

Presentation by CTO Chairman Hon. Richard L. Sealy at
CTO Press Conference
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World Trade Center, Curacao



International tourist arrivals in the Caribbean continue to be strong with 5.8 per cent increase through June, outpacing all major regions of the world.

For the first six months the Caribbean welcomed 14.8 million, approximately 800 thousand or 5.8 per cent higher than the corresponding period in 2014, well above the 4.1 per cent recorded globally.

The Caribbean share of global arrivals stood at 2.8 per cent. The Dutch Caribbean saw the fastest relative growth across the sub-regions in the first six months of 2015 with an 8.5 per cent increase in arrivals.

All destinations in this sub-region had considerable growth benefitting from increase demand from the US and South American markets. Of the other five sub-regions only the French West Indies recorded a slight decline.

Data obtained from CTO member countries shows that the US remains our main market with 7.3 million US tourist visits between January and June representing a 5.3 per cent rise.

The thawing of the relationship between Cuba and United States resulted in greater number of Americans transiting through other countries like the Bahamas, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands in order to visit Cuba. The Canadian market continues to perform well with 2.1 million visits during the period, while arrivals from Europe increased by a modest 1.1 per cent, moving from 2.58 million in 2014 to 2.61 in 2015.

The intra-regional market recorded strong growth of 5.5 per cent, with some 400 thousand visits.

HOTEL PERFORMANCE

The indicators which are used to monitor the performance of the accommodation sector were positive and holding strong through to the end of June.

Room Occupancy in the first half of the year stood at 74.6% up from the 72.0% during the same period of 2014.

Both room rates and revenue increased during the period, with room revenue collected in the sector rising 9.2 per cent. The available room stock across the region also increased by 1.5 per cent.

CRUISE

Cruising the Caribbean continued to be in high demand up to the end of June. There were an estimated 13.7 million cruise passenger visits to region in the first six months, an overall three per cent rise over the corresponding period last year.

The numbers suggest that the prospects for Caribbean tourism are good, and we remain cautiously optimistic that we will maintain the pace during the second half. Overall, the CTO's research department projects a 5 to 6 per cent growth this year.

Now on to the conference.

We are pleased with the way SOTIC has gone so far. We have had more coverage on social media than at any other time, thanks to you in the media who have done an outstanding job sharing news, information and the wonderful time you've been having in Curacao.

Let me, on behalf of the CTO, thank you for your support.

The keynote address generated quite some stories for you so you must be pleased. We too are very happy with the announcements made by Robin Hayes about additional service to the region. This is just one of the many positives coming out of the conference so far.

Introduction of additional flights by JetBlue to the Caribbean

It was heartening to hear testimony from a CTO Foundation scholarship recipient during lunch yesterday as she explained what it meant to her and the impact it has had on her career. Since completing her studies she has been appointed the COO of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism Authority. This is but a small example of the CTO commitment and the work the organization does to ensure our countries' future is secure by working with and developing our youth.

This to us is what sustainability is all about.

We learned during our business meetings that almost 600 students in the Caribbean taking tourism subjects at the advanced level. The CTO advocated, engaged and sometimes pleaded for the teaching of tourism in our schools. It was a long road, it took a long time but it is finally happening and we are proud of the part that we played.

As we work to serve our members in the best way possible, our research and information technology department is currently working on a tool which will help our members identify their best possible prospects. Our acting head of research and IT, Ryan Skeete is here and is available to provide details.

Before I end I'd like to thank the two leaders who yesterday accepted a letter from CTO committing them to be champions for tourism. Premier Rufus Ewing of the Turks and Caicos Islands and the leader of Government in St. Eustatius are the trailblazers in this regard. We look forward to many more of our leaders making similar commitments to the primary revenue earner for most of our countries.
I thank you.