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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**BARBADOS FOCUSED ON INCREASING EUROPEAN BUSINESS**

**BERLIN, GERMANY.** This year, the Barbados delegation set out to wow European media, travel agents and tour operators with all of the destination’s unique selling points at ITB Berlin – the world’s largest tourism trade fair.

Barbados’ presence there was part of a bigger strategy to increase business from Europe. Between January and December 2017, a total 37,072 visitors travelled to Barbados from Europe, up 2 percent from 2016. While arrivals from the market have been steadily increasing, CEO of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI), William ‘Billy’ Griffith, said that there is potential for greater growth. “I think we’ve just scratched the surface of the possibilities here in Europe. We’ve had some success partnering with Condor and the additional airlift to Barbados, and we are engaging a number of principals in the market to foster relationships likely to increase Barbados’ presence and secure business for the destination.”

The trip proved especially successful. During ITB, all eyes were on the destination as Barbados

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was named ‘Best Destination’ in the World category on the 2017 Destination Satisfaction Index (DSI). Barbados also copped ‘Best Destination’ in the Americas as well as ‘Best Accommodation’, beating out over 140 other destinations. “We have been working assiduously to promote Barbados throughout Europe, and receiving these awards during the market’s largest trade fair, from a European company, will only serve to give further veracity to the high standard of a Barbados holiday.”

**Marketing Barbados in Europe**

Understanding the need for a distinctive strategy in a new and diverse market such as Europe, the BTMI has incorporated a number of innovative tactics in its plans for promoting the destination there.

Anita Nightingale, BTMI’s Director for Europe, spoke on the organisation’s strategy for success. “It goes without saying that promoting Barbados in Europe requires a different approach than the ones we’ve taken in, let’s say the U.S., or even the neighbouring U.K. We’ve setup an office in Brussels, which helps us in understanding the nuances of the market, and we’ve also engaged a local European marketing and public relations agency to assist our efforts and offer their knowledge on what does and doesn’t work here.”

Describing the German travel market as “spoilt for choice”, Nightingale noted that in 2017, Germans took the same number of trips out of the region as they did to Europe. “They also spent more money. This is a lucrative market but highly vied for; it’s not enough to grow brand awareness. We align with partners that already have a large loyal following in the market to help us grow purchase consideration of our destination.”

**Partnering with SportScheck**

One of the innovative tactics the BTMI has engaged in is their partnership with SportScheck, Germany’s largest sports retailer. SportScheck has an annual in-store traffic of 13 million, while their online traffic is 37 million unique visits.

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“We really saw partnering with SportScheck as a way to take advantage of the considerable influence this retailer has among German sports lovers. We knew this would be an excellent opportunity to showcase the diversity of Barbados holidays in a way that’s both fun and relatable, but most importantly in a way that would resonate with the numerous Germans who shop there,” Nightingale said.

Since the 10-month partnership began in September, the BTMI has embarked on numerous activations including FourSquare Rum Distillery ‘pop-up rum shops’ at the SportScheck Munich and Cologne stores. Earlier this year, the BTMI also collaborated with SportScheck to give its shoppers the opportunity to be photographed in Barbados for the retailer’s 2018 Summer catalogue. During March, the lucky winners arrived in Barbados and had a fully immersive experience including stand up paddling at Reeds Bay, exploring both the North and East coasts, as well as kiting at Silver Sands.

“We had over 567 shoppers enter the competition and in the end, three travelled to Barbados to experience first-hand what the destination has to offer,” Nightingale added. “This collaboration alone will give Barbados immense exposure in Europe as the photographs are showcased in the store fronts of all SportScheck stores across Germany.”

**German travel agents coming to Barbados**

Next up for the BTMI’s efforts to increase European business is a partnership with Condor, Germany’s second largest commercial airline. The two are partnering to stage a familiarization (FAM) trip which will see 60 of Condor’s best performing travel agents journeying to Barbados between May 15 - 22.

The agents will choose from four itineraries the experiences most requested by their clientele including Culture, Luxury & Wellness, Sports and Romance.

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**About Barbados**

The island of Barbados offers the most authentic Caribbean experience with its exceptionally rich culture and history rooted in remarkable landscapes. Rated as one of the world's sexiest beaches in 2008 by Concierge.com; Barbados' Crane Beach in St. Philip stands as a premier destination for travelers. Barbados is also the first Zagat-rated Caribbean island and is known as the culinary capital of the Caribbean. Barbados has hosted several world class events including: The annual Barbados Food & Rum Festival; the 2006 PGA World Golf Championships-Barbados World Cup, the ICC Cricket World Cup Finals in 2007, the Sentebale Charity Polo match with Prince Harry of Wales in 2010, and the ICC Twenty20 Cricket Finals for 2010, and the Rihanna LOUD concert in 2011. Accommodations range from picturesque plantation houses and villas, to quaint bed and breakfasts and award-winning, five-star resorts. Grantley Adams International Airport offers even more non-stop and direct service from a growing number of U.S. cities, making Barbados the true gateway to the Eastern Caribbean. Barbados was voted eighth in the World by Trip Advisor's "2008 Travelers' Choice Destination Awards" in its Top 100 Destinations category. For more information on travel to Barbados, visit www.visitbarbados.org, follow on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/VisitBarbados, via Twitter @Barbados.