

# ZIKA: *Impacts on Tourism*



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## Zika and Tourism

While tourism related travel is the Caribbean's major economic earner, it also contributes to disease spread. The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) indicated a record 26.3 million stay over tourists and 24.5M cruise ship arrivals in 2014, a 5.3 percent rise over 2013, and this trend continued in 2015. These visitors spent US\$29.2 billion, another record for Caribbean tourism. The United States continues to be the region's primary market, with nearly 13 million Americans, just under half of the total arrivals to the region.

However, high and increasing levels of visitor arrivals increase the potential risk for visitors and locals transmitting or acquiring diseases from each other. This was typified by the H1N1 pandemic of 2009, Chikungunya in 2013 and now Zika. Thus, heightened concern, alerts and specific measures for travelers have resulted from regional and international health agencies like CARPHA, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The consequences of reduced tourist numbers for the millions of people in the Caribbean whose livelihoods depend on the sector can be serious, contributing to adverse economic and social burden on Caribbean economies. As travel increases, the number of Zika cases among travelers will likely increase and the potential negative impact on Caribbean tourism-dependent economies will likely escalate.

Recent reports from the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), suggested declines in arrivals to some locations/hotels, e.g., honeymoon and wedding destinations.

### **So how is CARPHA addressing the impact of Zika on tourism?**

CARPHA, through its integrated regional Tourism and Health program, and in collaboration with its partners, CTO and CHTA, is taking a holistic aggressive approach to travel-related Zika (and other mosquito borne infections) through prevention and control that include guidelines for circulation by CHTA in hotels and other tourism stay-over lodgings, and on cruise ships by Cruise Line International Agency (CLIA).

- [Guidelines for travellers to the Caribbean](#)
- [Guidelines for hotels and guesthouses](#)

Other approaches include:

- The introduction of a web based rapid early warning and response web based information tool for hotels. This will allow and alert hotels of symptoms of illness, including for Zika, and hence trigger a rapid response to reduce spread and negative outcomes and reputational damage to tourist industry.
- An aggressive public awareness campaign for the tourism industry, that includes sharing facts to the media, travellers and the public
- Agreement with CTO and CHTA to embark on a joint enhanced vector control program in hotels. This includes the sharing of best practices with the industry (via various means including webinars).

- Joint and ongoing discussions with CDC Traveler's Health and other international agencies like the PAHO, Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and Public Health England (PHE), regarding travel advisories, Zika prevention, its risk and impact on tourism
- Teleconferences/Webinars with hotel, cruise ship industry and Ministries of Health re Zika prevention in hotels and cruise ships, surveillance guidelines and joint public health action if necessary.
- Using the Caribbean Travel and Health Network (CaTHNet) forum for rapid dissemination of information and outbreak prevention and control. CaTHNet, established by CARPHA in December 2015, is a network of public health agencies designed to rapidly share relevant information on issues of public health concern to travelers visiting the Caribbean region, to promote global health security. Current agencies on this network include the CDC, PHE and PHAC.