



BOOK LAUNCH, WATERFALLS
OF PARADISE TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO AT NALIS ON 1ST JUNE
2016 AT 10:00AM



It is indeed a pleasure to be here at today's launch of Annela Rajkumar's book entitled "Waterfalls of Paradise, Trinidad and Tobago."

I represent the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe who is unable to present here today. I also represent the Ministry of Tourism which is proud to be associated with this book launch.

I would like to congratulate Ms Rajkumar on this landmark achievement.

Through her book, Ms Rajkumar invites us all to her quest, to seek, to learn, to make sense of, to understand, to become mindful of the waterfalls that populate our islands.

An area of our eco environment that is rarely celebrated. Reading the pages of Waterfalls of Paradise, Trinidad and Tobago, we discover, page after page, Ms Rajkumar's emergence from the hiker to a masterful author who takes us on

24 exciting journeys to various waterfalls all over Trinidad and Tobago.

It is a privilege to be invited, to share in the launch of this wonderful book.

We in Trinidad and Tobago have heard of our Caribbean islands beckoning travellers to sun, sand and sea. Ms Rajkumar now beckons them and us to Waterfalls. And for us to reflect on the beauty of our waterfalls and the excitement of the hiker is the journey that Ms Rajkumar has invited us to take.

Ms Rajkumar has taken a prized tourism product and brought it into high relief and so has enhanced our destination offering that until now has not been widely unveiled.

Wider tourism context

The latest Report from the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), states the Caribbean outperformed every major tourism region in the world in 2015, setting new arrivals and expenditure records.

International tourist arrivals reached 28.7 million, representing a growth of 7% over 2014, while visitor spend reached an estimated US\$30billion, representing a 4.2% increase over 2014. Globally, international tourist arrivals grew by 4.4 % in 2015 representing the 6th consecutive year of above-average growth

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has predicted that in the year 2020, the number of international tourists will reach approximately 1,600 million.

The impressive growth of tourism is evidenced in countries across every region of the world.

Tourism is today one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world.

It contributes 9 per cent to global GDP, accounts for one in 11 jobs worldwide, and for 6 per cent of global exports. By 2030, UNWTO forecasts that there will be 1.8 billion international tourism arrivals annually.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with this positive outlook for tourism and against the backdrop of our current economic climate, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago views the tourism sector as one with tremendous potential for promoting economic diversification and growth.

Trinidad and Tobago context

Trinidad and Tobago stands as a unique, highly-differentiated and attractive tourist destination in the Caribbean and indeed the wider region. Ours is a nation that offers much more than the traditional “sea, sand and sun”.

Our rich and diverse history has resulted in a culture and heritage that distinguishes us from many. Our talents, skills, creativity, energy and excellence as a people, have added to this making us a destination of enviable appeal.

Tourists come here mostly for carnival, and sand, sea and sun.

We need to add and nurture another component, that of our waterfalls in eco-tourism.

Ms Rajkumar's book is a landmark in this effort. She brings attention to waterfalls in way that adds to our differentiation.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is broadly defined as low impact travel to endangered and often undisturbed locations. It is different from traditional tourism because it allows the traveller to become educated about the areas - both in terms of the physical landscape and cultural characteristics, and often provides funds for conservation and benefits the local economy

Principles of Ecotourism

Due to the growing popularity of environmentally-related and adventure travel, various types of trips are now being classified as ecotourism.

To be considered ecotourism, a trip must meet the following principles set forth by the International Eco Tourism Society:

- Minimize the impact of visiting the location (i.e.- the use of roads)
- Build respect and awareness for the environment and cultural practices
- Ensure that tourism provides positive experiences for both the visitors and the hosts
- Provide direct financial aid for conservation
- Provide financial aid, empowerment and other benefits for local peoples
- Raise the traveller's awareness of the host country's political, environmental and social constructs

The world's travel industry has transformed, and globe-trotters are enticed by the tropical rainforests, savannahs, mountains, coral reefs, deserts and waterfalls of countries all over the world. In light of this, eco destinations hold significant potential to enhance our tourism product.

Ms Rajkumar in her book continually places emphasis that upholds eco-tourism principles.

Waterfalls, as opportunities.

Travellers to our shores now are equipped with detailed descriptions of our waterfalls supported by beautiful photographs and directions of how to get there. Even for the local tourist, the book represents a guide to some idyllic destinations in Trinidad and Tobago.

The book details location, accessibility, amenities, safety, flora, fauna and historical perspectives. The book represents a milestone in the literature that is now available about Trinidad and Tobago. It will encourage locals and visitors alike to appreciate and learn more about our beautiful waterfalls

This clearly is a hiker's book.

Ms Rajkumar states in her book that it is her hobby of hiking that led to book's publication.

She brings a particular eye to her observations. She is careful to inform her reader every step of the way as to what is expected. The traveller is advised on dress and appropriate food to take on the journey.

Ms Rajkumar is also offering a challenge and an encouragement to communities that host these water features to contribute to their preservation and development.

She says, it is possible to create employment through development of restroom facilities, parking and cafes.

It is her goal to encourage a greater number of beach and leisure visitors to engage in hiking to visit the waterfalls.

What Ms Rajkumar has so eloquently said through the many glossy pages of her book is that ecotourism of which the waterfalls are a part, creates significant opportunities for both conservation and local communities.

Ecotourism can provide much-needed revenues for the protection of waterfalls and other natural surrounding areas -- revenues that might not be available from other sources.

Additionally, ecotourism can provide a viable economic development alternative for local communities with few other income-generating options.

Moreover, ecotourism can increase the level of education and activism among travellers, making them more enthusiastic and effective agents of conservation.

The tourism sector is well served by the addition of this book.

I congratulate you and offer you all best wishes from the Ministry of Tourism. I am sure this book will do well and will bring reading pleasure to many and motivation to others to get hiking to see our wonderful and beautiful waterfalls.

I thank you.

