

ORTCP NEWS

Newsletter of the OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness Project

April 2018

The ORTCP is launched

On January 25, 2018, the ORTCP was launched during a brief ceremony, held at the Finance Administrative Centre in Castries. The Launch was addressed by Hon Dominic Fedee, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Tourism, Information and Broadcasting, and Hon Guy Joseph, Minister for Economic Development, Housing, Urban Renewal, Transport, and Civil Aviation. The two Ministers each stressed the importance of the project to the country's tourism industry, as well as, to its economic stability.

Honourable Fedee made a special appeal to the relevant stakeholders to make the project achieve multiplier effects so that a wide cross section of the populace can benefit. We need to manage tourism "socially, culturally, and economically, with the understanding that tourism is a business. Only then, can we optimize the full range of revenue generating opportunities it presents."

During his remarks, Honourable Guy Joseph noted that while we should be grateful for the project funds from the World Bank, Saint Lucians must act with loyalty and a sense of patriotism in order to bring fruition to the Project. He proposed the creation of "an authentic *Saint Lucia Products Avenue* - an avenue that is 100% Saint Lucian, selling food, drinks, and products that are Made In Saint Lucia, because "only when we offer the right things in Saint Lucia, will the cruise ship passengers come down from the ship".

The OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness Project is focused on enhancing the competitiveness of Tourism in the participating countries, by (i) facilitating movement of tourists between the participating countries using ferries; (ii) improving selected tourism sites and (iii) strengthening capacity for regional tourism market development. This will ultimately contribute to improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the sector.

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- Hon Dominic Fedee, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Tourism, Information and Broadcasting, Saint Lucia

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Officials at Head Table at ORTCP Launch



Castries Market

The Importance of Tourism to Saint Lucia

The Tourism sector is by any measure, one of Saint Lucia's most economically significant sectors. In fact, the World Travel & Council (WTTC's) reported that in 2016, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to Saint Lucia's GDP was XCD1,545.1mn (USD572.2mn) or 39.6%. Also, in 2016, Travel & Tourism directly supported 17,500 jobs, representing 22.7% of total employment on the island.

By all accounts, the outlook for the vital tourism sector is promising, with evident signs of growth from 2017. Some of these growth signs are recorded in increased visitor numbers to Saint Lucia in 2017, which reached a record high of 1,105,541, representing an 11% increase over 2016. This performance distinguishes Saint Lucia as being among the countries with the highest growth in arrivals in 2017, compared to other Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) member countries. Of the total arrivals, 386,127 were stay-over arrivals; and 669,217 cruise passengers, recording a 14% increase. All of this, despite the 8-month closure of Berth 1 at Pointe Seraphine.

Impressive Growth in the Sector

Factors contributing to the impressive growth in the sector include improved global economic conditions in Saint Lucia's source markets, contributing to increased demand for travel; an expansion in the accommodation stock, better targeted marketing efforts, and improved airlift capacity. Growth in the hotels and restaurants sector is estimated to have also expanded by 10.1 percent in 2017, after contracting by 2.9 percent in 2016 (Saint Lucia Economic & Social Review, 2017).

The WTTC projects that long-term growth prospects for Saint Lucia's tourism industry trends higher than that of other prime Caribbean destinations (i.e. Aruba, Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Bermuda, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis etc.); double the Caribbean average growth rate in GDP contribution per annum of 3.6%; and exceed the world average of 4% (Saint Lucia-6.8%).

\$15 Million USD from the World Bank for Tourism Project

The World Bank has committed a total of USD15 Million to the ORTCP Project in Saint Lucia. This amount is the largest allocation to the regional project, which is also being implemented in Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr John Anderson, who is a senior economist with the World Bank, said in a press statement that "the WBG invests heavily in the tourism sector – with a substantial portfolio of lending, technical assistance, and investments totaling nearly \$4 billion USD globally..."

He expressed confidence that with the upgrades to Castries to be delivered under the project, there is potential for the city to become "a signature destination" that can attract more of cruise visitors or yachting tourists to the island.



Celebrity Equinox calls to Port Castries

Increasing the Visitor Experience

The OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness Project (ORTCP) is seeking to create opportunities to increase the visitor experience as a means of increasing tourists' expenditure in the city of Castries.

A 2014 cruise survey report for Saint Lucia, demonstrated relatively lower levels of spending by cruise visitors to Saint Lucia, compared to other islands. In this regard, the Project is designed to improve the shopping experience at the Castries Market with a focus on diversifying and authenticating the products; enhancing the physical ambiance; and improving the customer relations between vendors and visitors. Interventions will also be implemented to ease the congestion in the city, improve sidewalks, and enhance the overall visitor experience in Castries with better signage and information services; more rest and relaxation areas; and façade improvements.

The William Peter Boulevard, a major commercial hub in the city is also earmarked to be enhanced as a hot spot for tourists to 'chill' and immerse in the Saint Lucia way of life, enjoying an ambiance enriched with cafes and urban furniture and occasionally, live entertainment."



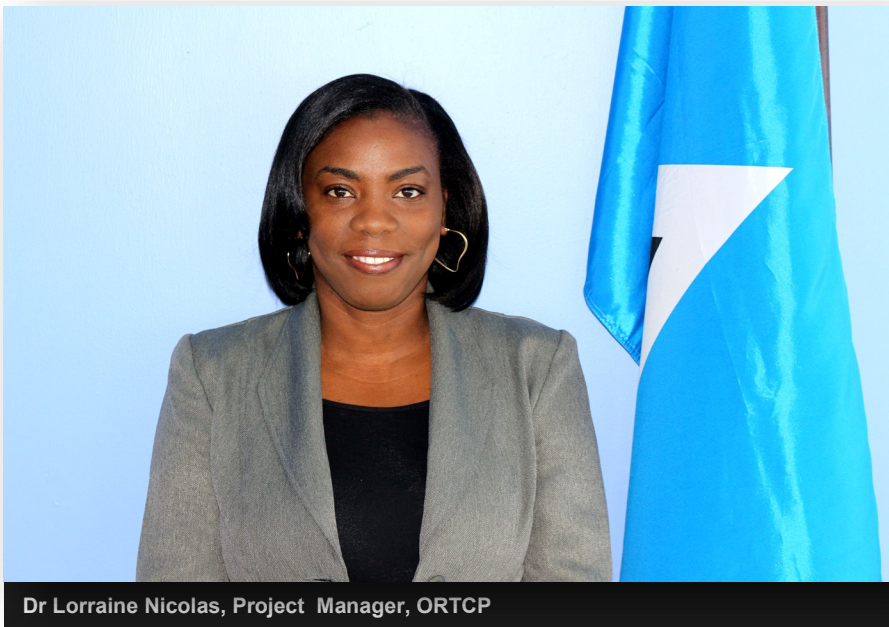
Castries Boulevard - a hub for commerce

Rationalising the ORTCP—the Saint Lucia context

About two decades ago, the Caribbean was touted as the premier warm weather destination. Recent times, however, has seen the tourist destination map become increasingly populated with a plethora of destinations and regions across the globe, offering a similar product-type. Thus, inadequate competitiveness also threatens the sustainability of Saint Lucia's crucial Tourism industry.

According to a recent study by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), "St. Lucia is endowed with stunning physiography, tropical climate and a rich culture and history. However, these factors are not sufficient to provide a distinctive destination appeal in relation to the competition. Strategic investment and planning are required to leverage the existing activities, events, entertainment and industry infrastructure and services in response to the evolving demands of the target markets and tourists' quest for a unique destination experience". Simply put, we can no longer sit back and rely on our sand sea and sun to be competitive in Tourism.

The OECS Regional Tourism Competitiveness Project, whilst not by any means a panacea, seeks to bridge this gap, with a deliberate strategy to invest in the development of the tourism product. Even more importantly however, a key aim of the project is to increase spending by visitors. The intention is to sustainably develop tourism by striving not only to increase visitor arrivals but more importantly, to increase visitor expenditure thereby optimizing the development potential that exists within the industry.



Dr Lorraine Nicolas, Project Manager, ORTCP

Meet the Project Manager

Dr. Lorraine Nicolas is Project Manager of the OECS Regional Tourism Project (ORTCP). She assumed duties on the Project in August 2017.

A Tourism Specialist by profession, Dr. Nicolas is a Fulbright Scholar, who received her Doctorate in Tourism at the University of Florida in 2007. She also holds a Master's degree with distinction; and a Bachelor's degree with First Class Honors in Tourism Management from the University of the West Indies.

Dr. Nicolas enjoys research and has published academic articles in international journals including the *Annals of Tourism Research*, the *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology* and the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*. She has also written several technical documents, articles and study papers on Tourism and related areas in the Caribbean, including *The socio-economic Impact of Tourism in Saint Lucia: an exploratory study (2002)*; *The OECS Single Domestic Space for Travel: underpinning the OECS Economic Union (2016)*; *OECS Tourism – A unique experience (2016)* and several pieces on the Piton Management Area (a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Saint Lucia).

A wealth of knowledge on tourism

Dr. Nicolas brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Project, and can boast of her contribution to the development and implementation of an OECS Common Tourism Policy; the development and implementation of a community-based tourism programme which provided technical assistance to an estimated 250 persons from ten communities across the OECS; and the development of an OECS Air Services Agreement. In addition, Dr. Nicolas has led and coordinated the participation of the OECS in international trade shows in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and the execution of an OECS Road Show in Germany.

A Tourism Specialist with Caribbean Experience

Before joining the ORTCP, Dr. Nicolas worked at the OECS Commission as a Tourism Specialist for a period of eight years, from 2009-2017. During her tenure at the OECS Commission, she managed several donor-funded projects including the Tourism Component of the OECS 10th EDF Regional Integration and Trade, funded by the European Union (EU); and the OECS Tourism Market Intelligence Project funded by the World Bank.

On the ORTCP, Dr. Nicolas will lead the implementation of the 15 million USD tourism enhancement initiative.



2016 Boat Show, Dusseldorf, Germany

Bringing the best communication principles to the ORTCP

A graduate of the University of the West Indies (UWI), Jamaica), and the University of Salford, UK, Tecla assumed duties as Communications Liaison/Safeguards Officer in January 2018, and is excited to bring her breadth of knowledge and skills to the Project.

With the plethora of two-way communication tools being constantly introduced to the average consumer, building national and global awareness on the Project should be both thrilling and stress-free. Tecla promises to utilize a full gamut of communication tools to promote and chronicle the successes of the Project.



Tecla Fontenard, Communications/Liaison/Social Safeguards Officer

Meet the Communications Officer

The Communications/Liaison/Social Safeguards Officer is a Saint Lucian native with tremendous experience that cuts across fifteen CARICOM States. Ms Tecla Fontenard has amassed 18 years of regional experience, having worked with both the CARICOM Secretariat in Guyana, and the OECS Commission in Saint Lucia. More recently, she served as a Consultant to the UNDP (Barbados and the OECS).

No stranger to Projects, Tecla has successfully implemented communications components on at least three regional projects with awareness budgets, totaling in excess of 1.5 million USD. Tecla is a valiant innovator of communications solutions and is well known across the OECS region, for her work in the area of awareness building related to environmental management and climate change. From 2011—2015, she championed the first-ever OECS Climate Change Awareness Campaign accomplishing several novelty events, producing a tapestry of multi-media products, and leveraging rich relationships with the media across the 9 states of the OECS. She is an avid proponent of evidence based principles in communication applications, and has managed the conduct of several Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) Studies in the OECS, and utilised the results to implement successful communications and awareness programmes.

OECS Share of International Tourist Arrivals and Receipts

YEAR	Tourist Arrivals	Revenue
2010	0.09	0.11
2014	0.09	0.10
2015	0.08	0.10
2016	0.07	0.10

The OECS accounts for less than 0.2 % of international tourism arrivals – a fact, not too hard to fathom, given our small size, both geographically and with regard to population. What is more worrisome, is the fact that there appears to be a declining trend in the region’s share of the international tourism pie. This suggests that the OECS is losing market share; and therefore becoming less competitive, owing to multiple factors, primary of which is stiffening global competition.

Contact Us

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