

CAL named region's leading airline brand

■ Melissa Maynard

For the ninth consecutive year, Caribbean Airlines has been named the Caribbean's Leading Airline Brand at the World Travel Awards.

The airline was also nominated for the Caribbean's Leading Airline and Caribbean's Leading Cabin Crew awards, which were won by Bahamasair and InterCaribbean Airways, respectively. Additionally, Caribbean Airlines has been nominated for this year's World's Leading Airline Brand and World's Leading Cabin Crew awards.

The airline's latest recognition comes just days after CEO Garvin Medera resigned following eight years in the role. His departure follows the resignation of the previous Caribbean Airlines board after the United National Congress's general election victory on April 28, marking the latest in a series of leadership changes at State organisations since the election.

On June 24, Reyna Kowlessar was appointed chairman of the Caribbean Airlines board.

Also on a winning streak is Blue Haven Hotel, which was named Trinidad and Tobago's Leading Hotel 2025.

This year marked the Tobago property's fifth consecutive win, according to the World Travel Awards website.

In response to questions from the *Express* yesterday, owner and managing director Karl Pilstl said the recognition affirms Blue Haven's commitment to preserving and celebrating a true piece of Tobago's history.

'Blue Haven is more than a hotel; it is part of the island's history. Originally one of Tobago's first hotels, it was lovingly restored to blend colonial charm with contemporary design. For us, this award validates the balance we strive for, where heritage, service, and authenticity come together to create an experience that feels timeless yet refreshing,' said Pilstl.

For Tobago, he explained, 'it highlights the island's appeal as a refined, boutique and culturally immersive destination, rich in history, culture, and character. This recognition helps reshape the narrative of Tobago as more than a beach escape, showcasing it as a benchmark for Caribbean boutique hospitality.'

Asked how the recognition positions Tobago on the international tourism map, Pilstl said the award from the World Travel Awards gives the island greater visibility when marketing overseas. He believes the 'award helps open conversations with those who might otherwise focus only on more established Caribbean destinations. It gives us leverage to pitch Tobago as a boutique, sustainable, and culturally rich destination.'

As for what contributed to the win, Pilstl underscored several key strengths, 'including its boutique scale of 55 ocean-view rooms, which allows for a personalised, intimate experience. Consistency in service and reputation over the years has also played a role, but above all, our staff, with their dedication, commitment, and attentiveness, have been central to this achievement.'

He said Blue Haven continues to evolve, with ongoing renovations, upgrades, and enhancements designed to deliver the highest level of comfort and experience for its guests. He said new features include a pickleball court, sushi nights, and live entertainment on the terrace, 'all aimed at creating memorable, culturally rich moments for visitors.'