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Aruba Hotel First in World to Win Global United Nations 2020 Climate Neutral Now Award

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The Caribbean's most eco-certified hotel is now setting the world standard as Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort (<http://www.bucuti.com>) in Aruba is the first-ever hotel in the world to win the prestigious Global United Nations 2020 Climate Action Award for Climate Neutral Now. For the first time in the award's history, a hotel is a winner. Past recipients include global giants and household names such as Apple and Infosys and projects backed by major banks.

With Bucuti & Tara as the first hotel, the UN is signaling to the world the significantly positive affect every member of the hospitality sector – more than 10% of the world's GDP – can and must have to combat climate change. The UN's Momentum for Change program is a highlight of the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference. This year is the 10th anniversary of the awards and 510 organizations and business worldwide answered the call for submissions.

Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Aruba: Excelling Beyond Carbon Neutrality is the winning case study submission. At just 104 rooms, independently owned Bucuti & Tara is not a stereotypical chain resort backed by corporate finances. On its own, Bucuti & Tara researched, sought and implemented sustainability initiatives that can be easily replicable and scalable, which drew the UN to the resort's success. Due to this, Bucuti & Tara will also serve as a Lighthouse Activity among the UN's collection of inspiring, action-oriented resources the organization invites others to reference for their own sustainability journeys.

"I congratulate the winners of the 2020 UN Global Climate Action Awards, who provide tangible proof that climate action is under way around the world," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres. "It is exciting to see these climate solutions, which reinforce my call for decisive leadership on climate change by governments, businesses and cities, and for a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us keep pressing ahead to build a more sustainable and equitable future for all."

"The last eight months have been a nightmare for many throughout the world," said UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa. "COVID-19 has altered lives, economies and the nature of business on every continent—from the largest cities to the smallest villages. It is the most urgent threat facing humanity today, but we cannot forget that climate change is the biggest threat facing humanity over the long term."

Sustainability is not an add-on

"We are not in the tourism business; we are in the nature business." Bucuti & Tara Owner/CEO Ewald Biemans often shares this perspective whether he is talking with industry colleagues or speaking from a world stage. It is this difference in mindset combined with passion and the relentless pursuit of providing a well-rounded, highquality vacation that has led Bucuti & Tara to be Tripadvisor's No. 1 Hotel in the Caribbean while simultaneously being the Caribbean's most eco-certified, and first and only carbon-neutral resort.



Born in Europe to humble beginnings, Biemans is a celebrated hotelier who never set out to win awards. While attending school, he helped managed his families' pastry shop growing his kitchen skills while discovering a gift of business acumen. His passion for the hospitality business engrained, Biemans rose through the ranks of hotels and restaurants and along the way he even competed in Milan where he became the World Champion Bartender. From there he was recruited to resort management in Aruba. His studies and world travels continued to broaden his perspective of how people relate to the environment. Along the way, his unyielding pursuit of delivering a high-quality vacation experience included doing so while protecting the planet.

From the first step, to the world stage

While Bucuti & Tara is on the largest swathe of Eagle Beach, with sea level rise predictions, the turquoise waters could be lapping at the resort's backdoors in 20-30 years. Ewald is known to soberly say, "If we do not stop global warming, guests will need snorkels to see our world-famous beach!" Having lived in Aruba the past 50 years, Biemans opened Bucuti in 1987. He soon noticed construction cranes touching the skyline further down the powdery white sand beach and grew concerned about the small island's natural resources. As Aruba quickly grew into an international vacation spot (today, 90% of its GDP is from tourism), Biemans knew the vacation experience had to be in harmony with the planet, otherwise, the small island would be ruined. He looked within his own property and rallied the community and actively engaged with the government.

He busied himself, just as he still does, with researching and implementing forward-thinking initiatives. In a "think globally, act locally" approach, a key driver for Ewald was the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. With Agenda 21 being adopted by more than 170 heads of state worldwide, momentum was afoot. Years of initiatives followed and with the sustainability success came invitations to share with others how to achieve the same. Fast-forward to 2019 and Biemans was accepting the World Travel & Tourism Council's Tourism for Tomorrow Climate Action Award. At the WTTC Global Summit, keynoted by former U.S. President Barack Obama, Biemans was asked to present "The Path to Carbon Neutrality/Net Zero" so the world could learn.

At the adults-only enclave, three cornerstones prevail: romance, wellness and sustainability. Each day guests hail from one of 25 countries worldwide and the resort hums at 97%+ occupancy year-round. Bucuti & Tara proves a memorable vacation and sustainability are mutually inclusive.

Relatability: scalable, replicable initiatives

Like every sustainability journey, Bucuti's earliest days included its tangible first step. A German guest was bewildered that Bucuti was pouring cans and bottles of beer into disposable plastic cups. That left a significant impression and shortly after, Bucuti began with banning single-use plastic and Styrofoam, long before it was ever discussed in mainstream media. Soon, every resort project was more carefully viewed, and a full-time sustainability & certifications manager was added to the staff. Biemans soon sought eco-certifications viewing them as a management structure providing the framework of the platform to build and grow a successful program that continues providing a safe setting for guests and staff while protecting the environment for generations to come. Over the years, the resort has earned certifications for LEED Gold, ISO 14001 and 9001, Travelife Gold, Green Globe Platinum with this year marketing the first perfect score in Green Globe's history.

Achieving climate neutrality required a careful examination of every standard operating procedure at the resort, both direct and indirect for emissions such as energy smart appliances to business travel. While the resort is home to the largest solar panel project in the island's private sector, climate neutrality required far beyond the obvious such as fossil-fuel dependency.

Some aspects include:

- Gifting every guest

with a refillable water canteen, which avoids the potential of 290,000 single-use plastic water bottles being destined for Aruba's landfill

- Gray water is sanitized

and used for irrigation

- Healthy Portions –

sensibly sized meals – reduced plated food waste by 30% and a food waste collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund further reduced it by 30% more

- Eco-fitness treadmills

and bicycles let guests burn calories while simultaneously generating kilowatts that are sent directly to the resort's power grid

- Streamlined

procurement and transportation reduce unnecessary shipments and local purchasing is key

- Staff are incentivized

to take public transportation or carpool

- Ozone-based laundry

equipment requires shorter cycles to wash, less water and less hot water

- In-room energy

management system and sensors. Triggered by motion and doors to regulate energy consumption and limit temperature range. Average savings: 32-38%.

- Waste diversions. 62%

diverted from landfill by donating all food waste to pig farmers, recycling glass and cardboard, repurposing/donating linen/towels.

- Sustainable cooling

system. Variable Refrigerant Flow A/C installed allowing system use only as needed.

In August 2018, it became the Caribbean's first carbon-neutral hotel and remains the only one to this day. The resort does not see this as crossing the finish line, rather the very day after it was certified carbon neutral, it began its pursuit of carbon negative.

Achieving climate neutrality and journeying beyond

Bucuti & Tara's sustainability success is one Biemans openly invites others to use as a resource. The property routinely hosts professors, students and researchers just as easily as foreign dignitaries and industry associates seeking knowledge for implementing eco-friendly initiatives. Every staff member is trained and part of the resort's green operations, every vendor must comply, and each guest is invited to participate. Even with the current pandemic, Bucuti & Tara's sustainable standard operating procedures put it ahead of others in testing and implementing a hospital-grade, high-tech COVID-19 safety protocol that is as safe for guests and staff as it is the planet.

"I am deeply grateful Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort is the recipient of a Global United Nations 2020 Climate Action Award for Climate Neutral Now," shares Ewald Biemans, owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort. "I invite every hospitality industry colleague to use us as a resource to start somewhere and make sustainability an equal part of your operations. I guarantee delivering a memorable vacation and sustainability can be – and must be – mutually inclusive."

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