

Destinations take center stage at FCCA Cruise Conference in Puerto Rico

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO, October 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- With global cruise passenger numbers projected to climb from about 37 million in 2025 to 46 million by 2031, Caribbean and Latin American destinations are well positioned to benefit from the industry's continued expansion, drawing on their distinctive visitor experiences, tourism infrastructure and strong relationships with cruise lines to generate greater economic opportunity.

That message emerged from the 32nd annual Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) Cruise Conference & Trade Show, held Oct. 12-16 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where close to 700 cruise executives, government officials, port operators, tour providers and other stakeholders gathered to explore opportunities to strengthen tourism offerings and expand the benefits of growth for local communities.

"Destinations are at the heart of what makes cruising such a compelling vacation experience," said Adam Ceserano, president of FCCA. "Today's travelers want variety, authenticity and memorable experiences, and our destination partners are essential to delivering that. This conference demonstrated the tremendous opportunities that exist when cruise lines and destinations work together to create value for guests and local communities."

The importance of destinations was a central theme of the President & CEO Leadership Panel,



Puerto Rico Gov. Jenniffer González Colón and FCCA CEO Michele Paige are pictured with cruise tourism leaders at the ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opening the 32nd annual FCCA Cruise Conference & Trade Show in San Juan, Puerto Rico, last week.



featuring executives from Carnival Cruise Line, Margaritaville at Sea, MSC Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line and Virgin Voyages. The discussion explored deployment priorities, changing passenger expectations and the role of destination partnerships in developing compelling itineraries. The region's diverse attractions and established tourism infrastructure offer opportunities for continued collaboration as the industry grows.

In "Building Your Port into an Unforgettable Experience," port and cruise representatives examined how the visitor experience begins before passengers reach a beach, restaurant or attraction. Efficient terminals, welcoming personnel and access to local culture all help shape impressions. Speakers highlighted language lessons and customer service training, alongside greater participation by local artisans, restaurants and cultural performers, as ways to enrich the welcome ashore while expanding business opportunities for residents.

Homeporting offered another avenue for expanding tourism's economic contribution. During "Homeporting: The Gateway to the Caribbean," speakers examined opportunities for hotels, transportation providers, provisioning companies and other businesses when a destination serves as the starting or ending point of a voyage. They also highlighted the importance of coordination among ports, airports, cruise lines and public authorities, along with efficient passenger and baggage handling.

Technology and innovation featured in discussions about developing visitor experiences, including immersive attractions, digital storytelling and AI-powered visitor guidance. The conference also examined luxury cruise tourism, exploring how distinctive local experiences, personalized service and carefully curated shore excursions can meet the expectations of high-end guests traveling on ships of all sizes.

An Oxford Economics presentation outlined cruise tourism's economic contribution through visitor spending, employment and local business development.

"The success of this year's conference reflects the strength of our partnerships and the shared commitment to growing cruise tourism in ways that benefit destinations and their people," said Michele Paige, CEO of FCCA. "We are especially grateful to Puerto Rico Gov. Jenniffer González Colón and the Puerto Rico Tourism Company for their tremendous partnership and hospitality in hosting this important gathering. Together, we are helping create a stronger, more prosperous future for cruise tourism throughout the region."

Puerto Rico's music, cuisine and cultural heritage were showcased throughout the conference, from the opening ceremony to various receptions.

As cruise lines expand their fleets and develop new itineraries, Caribbean and Latin American destinations can build on their established strengths through stronger local supply chains, enriched visitor experiences and deeper cruise partnerships, translating passenger demand into greater business opportunities for local operators and sustained economic benefits for their

communities.

About Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA)

Created in 1972, FCCA is a nonprofit trade organization representing the shared interests of the cruise industry and destinations' private and public sectors. For more information, visit FCCA.com and @FCCAupdates on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X

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