

# OVER 80% OF CARIBBEAN HOTELS 'UPBEAT' FOR 2017

MORE than four out of every five Caribbean hoteliers "have an encouraging outlook for 2017", the region's main tourism organisations says.

Frank Comito, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association's (CHTA) director-general and chief executive, said the results of the organisation's second annual industry performance and outlook study showed sector players were becoming more upbeat about their growth prospects.

He said the survey showed "more than four out of five (81 per cent) hoteliers have an encouraging outlook for tourism in 2017."

Mr Comito added that the survey, conducted by CHTA, was undertaken "to assist the organisation in gaining a better understanding of the state of the tourism economy, its outlook, and the degree to which a number of factors impact - or may affect - the tourism industry."



FRANK COMITO

The CHTA survey, conducted during the first two weeks of 2017, took a representative sample of hotels, from various sizes and categories, throughout the Caribbean.

It looked at their 2016 performance and 2017 expectations in areas such as employment levels, revenue, profits, capital spending, room occupancy and rates.

In 2016, hoteliers report-

ed an even split on revenue performance, with 47 per cent recording an increase and a similar percentage reporting a decrease. While expectations for the year were initially higher initially, 2016's mixed performance came after an exceptional year for Caribbean tourism in 2015.

"Hoteliers entered 2016 with high performance expectations, but these were tempered as a combination of unanticipated factors surfaced during the year," said Mr Comito.

These events included a warmer than usual winter in

the region's primary feeder markets; Canadian and UK exchange rates; Brexit; the threat of Zika; and political and economic uncertainty in parts of the world.

Despite this, profitability improved over the previous year, with most hotels registering a net profit in 2016. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents reported a net profit, while 22 per cent reported a net loss.

Looking ahead, for 2017 more than two-thirds (67 per cent) of Caribbean hoteliers surveyed anticipate an increase in revenue, and 56 per cent expect a slight

improvement in profits.

Some 55 per cent of hotels also increased capital investment in 2016, with a quarter of those investing over 10 per cent more than they did in 2015.

"This is a positive sign and an indication of long-term confidence by Caribbean hoteliers in the industry," said Mr Comito.

Although room occupancy decreased for more than half (51 per cent) of the reporting hotels, a significant proportion (29 per cent) reported an increase in occupancy. More hoteliers are optimistic for 2017,

with two-thirds expecting an increase in occupancy.

Despite the fact that average daily room rates (ADR) were reduced by 45 per cent of hotels, some 42 per cent increased their's. For 2017, about 55 per cent of hoteliers expect to increase ADRs, while only 15 per cent expect downward pressure on rates.

Employment levels were maintained by 55 per cent of survey respondents in 2016, while only 17 per cent reduced staffing levels. Some 28 per cent hired more staff and this pattern is anticipated to continue in 2017.

## Bahamas remains in cruise 'driving seat'

From pg B1

"Norwegian Cruise Line will continue to call on Nassau, Bahamas, year-round with Norwegian Sky every Saturday; Norwegian Gem each week during the summer months; and Norwegian Escape, the line's largest ship, every Friday in the winter months and bi-weekly in the summer months."

It pointed out that Norwegian Cruise Line did not have any five-day cruises to the Bahamas, Tribune Business having been given two four-day cruise schedules, both of which confirmed the switch to Cuba.

Norwegian Cruise Line, in a statement issued to the media the previous day, said 25 four and five-day cruises during the 2017 second half will now enjoy "an overnight stay in Cuba's historical and culturally-rich capital of Havana".

Tribune Business obtained additional information showing that all-day calls on Nassau and Freeport were dropped to make way for Havana. This showed that the Norwegian Sky's four-day cruises from Miami to the Bahamas typically spend Tuesday's docked in Freeport from 8am to 5pm, followed by a Wednesday call in Nassau that lasts from 8am to 6pm.

Mr Wilchcombe said: "From time to time there will be changes and rotations, and we understand that. As far as we are concerned we have a good relationship with Norwegian and with the other cruise lines, and we intend to keep that."

"The Bahamas understands that we must always improve upon the product because of the competition, but we will also be in the driver's seat."

Mr Wilchcombe added: "Because Cuba cannot take some of the large vessels, the Bahamas will still be accommodating more of the large vessels, but Cuba is part of the Caribbean, such as Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and others, and we are working always with them on a multi-destination marketing. We must at all times continue to improve on our product."

Free National Movement (FNM) deputy leader, K Peter Turnquest, yesterday argued that the Bahamas needs to work "double time" to ensure that other cruise lines do not end their calls on Bahamian ports in favour of Cuba.

"We will experience a loss of customers, a loss in revenues and profits and an increase in our national debt," he said of Norwegian's decision. "When companies start to leave the Bahamas and a trend is allowed to begin, it is hard to stop."

"This change in destinations will mean that the Bahamas will lose out on 25 cruises, which make stops in both Nassau and Freeport, in the second half of 2017. This will have major negative impact on our tourism industry."

"With the US-Cuba relations on the mend, the Bahamas needs to work double time to ensure that other cruise lines do not end their calls on Bahamian ports."

giving its own take, said it was "regrettable" that Freeport and Nassau had been dropped from the 25 cruises' schedule, especially given Hurricane Matthew's impact on the former.

"The timing for the Sky to drop Freeport, Grand Bahama, an island that is still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Matthew, which struck the island in October 2016, is regrettable. We look forward to Norwegian returning to that island in 2018," the Ministry said.

It added that the Norwegian Sky would still be calling on Nassau on its three-day cruises, and said all the cruise lines vessels came to the Bahamas, being "vested" in this destination.

Pointing out that Norwegian's vessels all came under the Bahamian flag, the Ministry of Tourism said: "Figures from 2016 show that cruise visits were up by 5.8 per cent over 2015. A total of 4,219,218 visitors cruised to the Bahamas through to November last year, compared to 4,066,530 for the same period in 2015. As a result, thousands of jobs and millions of dollars have been injected into the Bahamian economy as a result of the cruise industry."

"Moreover, many cruise lines who committed to move their itinerary to Asia have moved back to the region, where the Bahamas owns the market share. This is further evident in the investments by all major cruise lines including Norwegian, Royal Caribbean, Disney, MSC and Carnival Cruise Line."

"It should be noted as well that several new cruises by major operators were added to the Bahamas in 2016, including the Carnival Vista, which has capacity for up to 5,000 guests, and Royal Caribbean Harmony, which has a capacity for up to 5,400."

## BAHAMAS AGRICULTURE & MARINE SCIENCE INSTITUTE

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### WEEKLY PRICE REPORT

WHOLESALE PRICES		BAMSI		USDA - AMS	
WEEK BEGINNING FEBRUARY 6TH, 2017				HIGH	LOW
Weight	Size	Crop			
100 lbs.		Pumpkin	0.42	0.32	0.30
50 lbs.		Cabbage	15.50	12.00	11.00
20 lbs.		Eggplant	6.00	9.00	6.00
25 lbs.		Tomato 6*6	23.00	9.00	5.00
25 lbs.		Tomato 6*7	21.00	9.00	5.00
25 lbs.		Cucumber	16.50	14.00	11.00
20 lbs.		Sweet Pepper	19.80	23.00	20.00
40 count		Avocado Pears	50.00	22.00	20.00
40 count		Sour Orange	9.00	N/A	N/A

  

RETAIL PRICES					
		Pumpkin	0.45	lb.	N/A
		Cabbage	0.39	lb.	0.99
		Eggplant	0.45	lb.	1.25
		Tomato 6*6	0.99	lb.	2.99
		Tomato 6*7	0.99	lb.	2.99
		Cucumber	0.89	lb.	1.99
		Sweet Pepper	0.99	lb.	3.99
		Avocado Pears	1.30	each	1.62
		Sour Orange	1.00	4 count	N/A

**SOURCE: USDA - AMS MIAMI**  
United States Department of Agricultural Market Service

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## News Release

January 12, 2017

### Bahamian spiny lobster fishery embarks on sustainability assessment

The Bahamian spiny lobster fishery has stepped forward for assessment to the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC) global standard for sustainable fishing. Working with scientists, the fishing industry and conservation groups, MSC has developed the world's most credible and recognized standard for environmentally sustainable wild-caught seafood.

Since 2009, the World Wildlife Fund, together with Bahamas Marine Exporters Association, The Bahamas Department of Marine Resources and The Nature Conservancy, have been driving improvements to the fishery. Through a Fishery Improvement Project addressing governance, fishing practices, and environmental impacts, their efforts have been aimed at helping the fishery meet the MSC standard.

Spiny lobster is an important commercial species in The Bahamas. The \$90 million Bahamian lobster industry employs about 9,000 fishers who cover a massive 45,000 square miles of ocean. More than 6 million pounds of spiny lobster tails are sold commercially each year, primarily to the United States and Europe.

If certified, these lobster tails will be eligible to carry the internationally recognized blue MSC ecolabel, which provides consumers an easy way to choose seafood that can be traced back to a certified sustainable source.

The independent assessment will be conducted by ME Certification Ltd., an accredited third-party conformity assessment body. ME Certification Ltd. will assemble a team of fishery science and policy experts to evaluate the fishery according to the three principles of the MSC Fisheries Standard: the health of the stock of spiny lobster; the impact of fishing on the marine environment; and the management of the fishery. The process takes around 18 months and is open to stakeholders. All results are peer reviewed and no decision is made about a fishery's sustainability until after the assessment is complete. ME Certification Ltd., will be conducting the assessment in Nassau, Bahamas from February 13 through the 17 in Nassau, Bahamas. Any interested organizations or persons interested in meeting with the assessment team during their visit please contact The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Practitioner Natalie Miaoulis at 1-242-326-0024 or email at [Natalie.Miaoulis@tnc.org](mailto:Natalie.Miaoulis@tnc.org).

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