

SOTIC 2026 to Feature Cruise Master Class as Guyana Advances Cruise Tourism Ambitions

FCCA CEO Michele Paige to headline initiative focused on building capacity and unlocking new opportunities in cruise tourism

BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), in collaboration with Aquila Center for Cruise Excellence, will host a special Cruise Master Class during the 2026 State of the Tourism Industry Conference (SOTIC) in Guyana (Oct. 5-9, 2026), as the country takes important steps toward developing its potential as an emerging cruise tourism destination.



Norris Clement, CTO's Deputy Director of Professional Services

The Master Class, titled "Maximizing Destination Value through Cruise Tourism," will feature Michele Paige, CEO of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), bringing one of the cruise industry's leading voices to Georgetown for a productive exchange designed to strengthen understanding of the sector and help Guyana assess the opportunities, requirements and partnerships necessary to build a competitive cruise tourism product. FCCA works with destinations and cruise lines across the Caribbean and Latin America to strengthen cruise tourism development and maximize the economic benefits generated by the sector.

The session will provide tourism officials, private-sector stakeholders and other participants with practical industry insights into areas such as destination readiness, product development, shore experiences, service excellence, cruise line expectations and the creation of sustainable economic opportunities for local communities.

Norris Clement, CTO's deputy director of professional services, said the Master Class reflects CTO's commitment to ensuring that tourism growth is supported by the skills, knowledge and institutional capacity required to deliver long-term benefits. "Cruise tourism presents the entire

Caribbean with an exciting opportunity. But we must have a clear understanding of how the industry works and the importance of strong partnerships, compelling visitor experiences and a workforce and business community prepared to deliver at a consistently high standard.”

Clement said: “This Master Class is about building that foundation and equipping stakeholders with practical knowledge that can help Guyana and the wider Caribbean continue to approach cruise tourism strategically, sustainably and competitively.”

The Cruise Master Class aligns with CTO’s Reimagine Plan 2025–2027 and supports the ongoing work of its Cruise, Yachting and Ferry Committee, which is focused on strengthening engagement between Caribbean destinations and the cruise sector and expanding the benefits generated by marine tourism across the region.

Beth Hatt, founder of Aquila Center for Cruise Excellence, said Guyana has an opportunity to draw on proven industry experience and practical tools as it shapes its approach to cruise tourism. “For destinations across the Caribbean, cruise tourism represents an important opportunity, but maximizing that opportunity requires looking beyond the cruise call itself. It means understanding where value is created and where it can be strengthened, while building destination readiness, compelling visitor experiences, local participation and strong partnerships. We look forward to helping stakeholders explore how cruise tourism can contribute to broader tourism growth and long-term destination resilience.”



Beth Hatt, Founder of Aquila Center for Cruise Excellence



Ambra Attus, Director of Impact, Development and Growth at Aquila

Aquila Center for Cruise Excellence, who will be represented in Guyana by both Hatt and Ambra Attus, director of impact, development and growth, is a leading destination training provider for the global cruise industry. Drawing on more than 35 years of experience operating Aquila Tours and its Living Lab in Saint John, New Brunswick — where guest experiences are designed, tested and refined — the organization delivers training and development programs for destinations, tour companies, tour guides and front-line operators.

Aquila, a CTO Allied Member, works with cruise lines and destination stakeholders to support long-term cruise destination success.

Guyana's emergence as a potential cruise destination adds a distinctive dimension to the Caribbean cruise landscape, complementing the region's established island ports with experiences rooted in the country's natural environment, cultural diversity and adventure tourism product.

Under the theme "Tourism Futures: Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive," this year marks the first time Guyana will host CTO's flagship State of the Tourism Industry Conference.

SOTIC brings together tourism ministers, commissioners and directors of tourism, private-sector executives, industry specialists, media and other regional and international stakeholders to examine the issues and opportunities shaping the future of Caribbean tourism.

To register, visit <https://sotic.onecaribbean.org>.

About the Caribbean Tourism Organization

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), headquartered in Barbados, is the Caribbean's tourism development agency, comprising membership of the region's finest countries and territories, including Dutch-, English- and French-speaking, as well as a range of private-sector allied members. 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 and execution, and research and information technology.

CTO's headquarters is located at Baobab Tower, Warrens, St. Michael, Barbados BB 22026.

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For more information about the Caribbean Tourism Organization, visit www.OneCaribbean.org and follow the CTO on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn to be part of the conversation.

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