



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW NATURE TRAILS COMING – 40 KM BY JULY 2015

On **Wednesday May 20, 2015** the Ministry of Tourism launched its Sustainable Eco-Tourism Trail Development Project at the Ministry's offices located at Tower C, International Waterfront Centre, Port of Spain. The current four (4) month pilot phase will rehabilitate 40km of bench trails which will provide citizens and our international visitors with an extensive range of exciting experiences - from hiking to bird watching to zip lining and mountain biking - by July 2015.

Speaking at the Media Launch, Senator the Honourable Gerald Hadeed, the Minister of Tourism, indicated that "this trail project is very close to my heart as it would bring community life back, promote healthy lifestyle, recreational sport and make a meaningful contribution to Trinidad and Tobago. Minister Hadeed added that the aim is to eventually rehabilitate a total of 1,000km of pathways that were once traversed thousands of years ago by the First Peoples.

The Trinidad and Tobago In-Coming Tour Operators' Association (TTITOA) has been contracted by the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC), after the pre-requisite tender process, for the roll-out of this nature trail initiative. The TDC will manage the project and its progress.

Lorraine Pouchet, President of the Trinidad and Tobago In-Coming Tour Operators' Association, in outlining the project details at the Launch Ceremony, noted that "**the implementation of the pilot phase of the trail project is well underway as community groups have been engaged and training of 30 tour guides has started**". Representatives from the various community groups involved in the project also echoed the sentiments of "the capacity of this trail project to empower communities and conserve our local natural heritage".

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Also speaking at the launch was Keith Chin, the Chief Executive Officer of TDC, who emphasised that “the nature trail project is the perfect vehicle through which Destination Trinidad and Tobago can be enriched and marketing efforts can be made successful.”

Trinidad and Tobago is one of the richest islands in the Caribbean in terms of biodiversity because of the tremendous range of exotic flora and fauna and large areas of untouched rainforests, and beaches. The country is reputed to have more than 460 species of birds, 108 types of mammals, 620 types of butterflies, 25 amphibians and 55 reptiles.

Government’s vision for the local tourism industry is to deliver on visitors’ expectations of top-quality, high-value products whilst preserving and protecting the stunning natural and un-spoilt environment with which we are richly endowed.

The nature trails launch was also quite timely, as **Trinidad and Tobago is now ranked as the third most competitive tourism economy in the Caribbean according to the 2015 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report released only this week.** This is definite encouragement for Trinidad and Tobago to improve the quality of its tourism product to appeal to the discerning international visitor who craves new and novel experiences.

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