



Center for Responsible Travel

CREST at Stanford University
450 Serra Mall Building 50, Room 51D
Stanford, CA 94305
650-723-0894

CREST Washington, DC
1333 H Street, NW Suite 300, East Tower Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 347-9203 x.414

www.responsibletravel.org
www.travelersphilanthropy.org

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PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Samantha Hogenson
Phone: (202) 347-9203 x414
Email: shogenson@responsibletravel.org



**Upcoming Innovators Symposium Showcases Eco-Practices of Large Tourism Companies and Boutique Resorts;
Announces New Initiatives to Strengthen Sustainable Tourism in the Caribbean
July 9-11, 2014 ~ Grenada, West Indies**

Register today at: CTOCRESTSymposium.com

(Washington, DC) 19 June, 2014: The Innovators Symposium, which opens in Grenada July 9, is bringing together some of the Caribbean's finest boutique resorts along with its largest tourism companies to showcase their shared commitment to sustainable tourism. In addition, several new innovative 'green' initiatives will be launched at the Symposium.

Among the speakers are executives from some of the Caribbean's leading, large-scale tourism companies. These include:

- Miguel Pena, Sustainability Director, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, which has compiled a number of eco-awards including the “Best Eco-Friendly Cruise Line” (Porthole Magazine);
- Ryan Crabbe, Senior Director Global Spa Brands, Hilton Worldwide, will share how Hilton's global approach to wellness and spa tourism contributes responsibly to the international tourism economy and how large brands are now making a difference;
- Kressville Ritchie, Hotel Manager of Sandals LaSource in Grenada which is part of the leading, Caribbean owned hotel chain whose mission combines high quality services with “being among the most eco-friendly and community-friendly resorts in the hospitality industry”;
- Jake Kheel, Environmental Director at Puntacana Resort & Club in the Dominican Republic, which is recognized as one of the top 100 most socially responsible resorts in the world (Island Magazine) and winner of numerous awards including [Condé Nast Traveler’s](#) World Savers Award and the WTTC’s Destination Stewardship Award.
- Sean Allyne, General Manager of The Crane in Barbados, the Caribbean’s oldest continuously operating resort and named “Top 50 Places to Go Before You Die” (BBC’s Holiday Programme).



The line-up of speakers also includes owners and sustainability experts from top eco-resorts in the Americas:

- Ewald Beimens, Owner CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resorts in Aruba, one of the Caribbean’s greenest hotels. According to Beimens, “We’re eco-pioneers, and creating a sustainable, eco-friendly resort is woven throughout the fabric of our company culture. We’re proud to have initiated the first Green Globe 21 certification of hotels in Aruba in 2000, and we are the first resort in the Americas to be certified ISO 14001.”
- Michael Robbins, an advisor to Arviat, a community ecotourism project in northern Canada and winner of the top 2014 Community Tourism for Tomorrow Award, sponsored by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC);
- Mary Elizabeth Gifford, of Washington Spa Alliance, who is known for her expertise in organic luxury, organic and Biodynamic agriculture, and plant-based beauty; she works with some of the world’s top-rated destination spas and will share how spas in the Caribbean region can nurture & strengthen staff culture and attract the conscious consumer;
- And from Grenada, Spice Island Beach Resort, True Blue Bay Resort, and Calabash Resort, all family owned and eco-certified, or working toward certification; all are recognized for their outstanding environmental and socially responsible practices.

One of the new initiatives to be unveiled at the Symposium the Skyviews Sustainability Awards program which will enable tourism businesses, irrespective of size, to measure their progress towards sustainability and to create a resilient supporting environment. The voluntary program measures businesses’ impact on biodiversity, energy, waste, water, and social governance with guidelines on how to achieve best practice in each category, based on globally recognized standards. It was developed by Skyviews Inc., a Barbados-based company that features some 600 tourism businesses on its maps and pocket guides of Caribbean destinations.

“We are at a pivotal point in the course of history and the degradation of earths supporting ecosystems. We have before us an urgent call and challenge to adopt sustainable business practices and decouple environmental degradation from economic progress in order to create continued well-being,” said Jessica Bensley, the chief executive officer of Skyviews Inc.

In addition, Grenada together with CREST will announce plans to launch a new travelers’ philanthropy program for the island which will raise voluntary contributions from travelers and tourism businesses to support a select number of worthy conservation and community projects. “Our program will be the first of its kind in the Caribbean,” says Jennifer Alexis, a Compete Caribbean Consultant, supporting Grenada’s hotel cluster. “It will help to strengthen the ‘Pure Grenada’ brand by deepening the island’s commitment to socially and environmentally responsible tourism while enriching the travel experience by providing opportunities for visitors to learn about and contribute ‘time, talent or treasure’ to assist local organizations that are addressing critical needs in Grenada. The program will be designed to appeal to a broad range of interests for travel philanthropists.”

The July 9-11 Innovators Symposium is a partnership between the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the Washington-based Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), Grenada's Ministry of Tourism, and the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association.

Over 40 regional and international tourism experts will speak on various aspects of sustainable coastal and marine tourism at the event where up to 150 participants from across the Americas will explore challenges to the wider adoption of sustainable tourism models. The three-day conference will feature 16 workshops and five plenary sessions that will cover an extensive range of topics.

Delegates will stay in four of Grenada's leading eco-boutique resorts, while the proceedings will be held mainly at St. George's University.

Highlighting the importance of the Symposium, speaker James Dobbin, President & CEO, Dobbin International Inc, Strategic Spatial Development Planning, says:

The economies on the Caribbean Islands (and many small islands worldwide) revolve around tourism related industries. Their natural resources attract visitors from around the globe and communities are dependent on the income generated from tourism development. Sustainable coastal tourism to many communities is their lifeline. Poor tourism and resort development that degrades natural resources will result in a reduction in visitors and income over time, leading to failing local, national, and regional economies. Global climate change and sea level rise will also have serious short- and long-term implications on sustainable coastal tourism development. The CTO CREST Symposium on Coastal Tourism Development at St Georges University, Grenada from 9-11, July 2014, will be a great opportunity to delve into these issues with many leaders in the field.

For Symposium details and updates, including how you can participate, visit www.CTOCRESTSymposium.com or contact any of the following:

- CREST at staff@responsibletravel.org or 202-347-9203, ext. 414
- CTO New York office at CTOny@caribtourism.com or 212-635-9530
- Grenada Tourism Authority (GTA) at gbt@spiceisle.com or 473-440-2279/2001
- Grenada Hotel & Tourism Association at pancy@ghta.org or 473-444-1353

The Symposium for Innovators in Coastal Tourism is supported a growing list of sponsors including by [Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort](#), [St. George's University](#), [Compete Caribbean](#), the [Inter-American Development Bank](#), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) & World Bank "Sustainable Financing and Management of Eastern Caribbean Marine Ecosystems" project, German Ministry for the Environment-funded [GIZ-ICCAS Project in Grenada](#), [Puntacana Resort & Club](#), [The Travel Foundation](#), [The Ocean Foundation](#), and [True Blue Bay Resort](#).



About the Caribbean Tourism Organization:

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), with headquarters in Barbados and offices in New York and London, is the Caribbean's tourism development agency comprising membership of over 30 countries and territories including Dutch, English, French and Spanish, as well as a myriad of private sector allied members. The CTO's vision is to position the Caribbean as the most desirable, year round, warm weather destination, and its purpose is Leading Sustainable Tourism - One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean.

Among the benefits to its members the organization provides specialized support and technical assistance in sustainable tourism development, marketing, communications, advocacy, human resource development, event planning & execution and research & information technology.

In addition the CTO, in partnership with the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association, jointly and equally owns the Caribbean Tourism Development Company, a marketing and business development entity dedicated to promoting the Caribbean brand worldwide.

The CTO's Headquarters is located at Baobab Tower, Warrens, St. Michael, Barbados BB 22026; Tel: (246) 427-5242; Fax: (246) 429-3065; E-mail: CTObarbados@caribtourism.com. The CTO's New York office is located at 80 Broad St., Suite 3302, New York, NY 10004, USA: Tel: (212) 635-9530; Fax: (212) 635-9511; E-mail: CTOny@caribtourism.com; The CTO's London office is located at The Quadrant, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1BP, England. Tel: 011 44 208 948 0057; Fax: 011 44 208 948 0067; E-mail: CTOlondon@caribtourism.com

For more information on the Caribbean Tourism Organization please visit www.OneCaribbean.org.
Get the latest CTO updates on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/ctotourism>.
Connect with CTO on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CaribbeanTourismOrganization>.

About the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST):

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a unique non-profit organization affiliated with Stanford University, devoted to increasing the positive global impact of responsible tourism. Founded in 2003, CREST functions as a bi-coastal institute, with offices in Washington, DC, and at Stanford University in California.

CREST stands alone in the areas of environmentally sustainable and socially responsible tourism, having built an international network of highly-trained experts providing interdisciplinary analysis and solutions, as well as publications, conferences, courses, training, and educational workshops. CREST delivers programs and services in field research, feasibility and impact studies, market research, certification programs, traveler's philanthropy and strengthening sustainable tourism and ecotourism. CREST's mission is to promote responsible tourism policies and practices globally so that local communities may thrive and steward their cultural resources and biodiversity.

The rapid pace of resort and vacation home developments along coastlines and on islands is contributing to a variety of environmental and social issues. CREST has sought to critically address these through research and analysis of the coastal tourism sector - the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry - in order to lessen the social and environmental impact of these developments, and increase the benefits for local communities on the coast.

CREST has extensive experience examining and providing policy recommendations to the coastal tourism sector including several reports and publications: 1) "Alternative Development Models & Good Practices for Sustainable Coastal Tourism: A Framework for Decision Makers in Mexico", a report which compiles existing best practices for sustainable, large-scale coastal tourism developments in Mexico, and provides recommendations for implementation at the policy level; 2) "The Impact of Tourism Related Development along Costa Rica's Pacific Coast", a multi-dimensional study which critically assesses the growth, trends and impacts of tourism and tourism related development along Costa Rica's Pacific Coast; 3) "Global Trends in Coastal Tourism", a study funded by WWF, which analyzes global trends in coastal and marine tourism; 4) "Cruise Tourism Impacts in Costa Rica & Honduras: Policy Recommendations for Decision Makers" and "Cruise Tourism in Belize: Perceptions of Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts", two reports which take a critical look at the impacts of the cruise tourism industry in Central America.

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