



Message from Caribbean Islands: We're Open for Cruise Vacations

October 4, 2017

MIAMI, Oct. 4, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- More than 40 islands visited by cruise ships on Caribbean itineraries have a message they want to share: They are open, fully operational, welcoming ships full of cruise passengers and hoping more will follow. Included are places that saw some damage from the September hurricanes but have already recovered.

"In Key West, we are looking good and open for business," said Mayor Craig Cates. "Water sports and cruise ship excursions are open and ready. The trolleys are running."

"We are open and welcoming visitors," said Racquel Brown, CEO of the St. Kitts Tourism Authority.

She said cruise passengers are back to doing such activities as playing golf, going scuba diving, relaxing on the beach, visiting historic Brimstone Hill, riding on the Scenic Railway and getting adventuresome on zipline and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) excursions.

While thoughts, prayers and aid are being sent to six islands in particular, including Puerto Rico, the fact is that at most ports of call, people are currently enjoying exceptional and memorable cruise experiences – while at the same time helping to keep the tourism economy alive.

"Let's face it: We didn't all get As in geography," said Doug Parker, host of Cruise Radio. "So for a lot of people, when they hear that the Caribbean was hit by hurricanes, they don't realize that it doesn't mean every island in that region. The reality is the Caribbean is far from down."

"We've found that many travelers don't realize how vast a region is the Caribbean – its islands are spread out over one million square miles," said Carolyn Spencer Brown, chief content strategist for the popular cruise website Cruise Critic.

The majority of the estimated 48 Caribbean cruise ports were not impacted at all by the storms. Cruisers still have plenty of wonderful vacation options in the region, Spencer Brown said.

As examples, in places such as Jamaica, Belize and Cozumel in the Western Caribbean, and Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao in the Southern Caribbean, and Antigua and St. Kitts in the Eastern Caribbean, it's business as usual.

Added Spencer Brown: "Travelers will see the Caribbean they love – the beautiful beaches, gorgeous terrain, vibrant and thriving towns and villages they're expecting to see."

Ports in the Bahamas, including Nassau and the popular private islands of Half Moon Cay and Princess Cays, are also open for business, providing cruise passengers a fun beach experience.

The cruise lines, given that their ships are mobile, were able to update itineraries where needed before, during and after the storms. Most cruise itineraries in the Caribbean are unchanged.

Several destinations were able to reopen within days after the storms, including Amber Cove (in the Dominican Republic), Havana, Martinique, Nassau, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Guadeloupe.

Said Spencer Brown: "We're heartened at how quickly some of those islands that were in the path of a hurricane have been able to make quick repairs and get back to the business of welcoming tourists."

Ports not fully operational are quickly rebuilding – St. Thomas, St. Maarten, Grand Turk, Dominica, Puerto Rico and St. Croix are all working to be back on line soon.

"Because so many of these ports rely so heavily on cruising as the main driving force for their economies, getting the ports back in operation remains a top priority after the relief efforts have been successfully put in place," said Roger Frizzell, chief communications officer for Carnival Corporation. "The focus is on getting things up and running on the islands impacted."

Most cruise ship guests have shown a willingness to go with the flow in terms of itinerary updates. "It has been impressive to hear that so many passengers are totally cool with any itinerary changes and totally understand," said Cruise Radio's Parker.

On social media, cruisers are talking about enjoying their current cruise vacations, as normal.

"People are posting things such as, 'Having a blast, pub crawl in Cozumel,'" Parker said. "People seem happy to be on a cruise ship, happy to be on vacation."

Spencer Brown said one member of Cruise Critic posted a message about feeling a bit guilty about having a great time.

"What was so heartening were the responses to the comment, particularly from travelers who understand that most of the Caribbean that have been unaffected have economies reliant on tourism," Spencer Brown said. "As islands that have been impacted make progress and begin to open, it gives travelers a chance to return and support not just the economy but also locals who have been through a challenging time."

Marc Melville, director of Montego Bay, Jamaica-based CHUKKA tours, which has a staff of about 100 on Grand Turk (as well as sizeable operations

in Jamaica and Belize), said as the cleanup on Grand Turk continues, the message to cruise passengers is that once the port reopens, "We need you to come back as soon as possible."

Added Melville: "A lot of people indirectly benefit through tourism, so not only have they lost their personal effects, there's no ships coming in and they don't have any revenue. But on Grand Turk the beaches are there, the water is gorgeous and the welcoming people are getting ready to resume business."

The Caribbean sun is shining and the show must go on, said Parker.

"The cruise lines have passengers who want to go to the ports," Parker noted. "The ports rely heavily on the money that the passengers spend while they are there. So both parties know it's important to get things back to normal as soon as possible. Ports in the Caribbean need cruise ship dollars."

Relief efforts

Carnival Corporation has joined with its destination partners to assist residents and communities impacted by Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria – providing financial support for a wide variety of relief organizations helping the Caribbean in its recovery.

The company, together with the Miami HEAT Charitable Fund, and the Micky and Madeleine Arison Family Foundation, pledged up to \$10 million in funding and in-kind support for relief and rebuilding efforts in Florida and throughout the Caribbean. The Micky and Madeleine Arison Family Foundation also donated \$2.5 million to Direct Relief, UNICEF and the United Way of Miami-Dade County to support the most timely and urgent relief needs in the wake of Hurricane Irma.

In addition, Carnival Cruise Line deployed ships in the region to deliver emergency supplies to affected ports in Florida and throughout the Caribbean. The ships delivered crucial supplies and the most immediate necessities, including food, water, clothing, diapers, medical supplies and generators, among others.

Carnival Cruise Line has donated proceeds from ticket sales for two recent Carnival LIVE performances by comedian Chris Tucker aboard Carnival Liberty and Carnival Breeze to hurricane relief. Guests are also being encouraged to contribute at www.carnival.com/hurricane-relief.

Other Carnival Corporation brands including Princess Cruises, Holland America Line and P&O Cruises UK are contributing to additional global fundraising efforts, and encouraging guests to do the same.

View original content: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/message-from-caribbean-islands-were-open-for-cruise-vacations-300531177.html>

SOURCE Carnival Corporation & plc

Roger Frizzell, Carnival Corporation, rfrizzell@carnival.com, (305) 406-7862; Mike Flanagan, LDWW, mike@ldwwgroup.com, (727) 452-4538