

Tourism:

Why Barbados is No. 1 in the Caribbean, and How to Stay Ahead of the Competition



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Barbados ranks first among seven Caribbean countries included in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2015, published by the World Economic Forum, the body which hosts the famous Davos conference in January each year. The Forum's measure of competitiveness is a comprehensive one, taking account of all the factors that influence potential investors' decisions. Taking a closer look at these factors pinpoints for us the competitive strengths of Barbados' tourism, as well as the challenges we have yet to overcome.

WHY BARBADOS IS NO. 1

Barbados' strongest showing is in the quality of its health facilities and the quality of water and sanitation services. It is an area where the Caribbean scores high marks, by international comparison, and even so Barbados outshines its Caribbean rivals.

Barbados also scores highly for number of hotel rooms, given our size, the widespread availability of conveniences such as ATMs, and the frequency with which business trips are extended for purposes of relaxation.

Compared to others, Barbados gives high priority to travel and tourism, and budgetary resources allocated to tourism are comparatively high. Our marketing is also considered among the more effective programmes worldwide, ranking at No. 26 of the 141 countries assessed.

Barbados scores highly on the reliability of its police service, and in other aspects of safety and security. The port and airport, ground transportation and other domestic infrastructure are also highly rated.

Barbados has outstanding mobile network coverage, and internet and broadband usage are high. The high quality of our electricity supply is another factor that puts us ahead of the competition.

HOW BARBADOS CAN STAY IN THE LEAD

Barbados can retain its leadership in Caribbean competitiveness, and gain on the world's most competitive tourism destinations, by scrupulous attention to maintaining standards where we already do well, on the one hand, and addressing our competitive weaknesses on the other.

Compared to other tourist destinations Barbados has relatively scant cultural resources, our single World Heritage site notwithstanding. Our score in this area should improve, thanks to the efforts of our cultural entrepreneurs. Effective implementation of incentives under the Cultural Industries Act would greatly enhance competitiveness in this area.

Among the other features where Barbados has unacceptably low marks on the global scorecard are:

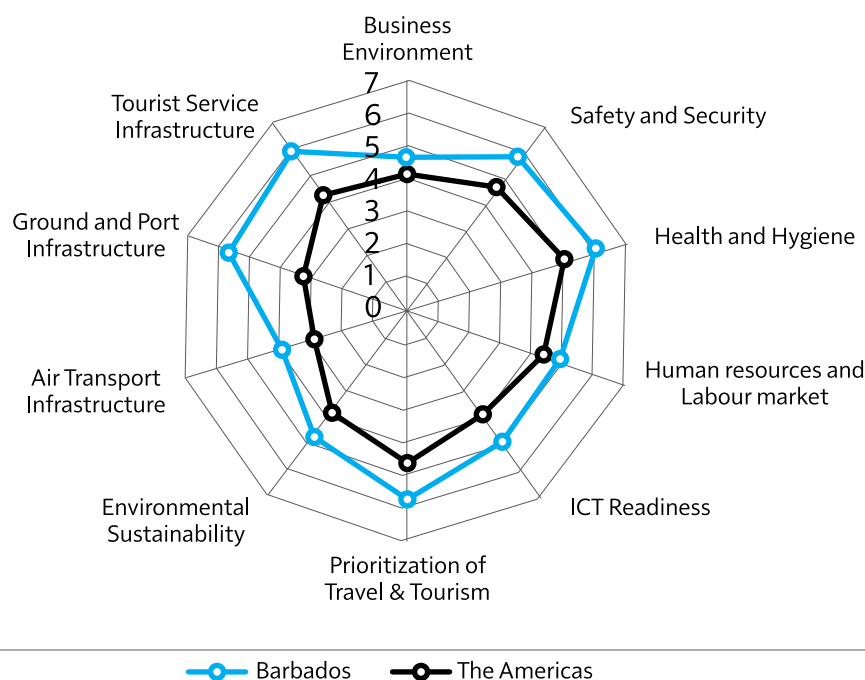
- The time it takes to start a business (we're No. 91) or to obtain a construction permit (No. 138);
- The ease of hiring foreign labour (we're No. 125);
- Pay and productivity (we're No. 109);
- The comprehensiveness of tourism data (we're No. 117); and
- Barbados' baseline water stress (we're No. 128).

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These are all factors that can be addressed by means of appropriate policy. It is important that we bring such policies to bear, because the beneficial effect on the country's competitiveness is self-evident.

Finally, a word on prices. Barbados' hotel prices are high, on average, compared with the countries included in the report. The fact that tourist arrivals to date are 14 percent higher than last year means that tourists believe that they are getting value for their money. They are paying a premium, and they are getting a service that deserves that premium. In order to stay in the game, worker productivity must increase and work attitudes improve, so that visitors feel their money is well spent.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS INDEX



Source: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2015