



UN Tourism and The Bahamas spotlight innovation shaping the future of resilient tourism in the Caribbean

Nassau, The Bahamas, 30 April 2026 – UN Tourism, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Investments and Aviation of the Bahamas, has highlighted a new generation of innovators advancing resilient tourism in the Caribbean.

The [Bahamas Sustainable Islands Challenge](#) was created to recognize the emerging start-up ecosystem as well as the need for greater cross-Caribbean collaboration, more investment and stronger public-private partnerships.

UN Tourism Executive Director Natalia Bayona said: “Tourism accounts for 15% of GDP in The Bahamas, making it an economic engine and a source of vulnerability. We are identifying solutions and building a pipeline of entrepreneurs able to address critical challenges in The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean, while helping to catalyze a fast-emerging regional start-up ecosystem driven by stronger cross-Caribbean collaboration

Awardees:

- Runner-up – Category 1: Ocean and Marine Conservation: Island Bey Coastal Stewards
- Runner-up – Category 3: Green Tech for Sustainable Tourism: Coco Bliss Bahamas
- Winner – Category 1: Ocean and Marine Conservation: Bluequest Bahamas
- Winner – Category 2: Local and Community-based Tourism: Access Island Guide
- Winner – Category 3: Green Tech for Sustainable Tourism: Out Island Water Company Recycling Program
- **Overall Winner – UN Tourism Bahamas Sustainable Islands Innovation Challenge: Out Island Water Company Recycling Program**

Hon. I Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, said: “The Bahamas Sustainable Island Challenge demonstrates how small island destinations can lead global tourism transformation through innovation. By empowering local entrepreneurs to develop solutions in sustainability, community-based tourism, and green technology, The Bahamas is intentionally building an innovation ecosystem that strengthens resilience, attracts investment, and converts our vulnerabilities into long-term competitive advantage

Latia Duncombe, Director General, Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, adds: “This Challenge brings global attention to solutions being shaped by Bahamian hands, Bahamian insight and Bahamian experience. Through our partnership with UN Tourism, we are translating

those solutions into market-ready opportunities, ensuring that sustainable tourism in The Bahamas is not only discussed at the policy level, but advanced through practical innovation and measurable impact.”

Supporting Caribbean innovators

The six finalists were mentored by the Caribbean Climate Innovation Center (CCIC), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Tech Beach Retreat, UnTours, and the Tourism Development Cooperation of the Bahamas. All were awarded seed capital by the Tourism Development Cooperation of the Bahamas, will join the UN Tourism Global Innovation Network, and get scholarships for the UN Tourism Online Academy. The winner will benefit from further acceleration programmes.

As the first of its kind for the Caribbean, the initiative sets the foundation for future collaboration. UN Tourism and its partners will expand the model, strengthening an innovation ecosystem for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The Challenge was also supported by partners including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Katapult Ventures.

Related links:

[Bahamas Sustainable Islands Challenge](#)

More information on additional challenges and competitions of UN Tourism:

<https://www.untourism.int/startup-competition>