



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE

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UNIVERSAL ACCESS FOR ALL AT LA BREA VISITOR CENTRE & MUSEUM



Port of Spain, Trinidad – September 28, 2016 – On World Tourism Day – Tuesday September 27 – the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism, opened a refurbished La Brea Museum and Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre now features a differently-abled access ramp to the museum located on the first floor of the building.

Joining Minister Cudjoe at the Official Opening Ceremony were

the Honourable Nicole Oliverrie, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Member of Parliament for the La Brea area, national swimming champion and youth motivational speaker Ms. Shanntol Ince, Mr. Warren Solomon, Chief Executive Officer (Ag.) of the TDC and Mrs. Lisa Bholai, Research and Communications Officer of the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities. Students from the La Brea Roman Catholic Primary School also attended the event and toured the museum.

The international observance of World Tourism Day, celebrated annually on September 27, is intended to promote awareness of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic value. This initiative also seeks to address global challenges outlined in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to highlight the contribution that the tourism sector can make in reaching these goals.



The theme for this year's World Tourism Day, **TOURISM FOR ALL: PROMOTING UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY** highlights the need for tourism destinations to ensure accessibility, regardless of a visitor's physical or mental limitations; or the special needs required by some. Everyone has the right to access and enjoy tourism products and services on an equal basis but millions of people around the world have encountered barriers to participating

in the sector.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, the Minister of Tourism, promised that **“as Tourism Minister I intend to ensure that all future tourism projects would be designed towards developing a barrier-free destination where all can truly appreciate, experience and enjoy what our twin-island paradise has to offer”**.

Minister Shamfa Cudjoe went on to state that “differently-abled people, older people, small children and their caretakers, family and friends are among the 1 billion people around the world who face numerous obstacles in accessing the fundamentals of travel and tourism”. Minister Cudjoe urged tourism stakeholders “to embrace the concept of integration, and develop and implement policies and strategies to ensure that our tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people; regardless of their physical limitations, special abilities, age or circumstance”.



Other improvement works that were done at the La Brea Visitor Centre and Museum include: -

- Removal and replacement of the perimeter fencing with high security fencing and installation of new gates to the entrance of the Pitch Lake.
- Refurbishment of all public washrooms; including those for the differently-able.
- Upgrades to the sewage system including the expansion of waste storage, new waste lines and associated fixtures.

- Repainting of the facility, landscaping and the construction of a cascading water feature.
- Museum repairs were completed on the existing displays along with the installation of additional lighting and painting of the internal walls of the museum.

Mr. Warren Solomon, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the TDC, implored the residents of La Brea “to ensure that the Pitch Lake site is treated with respect by all who visit it and that you show it off with pride each and every time”.

ABOUT THE LA BREA PITCH LAKE

The La Brea Pitch Lake, internationally known as a wonder of the world, measures approximately one hundred acres and is estimated to be 76 meters deep in the center. The Lake has the largest deposit of natural asphalt in the world.

The La Brea Pitch Lake attracts over 20,000 visitors annually. Efforts are in train for the La Brea Pitch Lake to be listed as a World Heritage Site.

The La Brea Museum provides an excellent opportunity to gain an insight into the story and artefacts that have formed our history; especially that of our Amerindian heritage.

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