

Tourism trends in the Caribbean

González-Sánchez, Cynthia

Catalonian Politechnic University, School of Architecture, Barcelona, Spain
e-mail: cynthia.margarita.gonzalez@estudiant.upc.edu

Muñoz-Salinas, Francisco

Catalonian Politechnic University, School of Architecture, Barcelona, Spain
e-mail: francisco.munoz@upc.edu

Roset, Jaume

Catalonian Politechnic University, School of Architecture, Barcelona, Spain
e-mail: roset@fa.upc.edu

Abstract

The Caribbean is a great holiday destination, along with Europe, Asia and South America. But it is one of the regions that depend more economically on the touristic sector. That is why there is a need to innovate and reinvent the touristic offer constantly. Throughout the years, tendencies and tourism types has changed and developed, adapting to the market and clients expectations.

Beach hotel, all inclusive hotel offers, mountain tourism, hiking, ecotourism, city tourism, are some of the types of tourism that we highlight in this region. Nowadays, in seeking to expand the offer to the clients, the hotels have included some variations in the services, such as Spas, golf, convention centers, big casinos, etc.

The aim of this paper is to list the latest tendencies in hotel design and services in the Caribbean Region, and highlight its progresses in energy efficiency and sustainable design.

Keywords: Caribbean, trends, hotel, sustainable

Introduction

In the Caribbean the touristic offer is usually divided in Family, Spa and Wellness and Exploration. In this categories many touristic activities shows; like cruises, spas, sports, exploring natural parks, diving, sailing, etc.

Arrivals in the Caribbean are estimated to have risen 4% in 2010, more than enough to make up for the decline in 2009, with three of the major destinations recording new peaks: Jamaica (+5%), Cuba (+4%) and the Dominican Republic (+3%). By getting to know which islands and countries form this beautiful place in paradise we will find out their main touristic offers.

The Caribbean region

The Caribbean is a region formed by a group of islands, the Antilles, located in the Caribbean Sea, and the surrounding coasts. The Antilles are divided in various groups:

- The Greater Antilles
 - Hispaniola
 - Haiti
 - Dominican Republic

- Jamaica
- Cuba
- Puerto Rico
- Cayman Islands
- Lucayan Archipelago
 - Bahamas
 - Turks and Caicos Islands
- Lesser Antilles
 - U.S. Virgin Islands
 - Saint Croix
 - Saint Thomas
 - Saint John
 - Water Island
 - British Virgin Islands
 - Tortola
 - Virgin Gorda
 - Anegada
 - Jost Van Dyke
 - Anguilla
 - Antigua and Barbuda
 - Saint Martin
 - Saba
 - Sint Eustatius
 - Saint Barthélemy
 - Saint Kitts and Nevis
 - Montserrat
 - Guadeloupe
- Windward Islands
 - Dominica
 - Martinique
 - Saint Lucia
 - Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
 - Grenada
 - Barbados
 - Trinidad and Tobago
- Leeward Antilles
 - Aruba
 - Curaçao
 - Bonaire



Figure 1 Caribbean map

All these countries have many things in common; similar yearly temperature rates, similar landscape, same natural disaster possibilities, energy dependency, growing tourism industry. It looks like they all have the same to offer, and for a tourist, it may be difficult to decide which island to visit in paradise.

Tourism trends

The purpose in diversifying the touristic offer of a country is mainly to have more visitors throughout the year, to get those tourists to come back and to gain international prestige. Also, being part of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC), which aims to take care of the ecosystem and promote a balanced development to the countries, establish that this area is a unit of cultural and socioeconomic diversity and biological richness whose development depends on sustainable tourism and the principles of integration, cooperation and consensus, to facilitate the integrated development of the Greater Caribbean.

Some of the new offers and touristic trends are:

Tobacco and rum tourism.

In La Romana, Dominican Republic, Tobaccos García Company shows visitors how they prepare handmade cigars with diverse tour types: Discovery tour, Aficionado Factory tour, Private Cigar tour and tasting, Cigar Masters tour and tasting and Cigar tasting basics.



Figure 2 Tobaccos García Company

In Guyana El Dorado Rum is a line of production by the Demerara Distillery. Visitors will see how this unique blend of Eldorado 5, 10 or 15 years old rum is being produced.

“La route des rhums” is a self-guided tour that directs visitors to 10 famed distilleries throughout the Isle of Flowers in Martinique.

Golf Tourism

Dominican Republic with its 28 golf fields, designed by prestigious firms, is one of the major golf destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Figure 3 Punta Espada Golf Club, Dominican Republic

There are two 18 hole golf courses on Antigua. There is also a miniature golf park at Dickenson Bay. In the Bahamas Islands there are 13 championship golf courses available.

There are also other islands where to play golf, like Aruba, Belize, Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico.

Since 2007, Bermuda has been home to the PGA Grand Slam of Golf, the season-ending showcase featuring golf's premier foursome. The island has 7 championship golf courses. There is an offer to get a sample of the courses by following a three or five day itinerary.

Bonairean Golf Club in Bonaire, it's a complete natural local environment, which means no grass grown fairways, sophisticated greens, but fairways with the spares local vegetation and "browns", existing from local soil, instead of greens. The objective is to keep the landscaping as natural as possible.

Sailing and Fishing

The "Antigua Sailing Week" each April welcomes participants from all corners of the globe to compete for the chance to win this prestigious Regatta.

Granada has an annual "Spiceisle Billfish Tournament" on a tag and release system just like in Cap Cana, Dominican Rpublic with participating boats from Puerto Rico. The two week-ends "Grenada Sailing Festival" also calls international attention with keelboats form the UK, USA, Europe, and with strong competition from local yachts from Grenada & the Caribbean Region.

In the British Virgin Island sailing is very popular. The "Arriving by Sea" section of the official tourism website provides information on Marinas, Yacht Clubs, Ports of Entry, Moorings & Anchorages.



Figure 4 Grenada Sailing Festival

In Cuba the "Jardines del Rey" (Big Game Trolling) tournament takes place in the Intenational Marina of Cayo Guillermo. Also the International Fishing Tournament of the Needle "Ernest Hemingway" takes place at the Hemingway Marina.

Diving

The Caribbean is well known by its countless reefs, towering coral pinnacles and underwater caves. There are diverse diving activities, In the British Virgin Islands the diving is organized by day itineraries or a list of diving sites, and diving companies are listed by island and diving classes.



Figure 5 Diving picture. British Virgin Islands

In Curaçao there is the Mushroom Forest for diving, an underwater jungle of 10-foot, mushroom-shaped star coral.

Grenada shows new diving attractions like the fourteen new sculptures at underwater sculpture park and the launch of Sandy Island / Oyster Bed Marine Protected Area.

Carnival

There are several Carnival celebrations through the islands. Like La Vega's Carnival in Dominican Republic. In Trinidad and Tobago there is a carnival with massive masquerade bands, spectacular costumes and pulsating music that last three days.

Antigua & Barbuda Carnival takes place throughout the streets of St. John's and in Carnival City, located at the Antigua Recreation Grounds.

Cayman's National Carnival Batabano is a celebration of Caymanian and Caribbean culture through cuisine, music, dance and other arts.



Figure 6 La Vega's Carnival. Dominican Republic

In Curaçao Carnival is one of the largest and longest-lasting Carnival spectacles of the Caribbean. With the Jumps In (Indoor) and Jumps out (outdoor) Carnival groups that assemble and dance to raise money for their participation in the Gran Marcha ("The Grand Parade").

Real State tourism.

Participating in international Real State tourism fairs or property shows, in which they offer targeted customers the opportunity to buy and invest in countries such as, Dominican Republic and Bonaire. The government gives information and facilities for purchasing a vacation or permanent home. Some international real estate agencies offer luxury properties in St. Barts Island as well.

Ecotourism.

This is an important new trend in the Caribbean countries; it is related to sustainable tourism because it promotes community involvement in tourism development by taking advantage of the mountains, rivers, culture and history.

In Antigua & Barbuda there are some legislations regarding sustainable tourism for areas of: tourism management capacity; marketing; transportation; environment; linkages and health, safety and security. Also, declaring new areas as national parks, like Green Castle Hill, Fort Barrington and Half Moon Bay.

The “Antigua Rainforest Canopy Tour” is a unique eco-tour through Antigua's lush rainforest where you embark on a journey through the verdant forest, high above the trees. In Belize there is a canopy tour as well called “Ziplining” where you can soar above the jungle canopy traversing from one platform to another.



Figure 7 Zipline. Belize

Bonaire has created a master plan to control the development of the island without harming its natural wonders. Currently Bonaire has a total of 5 Ramsar Sites¹ on the island. Bonaire has a long history of marine preservation, beginning with turtle protection in 1961, prohibition of spear fishing in 1971 and protection of coral, dead or alive, in 1975. The island's strategic goal is to become a sustainable destination, having a healthier environment, the plan is to have a 20% reduction of dumped waste, and also utilize more energy efficient methods. Bonaire is striving to become Carbon Neutral. The goal is to become a tourism destination that is in balance, identifying, measuring and reducing gas emissions (GHG), and 100 percent of the remaining

¹ Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) is a governmental treaty which enshrines the commitments made by member countries to maintain the ecological characteristics of Wetlands of International Importance.

emissions will be offset through high quality renewable energy, energy efficiency and or reforestation projects.

“The chocolate route” in Hato Mayor Province, national park Los Haitises in Dominican Republic is another example of community tourism.

In Cuba, the “Nature Tourism” international event will offer an itinerary through a wide area of the Cuban archipelago, has significant natural and cultural attractions. There are a great amount of national parks, protected areas and Biosphere Reserves.

“The Cotton Tree Chocolate Factory Tour”. This tour offers a unique look at the process of chocolate making in Punta Gorda, Belize. Also an abundance of national parks, private nature reserves and botanical gardens offer a range of rainforest activities for the quiet observer to the active adventurer.

Dominica has turned to eco-tourism because it lacks the geography that makes other Caribbean destinations attractive by advertising its natural, undeveloped beauty. Local guides are involved in protecting one of the more popular tourist draws: nesting sea turtles. Specially trained local guides lead limited tours to the nesting areas so it has no interfere with the nesting process.

In Aruba, hikers can explore the Arikok National Park. Also, 7 of the 57 Green Globe-certified hotels² in the Caribbean area, are in Aruba: Playa Linda, Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Bucuti Beach Resort and Tara Beach Suites, Costa Linda Beach Resort, Aruba Beach Club, La Cabana Beach & Racquet Club and Manchebo Beach Resort.

Puerto Rico holds some of the bioluminescent bays of the world. Bioluminescent bays are filled with microscopic organisms called dinoflagellates that with a certain environment flourish. Puerto Rico has 3 bioluminescent bays: La Parguera, Fajardo and Vieques. There is also the largest cave system in the Western Hemisphere at Camuy’s National Cave Park.

Bermuda’s Gilbert Nature Reserve and Springfield offers five acres of unspoiled woodland and bird watching. Other natural reserves are: Gladys Morrell Nature Reserve, Par-la-Ville Park and The Arboretum.

The Indigenous communities of the Amazon Rainforest in Guyana offer a unique community tourism experience. The friendly Macushis and Patamonas of Surma and Wowetta in the Rupununi and the Arawaks of Santa Mission invite you to spend a few days and experience their traditional Indigenous culture.

In Jamaica the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) project is devolving with aims to involve local people in the planning of tourism activities.

Martinique is rapidly emerging for green tourism, thanks especially to its volcanic north and a tropical forest that is unique to the region. The Route de la Trace is a genuine botanical circuit through the heart of this tropical forest that winds its way up Mount Pelee. Other routes are Canal de Beauregard known as the Slave Canals, La Trace des Jesuites, La Trace des Caps, La randonnee Grand Riviere/Precheur.

St. Martin has created 17 walking trails around the island, including a information about distance, altitude, start and finish point.

The first National Tourism Park was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2004. Every year provides patrons with tourism-focused, interactive experiences, such as the opportunity to interact with

² Green Globe Certification is a travel and tourism industries’ worldwide certification label for sustainable management and operations.

live animals, learn from our nation's tour guides and view fun and educational videos within a highly entertaining atmosphere.

Religious Tourism

This type of tourism shows the main religious places related to important events in the catholic (or other religions) in history.

“Houses of Worship” in Bonaire is a list of Churches, Mosques and Synagogues that give services in Papiamentu, Dutch, English and Spanish.



Figure 8 San Bernardo Church. Bonaire

In the Dominican Republic there is the “Faith Path” in La Vega, it is a journey or pilgrimage that covers diverse monuments and sites with catholic religious relevance. It is known to be the town that led to the first evangelization of America. Also, the “Santuario del Santo Cerro” can be visited, in which Christopher Columbus sent to lay the first cross of America.

In Anguilla there is a “Places of Worship” guide, with a list of churches for the predominant religious denominations, their address and timetable.

Weddings

The Caribbean has become a great destination for weddings. Its beautiful beaches have provided the setting for romantic destination weddings. There is much information available in the license procedure and costs, like in Anguilla or Antigua & Barbuda with its “Celebrity Destination Wedding” contest.

The bridal registry in Aruba helps the bride's friends and family select the perfect gift for the newlyweds.

In Cayman Islands there is an interactive website called “Caiman Vows” to find a wedding style: chic, barefoot, private, elegant and grand, etc. According to the test result, there is a list of beaches, hotels and restaurants that matches the style. There are also underwater wedding services.

In the Islands of The Bahamas weddings are easy to plan, especially when you choose to work with the professional consultants and the staff at the resort.



Figure 9 Wedding. Bahamas

Many of Bermuda's hotels are experts in destination weddings with an emphasis on special themes such as "Exotic Cave" to "Eco-Chic" weddings.

Meetings

There are many offers for hosting events in a variety of convention centers in the Caribbean.

There are destination management companies that organize events, offering both accommodation and meeting facilities range from big to small, with a broad variety of meeting and conference facilities.

"Welcome to the perfect blend of business and pleasure." They state in Bermuda. Also, they have an online meeting planning form available. A "Meeting Guide" helps organizers in the details of an event.



Figure 10 Convention Center. Puerto Rico

Some other countries with large or small event facilities are: Guyana, Dominican Republic, Barbados, Jamaica, Martinique and Puerto Rico.

Others

There is an intent or initiative that within a year or two, nationals and residents of eight (8) Southern Caribbean tourist destinations (Grenada, Columbia, Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Columbia, and Trinidad and Tobago,) should be able to purchase one ticket and travel to all eight destinations. It will also enable them to choose between sailing from port to port aboard a cruise ship, fly to the next destination, or use a ferry.

Five artisan villages will be constructed over the next five years in resort towns in Jamaica. The villages are envisaged as 'one stop' venues for authentic Jamaican food, music, heritage and craft, as it is believed the current craft market concept in Jamaica is inadequate to showcase and sell the Jamaican experience to visitors.

Puerto Rico's natural landscapes and picturesque cityscapes have provided the setting for many blockbuster Hollywood films and highly acclaimed television shows. Some sites are Arecibo Observatory, El Yunque, Palomino Island and Old San Juan.

Conclusion

As we can see, there are different trends in Caribbean tourism, the common intentions are to unify and consolidate the zone as a first class holiday destination market, highlighting the

natural resources of each island, protecting the environment and continue to improve services to increase growth.

It is clear that each government should create laws and policies that promote these objectives and continue to participate in the institutions or organizations that perform and promote these changes.

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