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# Tobago Goes Its Own Way; Targets Canadian Market

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Maracas beach in Trinidad and Tobago (Photo via Altinosmanaj / iStock / Getty Images Plus)

It might be one of the Caribbean's last frontiers for tourism; an island with luscious waterfalls, beautiful beaches, great local food and the world's fifth largest number of bird species.

Best of all, it's all on one small island you can circumnavigate in a couple of hours.

Until recently, tourism officials from the island of Tobago were intertwined with folks promoting Trinidad. But that has now changed, and Trinidad is marching to its own tourism drum, said Louis Lewis, CEO of the new [Tobago Tourism Agency](#).

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"We tried promoting both but either you sacrifice one or you miss both," he told TravelPulse Canada in an interview yesterday, prior to a Tobago tourism event at a posh private home in Toronto's Rosedale district.

"We like to say Tobago is untouched, undiscovered and unspoilt," Lewis said. "It's not about the places to stay, it's about the things to do."

The island is popular with divers, who flock to the warm, crystal-clear waters. There's also great snorkelling, kitesurfing, paddle-boarding and even a bioluminescent pool in the mangroves that lights up at night, he said.

"Forty per cent of the island is rainforest," Lewis said. "It's fairly mountainous, so there are lots of waterfalls. And 42 types of sand!"

"Tobago has so many world-class things to see and do," he said. "Our rainforest preserve has been protected since April 13, 1776. That makes it the longest protected rainforest reserve in the world."



Nadine Stewart-Phillips, Minister of Tourism and Culture for Tobago, and Louis Lewis, CEO of the Tobago Tourism Agency.

Lewis said one of the things he likes to do with visitors is take them to the Nylon Pool, an area off-shore where the water is only waist-deep; making it perfect for swimming and for kids to explore.

The island also has two golf courses, one of them (Mount Irvine Bay Resort) being quite challenging.

Lewis said Canada is probably the country's fifth largest market.

"But we want to improve our numbers. We're making a deliberate move into the Canadian market."

He said his ministry also is eager to work with agents and host agencies.

The island has just 55,000 people, Lewis said with a smile. "And six of us are here in Toronto."

Lewis said Tobago has changed hands 35 times over the years. Those shifting flags on the flagpoles make for a tremendous cultural exchange, which is reflected in how people dress and what they eat, "as well as in the warmth and hospitality."

A great way to meet locals is what's called the harvest, a period where local residents fling open their doors and serve great food and drink to anyone who wanders in.

"Every community has them at different times of the year," Lewis said.

On top of that, Tobago (and Trinidad) are quite close to South America and outside the traditional hurricane belt.

Sunwing operates direct flights from Toronto in winter, which is a big plus. Air Canada, WestJet and others fly frequently to Trinidad, which is merely a 20-minute flight away, he said.

There aren't any big-name hotels and most aren't normally all-inclusive. But many hotels offer all-inclusive packages, Lewis said.

Toronto-based Siren Communications recently was announced as the Canadian public relations agency for the Tobago Tourism Agency.