Dear Tourism Colleague,

Happy New Year and Welcome to the first edition of the Sustainable Tourism Roundup for 2023.

As customary we are pleased to provide you with information and updates from CTO and its tourism development partners relevant to sustainable tourism product development.

You are encouraged to take action where appropriate and to disseminate this information widely, for the benefit of all tourism stakeholders.

**CTO INITIATIVES**

We are pleased to invite you to the ‘Virtual Awards Ceremony’ on **Wednesday, 15 February 2023 from 11:00am (AST)** to announce the Results and Recognize the Winners of the 2022 Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Awards. Please click on the link in the flyer below to join the Ceremony.

[Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Awards](https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/82368529667)
Visitor Management Strategies for Destinations Course  
(3-15 May 2023)

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) has partnered with George Washington University (GW) to offer the new training course - *Visitor Management Strategies for Destinations* from May 3 – 15, 2023 and will be hosting an information webinar on Wednesday, February 22 at 12pm EST (1pm Eastern Caribbean time / 11am Belize time) to introduce the key areas that the course will cover, including:

- Trends in visitor flow management
- Visitor management best approaches
- Steps in developing a visitor management plan.

Additionally, Course registration details will be provided during the 45-minute webinar.

**Please click on this link to register for the information webinar.**

Note that this course will be offered as a part of the *Professional Certificate in Sustainable Tourism Destinations Management* or can be taken as a stand-alone credited course by anyone who is interested.

The 2023 Spring cohort of the *Professional Certificate in Sustainable Tourism Destinations Management* will begin in April and registration details will be shared shortly. The other courses that will be offered in this cohort are:

- Destination Management
- Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism
- Destination Marketing

Information about the Professional Certificate will also be shared during the webinar.

We look forward to welcoming you to the information webinar on **February 22, 2023.**
Annual Sustainable Tourism Technical Committee Meeting

The annual meeting of the Sustainable Tourism Technical Committee will be held on Tuesday, 28 February 2023 from 10:30am – 12:30pm (AST).

Please register using the link below or clicking on the flyer:
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_f5kZrlpRRbK20Ok8hhU_rg

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.
Rural Tourism Online Course

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is offering on its e-learning platform a free course on Rural Tourism that has been designed for the Caribbean. The course, which exposes learners to rural tourism opportunities and the steps to plan and execute a rural tourism enterprise, will commence in March 2023.

For more information on the course and to register, please click on the link in the flyer below.

IICA is also partnering with the University of Technology in Jamaica (Utech Jamaica) to offer this online Rural Tourism course with tutor facilitation. This option will also be provided as an online course, but comprise lecturer guidance and more rigorous course assessments, culminating with a university certificate. Accordingly, there is a cost associated with this option. Individuals/entities who are interested in this option can contact IICA via iica.jm@iica.int.
Grant Proposal Writing Online Course

For more information on the Grant Proposal Writing Online Course please use this link:
https://carib-export.com/opportunities/grant-proposal-writing-course-acp-eu-grants-for-arts-culture

The application form can be completed online in either English, Spanish or French using this link:
https://adaptforarts.org.uk/acpeu

Deadline to submit application form is Monday, 6 March 2023 at 23:59 AST.

For more information on this course and the process, please contact:

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Tourism TidBits

Reviewing Some of the Travel & Tourism Industry’s Basic Principles

PART ONE of a two-part series

The past year, 2022, was the first year since the great pandemic. Although there were continual Covid-19 challenges for the most part tourism returned to its pre-Covid-19 days: planes and hotels were full, we saw long lines at attractions and people began to speak about over-tourism instead of too little tourism. That does not mean that the past year was without challenges and the new year will be smooth sailing.

The new year (2023) will require that the travel and tourism industry and its professionals will have to face both on-going challenges and new challenges. Travel and tourism cannot be separated from the world context in which it operates. Be that context political states of war, or one of health issues or of economic undulations, what occurs throughout the world touches every aspect of tourism.

The year 2022 saw a boom in the tourism industry. After what seemed to be eternal lockdowns, the public was eager to travel. This boom caused a decline in customer service and multiple price rises. Although no one can predict the future, it would appear that tourism and travel professionals will have to deal with issues such as:

- Tourism and travel labor shortages
- On-going inflation
- Political instability
- The potential for a new health crisis or a new form of Covid-19

It is for these reasons it is good for travel and tourism professionals to take a step back and to review at least some of the basic fundamentals of their industry. We all claim to know these fundamental principles, but all too often in the “madness of life and work” we need to be reminded of the some of the basic principles of tourism: what we do and why we do it. To get the New Year off to a great start, Tourism Tidbits provides you both this month and next month with a listing of some of these basic principles. It behooves tourism professionals to remember that when these principles are ignored eventually the entire industry suffers.

- In the world of leisure travel, tourism is the telling of a story in which the visitor becomes part of the tale. To travel is to seek the different, to find a way to leave the humdrum of daily life and enter into a world of non-realities. This basic principle means that the tourism industry must allow its visitors to experience the unique and special in a safe and secure environment. Remember we are selling memories and it is our job to help our customers create memories that can be shared.

- Tourism and Travel professionals should never forget that they are selling “memories”. No matter if the travel product is of the leisure or business variety, we are selling “memories”. Even on short business trips, how we treat people and the service which we offer is both commented upon and remembered. The fact that air travel has become so unpleasant and often expensive is one of the reasons that businesspeople have continued to seek non-travel options.

- It cannot be stated too often, that most leisure travel and tourism are choice made by the consumer who is using his or her expendable income and time. In all but a few cases, and with the exception of business travel and some forms of health travel, the customer does not have to choose to travel. This simple fact means that tourists often frighten easily and may have unrealistic expectations. It does the travel expert no good to become either frustrated or annoyed with his or her customer. Although the customer may technically not always be right, the customer always has the option of not traveling. In that case, it is the professional or the professional’s business that in the end suffers. This fundamental principle is so important that around the world places that provide clean efficient and friendly service and products prosper. Others, who took their visitors for granted, demonstrate disappointing results.

- A basic rule of tourism and travel is: treat your customer fairly, provided a good product in a safe and clean environment. Travelers understand that the tourism industry must show a profit if it is to survive. Making a profit however does not mean overcharging or underserving. Be sure that your prices are in line with your competition, your service is delivered promptly and with a smile and your security demonstrates a sense of caring.
- In tourism a perception may not be true, but its consequences are always true. Negative reputations are not easy to erase, and negative perceptions can destroy a tourism industry. If our visitors perceive that they are not wanted, or are seen as easy prey, then they will soon find alternatives.

- Tourism is security dependent. In a world where one can experience “virtual” travel, where meetings can be held on a computer, and where the traveler is exposed to twenty-four-hour news cycles, our customers know where there are problems, be these problems concern security, health or even infrastructure. The Covid-19 pandemic is an example of how fragile the tourism industry can be. Crime and terrorism are also major problems around the world. Countries that are not perceived to be safe and skimp on security are risking great economic loss.

- It is essential to create safety and security. To create such an atmosphere local security professionals must be part of the planning from the beginning. Tourism security is more than merely having police or security professionals at a site. Tourism security requires psychological and sociological analysis, the use of hardware, interesting and unique uniforms, and careful planning that integrates the security professional into the enchantment experience.

- Travel and tourism professional need to love our customers! Tourism professionals need to travel so that they come experience the world of travel and tourism both as a provider and as a customer. If travel professionals are perceived as “hating” their customers, then customer service and quality of service will soon decline. Visitors are savvy and know when tourism and travel officials are more interested in their own ego trips then in the vacationer’s experience. An employee who is unique, funny, or makes people go away feeling special is worth thousands of dollars in advertising. Every tourism manager and hotel GM ought to have performed at least once every task in his or her industry. Often tourism managers push so hard for the bottom line that they forget that their employees are also human beings.

- Professional burnout can become a real problem. Tourism is hard work, and many people find the industry too hard. Work-Life Balance remains a priority. Also be on the lookout for new and creative employees, seek people who are gregarious and warm and people with both patience and a sense of adventure.

- When the going gets rough, be calm. People come to us for tranquility and to forget their problems, not to learn about our problems. Our guests should never be burdened with our economic difficulties. Remember they are our guests and not our counselors. Tourism ethics requires that your personal life stay out of the workplace. If you are too agitated to work, then stay home. Once one is at the workplace, however, we have a moral responsibility to concentrate on the needs of our guests and not on our own needs. The best way to be calm in a crisis is to be prepared. The Covid-19 pandemic should teach to do good risk management and be prepared for foreseeable problems and “black swan events”.

PART 2

We began the year by reviewing some of the fundamental principles of a successful tourism business or industry. Tourism is multifaceted and despite the fact that there is no one form of tourism many of the industry’s basic principles hold true no matter in which aspect of the travel and tourism industry one works. Despite our cultural, linguistic, religious, and geographic differences human beings are basically the same around the world and the best principles of good tourism transcend cultures, languages, nations, and religious affiliation. Due to tourism’s unique ability to bring people together if use properly it can be an instrument for peace. This month we continue with some of the basics and fundamental principles of the tourism industry.

- Be prepared for to face both ongoing and new challenges. The tourism industry is part of a constantly changing world. The year 2023 will see multiple challenges about which travel & tourism professionals will have to face. Some of these are:

  - Climate crises that can impact your part of the industry, including flight cancellations or delays, and irregular heat and cold patterns
  - Economic pressure especially on the world’s middle class
  - Increased issues of crime
  - Higher levels than normal of professionals leaving the workforce due to retirement or feeling underappreciated. These include police, medical personnel, and other essential service providers
  - Fuel and Food shortages
  - Further divisions between the richer and poorer areas of the world
  - Greater numbers of people suing tourism business or tour operators due to poor service or not delivering what was promised.

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In a like manner, your community or attraction needs to train employees on how to handle health risks, travel changes, and personal security issues.

- **Use multiple methodologies to understand trends in tourism.** There is a tendency in tourism to use purely qualitative or quantitative analytical methodologies. Both are important and both can provide additional insights. Problems occur when we become so dependent on one form of analysis that we ignore the other. Remember people surveyed along with computerized data are not always truthful. Although these methods may be highly valid their reliability factors may be lower than what we believe. Polling errors both in the US and the UK ought to remind us of the principle of “garbage in/garbage out”.

- **Never forget that travel and tourism are very competitive industries.** It behooves tourism industry professionals to remember that the tourism industry is filled with multiple forms of transportation, hotels, restaurants, tour operators and tour guides and interesting places to visit and shop. Additionally, there are many places in the world with interesting history, beautiful scenery and great beaches.

- **Find a way to make the shopping experience unique.** In today’s interlocked world major cities no longer sell only their local products but provide wide variety of products from around the world. Basic principle: if you can get it there, you can probably get it here.

- **Do not forget that travelers today have more information than ever before.** The worst thing for a tourism industry is to be caught exaggerating or lying. It takes a long time to rebuild a reputation and in today’s world of social media, one mistake can spread like wildfire.

- **Marketing can aid in product development, but it cannot substitute for product(s) development.** A basic rule of tourism is that you cannot market what you do not have. Remember that the most successful form of marketing is word of mouth. Spend less money on classical marketing strategies and more money on customer service and product development.

- **Focus on the unique aspects of your part of the travel and tourism world.** Do not try to be all things to all people. Represent something that is special. Ask yourself: What makes your community or attraction different and unique from your competitors? How does your community/locale/country celebrate its individuality? If you were a visitor to your community, would you remember it a few days after you had left or would it be just one more place on the map? For example, do not just offer an outdoor experience, but individualize that experience, make your hiking trails special, or develop something unique about aquatic offerings. If, one the other hand, your community or destination is a creation of the imagination then allow the imagination to run wild and continually create new experiences.

- **Travel and Tourism professionals need to enjoy what they do project this sense of joie de vivre to their customers.** Travel and tourism is about having fun and if your employees are you do not come to work with a smile on your face then it would be better to seek another job. Visitors quickly ascertain our moods and professional attitude. The nice you are the more successful your company or local tourism community is going to be.

- **Be authentic.** Nothing gets unmasked more easily that a lack of authenticity. Do not try to be what you are not but rather be the best that you can be. Tourism locations that are authentic and natural tend to be the most successful. To be authentic does not mean only forests or beaches, but a unique presentation of cultural awareness.

- **Smiles are universal.** Perhaps the most important technique to learn in tourism is the way to smile. A sincere smile can compensate for many an error. Travel and tourism is built around principles of high expectations, many of which never get met. This gap between the image and the reality is not always the fault of the industry. There is little that the industry can do to make a rainstorm depart or to stop an unexpected blizzard. What we can do, is show people that we care and be creative. Most people can forgive an act of nature, but few customers will forgive a state of callousness or lack of caring.
Tourism is a customer driven experience. In the last few years too many tourism and visitor centers have worked hard at driving their customers from human-based experiences to web page experiences. The logic behind this move is that it will save large corporations such as airlines a great deal of money on wages. The risk that these companies will have to consider is that tourists develop relationships with people rather than web sites. As tourist and traveler corporations drive people to web sites, they should be ready to accept the fact that customer loyalty will decrease and that their frontline personnel’s actions become even more important.

Ask yourself if your tourism image is the same as that of your clients? For example, you may say that you are a family destination, but if your customers view you from another perspective, it will take a tremendous amount of marketing change the image. Before launching a new marketing campaign, consider how your destination makes its clientele feel, why people chose your destination over the competition, and what emotional benefits do your visitors receive when they chose your destination.

Our customers are not in school. All too often, especially on guided tours, we have the false notion that our customers are our students. Guides need to speak less and allow visitors to experience more. The average adult, on tour, stops listening after about 5-7 minutes. In a like manner too many police departments and security organizations falsely believe that they can educate the visitor regarding personal safety and security. Assume the visitor will pay no attention and develop security programs based on this simple fact.

- Strive to provide an enchanting travel and tourism experience. Tourism is not about education or school but about enchantment and the nurturing of the spirit. A lack of enchantment means that there are fewer and fewer reasons to want to travel and to participate in the tourism experience. For example, if every shopping mall looks the same or if the same menu exists in every hotel chain, why not simply stay at home? Why would anyone want to subject him/herself to dangers and hassles of travel, if our industry destroys the journey’s enchantment by rude and arrogant front-line personnel? To help your locale or attraction make money put a bit of the romance and enchantment back into your tourism product.

- When in doubt, the right thing to do is the best thing to do. Don’t cut corners because times are hard. This is the time to build a reputation for integrity by doing the right thing. Make sure to give customer’s their money’s worth rather than appearing to be selfish and greedy. The hospitality business is about doing for others, and nothing advertises a place better than giving that something extra in a period of economic constriction. In a like manner, managers should never cut their underlings salaries before they cut their own. If reduction in forces are necessary, a manager should personally handle the situation, present a good-bye token and never be absent on the day of a lay-off.

Compliments,

Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO)
Resource Mobilization and Development Department

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