

**Reimagining our Future**  
**Aruba Global Travel Conference**  
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## **Welcome**

### **Distinguished guests and esteemed partners,**

Good morning and welcome.

*A nuestros socios de América Latina, nos complace darles la bienvenida y agradecerles por su valiosa presencia y colaboración. Permítanme continuar en inglés.*

This year's conference takes place at a meaningful moment for Aruba, as we commemorate 40 years of Status Aparte and reflect on one of the most important transformations in our island's modern history. In 1986, Aruba became a self-governing, autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, marking a defining milestone in Aruba's history and identity.

Before 1986, our economy was built on aloe cultivation, gold mining, and oil refining. These industries brought prosperity, attracted people from around the world, which helped shape the multicultural society that remains one of Aruba's greatest strength.

In 1985, with the closure of the oil refinery, and unemployment rising to 35%, Aruba made one of the most consequential decisions in its history: to embrace tourism as its path forward. Concurrent with our autonomous status, Aruba charted its own economic future at that time. A tourism-focused recovery strategy was quickly put in place, centered on creating jobs, expanding hotel capacity, and attracting investment.

What began as a response to economic necessity became much more. Tourism evolved into a platform for opportunity, prosperity, and international recognition, helping Aruba build confidence in its future and establish itself as a leading destination in the Caribbean.

Aruba's transformation through tourism was shaped by bold decisions, strong public-private collaboration, and above all the character of our people: our openness, diversity, and our culture of hospitality, that is deeply ingrained in Aruba's DNA, giving meaning to *One Happy Island*. Those same qualities continue to define the *Aruba Effect*. *O en Español... "El Efecto Aruba"*; the lasting connection that guests feel with our island and its people, long after they have returned home.

Over the past four decades, that connection has helped transform Aruba into a strong performing Caribbean tourism destination. But with that success comes a new responsibility. As Aruba matures as a tourism destination, the challenges also evolve. Housing, mobility, infrastructure, natural resources, and quality of life have become central tourism issues that require careful management.

This is especially important because tourism is not simply part of Aruba's economy, it is the engine driving Aruba's economy. Aruba is the second most tourism-dependent nation in the world, according to World Travel and Tourism Council with tourism contributing with 76.5% of GDP in 2025 and a projected 78.6% in 2026. This reinforces why our approach must continue to evolve and why every tourism investment, every guest interaction, and every strategic decision should create greater value for Aruba, its communities, its guests, its workforce, and its businesses.

That is why we continue to sharpen our long-term strategy, with a vision extending to 2035 and a concrete five-year roadmap. Aspects which now continue to be sharpened as the Minister recalibrates Aruba's National Tourism Policy.

At the heart of that strategy is a shift in mindset. For many years, the focus was on what Aruba could do for its guests. Today, we ask "What can Aruba do for its guests, but also what can our guests do to help us protect our island?"

How can tourism benefit the visitor, and also strengthen our communities, protect our nature, support our environment, celebrate our culture, and contribute to Aruba's future?

These are important questions because tourism remains vital to Aruba's economy and national well-being.

The strong demand we see is something we do not take for granted. Together with our partners, we remain focused on managing tourism growth, particularly during peak periods, in a way that protects the visitor experience, the well-being of our residents, and the qualities that make Aruba unique.

Because Aruba's challenge today is not a lack of demand. It is how we preserve our beauty, authenticity, and quality of life while ensuring that tourism continues to create value for generations to come.

Looking ahead, demand for Aruba remains strong. Current airlift projections for the upcoming winter season continue to reflect tremendous confidence in the Aruba brand. To our airline partners present, Thank You for the strong partnership, over the years!

We remain committed to strengthening Aruba's long-term resilience through our diversification and replacement strategy. North America currently anchors our visitor base at 75%, while Latin America (14%) and Europe (4%) contribute to our overall mix. A diversified portfolio across multiple source markets creates a healthier, more resilient tourism foundation.



Beyond geographic expansion, our replacement strategy focuses on attracting market segments aligned with responsible and economically sustainable tourism practices – targeted segments include... destination weddings, multigenerational travelers, and eco-conscious visitors. Rather than simply replacing volume with volume, we're cultivating audiences whose values and spending patterns support both our community and long-term destination health.

All which are to serve Aruba's tourism vision which is centered on the prioritization of value creation, and responsible tourism, over continued expansion in arrivals. Aruba's future cannot be defined by the short-term pursuit of arrivals. As travel costs continue to rise and consumer behavior evolves, our focus must remain on attracting the right guest, creating greater value for Aruba, and continuing to build a resilient and high-quality guest economy.

For 2027, A.T.A. will continue translating its long-term strategic direction into action through a series of strategies designed to strengthen Aruba's competitiveness, advance responsible tourism, attract higher-value guests, and support the continued evolution of the island's tourism model.

Examples of these key strategies for 2027 include pursuing limitation of growth in stay-over arrivals to 1.4% while prioritizing higher-value guests; growing Aruba's share of the affluent household-income guests in the United States through a refresh of our North American audience segmentation model; introducing refined market-segmentation strategies across Latin America and Europe; expanding the share of premium airlift to strengthen access to priority markets; and increasing cruise visitor spending while advocating for limits on cruise arrivals.

In addition, the Aruba Tourism Authority will continue advocating for a well-regulated and transparent short-term vacation rental sector to safeguard community interests and support a balanced and sustainable tourism economy.

These initiatives reflect a broader shift in how we think about tourism success. While arrivals and revenue remain important, particularly for a destination as tourism dependent as Aruba, they no longer tell the full story. As a Destination Marketing and Management Organization, we have been looking beyond arrivals and revenue. We monitor a broader set of indicators that help us understand how tourism is contributing to Aruba's quality of life, the quality of the guest experience, the quality of economic impact, and the protection of our natural and cultural assets.

If we are serious about protecting Aruba's quality of life, natural environment, and cultural heritage, then responsible tourism cannot be optional. It is the only sustainable path forward. Responsible tourism must guide how we market the destination, develop experiences, engage our guests, invest in our island, and how we work with partners.

Our targeted travelers also place high emphasis hereon...



A global Responsible Tourism study commissioned by the A.T.A. last year, where 7,000 people were surveyed, found that 96% of travelers consider responsible tourism important. 73% want to make a positive impact on the destinations they visit, yet only 23% feel they have been shown how to do so. Among luxury travelers, 34% now consider positive impact part of what defines a premium travel experience.

For Aruba, this creates an opportunity. By providing more clear guidance and more meaningful experiences, we can help visitors contribute positively to the island while strengthening the quality and value of the guest experience.

This thinking is reflected in our renewed international communication strategy and in the message:

**"When You Love Aruba, It Loves You Back"... "Cuando Amas Aruba, Aruba te Ama"**

And we are happy to announce today, the launch of our local communication strategy, what we refer to our business-to-guest strategy!

The idea behind all of this is simple: tourism is a relationship between the guest and the destination. When guests choose Aruba, we want them to experience what makes our island special, while also helping preserve the nature, culture, and community that make those experiences possible.

For you our travel trade partners, this also matters. The conversations you have with clients, the stories you tell, and the experiences you recommend help shape expectations long before visitors arrive. Your role now transcends from inspiring to travel and from converting this into bookings, to helping us carry the message of 'Protection'.

Great collaborations have already transpired on this front, since the launch of our new international communication strategy. We know that such positioning makes business sense and benefits all involved. We look forward to continuing to strengthen this, and we thank you for your partnership and commitment!

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

As we look back on 40 years of Status Aparte, we can see that Aruba's tourism story has always been about more than growth. It has been a story of resilience, vision, and transformation.

Forty years ago, Aruba responded to a crisis by reimagining our future through tourism. Today, we face a different challenge: ensuring that tourism continues to create value for Aruba, ... for our guests ...and for you ..., in the decades to follow.

Aruba's future will not be defined by volume alone. It will be defined by the value we create, the standards we uphold, and the care we show for the island which gives all of us 'so much'. For us it is the place we call 'home'.



The opportunity before us is clear. Success will depend on our ability to align economic opportunity with environmental stewardship, destination quality, and quality of life.

As you engage with Aruba over the coming days, I invite you to reflect on the spirit of Masha Danki. Consider how your decisions, partnerships, and investments can contribute to Aruba's long-term success.

That is how we honor the choices made 40 years ago. And that is how we shape the next 40 years. Guided by a simple principle:

**Un Aruba dushi pa biba ta un Aruba dushi pa bishita.**

*A wonderful Aruba to live in is a wonderful Aruba to visit.*

*Una Aruba maravillosa para vivir es una Aruba maravillosa para visitar.*

*We invite you to join us in creating this future.*

**Masha Danki.**

Thank you for your partnership, your commitment, and your continued belief in Aruba.

*Gracias por su colaboración, su compromiso y su confianza continua con Aruba.*

*Agradecemos sua parceria, seu compromisso e sua confiança contínua em Aruba.*

*Dank u voor uw samenwerking, uw inzet en uw blijvende vertrouwen in Aruba.*

