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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BARBADOS AND COPA AIRLINES SIGN AGREEMENT IN PANAMA CITY

Panama City, PANAMA – On Wednesday morning, the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI) along with Copa Airlines co-hosted a media breakfast in Panama City, which saw the official signing of the partnership agreement between the two for the new twice-weekly service starting July 17.

Among those in attendance to witness the historic partnership between Panama’s flag carrier airline and the award-winning Caribbean destination were Carlos Duboy, Director of Tocumen International Airport; Raisa Banfield, Vice Mayor of Panama; and Alfredo Fonseca Mora, Director of the Civil Aeronautics Authority.

Seated at the head table, CEO of Copa Airlines, Pedro Heilbron, shared his enthusiasm for the implications of the airline’s newest route. He told the local media that “Copa Airlines is proud to start flights to Barbados and be the only airline that will connect this beautiful and dynamic Caribbean island with Latin America. With this new destination, we consolidate our leadership and presence in the Caribbean region, where we serve 16 destinations. The air connectivity

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between Panama and this new destination will generate important opportunities for the development and strengthening of tourist and commercial activity, both for Barbados, Panama, and for the 76 additional destinations offered by the airline.”

Panamanian media learnt about destination Barbados’ diverse product offerings including accommodations, eateries and attractions, through a multimedia presentation by the BTMI; while the company’s CEO, William ‘Billy’ Griffith, apprised them of the performance of the flight to date.

“So far, we have been pleasantly surprised with the overall response to this new service,” Griffith said. “Copa is reporting numerous advanced bookings two months ahead of the inaugural flight on July 17. In fact, the response has been so great that they’ll be using a larger aircraft throughout July to accommodate the overwhelming response. That’s fantastic, and our hoteliers and other tourism service providers in Barbados are eagerly looking forward to welcoming the influx of business from Latin America.”

Following a brief question and answer segment, two lucky reporters won a trip for two to Barbados on Copa Airlines, plus accommodations. They were then treated to a unique breakfast spread including Barbadian favourites such as coconut bread and banana bread, which were the first to go.

The twice-weekly service between Tocumen International Airport in Panama City, Panama, and the Grantley Adams International Airport, begins on July 17 and will run every Tuesday and Friday. Flight time is approximately 3.5 hours and roundtrip fares start at US \$483.

Cocktail, canapés and soca

Later that evening, Bajan soca star Rupee made the crowd at the W Hotel ‘Jump!’ as the BTMI once again joined with Copa Airlines, this time to bring the tastes and sounds of Barbados to over 90 Latin America travel agents, all of whom came to learn more about the new service and destination.

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Alvin Jemmott, Chairman of the BTMI, shared his confidence in the flight's success, particularly with Barbados' strong historic connection to Panama. "Many do not know that between 1904 and 1914, around 60,000 Barbadians came here to work on the very important Panama Canal, which was integral in fostering the marine connection between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Even after completion of the Panama Canal, several Barbadians stayed on and built lives for themselves in Panama. Today, some 100 years later, more than 16% of Panamanians can trace their roots back to the Caribbean, especially Barbados," he said.

Jemmott added that the BTMI would therefore be looking to capitalize on the increasingly popular niche of genealogy tourism, which would be a driving force for both inbound and outbound business for the new service.

BTMI Director for the Caribbean and Latin America, Corey Garrett, also announced that the partnership agreement between the BTMI and Copa Airlines includes significant co-op marketing to ensure the success of the venture for all.

Under the banner of the BTMI's Year of Culinary Experiences, guests received specially handcrafted culinary delights prepared on location by **Caribbean Chef of the Year 2016**, Damian Leach, and **Barbados Bartender of the Year 2018**, Shane McClean. Impressed by their creations, guests flocked to their stations for seconds and thirds.

But perhaps the party-stealer was Barbadian musician Dwayne Jones, whose steel-pan renditions of soca, pop and reggaeton kept the crowd engaged and lively well into the night.

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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 travellers. 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 Traveler's 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.