





A Tobago Treasure

Winners of the 2014 World Travel Award as Tobago's Leading Hotel for the sixth consecutive year, Blue Haven Hotel offers a beautiful, private, and exotic escape on the Caribbean island. A decorated history of golden era Hollywood glitz and glamour, the hotel was at one point considered a relic, but has since been rejuvenated and remains a romantic hotspot and hideaway for honeymooners and clientele the world over.

There is a little bit of everything in and around the Blue Haven Hotel in Tobago. For starters, look around. Built on a historic site, remnants of the past add delight and charm as the old fortress – complete with cannons and a surrounding stone wall encapsulate your senses. Secondly, it's got star studded appeal embedded into its unique character. Featured in many movies from the 1950s such as *Fire Down Below*, *Heaven Knows Mr. Allison*, and the Disney production of *the Swiss Family Robinson*, the Blue Haven Hotel is a nostalgic destination. But for all the bygone discourse and narrative, the Hotel also endured a spell of silence before owner Karl Pistil brought it back to life.

"In the 1970s it got closed down and was empty, unoccupied for 25 years – half a century," he said. "This is when I discovered it and renovated it and now, in 2014,





we'll be celebrating our 15th anniversary since re-opening.”

A boutique style property with 55 rooms, the Blue Haven Hotel is situated on Bacolet Bay, just outside of Scarborough – Tobago’s capital city. Renowned for its dedication and preservation to unspoiled nature and picturesque scenery, namely the three sides of the sea and breathtaking ocean views, it is no wonder why the hotel is considered a fantastic and idyllic location for rest, relaxation, and wedding vows.

A pivotal component in maintaining the lifestyle and experience at the Blue Haven Hotel is the staff. Comprised of 40 employees, the long-serving team is a testament to the unrelenting growth and dedication that Pistil has put in to bring the property back to prominence.

“Our staff is like a family,” he said. “When the employees are happy, they make the guests happy. The guests also become part of the family and they come every year. Some guests have already stayed 10 to 12 times and





when they leave, they've already booked for the next year."

WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS

At the 2015 World Travel Awards ceremony, one of the presenters made a comment that made Pistil smile.

"You must be doing something right," the presenter mused.

The numbers and accolades don't lie; they've definitely set the tone, and continue to run away with the accolade of Tobago's leading hotel. The evidence is irrefutable: In 15 years, Blue Haven has been given the honor

eight times – including six times in a row, from 2009 to 2015 – since re-opening. For all the hardships that the property has faced, the award is a shared accomplishment.

"It means a lot," Pistil said. "It's a tribute to our staff for their friendly service and of course, sets us apart from the rest because if you get an award and you're chosen for this award by over 200,000 travel professionals, it sets a good benchmark in the industry."

SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAIN

Integrity and transparency have become undeniable traits of success for Blue Haven





Hotel since its reincarnation. The unspoiled beaches, coral reefs, waterfalls, and exotic flowers make up the scenic and natural beauty of the landscape. A redefining feature of the property remains its commitment to sustainability and nurturing the environment. A low-energy hotel, the environmental conscious operations has led to exciting opportunities.

“We get offers from other,” Pistil said. “These islands want us to extend the environmentally friendly boutique style hotel concept to include a Blue Haven Granada or a Blue Haven Bahamas.”

The allure of the Blue Haven brand and its ‘green-first’ mentality extends beyond its energy and cost saving measures. The attention to detail and preparation taken to keep things running smoothly comes down to the hotel’s organic supply chain relationships.

“On an island, everything is a logistical problem, because you have to bring everything in,” Pistil said. “It doesn’t matter on the water or in the air, so it’s crucial to have good cooperation with your suppliers. Especially on an island, you need the goods on time and sometimes the ferries don’t travel, so the infrastructure can be an issue.”



“We have to do the orders in advance, especially when the season is coming,” Pistil continued. “We have to work together and plan ahead – for the amounts and what we need, so they can bring us what we need.”

Like any hotel catering to international guests, dining is a paramount feature at the Blue Haven Hotel. Encapsulating true Tobago delicacy and tradition, the property offers an interesting dynamic of adventure, tradition and wellness.

“With our cuisine – we use organically grown vegetables - a fusion style, international cui-

sine using western Indian ingredients and spices,” Pistil said. “We give our guests true Caribbean island feeling so they’re relaxed and laid back. This is what you have with an authentic Caribbean hotel that history can provide – it’s not exchangeable.”

THE FUTURE OF BLUE HAVEN

Committed to constantly upgrading and refurbishing amenities to enhance the exotic experience on the Tobago Island, Pistil’s plan includes a lavish four penthouse suite development, complete with Blue Haven’s breathtaking and beautiful ocean views. With main



markets throughout North America, Europe and Scandinavia, it makes marketing the Blue Haven Hotel a challenge.

“We have a few different distribution channels,” Pistil said. “We also have to select the markets from where we get our flights. Our main markets are the UK – where we have a couple of flights directly from London to Tobago. Also North America – Canada and the USA – because there are flights connections from New York and Toronto to Trinidad and every hour there are multiple planes coming over and connecting to Tobago. Also

central Europe and Scandinavia, this is our main markets where we work with two operators doing marketing and trade shows.”

Intimately intertwined with the pageantry of the past – with the likes of Rita Hayworth and Robert Mitchum pictured enjoying a retreat to the Blue Haven Hotel forever frozen in time, Pistil hopes to continue to carry on the tradition via a transition combining old school chic, modern manners, and ease of access into Tobago. “We still want to be one of the leading hotels in the Caribbean,” he said. “We have planned to expand to 50



more rooms behind the beach, which could be a goal for the next five to seven years, but that depends on the tourist board and the government pushing tourism initiatives and the increasing the number of flights coming in. As an island, you're depending on flights, you can't swim to an island – most of the people come by plane and a minority comes by ferry.”

Filled with decadence, romance and historical splendor, the Blue Haven Hotel has enjoyed a rebirth after half a century in the dark. With a bright future ahead, Pistil en-

visions the quaint property reaching its goal by focusing on a hospitality industry rite of passage: selfless standards.

“What sets us apart from the competition is the hotel itself and the glamorous history that we have – not many hotels have that, especially in the Caribbean,” he said. “Besides the idyllic location, as a boutique hotel we can also offer smaller and more personalized service. Our goal is to build that up and market it, and it's working well, since our guests continue to come back and compliment us.”

