

Barbados at a glance: input from ARI, Rouge Duty Free & TAIRO International

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According to Jackie McDonagh, General Manager, ARI North America, recovery in Barbados is in line with the rest of the ARI estate

Across the travel retail experience, Aer Rianta International (ARI) is known for prioritizing sense of place and capturing the essence of each ARI location to create special moments in-store. The duty free operator relies on store design and product offering to reflect the diverse and colorful local culture and cuisine. Leading up to TFWA Cannes, *Global Travel Retail Magazine* connected with Jackie McDonagh, General Manager, ARI North America, to learn more about ARI's presence in Barbados and its role in the revitalization of the capital Bridgetown.

Elaborating on ARI's year-on-year performance across retail categories in Barbados compared to its other locations around the world, McDonagh responds that broadly speaking, recovery is in line with the rest of the ARI estate. Mainly driven by gifting, self-treating and the growing desire for a sense of place among consumers, spirits and confectionery and fine foods have been performing especially well at Runway Duty Free.

Supporting local & paying homage

Described as a small island that is bursting with local talent and well known for the hospitality of its locals, its beautiful beaches and "superb rum," ARI is currently working on a new island feature at each of its three stores. From locally grown produce to locally flavored wines and locally designed skincare products, ARI pays homage to the region.

Beyond offering the world's first African and Caribbean rum, Equiano, ARI works closely with leading local rum producer Mount Gay, which has been in operation since 1703. Mount Gay is world-renowned

for its vast collection of aged rum including premium selections Port Cask Expression and XO: Peat Smoke Expression. The duty free operator also highlights Doorly's range of aged rum, as well as Bajan 1966, which are distilled locally at RL Seale Foursquare Distillery.

Naming local brands Agapey and Caribbean Confectionery Co., McDonagh says local confectionery is another significant category for ARI at Runway Duty Free. These brands continue to perform well along with regional items such as Tortuga Rum Cakes and Visual Impact Rum Balls.

Tourism is key

As published online, ARI can claim another first as it has become the first travel retailer to feature in the Global Thought Leader series. When asked how its presence in the Caribbean contributed to the success of its global operations - and this achievement - McDonagh refers to the importance of the tourism industry. As one of ARI's more seasonal locations, with travel peaking during the winter months of November to April, and again in July and August, she notes that cruise ships are central to operations in the region.

"Barbados relies heavily on the tourism industry. Inbound passenger numbers grew in Barbados by 27.7% between 2014 and 2019, with the UK being the primary driver. The impact of COVID-19 on international travel was felt strongly here, and since travel restrictions have been lifted there has been a renewed effort by local tourism officials to revitalize the sector.

"As international travel continues its growth toward pre-pandemic levels, we expect the recovery at Runway Duty Free to continue to be in line with growth across the overall ARI estate. To date, penetration has been driving an increase in PAX, with more passengers being converted into customers. This is all positive news as we look ahead to the winter season," says McDonagh.

Rouge Duty Free: a place in travel history



A look at Rouge Duty Free's presence in the Caribbean travel retail market

Considering an influx of investors, the restoration of its Historic District and the reopening of the largest refinery in the Caribbean, St. Croix has been growing at a faster rate than the rest of the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

According to Rouge Duty Free (RDF), its approach to helping reclaim the island as a major destination for tourism and duty free shopping focused on driving engagement with the local market via a radio campaign, social media promotion, print advertising and in-store events, as well as catering to visitors.

At the end of 2020, RDF opened its flagship store in St. Croix, marking its second store in the USVI. With two anchor brands, Mont Blanc and Furla, the store is located near Christiansted National Historic Site at Orange Grove Shopping Center. By the end of its first year, the store ranked among RDF's top three locations in the Caribbean.

Following the success of the St. Croix flagship, RDF established Rouge Maison. The mansion-style building and historical site is a 2500-square-foot retail space that showcases luxury brands and designer goods across retail categories, scenic views and Bistro Rouge. The second level of the Maison is a multi-suite Airbnb. Following a soft launch of the Maison in July, RDF expects the Bistro to open fully to tourists this fall.

Looking ahead, RDF tells *Global Travel Retail Magazine* that it has acquired a building in Frederiksted, St. Croix, which will become its next store location on the island. The operator says it is also on target to open the First Creed Boutique in St. Barth, as well as establish stores in Western Caribbean, and Mexican Riviera and Quintana Roo, Mexico. Plus, RDF will open two stores in Tulum, Mexico, this fall. Located close to the archeological region of Aldea Zama, and at Hunab Lifestyle Center in Aldea Zama, separately, the pair will serve as the only perfumeries in town.

TAIRO International & Molton Brown: a sensorial journey



TAIRO International is shining a light on Molton Brown in the Caribbean and Mexico TR markets

TAIRO International (TAIRO) recently launched Molton Brown in the Caribbean and Mexico travel retail markets. A specialist in the distribution of perfumes and cosmetics across the region's TR channel, the operator is shining a light on the iconic British brand.

TAIRO generated brand awareness via window animations, personalized backwalls and gondolas. According to TAIRO's CEO Robert Bassan, its goal was to "paint the islands Brown, Molton Brown." In addition to point-of-sale animations, TAIRO led its clients, beauty advisors and consumers on a sensorial journey. During in-person training sessions and in-store events, the team organized "an experience for the senses" with stations dedicated to sampling Molton Brown's collection of hand soaps, body washes and lotions. The brand activation offered direct contact with the product ranges, as well as the opportunity for beauty advisors to explore the benefits of the line.

Regarding regional performance, Basan says the Caribbean travel retail market has seen a major uptick in 2022. This has been spurred by the return of cruise ship business and pent up demand from North American consumers.

Celebrating a series of Fall 2022 launches across the Caribbean and Mexico, TAIRO continues to promote luxury living. The operator is also showcasing collections by Yves Saint Laurent, Gucci, Burberry and others. Notably, TAIRO joined forces with Sears Mexico Travel Retail to create a floral fantasy story for consumers via an interactive QR code displayed in floor merchandisers.