

## **Port St. Maarten delegation learns Caribbean cruise market share likely to increase**

**2017-06-22 PORT ST. MAARTEN – The Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) and cruise stakeholders showed interest in increasing cruise calls to destination St. Maarten in the coming seasons as the vessels are getting larger with limited Ports in the region that can accommodate these vessels.**

The Port St. Maarten delegation who recently returned from Aruba was informed of the aforementioned while attending the FCCA PAMAC (Platinum Associate Membership Advisory Council) Conference.

There are immense opportunities for the Caribbean, but destinations must increase their marque value and appeal, Port St. Maarten reps were informed. The strength in regional development also ties in with the satisfaction of various destinations in the itinerary chain. If a key destination lags behind industry development, it can also be a threat to destination St. Maarten. The Caribbean must step up their game to better compete against other emerging markets such as Asia, said Port St. Maarten reps on Thursday.

PAMAC brought together over 200 Platinum Members of the FCCA and key cruise tourism stakeholders who met with 20 senior executives from the FCCA Member Line as part of a relationship and business building process.

Cruise executives presented industry developments and reiterated about the importance of having a strong social media presence as a destination.

The port delegation that travelled to Aruba had a series of meetings with cruise stakeholders.

MSC Cruises announced that they will be penetrating the Caribbean market and St. Maarten is one of the destinations that they showed interest in. MSC Cruises will have its inaugural call for their first Seaside class vessel in St. Maarten later this year.

The seaside class vessels is considered as game changers and are making further investments for Future Larger Vessels (FLV). Their FLV vessels announced earlier this month is slated to have more passenger's occupancy of Oasis of the Seas totaling 6850 passengers.

President of the FCCA Michele Paige in an invited comment stated: „The Caribbean continues to impress cruise lines and passengers, which has led to the industry's planned capacity share increase next season. Destinations like St. Maarten have helped this boost through attention to products, service and infrastructure, but though more passengers and bigger ships bring immense opportunities, they also bring new challenges. So it is crucial for the overall region and individual destinations to maintain their focus on constant improvement in order to take advantage of this industry's bright future.”

Port management said that they are actively engaging with the stakeholders to assure that the Port and destination is prepared for this new wave of vessels. Port management also agreed to participate in the upcoming BREA (Business Research Economic Advisors) survey cycle for 2018 which compares more than 30 destinations worldwide based on passenger and crew spending and economic contributions.



Port St. Maarten uses the BREA report as an analytical tool to better understand the cruise industry movement and product development. BREA is a public document that can be retrieved on the FCCA website, and Port St. Maarten encourages local tour operators and retailers to study the aforementioned in order to better understand the customer, demands and ratings.

Port management said that they are continuing to develop the country's product in order to main the destinations competitive edge in the Caribbean. St. Maarten is still one of the top-rated destinations which is frequently benchmarked by other Ports.

Business intelligence shows that the cruise industry is still in the infancy stage and more than 40 new build ocean going vessels is slated to be delivered between 2017 and 2023.

The evolving cruise industry estimates that nearly 26 million passengers will cruise globally in 2017. The Caribbean basin still accounts for the largest market share at 34% followed by the Mediterranean at 19%.

Port St. Maarten is following global cruise trends in order to better cater to their business to business and business to consumer customers focusing on customer centricity and operational excellence.

Representing the Port were Bertrand Peters, General and Government Affairs, and Ichel Moeslikan, Sales and Marketing, and Alexander Gumbs, Business Development Officer as well as a representative from the St. Maarten Tourist Bureau, Cherinah Franken, Product Development Officer.

The PAMAC event is one of many that the FCCA coordinates for its Platinum Members and Member Lines to stay at the forefront of information about both the industry and destinations while finding ways to maximize the benefits for all.

The FCCA is a not-for-profit trade organization composed of 19 Member Lines operating over 100 vessels in Floridaian, Caribbean and Latin American waters. Created in 1972, the FCCA's mandate is to provide a forum for discussion on tourism development, ports, safety, security, and other cruise industry issue and to develop bilateral relationships with destinations' private and public sectors.

By fostering an understanding of the cruise industry and its operating practices, the FCCA works with governments, ports and private sector representatives to maximize cruise passenger, crew and cruise line spending, as well as enhance the destination experience and increase the amount of cruise passengers returning as stay-over visitors.

The PAMAC conference took place in Aruba at the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino.



PHOTO CUTLINE: L to R: Adam Ceserano (FCCA Senior Vice President), Alexander Gumbs (Port St. Maarten), President of the FCCA Michele Paige, Ichel Moeslikan (Port St. Maarten), Cherinah Franken (St. Maarten Tourist Bureau), and Bertrand Peters (Port St. Maarten).

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