, rainforests, caves, historic fortresses and beautiful beaches.