

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**LAUNCH OF THE
2017/2018 CRUISE SEASON**

AN ADDRESS

**THE HONOURABLE SHAMFA CUDJOE
MINISTER OF TOURISM
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Date: Sunday October 15, 2017

Venue: Quayside of the Port of Port of Spain, Cruise Ship Complex

Time: 8.30am

- Colleague Ministers of Government
 - His Worship Alderman Joel Martinez, the Mayor of Port of Spain and other members of the Port of Spain City Council
 - Mrs. Vidiah Ramkhelawan, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tourism
 - Ms. Janelle Penny Commissioning Chow, Chairman of the Tourism Trinidad Limited and other Board Directors of Tourism Trinidad Limited
 - Mr. Adrian Beharry, Deputy Chairman of the Board of Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
 - Mr. Stephen Williams, Acting Commissioner of Police, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and other members of the protective services present
 - Mr. Kurt Duncan, Pilot Master of the Pilot Association of Trinidad and Tobago
 - Mr. Balkaran Maharaj, Cruise Coordinator at the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
 - Mr. Charles Carvalho, Managing Director of Carvalho Shipping Agencies
 - Captain Marco Fortezze, Master, Caribbean Princess of Princess Cruises
 - The Management Team at the Ministry of Tourism
 - Partners of the Tourism Industry
 - Members of the Media
 - Ladies and gentlemen
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Good morning!

Thank you for joining us as we hail the opening of our 2017/2018 cruise season and we welcome our guests from the amazing Princess Cruise.

Coming on the heels of some of the most terrifying natural disasters to hit the Caribbean, I am pleased to be here this morning and to join with the rest of my Caribbean brothers and sisters to declare that Cruise Tourism is still alive and kicking in the Caribbean. All is not lost and we are opened for business. Not just a handful of islands in the Caribbean but 70% of our territories is still opened for business.

And as people, governments and agencies around, offer their assistance to rebuilding the countries ravaged by this year's hurricane, we are stating that tourism remains the backbone of our economies and the Chairman of Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Hugh Riley stated

“If you want to help the Caribbean, you should travel to the Caribbean.”

The cruise industry is still the fastest growing segment of the worldwide leisure travel market; experiencing an average passenger growth rate of 7% per annum since 1980. For the period January to June 2017, Caribbean cruise arrivals stood at 15.3 million, a 4.0% increase on the corresponding period of 2016. This represented the largest number of cruise passengers in the region at this time of year.

The recent natural disasters have put a damper on this year's cruise season. But CTO Ministers, our governments and people throughout our beloved region are committed to keeping business within the region, promoting the viability of the Caribbean Brand and binding our resources to assist our brothers and sisters up the islands.

In this light as Minister of Tourism, I join this united front in pulling out all stops to attract cruise business to our shores.

For the 2017/2018 cruise season, Trinidad and Tobago was originally scheduled to receive forty-seven (47) calls. Twenty three (23) calls with a passenger throughput of 60,958 persons in Trinidad, and twenty-four (24) calls with a passenger count of seventy-five thousand, four hundred and fifty-one (75,451) persons in Tobago.

In the aftermath of the recent hurricanes, and with the hard work of our local stakeholders, Trinidad and Tobago is expected to receive an additional 24 calls for the 2017/2018 cruise season. 23 additional calls to Tobago (from Seabourne Cruise Lines, Carnival UK, TUI Cruises, Fred Olsen Cruises and Thomson Cruises) and one additional call to Trinidad from the Fred Olsen Cruises.

Trinidad and Tobago is a melting pot of cultures and warm and friendly people.

Today, The Ministry of Tourism is giving you a little taste as we have organised a cultural welcome and departure for the first cruise liner to dock at the Port of Port of Spain, the Caribbean Princess, for this season. The Caribbean Princess, with some 3,756 passengers on board, is no stranger to our shores and has been a regular visitor over the years - yet further proof of the attractiveness of destination Trinidad. Indeed, its sister vessel, the Pacific Princess will also be making its call in Scarborough later on in December this year.

The Ministry of Tourism will be providing cultural entertainment throughout the season. We want to wow our guests from the moment they arrive so that they return again and again. The Craft and Shopping Market in the parking area would showcase the artwork of our local small entrepreneurs, and provide opportunities for interaction and revenue generation.

Today, we have “pushed the envelope” a bit by incorporating the traditional culinary delights of some of our tourism community groups, such as Brasso Seco and Lopinot, via product displays and sampling in the Cruise Hall area so as to deliver a truly memorable experience.

The Ministry of Tourism is also working with the tour operators to upgrade the variety of on-shore activities and tours available for cruise passengers.

Over twenty (20) trained and highly experienced visitor guides will be strategically positioned on the streets of our capital city and on Brian Lara Promenade to offer guidance and assistance to cruise passengers who opt to explore the sites and attractions within the Port of Spain area.

The Ministry of Tourism will also have available, at the Cruise Ship Complex, translator services for passengers bearing in mind that some 38% of arrivals for 2017 are French speaking passengers.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am really pleased to be in the midst of so many of our valued tourism partners who manage the many aspects of our local cruise industry to ensure that our visitors enjoy the best that destination Trinidad has to offer in a safe and secure environment.

This year, Ministry of Tourism is handling several tourism matters previously under the remit of the TDC on an interim basis and this includes cruise shipping. We are relying on the vast skills and expertise of stakeholders gathered here today and we thank you for the tremendous role you are playing in helping to raise our competitive position, relative to other regional destinations, to attract cruise liners.

The Ministry of Tourism has received tremendous support from all tourism stakeholders... be it our partners in transportation, tours, law enforcement, or the small entrepreneurs and port management, including the Pilot Association. This strategic partnership between government and industry stakeholders is central to sustaining the cruise industry, and the long term development of our local tourism sector. Moreover, this partnership, based on trust and collective effort, is essential to ensure our competitiveness as a vibrant tourism destination.

So, as I close, let me extend my sincerest gratitude to all of you, for showing up, and showing out, and declaring your commitment to another exciting, safe and successful cruise season. We trust that our guests would enjoy our beautiful island, and that they will be fascinated enough to come back again and again and again.

Ladies and gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago is indeed open and ready for cruise business. I now officially declare Trinidad and Tobago's 2017/2018 Cruise Season.

Let the festivities begin!

October 15, 2017