

What innovative strategies are needed to develop tourism in Guyana for 2025?

This theme issue is dedicated to the development of sustainable tourism in Guyana which is located on South America's North Atlantic coast and known for its spectacular natural resources, including rain forests. As an English-speaking nation, Guyana has close connections with the Caribbean region and its well-established tourism industry. I would like to thank the writing team and theme editors, Donald Sinclair, Director General of Tourism, Guyana and Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena, who for number of years played a leading role in Guyana's hotel industry, for their thought-provoking collection of articles that explore the challenges and opportunities facing Guyana's tourism industry.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare

Managing Editor, WHATT

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The year 2025 is of significance for Guyana that is in the process of re-defining itself as a tourism destination. For many years its place in the family of Caribbean tourism destinations, the latter famous for their blue waters and white sandy beaches, made necessary a projection of a tourism identity that was based upon nature, upon the rainforest and biodiversity and upon indigenous cultural traditions that were in existence for centuries. Guyana, the Caribbean destination, seemed to have more in common with its neighbours to the south, with those eight countries that shared the geo-space known as the Amazon. This apparent dual tourism identity serves to enrich both the Caribbean tourism identity, in so far as Guyana can be presented as part of the "alternative Caribbean", and the tourism persona of the Amazon countries where Guyana can be seen to offer "Caribbean" content to a geo-destination often typecast as unremitting jungle space.

This circumstance aside, there is a contemporary factor that is driving the debate on the Guyana tourism identity and renewing calls for the elaboration of appropriate strategies for the development of a tourism sector. That factor is oil – the recent Exxon discovery of oil in apparently prodigious quantities off the north-eastern shores of Guyana. Once the commercial viability of that resource had been established, it became clear that Guyana would soon (2020 is the proposed year) be in receipt of royalties and profits from oil that would triple its current revenue base, making available unprecedented sums that could fuel development, including tourism.

This theme issue therefore seeks to examine tourism prospects, options and challenges as Guyana prepares for a future that, to a significant degree, will be financed by extraction of a non-renewable resource, even as it pursues a development path that is defined as the transition to a Green State. The theme issue recognizes appropriate



policy formulation and definition of strategy as critical elements. It explores the place of community-based tourism, human resource training and entrepreneurship in this tourism development matrix and examines the role of the diaspora as a force in the tourism development of Guyana. It also ventures into the dark alley of “thanatourism” and proposes Jonestown tourism initiative as a potential attraction to boost dark tourism traffic to Guyana.

Donald Sinclair and Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena
Theme editors

About the Theme Editors

Donald Sinclair is currently the Director General of Tourism at the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Business in Guyana. He holds the position of a Chairman of the sub-committee on Sustainable Tourism in the Association of Caribbean States, headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Tourism Organization. From 2006 to 2012, he worked as the Coordinator for Tourism and Transport at the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, headquartered in Brasilia. He is also the Founding Director of the Guyana Tourism Authority, and in 1988, he served as a Special Adviser to the minister responsible for Tourism in Guyana. Over a period of more than 25 years, he has lectured on Tourism and has researched and written papers, articles and opinion pieces for a range of refereed journals and scholarly publications. His main areas of research interest have been semiotics of tourism, dark tourism, sports and community tourism and cultural tourism. He spent 26 years as a lecturer in Tourism at the University of Guyana, retiring as a Senior Lecturer. In 1997, he worked as a Sessional at the University of Guelph in Ontario, and in 2005, he worked as a Visiting Lecturer of Ecotourism at Florida Gulf Coast University. From 2014 to 2015, he was appointed a Director at the Suriname College of Hospitality and Tourism, where he introduced and lectured on Ecotourism, among other Tourism courses.

Dr Chandana (Chandi) Jayawardena is President of Chandi J. Associates Consulting, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. He has held leadership positions in South Asia, the Middle East, Europe, South America, the Caribbean and North America. In mid-1990s, he held a few tourism-related important positions in Guyana, including General Manager of the premier hotel in the country – Forte Crest/Guyana Pegasus, General Manager of a key eco-resort – Timberhead, Visiting Professor of Tourism Marketing at University of Guyana and the Founding Principal of the first hotel school of Guyana – Pegasus Hotel School. In 2007, on a consulting assignment for the Government of Guyana, Chandi worked as the Opening General Manager of the largest hotel in Guyana – Buddy’s International Hotel (now Ramada Princess). As a hotelier, Chandi has led catering and hospitality for three heads of state summits in Guyana. As a Professor and Dean, he has co-authored or edited/co-edited 20 books and journal theme issues and authored over 100 articles related to tourism and hospitality management. He has presented at conferences in 38 countries. He has led or participated in consulting projects for over 40 organizations, including the European Union, USAID, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Amazon Corporate Treaty Organization, the Government of Guyana, the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association, Sandals International, Rocco Forte Hotels and Heads of Hospitality and Tourism Ontario. He is a Past President at the world’s largest professional body in the hospitality industry – Hotel and Catering International Management Association, now the Institute of Hospitality, UK.