

Choice Hotels International Targets Caribbean's Best Independent Hotels for New Ascend Collection

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In the midst of a troubled travel season, many Caribbean hotels can get a helping hand now from global hospitality leader Choice Hotels International. The company is expanding its Ascend Collection hotel membership program (www.ascendcollection.com) to include exceptional independent hotels throughout the Caribbean region. Ascend Collection has an aggressive growth plan of adding approximately two strategically selected Caribbean properties, per Island, to its growing portfolio within the next couple of years.

"Ascend Collection is perfect fit for savvy operators that are looking for a partner. Since the program's launch, Ascend Collection member hotels have experienced some of the highest guest satisfaction scores in the company with an average of 8.7 out of 10," said Stacy Ragland, vice president of Ascend Collection operations for Choice Hotels. "Ascend Collection currently boasts a reservation contribution of 33 percent and its current revenue per available room is the highest within the Choice family of brands. With this continued success, we are now looking to expand into Canada and Mexico."

Launched in late 2008, Ascend Collection includes more than two-dozen upscale properties that are Historic, Boutique or Unique, and provide guests with an authentic travel experience. With this elite collection, Choice Hotels aims to lend marketing and operational support to drive business directly to smaller, one-of-a-kind Caribbean properties.

To add to its list of lodgings that range from historic landmarks to contemporary boutiques in the heart of gateway cities, Ascend Collection seeks properties that offer stellar service and charms within their markets, providing guests with a local flavor they cannot get anywhere else.

"We're looking for the Caribbean's hidden gems," says Jose Salvador Icaza, director Caribbean franchise development for Choice Hotels. "The best of the best properties that provide an intimate atmosphere with character that's truly special - whether it be a rich cultural history or stylish decor with one-of-a-kind, local flair."

Backed by Choice Hotels, these best-of-the-region properties gain access to a powerful suite of tools and resources designed to boost occupancy and revenue. They can preserve all their unique appeal, while also benefiting from the marketing strength and support of one of the world's largest lodging companies. Among Ascend Collection advantages, members enjoy:

- Access to the robust reservations and distribution system of Choice Hotels, which has more than 5,800 hotels worldwide.
- Choice Privileges, the Choice Hotels award-winning rewards program. Membership is free, and guests can earn points towards free nights, airline miles, retail gift certificates and more while staying at any Choice brand hotel throughout the U.S. (including Hawaii), Canada, Europe*, Mexico, the Caribbean and Australasia.
- A commanding online presence through Choicehotels.com, one of the most visited sites in the lodging industry.

With the tools for a stronger market presence, Ascend Collection members have the opportunity to boost visibility among the large number of travelers who prefer unique vacation experiences. More than one out of four leisure travelers are interested in a historic hotel or resort, and nearly one out of five find a boutique hotel with unusual atmosphere and decor appealing, according to the just-released Ypartnership/Yankelovich, Inc. 2009 National Travel MONITOR(SM).

In addition, guests at Ascend Collection properties get the benefit of lodging with a global brand, including easy online booking, affordable rates and participation in the award-winning Choice Privileges program.

For more information on Caribbean outreach within the Ascend Collection, contact Jose Salvador Icaza at sal_icaza@choicehotels.com or visit ascendcollection.com.

About Ascend Collection

The Ascend Collection launched at the end of 2008 and now has 24 upscale hotels nationwide, including properties in Florida, Hawaii, California, Colorado, Nebraska, New York and Puerto Rico. For more information on this collection of Historic, Unique and Boutique hotels, visit ascendcollection.com.

About Choice Hotels

Choice Hotels International, Inc. franchises more than 5,900 hotels, representing more than 479,000 rooms, in the United States and more than 30 other countries and territories. As of June 30, 2009, more than 800 hotels are under construction, awaiting conversion or approved for development in the United States, representing more than 64,000 rooms, and an additional 110 hotels, representing approximately 8,700 rooms, are under construction, awaiting conversion or approved for development in more than 15 other countries and territories. The company's Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion, Cambria Suites, MainStay Suites, Suburban Extended Stay Hotel, Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn brands serve guests worldwide. In addition, via its Ascend Collection membership program, travelers in the United States and the Caribbean have upscale lodging options at historic, boutique and unique hotels.

Additional corporate information may be found on the Choice Hotels International, Inc. Web site, which may be accessed at choicehotels.com.

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*Excluding Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden

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