



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE

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T&T - A HERITAGE TOURISM HUB

On **Monday November 28, 2011** a Cabinet-Appointed Committee on Heritage Tourism were given Letters of Appointment at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad. By sanctioning the establishment of this Committee, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has sent a clear signal that cultural and heritage tourism is a high priority.

The mandate of this eighteen (18) member Committee, under the Chairmanship of Cultural Anthropologist Dr. Kumar Mahabir, **is to advise the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Development Company (TDC) on the development and implementation of a comprehensive and sustainable Heritage Tourism Program for Trinidad and Tobago.**

This program will include the development of heritage tours and packages, awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building events, and training programs for tour operators, transport operators and staff in the hotels and restaurant sectors. Upon presenting the Committee Members with their Letters of Appointment Dr. the Honourable Rupert Griffith, Minister of Tourism, instructed the Committee to provide him with a comprehensive heritage tourism development proposal within three (3) months.

As Minister Griffith pointed out “Trinidad and Tobago is a jewel among the Caribbean as our rich diversity is visible in our traditional ceremonies, festivals, dances, dresses, cuisines, language, handicrafts, architecture and music”.

The Advisory Heritage Tourism Committee reflects a broad range of representation from government, community groups and private sector and was meticulously selected so as to provide strong balanced understanding and guidance for heritage tourism development.

The newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Development Company (TDC) the national marketing agency, Sandra Perkins, welcomed the establishment of the Advisory Heritage Tourism Committee as “it offers a coordinated approach to promoting Trinidad and Tobago’s heritage” and is an important step in strengthening our capacity to safeguard our heritage and for cultural tourism development.

Mrs. Melba Dedier, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, further stated that “one of the overarching goals of the National Tourism Policy is to utilise the cultural, historical and recreational assets of Trinidad and Tobago as anchors for developing a highly differentiated and competitive tourism product.”

Heritage tourism has the potential to be a major revenue earner and according to international research approximately 50% of all international tourists visit attractions that have to do with culture and heritage.

This niche offers us the benefits of increased diversity of visitor experiences, direct visitor spend in communities and sustainability of our environmental, historical and cultural assets. It can also be utilised as a platform for international recognition of our artists, performers and other creative workers, while playing a direct role in urban and rural regeneration, providing vulnerable individuals and communities with social and economic benefits.

Minister Griffith indicated that Government “has already started investing in improving the infrastructure at many of our heritage facilities. A refurbished Toco Lighthouse was opened in September this year and before the end of this year the Ministry of Tourism will be opening the new Valencia Visitor and Eco-Tourism Centre. By making all of these improvements we are encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore the varied tourist opportunities that Trinidad and Tobago has to offer.”

The composition of the Advisory Committee on Heritage Tourism is as follows:

CHAIRMAN

Dr. Kumar Mahabir - University of the West Indies

MEMBERS

Rawle Mitchell - Head Restoration Unit,
Ministry of Works and Infrastructure

Shamshu Deen - Council of the National Trust

Louis B. Homer - Historian

Pearl Eintou Spinger - Emancipation Support Committee

- Abraham Ali - President
San Juan Business Association
- Carlyle Dick - Technical Advisor to the
Minister of Tobago Development
- Sherma Mac Dougall Williams - Product Development
& Destination Manager
Tobago House of Assembly
- Dr. Leslie Ann Jordan-Miller - University of the West Indies
- Primnath Goptar - Sugar Heritage Village and Museum
Project
- Ricardo Bharath Hernandez - Santa Rosa First People Carib
Community
- Clyde Albert Allum - Chinese Association of Trinidad and
Tobago
- Pundit Jeevan Changoor Maharaj - Inter Religious Organisation
- Andy Whitwell - Trinidad and Tobago In-Coming Tour
Operators' Association
- Dr. Krishendaye Rampersad - Trinidad and Tobago National
Commission for UNESCO
- Hans Hanoomansingh - Chief Executive Officer
Heritage Radio 104FM

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