

# The Jewel at the Very Heart of the Pacific Ocean

Famed for its strategic location, Guam is also the land of passion and opportunity.

It's the tropical and cultural meeting point of the Pacific, with a rich and storied history. However, the most exciting thing about the island of Guam isn't the past, it's the bright future. A United States territory, Guam is known around the world for its strategic location and trade links, and it is welcoming the world to its shores to experience its unique attractions, for business and pleasure. This Micronesian island of 172,000 people boasts a growing economy and vibrant cultural heritage. Located just a few hours by air from Tokyo, Seoul, and Taipei, Guam has strong Asian and Micronesian connec-

tions, while also enjoying its status as an unincorporated territory of the USA. The island is known by the saying "Where America's Day Begins," given its position to the east of the closest U.S. state, Hawaii. Its blend of influences is one of its key strengths. "We still have a large local, cultural, and traditional population in Guam and we are the most developed island in Micronesia," said the Honorable Lourdes "Lou" Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam. "I was born and raised here," Guerrero said. "My main goal is to improve the quality of life of our people."

## #WeAreGuam: The Unmissable Destination



As an island of inherent natural beauty, surrounded by stunning, pristine beaches, Guam is an ideal vacation spot by any definition. When you add its location just a few hours by air from Tokyo and Seoul, and its status as a United States territory, Guam perfectly bridges both sides of the Pacific. While the tourism industry is of huge importance to the economy – responsible for one-third of private sector jobs on the island – like most destinations, it suffered a major downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic, with its East Asian customer base restricted by lockdowns.

The island is now working as hard as possible to welcome visitors back to its shores. "Despite being an American community, our economic core is Asian," said Guam Visitors Bureau President and CEO Carl T.C. Gutierrez. "Guam must develop its interconnectivity and interdependency with the broader Asia-Pacific region." In 2019,

Guam welcomed 1.6 million visitors, but with East Asian tourism currently enjoying a slower recovery rate (17–20%) than many other regions, the island's figures for the last year were just 40% of pre-pandemic levels. The tourism authorities' recovery plans include increasing marketing efforts and online sales in Japan, while forging stronger links with its fellow Micronesian islands. The Guam Visitors Bureau has also launched a program of improvements to island-wide facilities and infrastructure, and is seeking to build on its natural beauty and the opportunities that presents.

The island is also home to a series of diverse festivities taking place across different towns and villages, and a major part of the task is championing the unique cultural attractions the island boasts. "We want to sell 'Destination Guam' as a culture-centric haven, and exercise that specialty of hospitality and love for people," said Gutierrez.



The Honorable "Lou" Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam

The people of Guam are renowned for their strength and resilience. Through a turbulent history, the island has weathered conflict, storms, and economic turmoil.

Today, the island's governor and its people are working together to transform the culture and finances of the island and usher in a new era of social mobility, improved healthcare, and strong business growth.

The United States territory's finances have been reformed, producing a recent surplus. Key plans are being implemented to support manufacturing, entrepreneurship, and farming, as well as significant moves towards providing healthcare and childcare for its people.

"I have witnessed the evolution of our island from very agrarian and rural to very well-developed," said Guam Governor Lourdes "Lou" Leon Guerrero.

## Welcome to The Place to Play and the Place to Stay

Hospitality chain Dusit is setting a new standard for hotels and entertainment in Guam.



The sun might set but the fun never stops at the Dusit properties on the beautiful and welcoming Pacific island of Guam.



Top-class accommodation awaits at Dusit.



Guam's Dusit spots are unmissable.



For modern tourists, retail, entertainment, and hotel resorts are increasingly all about a combined experience. With international travelers becoming more demanding and particular about where they go, and what they expect when they get there, the onus is on the owners and operators to offer a full menu of attractions and services. On Guam, an island teeming with diversity, history and opportunity, this is being spearheaded by one of the best-known hotel and leisure chains in the world.

Thailand-based firm Dusit is a major player in the island's tourism sector, with the Dusit Thani Guam Resort, Dusit Beach Resort Guam and the Bayview Hotel, all hugely popular with visitors expecting a certain standard for their vacation. After weathering the major drop in visitor numbers due to the pandemic, the business is now bouncing back in style. It is expanding its reach by transforming The Plaza Shopping Center into Dusit Place, a combined retail, accommodation, and entertainment complex in line with the firm's "one destination" brand strategy. "The incorporation of the shopping center into one inclusive destination with the hotels is an ideal way to extend the guest experience,

creating a more expansive and hopefully satisfying experience," said Dean Huntsman, Regional Vice President of Operations of Dusit Guam. "It truly provides a complete immersive experience into the best of what Guam offers, all in one place," he said. The Dusit Place strategy is about more than a rebranding exercise and improving facilities and links to existing hotels.

The firm's leaders are working closely to foster and strengthen local partnerships and business dealings, celebrating the best of Guam culture for the benefit of island residents and incoming visitors alike. Current facilities across Guam's Dusit footprint include beach and bar restaurants, cafes, entertainment bar lounges, stores, spas, pools, rooftop bar, club lounges, as well as an aquarium, and dozens of diverse dining and shopping venues. According to Dean Huntsman, this is just the beginning. "In the next three to five years we plan to open three to four more restaurants and we will complete the rebranding and refresh of the Dusit Place shopping mall and our aquarium," said Huntsman. "We are also very excited to open our very own culinary school to train our team of 150 chefs as well as upcoming local talent," he said.

## The Island of Industry and Innovation for Business

Private sector interests play a huge part in the development and future prospects of Guam.



Latte stone pillars used as building supports.

Guam might be best known for its colonial past, stunning beaches and tourism. However, the island is also a Pacific business success story, combining the best of American entrepreneurship with links to the great cities of East Asia, while acting as a gateway to Micronesia. The United States territory has traditionally been known for its strategic location, but the private sector has long made a positive impact on Guam by combining the different cultures of the island with a strong sense of community and partnership. This is especially true of its biggest employer, Core Tech Group. "A holistic view of the island and our part in it underpins all of our work. We recognize that we all need each other, even if that relationship isn't immediately clear," said Chairman, Ho Eun. "As a local company, we are inextricably connected to Guam, and it is only natural for us to devote resources to ensuring that our island is healthy, both economically and environmentally," he said.

International chains have also enjoyed great success by working with the local population. "We work to emphasize and strengthen the focus on different cultures to potentially achieve more for the local community, to promote entrepreneurship and elevate business service mindsets within Guam," said Rachel Tan, Vice President of Operations, Mid Pacific, for



Picturesque view of Guam's Tumon Bay resorts.

duty-free chain DFS Group. "As founding partners of the Guam Unique Merchandise and Art organization, we work to support entrepreneurship within Guam and emphasize and strengthen the focus on different cultures," said Tan. "We can potentially achieve more for the local community, not just to promote entrepreneurship, but also to elevate the business mindsets within Guam," she said.

Guam is well known as one of the strongest Pacific Island economies, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of over \$34,600 in 2020. Despite feeling the effects of COVID-19, particularly regarding tourism, a multi-billion dollar U.S. military relocation project and rebounding visitor numbers are positive indicators for the future. Calvo Enterprises Inc. President Leonard P. Calvo hopes to see more local production and greater infrastructure support for the island's future potential as a logistics hub. His firm operates some of the Guam's biggest manufacturing plants, including a Pepsi bottling franchise. "One thing Guam needs to do is to take advantage of manufacturing or assembly of goods to bring in raw materials and process them to take to the other islands," said Calvo. "Whatever we can do here and supply Micronesia, it would be great. You have to find the right thing for Guam," he said. Dean Huntsman, the regional Vice President of Operations of luxury hotel chain Dusit Guam, feels that political status is a clear advantage in the Pacific region. "Being a U.S. territory distinguishes Guam from its sister islands. This is a selling point for the target markets of Japan and Korea looking to associate with the qualities of the USA and the 'Where America's day begins' experience," said Huntsman.



Ho S. Eun, Chairman, Core Tech Group

The island mentality of community and hard work is at the very core of what makes Guam a special place to live. It's also what makes its largest employer, Core Tech Group, a special place to work.

Having started life as a three-person construction firm in 1991, the business is now the most important enterprise on the island, having expanded to encompass property management, tourism, media, and finance in addition to its charitable foundation. Of the 172,000 Guamanians, 2,400 work for Core Tech. The chairman feels a deep responsibility for his staff and the wider population. "When we perform a job, we create opportunities for the people on the island, and the profits are reinvested in Guam," said Ho Eun.

As Core Tech moves forward, the Group remains committed to its culture of driven conscientiousness. "I do not think there is anything more important than the hard-working spirit," said Eun. The company plans for the long-term, and expansion beyond the sea to Japan, Korea, or Hawaii has been mooted.

## Building a Sustainable Future for Guam

It might be a small island community, but the people of Guam are thinking big to build a brighter tomorrow. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, that means practicing farming and sustainability on land—and at sea. Surrounded by a rare, vast coral reef formation, protecting this natural wonderland for the next generation is integral to development. The local government is working with private-sector investors and academic researchers to support agriculture and cutting-edge aquaculture. Sustainability is key to all of this.

For example, University of Guam scientists employ drones to plant seeds in remote areas to reduce the impact of climate change, while a tree-planting program and sediment filter devices have been rolled out to fight land erosion. “Our water and environmental research institute is 1 of 54 in the US and is the only one that is multijurisdictional, including the Northern Marianas, Guam, and the Federated States of Micronesia,” said the university’s President Thomas W. Krise.

“Everything we do on land affects the ocean down below,” said University of Guam Associate Professor Austin Shelton. “We are helping lead the growth and expansion of our aquaculture industry, with experts doing aquaponics at the community level. I would like to highlight the sustainability initiative we facilitate out of our Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant,” Shelton said. “Partnerships are very vital,” said Senior Vice President Anita Borja Enriquez. “For example, Guam Waterworks Authority professing that our Water and Environmental Research Institute of the Western Pacific serves as their research and development arm.

We aim to be a respectful partner and an organization providing value, problem-solving and innovation.” These partnerships are vital, according to Guam’s governor, the Honorable Lourdes “Lou” Leon Guerrero. “I want us to be the leaders in this area for aquaculture,” said Governor Guerrero. “We are working very closely with the University of Guam, while the College of Natural and Applied Sciences is working with private-sector investors on hydroponic farming and aquaculture,” she said.



## Global Retail, Local Impact

International luxury retailer DFS plays a huge part in Guam life.



*T Galleria by DFS, Guam is one of Guam’s favorite retail spots.*

Living on a small but perfectly formed island, the people of Guam are used to looking out toward the rest of the world. So, when the world comes to visit in the shape of international business, Guamanians welcome it with open arms—none more so than the world’s leading luxury travel retailer, DFS Group. The multinational firm runs one of the most significant shopping hubs on the Pacific Island and plays a huge part in its tourism, travel and holiday industries. To blend seamlessly into island life, the duty-free shopping business leaders worked closely with islanders to properly assimilate with the local population and culture. Through a mixture of high-class shopping and community engagement, DFS has become a leading employer in the last 52 years, since the first Guam outlet opened in 1971.

Its flagship store T Galleria by DFS, Guam does great business with islanders, as well as incoming travelers. Examples of social outreach include supporting cancer charity work and backing entrepreneurship programs with local arts and crafts producers. “Over the last 50 years, our employees and



organizations within the division have led the way in cultural upkeep and we truly take pride in that,” said Rachel Tan, Vice President Operations Mid Pacific of DFS Group. “It is not just about building up the organizations within Guam or different destinations, but it is also about us being in an environment whereby we continue to provide support to the local community,” she said. The global group, with branches in 13 nations on four continents, is one of the best-known travel shopping names in the industry. As a luxury retail space bringing some of the world’s most desirable products and brands to Guam, the staff at DFS are rightly proud of the store’s place in the island’s economy. “Before the pandemic, 90% of our customers were travelers, but with a halt in tourism, we had to shift our focus elsewhere. For instance, we aimed to find ways to engage with the local community by providing intentional efforts to cater to their shopping needs,” said Tan. “We look forward to continuing to expand our footprint within the region, creating a true omnichannel experience from online (pre departure) to offline (destination) retail channels. We imagine the time where customers across all Mid Pacific islands are able to shop DFS boundlessly with or without the constraint of physical brick and mortar spaces,” she said.