



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

The Cruise Season Launch 2025 – 2026 and Inaugural Visit of the Coral Princess

Feature Address

Abigail Bynoe

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

*(on behalf of Senator the honourable Satykama Maharaj,
Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism)*

Tuesday, December 2nd, 2025

Salutations

- The Honourable Jearlean John – Minister of Works and Infrastructure
- Chairman of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago – Dr. Rodney Shastri Ramroop
- The CEO and Management Team of Tourism Trinidad Limited
- The Captain and Crew of the Coral Princess
- Your Worship the Mayor of Port of Spain
- Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Media
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
- Good evening.

Good morning.

It is a privilege to be with you today and to address you at this important occasion: the official launch of Trinidad's 2025–2026 cruise season, and the inaugural visit of the Coral Princess.

This morning, as we gather on the Quayside, we are not simply welcoming a ship; we are welcoming opportunity, partnership, and a strategic pillar in the economic transformation of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Significance of the Coral Princess' maiden call

The Coral Princess is no ordinary vessel. Purpose built to navigate the Panama Canal, this mid size cruise ship represents the innovation and ambition of Princess Cruises and the Carnival Corporation. Today, it brings with it more than 2,300 passengers and crew, docking in Port of Spain for the very first time.

This maiden call is marked by the ceremonial crest exchange—a tradition in maritime culture that symbolizes friendship and enduring partnership. By incorporating this ceremony into our official launch, we highlight the special significance of this moment: Trinidad and Tobago is firmly on the global cruise map.

When the Coral Princess sails away this evening, it will carry passengers with stories of our people, our culture, and our hospitality. Each passenger becoming an ambassador for our nation.

Cruise Season Outlook

For this Cruise Season – 2025 to 2026, Trinidad will welcome 16 cruise calls, bringing approximately 30,960 visitors. Tobago, already underway since November, will host 41 calls and nearly 48,000 visitors. Together, our twin island nation will receive close to 80,000 cruise passengers.

These numbers are not just statistics. They represent taxi drivers who will earn a living, artisans who will sell their crafts, tour guides who will share our heritage, and restaurateurs that will serve our cuisine.

They represent port revenues, meaningful jobs, and the multiplier effect of tourism across our economy.

Tourism is not a side activity. It is a pillar of growth, a driver of foreign exchange, and a catalyst for national development.

Linking to the Ministry's Strategic Objectives

At the Ministry we have channelled all our energies into driving economic diversification built on three pillars: Trade, Investment and Tourism. From the outset, we deliberately avoided the typical “wishful thinking” approach that has doomed so many diversification efforts in the past. Instead, we adopted a disciplined, structured and strategic framework with measurable outcomes.

One of the first realities we confronted was that non-energy exports accounted for only 30% of Trinidad and Tobago's export earnings. If we wanted a truly diversified and resilient economy, we needed to raise that figure to at least 50% within five years. This became our benchmark—our definition of a diversified economy. To achieve it, we established clear national targets, supporting initiatives, and strict timelines across every division of the Ministry.

Tourism is our gateway to the world. Within our systematic rethinking of the tourism sector there is a heavy focus on the segments and markets that will yield the highest value through world class experiences. Already analysis and assessment of yachting, medical, sport, business and ecotourism are underway. An integral part of this process will be the enhancement of the physical and digital desirability of our unique tourism products. Working in lockstep with the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards - to

set global standards, and other private and public sector entities, a new strategy for the re-imagining of tourism is being crafted for execution in the year ahead.

Government has launched an impressive Revitalisation Blueprint that will expand the tourism infrastructure including hotels, conference centres, and marina. This is in addition to the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism's existing pipeline of hotel projects currently under development with an estimated private capital investment of over \$600 million TTD.

Looking ahead, our targets are ambitious with innovation, collaboration, and cultural pride, we are elevating our tourism sector to new heights.

Today's launch is directly aligned with the Immediate Economic Development Action Plan of the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism. This plan sets out eight strategic objectives to accelerate growth, expand trade, attract investment, and transform tourism.

Allow me to highlight a few of these objectives, and how they connect to the occasion before us:

Tourism Transformation: We are committed to diversifying our tourism offerings. Beyond sun, sea and sand, we are promoting eco adventures, cultural immersion, medical and education tourism, and unique experiences such as the Caroni Bird Sanctuary, Paramin 4x4 tours, and the House of Angostura. These are already featured in the Coral Princess' itinerary, showing that our products are competitive and attractive.

Foreign Exchange Growth: Our target is US\$2 billion in foreign exchange earnings and 87,000 new jobs by 2030.

Cruise tourism contributes directly to this goal. Every visitor who spends in our markets, restaurants, and attractions strengthens our forex earnings and supports our balance of payments.

Investment in Tourism Infrastructure: We are actively inviting proposals for resort development along Trinidad's North and Northeast coasts, and facilitating projects including the following:

- The Four Points by Sheraton, at Piarco
- A Hampton Inn/ Hilton, also at Piarco
- The Hilton Garden Inn, at South Park
- The Maracas Bay Hotel

- The Wyndham Garden Hotel, Maraval
- Hilton, Tobago (Roxborough)
- And The Marriott, Couva

These investments will expand our accommodation capacity, enhance visitor experiences, and create jobs.

- **Ease of Doing Business:** By streamlining incentives under the Tourism Development Act and modernizing systems like TTBizLink, we are ensuring that investors, operators, and service providers can thrive in a competitive environment.
- **National Tone – Open for Business:** Today's launch is a clear signal to the world: Trinidad and Tobago is open for business, open for visitors, and open for partnerships that drive inclusive and sustainable growth.

Tourism as a Catalyst for Transformation

Tourism is more than leisure. It is a platform for cultural diplomacy, for showcasing our creativity, and for building bridges between nations.

When visitors walk through our streets, taste our cuisine, and hear our music, they experience the soul of Trinidad and Tobago. That experience is priceless—and it is what keeps them coming back.

But tourism also demands responsibility. We must ensure that our environment is protected, that our communities derive benefits, and that our traditions are respected. Sustainable tourism is not optional—it is essential.

Call to Stakeholders

Tourism is not the work of government alone. It is a shared enterprise. Taxi drivers, tour operators, artisans, hoteliers, and entrepreneurs—all of you are indispensable partners in shaping the visitor experience.

Our Ministry's plan calls for integration of private sector organisations, and I am pleased to share that in a few days, I will participate in the official launch of the Private Sector Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago (PSOTT). This umbrella body will unite chambers, financial institutions, and professional associations to strengthen

collaboration and eliminate fragmentation. Tourism stakeholders are also at the heart of this effort.

I call on each of you to see yourselves not just as service providers, but as ambassadors of Trinidad and Tobago. Every smile, every tour, every product sold contributes to the national brand.

Closing

As the Coral Princess docks in our harbour today, let us see it as a symbol of possibility. Each passenger who steps onto our shores represents a chance to tell the story of Trinidad and Tobago—our music, our cuisine, our heritage, and our warmth.

Together, through strategic planning, investment, and collaboration, we are committed to ensure that cruise tourism becomes not just a seasonal highlight, but a pillar of our economic transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago is open for business. And we welcome the Coral Princess with pride.

I look forward to the Captain's Tour and the Crest Exchange aboard the Coral Princess in a short while and let us embrace the future of our tourism plans with confidence.

I Thank you.