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12 - Page Special
Sunday March 16, 2025



**INTIMATE
HOTELS**
OF BARBADOS

25th
Anniversary

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Intimate by name and nature

**INTIMATE
HOTELS**
OF BARBADOS
25th Anniversary

stories by DOMINIQUE TOPPIN

*I*ntimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB) is marking another year of growth and resilience, and this is special, as it is the 25th anniversary. What began in 2000 as a cooperative effort to support small, locally-owned hotels has evolved into a dynamic force for sustainable development, community empowerment and memorable guest experiences. Today, with approximately 40 member properties ranging from cosy guesthouses to charming hotels, the association continues to nurture a thriving, diverse hotel sector that offers a unique and authentic alternative to the larger, more conventional accommodations found on the island.

The association's journey is deeply rooted in the history and culture of Barbados. The concept of small, independent hotels is not a modern trend but a long-standing tradition that traces back to the 18th century, when Rachael Pringle-Polgreen, an Afro-Barbadian, pioneered the first indigenous hotel on the island. The legacy of these small, personalised accommodations is as integral to Barbados as the warmth of its people. It is this same spirit of hospitality, craftsmanship and community focus that has propelled the IHB forward, now representing under 1 000 rooms across its membership.

One of the defining features of the IHB is the resilience and adaptability of its members. With properties ranging from intimate retreats with as few as four rooms, to larger establishments hosting up to 79 rooms, these hotels embody a unique blend of comfort, affordability, and local flavour. Offering accommodation at prices that cater to independent travellers – those seeking rest, adventure and immersive cultural experiences – these hotels form an essential part of the island's tourism offering. Over the years, they have cultivated a loyal customer base of repeat visitors who value the personal service, local insight and

authentic experience that these small hotels deliver.

But what is important to note is that it is not just about offering a place to stay. The IHB's commitment to sustainability in all its forms – environmental, economic and social – has been the cornerstone of its operations. By integrating eco-friendly practices such as solar energy, water conservation and waste management, the IHB member properties are doing their part to protect the island's natural beauty while appealing to the growing segment of environmentally conscious travellers. Additionally, the association's support for local businesses, from farmers to artisans, ensures that the economic benefits of tourism stay within Barbados, fostering a thriving, resilient local economy.

Social sustainability also plays a pivotal role in the IHB's work. The association takes great pride in the diversity of its membership, with 51 per cent of its hotels being female-led or owned. This representation highlights the powerful role women play in the nation's tourism sector, driving innovation, community involvement and the preservation of Barbados' cultural heritage. The IHB's focus on community development is also evident in the support it offers to local events, cultural programmes and artisan initiatives that help maintain the authenticity and vibrancy of the island's culture.

The growth and impact of the IHB member hotels extend beyond the individual properties themselves. Collectively, these hotels provide employment to over 1 200 Barbadians, creating stable jobs that contribute to the socio-economic fabric of the nation. In a tourism environment that is constantly evolving, the IHB's ability to adapt and stay ahead of trends has kept its members competitive, particularly in the face of changing travel patterns and increased competition from global hotel chains. The association's proactive approach to marketing, training, and advocacy ensures that small hotels have the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly complex and digital world.



THE CONCEPT BEHIND Intimate Hotels of Barbados traces back to the 18th century when Rachel Pringle (pictured above) pioneered the first indigenous hotel on the island.
(GP)

Looking to the future, the IHB remains committed to ensuring that small, locally owned hotels continue to thrive, offering a distinctive and authentic experience to travellers from around the globe. With its solid foundation, long-standing history, and dedication to sustainable growth, the IHB stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of Barbadian hospitality. Whether you're seeking a quiet retreat, an adventure-filled getaway, or an opportunity to immerse yourself in the island's vibrant culture, the Intimate Hotels of Barbados provides an exceptional alternative to larger, impersonal resorts, offering something truly special for every traveller.



25

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SHIREENE MATHLIN-TULLOCH, Chairman, Intimate Hotels of Barbados. (GP)

Message from Shireene Mathlin-Tulloch, chairman of Intimate Hotels of Barbados, to mark its 25th anniversary.

AS THE Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB) celebrates 25 years, I am honoured to represent this incredible association as Chairman of the Board of Directors. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone – past and present – who has contributed to the IHB’s foundation and success. As beautifully expressed during our anniversary celebration, 25 years is no small feat, and the resilience of this group is remarkable. I must especially thank our executive directors and administrators for their dedication and tireless efforts, as well as our board members for their invaluable guidance.

In my brief time as chairman, I have observed the diversity and unique strengths of our membership. We are a group of properties ranging from small, intimate havens of four rooms to larger hotels with 79 rooms, collectively providing nearly 1 000 rooms across 40 properties. Our members are predominantly locally-owned or from the CARICOM region, ensuring our association is authentically Caribbean and Barbadian.

Our members are featured across our website, social

Cheers to a bright future ahead



media channels, and in the popular **Barbados on a Budget** brochure. This brochure often surprises travellers with the variety of affordable accommodations we offer. The most common question we receive after showcasing our properties is how to book, highlighting one of our biggest challenges. Many properties still rely on limited booking channels, with some requiring a phone call to reserve.

Our properties also play a crucial role in supporting airlines by providing budget-friendly accommodations for incoming flights. Each year, the IHB properties undergo inspections by the Barbados Tourism Product Authority, ensuring they are a safe and secure choice for travellers. According to our Minister of Tourism, the IHB properties contribute 14 per cent annually to Barbados’ GDP and employ over 1 200 people, making us a vital part of the local economy.

One surprising observation was how many people were unaware of the IHB. This presented an opportunity to create a new path forward, starting with making our properties easier to book. In this digital age, instant booking is crucial. With support from the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc., we contracted a local vendor to help get our properties connected and bookable online globally. This process, more complex than anticipated due to the variety of reservation systems in use and different levels of digital skill among our owners, has turned into a labour of love. We are confident that this project, now underway for two years, will soon be completed, making booking the IHB properties as easy as the click of a button.

Revenue management and cost control are essential for growth, which is why we have established two sub-committees. One focuses on

exploring group purchasing opportunities, and the other on re-engaging with Enterprise Growth Fund Limited. Small hotels often lack the bargaining power and resources of larger establishments, so it is vital for us to unite and advocate as one body.

The IHB properties exemplify local entrepreneurship, which we want to inspire in the younger generation. We encourage young people to intern or work with our hotels to gain experience and contribute their talents.

To increase our visibility, we will expand our presence on social media, which is both cost-effective and essential. Additionally, we will continue attending travel shows across the Caribbean and new markets such as the UK, USA, Canada, Latin America, Europe, and soon, Africa and the Middle East.

The IHB properties are ideal for budget-conscious travellers, whether for short or long holidays, business trips, sports teams, medical travel, or those seeking an authentic Barbadian experience with warm hospitality. We invite new members and fresh ideas and encourage our current members to actively participate in shaping the future of the IHB.

Cheers to the Intimate Hotels of Barbados, to our owners, employees, and a bright future ahead. Here is to 25 years of success and to many more!

Callender's vision for IHB's future

WITH OVER 20 YEARS OF

experience in the hospitality industry, the new Executive Director of the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB)**, Cicely Callender is stepping into her role with a clear and strategic vision for the future of the association. While she is still in the early days of her tenure, having only been in the position for six days, her extensive background in hospitality has given her a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the small hotel sector.

Taking on this leadership role is also an exciting opportunity for her to further advocate for small hotels while driving **IHB's** growth and visibility in a rapidly evolving tourism landscape.

One of Callender's key priorities as executive director is expanding the **IHB** brand and making it more visible on both the local and international stage. "I hope that we are soon able to break into the tech and e-commerce space fully. We must be able to adapt to the new technology, be more active on social media and ultimately have a stronger digital presence," she explained.

The small hotels that make up the association have long been a cornerstone of Barbados' tourism sector, offering a unique and authentic alternative to

larger, more conventional accommodations. However, these hotels often face challenges in gaining the recognition they deserve.

But with Callender's wealth of experience, the aim is to change this by increasing awareness of **IHB's** member hotels and highlighting their diverse offerings to a broader audience. And she believes that one of the most critical steps in achieving this goal is leveraging modern technology and digital platforms.

Alongside expanding **IHB's** digital footprint, Callender also hopes to attract more small hoteliers to join the association by making its benefits even more apparent. In discussing, she said, "My aim is to ensure that more small hoteliers recognise the tangible benefits of being a part of this association. These benefits are vital in a highly competitive tourism market where small hotels often struggle to stand out on their own. From negotiating better purchasing agreements to offering marketing and promotional support, **IHB** plays a crucial role in helping its members thrive."

Over the years, the **IHB** has developed a strong dynamic among its member hotels, with collaboration being a key to its success. This spirit of cooperation has enabled many **IHB** hotels to achieve consistent recognition for their high standards of service, with several receiving awards from

platforms like TripAdvisor.

"The collaboration efforts have been great. And it is these strong partnerships which have played a significant role in driving the success of **IHB's** members. This collective strength and collaboration are some of the association's most valuable assets, and the vision is to nurture and expand as I settle into the role more," she said.

One of the most important goals of the new executive director is to ensure that this culture of collaboration continues to thrive within the **IHB**. She aims to foster an even more harmonious working environment, where the exchange of ideas and resources between member hotels results in collective success.

"The overall goal is for the institution to be more harmonious in collaborating to ensure continued success, while pushing for the success of small hotels," she stated. She believes that this cooperative approach will not only help individual properties succeed but will also contribute to the overall strength and sustainability of Barbados' tourism industry.

As the executive director, Callender is also focused on ensuring that **IHB's** small hotels remain competitive and resilient in an ever-changing market. And there is no



CICELY CALLENDER, Executive Director of Intimate Hotels of Barbados. (SLD)

doubt that her leadership will be essential in helping the association adapt to new industry trends, shifting traveller preferences, and assist in the ongoing challenges posed by the global tourism sector.

By emphasising the importance of sustainable growth, both economically and environmentally, the overall plan is to position **IHB** as a forward-thinking organisation that supports the long-term success of its members.

The vision of Callender is

clear: to raise the profile of the association, embrace digital innovation, attract new members and continue to champion the success of small hotels in Barbados.

With her experience, passion for the industry and commitment to collaboration, she is poised to lead **IHB** into an exciting new chapter, ensuring that small hotels remain a vital part of Barbados' tourism sector for years to come.

(DT)

Miranda a key player at the organisation



25th Anniversary



MIRANDA DOYLE, Executive Assistant at Intimate Hotels of Barbados. (SLD)

BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATION, there is a team of dedicated professionals who ensure smooth operations, strategic planning and effective communication. At the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB)**, Executive Assistant Miranda Doyle, who is in her tenth year working at the **IHB**, stands out as one of the key players whose role is not only pivotal but often underestimated.

As executive assistant at the **IHB**, she is more than just a secretary; she is the backbone of the organisation's day-to-day operations. From managing communication to supporting large-scale projects, she plays an essential role in ensuring everything runs seamlessly.

One of the most critical duties is handling the flow of correspondence. Every letter, email, or memo sent and received by **IHB** must be carefully logged, scanned, and routed to the relevant individuals. "Whether it's the board members, **IHB** members, committee members, or industry partners, I ensure that communication is directed efficiently and that no vital information is lost in the shuffle. With so many stakeholders involved, this task requires a high level of organisation and attention to detail," she said.

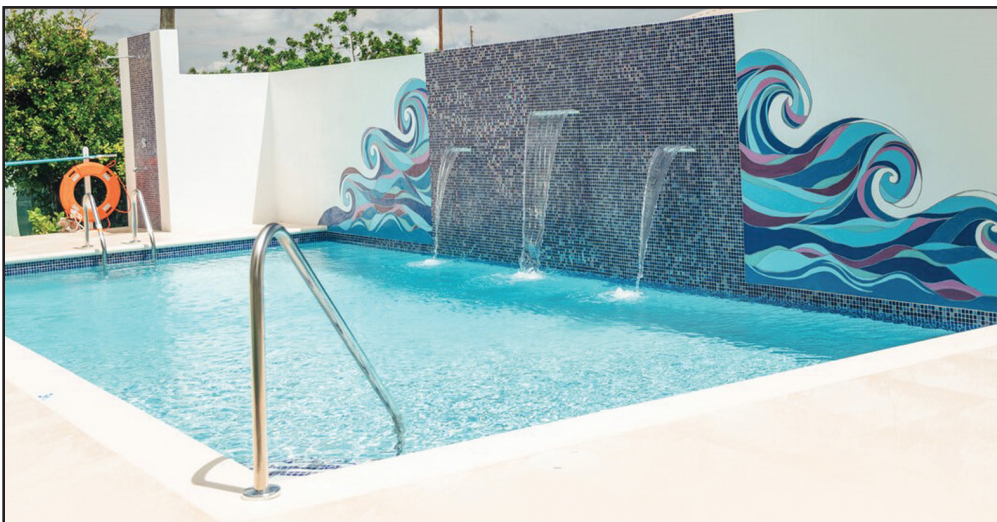
Equally important is sorting and prioritising correspondence for the executive director's review. In explaining, she highlighted that "it is critical that I ensure that urgent matters are flagged for immediate action, while less pressing items are scheduled for follow-up. This timely communication ensures that the executive director remains informed and proactive in all their decisions, particularly when supporting tourism development projects both locally and regionally."

Organisational skills are also at the heart of her role. The position demands a well-maintained filing system to ensure all documents and correspondence are easily

retrievable when needed. "By managing physical and digital files efficiently, this helps **IHB** to function at its highest capacity, supporting seamless decision-making processes. In addition to that, I am often tasked with assisting the executive director in overseeing the daily office operations. This includes everything from ordering office supplies to processing payments and ensuring that the office is equipped to handle the demands of the **IHB**. Ultimately, it is this attention to detail and proactive approach that keeps things running smoothly," she added.

Another key responsibility lies in managing accounts payable and receivable within the **IHB** accounting system. She said, "it is my duty to manage financial transactions, ensuring that they are recorded accurately, ultimately helping to maintain the financial integrity of the organisation. Beyond that, I am also deeply involved in coordinating and managing meetings, both internal and external. So, whether it is organising general **IHB** meetings, training sessions or special events, I ensure that logistics are covered, invitations are sent, and that everything is in place for successful collaboration."

Ultimately, her contributions are critical to **IHB** and by extension, the success of tourism development initiatives at both local and regional levels. Her role ensures that the organisation can focus on its core mission: driving sustainable tourism growth and enhancing the region's global competitiveness. Through her diverse and dynamic responsibilities, she exemplifies the qualities of the unsung hero behind the scenes who makes a lasting impact on the organisation's success. **(DT)**



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AT RIGHT, SOUTH GAP HOTEL
Below, ISLAND INN. (GPs)



PIRATE'S INN.
(SLD)



DOVER BEACH HOTEL. (GP)



ECO LIFESTYLE & LODGE. (GP)



BLUE HAVEN HOLIDAY APARTMENTS. (GP)



ALL SEASONS RESORT. (GP)

List of hotels under IHB

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- Bayfield House, St Peter
- Best E Villas – Prospect, St James
- Best E Villas – Providence, Christ Church
- Blue Haven Holiday Apartments, Christ Church
- Carambola Hotel, Christ Church
- Coral Lane Beach Apts, St James
- Dover Beach Hotel, Christ Church
- ECO Lifestyle & Lodge, St Joseph
- Golden Sands Hotel, Christ Church
- Healthy Horizons, Christ Church
- Island Inn Hotel, St. Michael
- Legend Garden Condos, St Peter
- Maxwell Del Mar Hotel, Christ Church
- Melbourne Inn, Christ Church
- Melrose Beach Apartments, Christ Church
- Meridian Inn, Christ Church
- Monteray Apartment Hotel, Christ Church
- Nautilus Ocean Suites, St Michael
- Ocean Spray Apartments, Christ Church
- Palm Garden Hotel, Christ Church
- Pirate's Inn, St Michael
- Regent Apartments, St James
- Rostrevor Hotel, Christ Church
- Santosha, St Andrew
- Sea Cruise Villas, St Lucy
- Sea Symphony Villas, St Lucy
- Shonlan Airport Hotel, Christ Church
- South Gap Hotel, Christ Church
- Southern Surf Beach Apartments, Christ Church
- Sugar Cane Club Hotel & Spa, St Peter
- Sweetfield Manor, St Michael
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- Time Out Hotel, Christ Church
- Worthing Court Hotel, Christ Church
- Yellow Bird Hotel, Christ Church

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Intimate a voice for small hotels

Message from Renée Coppin –
Past Executive Director of *Intimate
Hotels of Barbados* to mark its
25th anniversary.

THIS YEAR, the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB)** is celebrating 25 years, and I am reminded of my own journey with the organisation and the tremendous strides made in supporting small, locally owned hotels. Reflecting on the years that have passed since I first joined in 2000 as the founding executive director, I am filled with pride at what has been achieved and excited for the continued growth and success of the association.

My tenure at **IHB**, from 2000 to 2005, marked the start of what has been an incredibly rewarding journey in the tourism industry. I had the privilege of laying the foundations for what would become a powerful voice for small hotels in Barbados. It was a thrilling time, filled with the energy of starting something

new. Every step we took was a learning experience, from building the systems and structures to amplifying the voice of locally owned properties. We were not just creating an association – we were creating a movement that would shape the future of small hotels in Barbados.

Some of my key achievements during those formative years include establishing the association's governance structure, launching a global marketing strategy, and building a network of relationships with stakeholders both locally and internationally. One of the highlights was working with the Board of Directors and the Enterprise Growth Fund Limited to establish the Small Hotels Investment Fund (SHIF), which provided invaluable support to our members, helping them upgrade and refurbish their properties. We also introduced training programmes that helped our members improve their operations in areas ranging from housekeeping to customer service. We taught them how to harness the power of technology and the



RENÉE COPPIN (left), former Executive Director of *Intimate Hotels of Barbados* and current Chairman **Shireene Mathlin-Tulloch**. (GP)

Internet – a tool that, at the time, was still emerging in the tourism sector.

Of course, as with any new venture, there were challenges to overcome. Creating a shared ethos and culture for the association was no small task. We had to balance the diverse needs and expectations of our members while communicating the value we brought to them.

Navigating the political landscape of running an association, with its varying personalities and agendas, required a steady focus on our broader goal: to be a powerful voice for small, locally owned hotels that so often lacked representation in larger tourism

discussions. But despite the challenges, we were able to lay a solid foundation for the **IHB** that continues to thrive today.

With this quarter century celebration, I remain optimistic about the future of the **IHB** and the small hotels it represents. Over the years, the sector has grown, and it continues to be one of the best opportunities for locals to have a meaningful stake in an industry that is central to our economy.

While foreign investment in tourism is welcomed, it's crucial that we continue to create space for local participation at every level, especially when it comes to hotel ownership. A tourism industry that doesn't prioritise

local involvement will never reach its full potential.

For the past 25 years, the **IHB** has been on a mission to empower Barbadians to dream of creating their own enterprises in tourism, not just as employees but as owners and creators of lasting legacies. This vision remains as important today as it was when we first began. If we can continue to unlock the entrepreneurial potential of our people, Barbados will truly be on a transformative path.

The role of the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados** remains pivotal in ensuring that small, indigenous hotels continue to be the heartbeat of our tourism sector. We must continue to advocate for these businesses, ensuring that they remain not just relevant but vital to the fabric of Barbados' tourism story.

The **IHB** has been a beacon for local hotel owners, and as we look ahead to the next 25 years, I have no doubt that it will continue to be the unwavering voice for small hotels, helping them thrive in an ever-evolving global market.



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Message from Marc McCollin, Past Executive Assistant and Executive Director of Intimate Hotels of Barbados.

WHEN I JOINED the Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB) in 2004 as executive assistant and later transitioned to executive director in 2005, the association was still finding its footing in an industry dominated by larger hotel groups. The journey was both challenging and rewarding, as we worked tirelessly to establish the IHB as a recognised voice for small, locally owned hotels. But being a part of that growth and witnessing the transformation of the organisation into the influential entity it is today has been a truly fulfilling experience.

The early years at the IHB were about building momentum, and my primary goal was to grow our membership and develop programmes that would bring value to them. We knew that many of the small, locally owned hotels we represented were under-represented in the larger tourism conversation, and it was our job to amplify their voices. I vividly remember the sense of accomplishment as we managed to grow the membership year after year, engaging

them in everything from marketing initiatives to bulk-buying programmes, all designed to improve their operations and create stronger business networks.

One of the proudest moments of my tenure was organising our very first IHB Roadshow in 2006 in the North East USA, alongside the then Barbados Tourism Authority. It was a landmark event for us, and while it was both tiring and rewarding, it marked the first major step in increasing the global visibility of the IHB and its members.

Another significant achievement was the opportunity that arose in 2007 with the Cricket World Cup. Several of our member hotels took advantage of funding to make much-needed upgrades, giving them a competitive edge and ensuring their properties stayed relevant in an increasingly competitive market.

Despite the successes, there were challenges to overcome. One of the most significant hurdles was educating the public and the industry about who the Intimate Hotels of Barbados were and what we represented. At that time, we were often mistaken for other hotel groups on the island, and it took a concerted effort to clarify our mission and differentiate ourselves. This challenge was as much

about education as it was about marketing, but I'm proud to say that over the years, IHB's identity and brand have become well-established both locally and internationally.

As I reflect on the future, I believe that the IHB and its member hotels are in a unique and advantageous position. Representing a significant portion of Barbados' room stock, IHB's members are made up of locally owned, boutique properties that offer an authentic experience – something many travellers are increasingly seeking.

This authenticity is a key strength that should continue to be highlighted as tourism trends shift towards more personalised, unique experiences. The key challenge moving forward will be ensuring that the IHB's message reaches the right audience and that potential guests are drawn to the distinctive offerings of its members.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the IHB will continue to play a vital role in the future of Barbados' tourism industry. The organisation's evolution over the past 25 years has been remarkable, and as it continues to adapt and grow, the small hotels it represents will remain a cornerstone of the island's hospitality sector. I have no doubt that the next 25



MARC McCOLLIN, Past Executive Assistant and Executive Director of Intimate Hotels of Barbados. (GP)

years will bring even greater successes for the IHB, as it continues to champion the small, locally owned hotels that help define the true spirit of Barbados.

A pivotal force in our tourism future

Message from Gayle Parris, Past Executive Director of *Intimate Hotels of Barbados* to mark its 25th anniversary.

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY of the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB)** is the perfect time to be reminded of the incredible journey I had the privilege to be part of during my tenure from 2008 to 2020. The experience was nothing short of remarkable. I had the opportunity to engage with some of the most resilient and hardworking hoteliers on the island – individuals who were dedicated to their craft and deeply passionate about contributing to the economic enfranchisement of Barbadian entrepreneurs. Listening to their stories and working alongside them to navigate the challenges and opportunities in the tourism industry was truly inspiring. Their unwavering commitment to providing authentic Bajan experiences propelled me every day to seek new ways to generate business for this vital sector.

One of my proudest achievements during my time at **IHB** was creating the **Stay Like a Tourist** campaign. This initiative was designed to encourage Barbadians to experience their own island by staying in

locally owned hotels. The idea behind it was simple yet powerful: to allow locals to enjoy an authentic Bajan vacation and, in turn, support the local tourism industry. This campaign was a precursor to what would later become the island-wide staycation movement, but it was an important step in building awareness about the unique offerings of our small hotels.

Another memorable moment was participating in mall promotions at locations like Sky Mall and Sheraton. With a branded **IHB** booth, we were able to not only boost the visibility of the association but also engage directly with the public. Hoteliers participated enthusiastically, distributing brochures and sharing their insights on the importance of tourism to Barbados' economy.

These interactions helped to break down barriers, bringing the value of small hotels into the everyday conversation and reinforcing the importance of supporting locally owned businesses.

Perhaps one of the most impactful initiatives I was part of was organising the first-ever co-op campaign with Expedia, one of the world's largest online travel agencies (OTAs). This campaign brought tangible results, generating significant



GAYLE PARRIS, Past Executive Director of *Intimate Hotels of Barbados*. (GP)

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constant reality after the initial funding was exhausted. This required constant advocacy and meetings with the Barbados Tourism Authority (BTA) to secure funding for key marketing initiatives.

Thankfully, the then BTA was a strong supporter, and through collaborative efforts, we were able to ensure that **IHB's** marketing campaigns reached a wider audience and generated meaningful results.

I firmly believe that the **IHB** is essential for the sustainability of the small and indigenous hotel sector. The world is increasingly shifting towards a desire for authentic travel experiences, and this is where our small hotels truly shine. These properties offer a level of personalisation, culture, and connection that larger chains simply cannot replicate.

Ensuring the ongoing development, visibility and financial support of **IHB** will be crucial to maintaining the sector's relevance in a rapidly evolving industry. Yet, I am filled with optimism for what the **IHB** will continue to accomplish. With a strong foundation and the unwavering dedication of its members, the organisation will undoubtedly remain a pivotal force in shaping the future of Barbados' tourism industry.

business for **IHB** members during a challenging period. It was a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation, and it demonstrated how small hotels could leverage partnerships with large OTAs to remain competitive in an ever-changing global market.

Throughout my tenure, I also took great pride in expanding the **IHB** membership, helping the organisation grow to include 55 members at one point. It was a rewarding experience to witness the community of small hoteliers grow stronger, more united, and more confident in their ability to succeed together.

However, the journey was not without its challenges. Financial constraints were a

IHB an advocate for small hotels

Message from Davina Layne, Past Executive Director of Intimate Hotels of Barbados.

I BEGAN MY TENURE at the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados (IHB)** in May 2020, and I can't help but think about the unique challenges and growth the organisation experienced during my time as executive director. I stepped into the role during a time of uncertainty, as the world grappled with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel came to a halt, borders were closed and hotels shut down. It was, without a doubt, one of the most turbulent times in the history of the tourism industry, not just locally but globally. Yet, despite these challenges, I found that the crisis presented us with an opportunity to adapt, innovate, and strengthen the bonds within our community.

The pandemic forced us to pivot quickly and embrace new ways of connecting with our members. Technology became a lifeline, and through tools like **WhatsApp** and **Zoom**, we were able to maintain communication, keep the membership engaged, and ensure that the **IHB** brand remained visible. While international tradeshows and in-person events were put on hold for two years, we didn't let that stop us. Instead, we refocused on our core mission: to advocate for and support small, locally owned hotels.

Over the few years from 2020 to just February 2025, I had the privilege of leading the organisation through a period of transformation and growth. One of my proudest achievements was diversifying the revenue streams for the **IHB**, securing over US\$50 000 in grants and technical assistance for both the association and its members. This financial support proved vital, especially during such uncertain times. Additionally, I always believed in the importance of nurturing the next generation of hospitality professionals, which is why I committed to youth development. So, every year, we supported internships for students in hospitality and tourism programmes at the University of the West Indies and the Barbados Community College. This focus on workforce sustainability ensured that the future of the industry would remain bright, even in the face of adversity.

Another key accomplishment was securing over US\$100 000 in marketing assistance for the **IHB**, which helped amplify our presence and provided much-needed exposure for our members. Alongside this, we took significant steps to modernise the organisation, including overseeing a rebranding exercise, redeveloping the **IHB** website, and introducing channel management to streamline our operations. The growth in our social media presence and engagement – by over 600 per cent – was a testament to the increasing recognition of the **IHB's** relevance and importance.

But it was not all about numbers and initiatives. A significant challenge I faced was enhancing the awareness and visibility of the **IHB** in the public eye. For a long time, many people didn't fully understand the unique value our small hotels offered to the tourism landscape of Barbados. But through strategic PR efforts, one-on-one interviews, and media engagements, we made significant strides in changing that perception. The positive feedback and recognition I received from both the public and our members showed me that we were, indeed, making a difference.

I am incredibly optimistic about the future of the **IHB**. As a collective of small, locally owned hotels, it brings a perspective to the tourism sector that is often under-represented. These hotels are a vital part of the fabric of Barbados' tourism industry, offering authentic experiences that larger establishments simply cannot replicate. However, for the **IHB** to continue to grow and thrive, it's essential that all members participate actively in the organisation's work and that their voices are heard at the national level. We also have an opportunity to inspire younger generations by showcasing that local ownership in tourism is not only possible but essential for the future of the industry.



DAVINA LAYNE, Past Executive Director of Intimate Hotels of Barbados. (GP)

INTIMATE
HOTELS
OF BARBADOS

25th Anniversary



MELROSE BEACH APARTMENTS. (GP)



CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 25th anniversary! This is a huge milestone, and we are proud to be part of your journey.

Over the years, we have truly enjoyed working with **IHB**. Your support has been vital in helping small properties gain visibility in the industry. Additionally, the courses you offer have been incredibly valuable in developing our team and enhancing their skills.

Thank you for all that you do, and we look forward to continuing our successful partnership.

– **MANAGEMENT OF THE PALMS RESORT INC.**

OUR INTERACTIONS WITH the **Intimate Hotels of Barbados** team are always great experiences. The staff is always willing to go the extra mile to assist in whichever way possible. The smile of professionalism always shines through with excellence."

We wish you all the best in celebrating your 25th anniversary and look forward to a stronger partnership in the future.

– **MANAGEMENT OF MELROSE BEACH APARTMENTS INC.**

THE **Intimate Hotels of Barbados** serves as an umbrella body and plays an integral role in the development of many small hotel and tourism-related services.

Over the years, Dover Beach Hotel has benefited from their range of services such as promoting, marketing, lobbying on their behalf, networking and the availability of educational programmes for staff members.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Team at the **IHB** on their 25th anniversary and wish them continued growth.

– **MANAGEMENT OF DOVER BEACH HOTEL**

AS PROUD MEMBERS of **Intimate Hotels of Barbados**, the management of Yellow Bird Hotel, South Gap Hotel, and Blue Haven Holiday Apartments extends heartfelt congratulations to **IHB** on its 25th anniversary.

Yellow Bird Hotel was especially honoured to be recognised at the recent 25th anniversary celebration for being one of the first hotels to join the **IHB** when it was established in 2004. This recognition highlights the enduring partnership between **IHB** and small, independently owned hotels like ours. Even 25 years later, all of our properties remain active members, a testament to the value that **IHB** brings to intimate hotels across Barbados.

IHB has been a great resource for small hotels, providing opportunities for growth and development within the hospitality sector. Over the years, the **IHB** Secretariat has offered valuable support, helping us strengthen our operations and expand our reach. One of the most significant benefits has been access to funding through The Small Hotels Investment Fund, which has allowed us to renovate and enhance our properties, improving our offerings and ensuring we remain competitive.

Beyond financial support, **IHB** has created opportunities for training, marketing exposure, and industry collaboration, all of which have contributed to the success of its members. Through these initiatives, **IHB** has helped small hotels remain visible and relevant in a changing tourism landscape.

As we celebrate this milestone, we extend our sincere gratitude to the **IHB** Secretariat for their continued dedication. We look forward to many more years of partnership and progress.

– **MANAGEMENT OF YELLOW BIRD HOTEL, SOUTH GAP HOTEL & BLUE HAVEN HOLIDAY APARTMENTS**



YELLOW BIRD HOTEL. (GP)

Our partners say . . .



THE PALMS RESORT. (GP)

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