



ST. VINCENT
& THE GRENADINES

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ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES INVESTS IN TOURISM

-Tourism Development Project-

(November 2007) The St. Vincent & the Grenadines Government, with the support of the European Commission, is investing 5 million euros to upgrade and develop this undiscovered part of the Eastern Caribbean, in order to attract more tourists.

This tourism thrust comes on the back of a record year in 2006 in terms of visitor numbers, with a total of 306,578 arrivals to the destination from around the world. 2007 is set to beat the record, with 253,112 visitor arrivals already from January to August – a 26% increase on the same period last year. UK visitor numbers are up by 20% year on year, with 12,525 visitors so far in 2007.

From the heights of the majestic Soufriere Volcano to the bottom of the calm waters of the Tobago Cays, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is teeming with adventure, with lots of places waiting to be discovered and explored. The Tourism Development Project's (TDP's) objective is to achieve high levels of sustained growth, increase employment and spread the benefits of the tourism sector to local communities, whilst providing a quality offering to visitors, positioning St. Vincent & the Grenadines as the ultimate adventure holiday destination within the Caribbean.

A National Parks Authority (NPA) has been established, and a total of 20 sites and attractions have been earmarked for development including the lava pool Owia Salt Pond, the world-famous Tobago Cays and the 60-foot cascading Falls of Baleine. Community organisations and other non-Governmental groupings will be actively involved in the development and co-management of these designated sites. There is a strong focus on enhancing the sustainable management of the islands' resources to ensure developments do not adversely impact on the environment. What's more, the human dimension to the tourism product is also being worked on, with the creation of a National Hospitality Training Institute.

The Hon Glen Beache, Minister of Tourism, Youth and Sports for St. Vincent & The Grenadines, comments: “This is a very exciting time for us, with the development of our tourism infrastructure enabling us to offer an improved experience for our steadily growing number of visitors, whilst spreading the benefits of tourism to local communities. It is anticipated that the TDP will make a valuable contribution to the sustainable development of our tourism product, and in particular, the eco-tourism element of that product.

St. Vincent & The Grenadines has something to suit all holidaymakers, from guest houses to five star resorts, from sailing to hiking, and we hope that our efforts to develop key tourist sites, as well as the continued investment by hoteliers in new and exciting accommodation options, will attract even more visitors to the destination in the future.”

One of the key focuses in the tourism sector is on small, family-run hotels and B&Bs in order to position our destination as an affordable Caribbean holiday destination. While the bigger resorts may steal the headlines, St. Vincent & the Grenadines’ boutique offering of guesthouses, small hotels and private villas are a real find and offer great value for money. Accommodation is on offer from approximately £35 per person per night, and visitors get a taste of authentic, low key Caribbean hospitality as well as an insight into the local culture.

What’s more, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has embarked on a four year US\$178 million project this year to construct Argyle International Airport on St. Vincent. It will feature a 50,000 square-foot terminal, a 9,000-foot runway able to accommodate Boeing 737 and 767, Airbus 300 and 320, as well as MD80 aircrafts. On completion in 2011 this development will usher in the era of jet aircrafts and international flights coming direct to St. Vincent & the Grenadines, thus providing easier airline access to the country.

The US\$15.5 million dollar expansion of the airport on Canouan Island is nearing completion and on schedule to open in December. The runway has been extended to 5,900 feet, enabling the landing of most private jets, including the Airbus 319 and 320, as well as the Boeing 737. The airport will also feature a new air traffic control centre, improved airfield lighting, and an enlarged terminal building.

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The Tourism Development Project is managed by the Ministry of Tourism, funded by the European Commission and implemented by Tourism Intelligence International. The project will run from now until 2009. The sites that are being developed are:

- Owia Salt Pond
- Tobago Cays
- Dark View Falls
- The Falls of Baleine
- Argyle Recreation Park
- Belmont Lookout
- Black Point
- Botanic Gardens
- Cumberland Beach Recreation Centre
- Cumberland Nature Trail
- Fitzhughes Heritage Centre
- Fort Murray – Union Island
- Layou Petroglyph Park
- Rabacca River Recreation Park
- Rawacou Beach
- Soufriere Cross Country Trail
- Wallilabou Falls Park
- Youroumei Heritage Village

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