

Editorial

World Heritage Sites in the Greater Caribbean

"*IN THE ZONE*", is a publication of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS designed to increase interaction and the level of cooperation among ACS Member and Associate Member States, International and Regional organizations as well as observer countries. It features destinations, events and activities in ACS Countries as well as from our partners.



The Team of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is pleased to present, our **Tenth Edition** of '**In the ZONE**', focusing on World Heritage Sites in the Greater Caribbean.

Most people are familiar with what cultural heritage sites are and what they represent, but not everyone knows their historical importance and relevance to humanity. It is important to know that the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designates as "World Heritage Site" various places in the world that are invaluable for their cultural and/or historical significance, architectural grandeur and ecological integrity.

In this edition, the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism presents some of the special places found in the countries of the Greater Caribbean that are considered as World Heritage sites, all of which contribute to the spectacular and diverse localities as well as iconic landmarks which make the Caribbean Region a rich and unique destination.

We hope you enjoy this issue and that it enriches your knowledge and awareness, taking into account that these sites must be preserved for future generations.

Julio Orozco
Director of Sustainable Tourism

ARTICLES BY:

- ◆ Belize
- ◆ Republic of Nicaragua
- ◆ Republic of Costa Rica
- ◆ Mexico
- ◆ Republic of Panama
- ◆ St. Kitts and Nevis
- ◆ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
- ◆ Grenada

Belize's World Heritage Site – An Impactful Tourism Aspect



Photo by: Glover's Reef Atoll

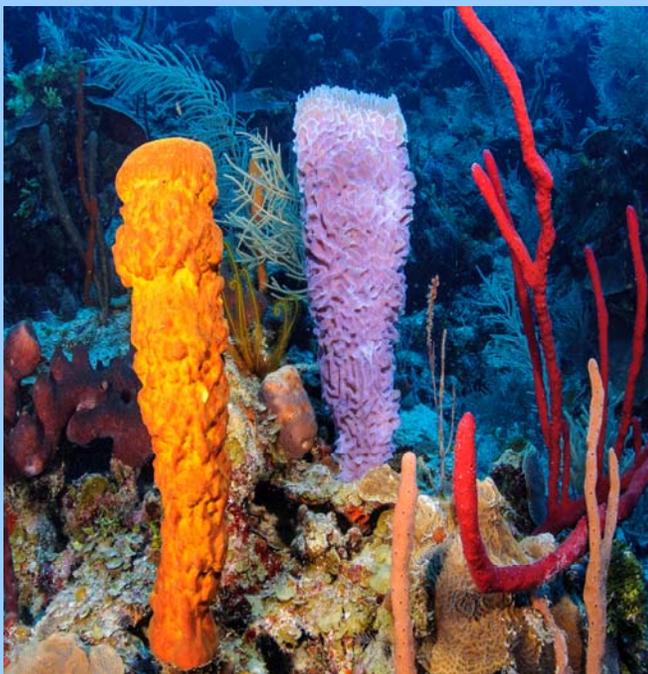


Photo by: Belize Tourism Board

Belize's wealth is in its biodiversity and world-renowned wonders; these are among the most intact ecosystems within the Mesoamerican system. The Belize Barrier Reef System, a UNESCO "World Heritage Site", is a prime example.

Encompassing seven preserve regions (12% of Belize's marine terrain) these zones are found along the largest Barrier Reef in the Northern and Western Hemisphere. These zones include wet lands and mangrove, sea grass beds, rare littoral forests, shallow coastal lagoons as well as deep and shallow sea areas.

These rich marine environments are habitats for critically endangered species, such as: Staghorn and Elkhorn Corals, Goliath Grouper and Hawksbill Turtle.

With its focus on preservation Belize's annual tourism regional interests data indicates a vital connection between tourism and its World Heritage Site, with the 2014 traveler figures revealing that 54.8% of visits are to the Barrier Reef.

Article submitted by:
Belize Tourism Board

Nicaragua, Focused on Preserving and Valuing its Heritage

Nicaragua promotes awareness and preservation of traditional ancestral values; treasured in its natural and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of locals and visitors. Among them you will find "**The Garifuna Culture**" of African descendants in the Caribbean; which by their exceptional historical, linguistic, anthropological and artistic value, was declared Intangible Cultural World Heritage (Registered UNESCO, 2008) as well as Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nation (October 2014).

The Güegüense, is a mixture of theater, dance and music, repertoire of popular roots and it is still displayed in the streets of Diriamba, during the festival of San Sebastian, the patron saint (o holy Saint) of the city; admired as a masterpiece and intangible cultural heritage.

The Insigne and Real Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Leon, the largest in Central America; a national treasure and symbol of identity, history, culture and religious art, was designated a World Heritage by UNESCO in 2011.

The **Ruins of Leon Viejo**, a unique destination to visit, and sample of archaeological remains of one of the oldest Spanish colonial settlements, in America, was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000.

Nicaragua develops tourist products based on its heritage, so that the tourist dynamics, contribute to the welfare and prosperity of families in communities, municipalities and departments across the country.

Photos and Article by: **Nicaragua Tourism Board**



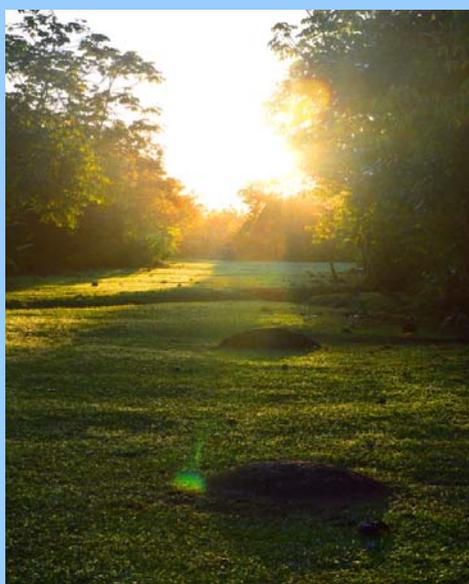
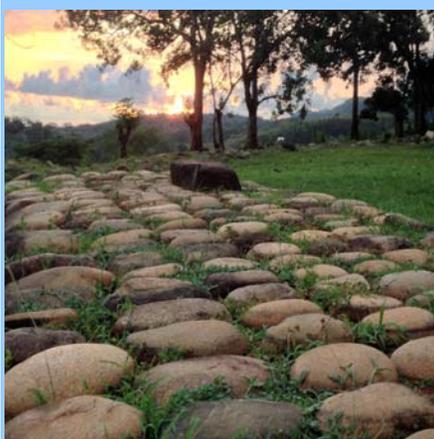
Places with stones spheres of the Diquís: World Cultural Heritage Sites

Diquís Delta is one of the most important archaeological sites in the south of Central America. It is located in the South Pacific of Costa Rica and is formed by a sedimentary plain between Sierpe and Térraba rivers.

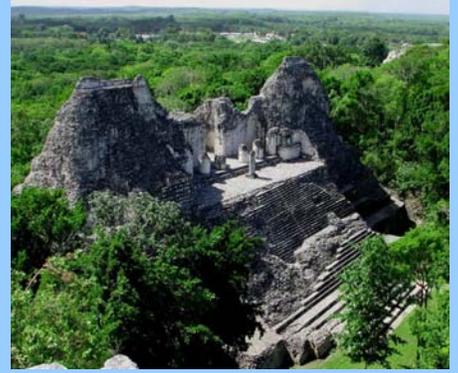
It contains evidence of the political, social and cultural complexity that pre-Columbian societies developed under the hierarchy of chiefdoms from 800 A.D. The inhabitants of the area made exceptional objects like stone balls, which is the only evidence of their artistic traditions.

Four archaeological sites were declared World Heritage Sites by UNESCO in 2014. The "Villa 6" site preserved stone spheres forming alignments. "Batambal" stands out for its strategic position and the visibility of the landscape. "Silence" field contains the largest stone ever found and Grijalba – 2 distinguishes the use of limestone in the construction of their architectural structures.

Photos and Article by:
National Museum of Costa Rica



Calakmul: Live it to Believe it



Culture, diversity and natural wealth make this a unique place; Calakmul is the largest and least explored tropical reserve in Mexico as well as the second largest rainforest in the Americas. In 2002, it was designated as a "mixed natural and cultural" World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Calakmul is home to about 86 species of mammals such as the jaguar and puma, some 282 species of birds, 50 species of reptiles, 400 different kinds of butterflies and 73 types of wild orchids. Should the natural beauty and offerings of this site not be enough, Calakmul is also one of the best places for eco-archeology. As one of the most densely populated regions in the Mayan era, the architectural legacy of this civilization can be admired everywhere in places like Becán, a city known for its surrounding ditch defense feature; and others such as Chicanná, Río Bec, Hormiguero, Balamkú and Xpujil.

To complete the Calakmul experience is the variety of local gastronomy offering. They include elaborate dishes using domestic and wild game which are prepared in pipián (sauce made from ground seeds), salpicón (diced or minced ingredients cooked in a thick sauce) and barbacoa (Mexican style barbeque).

Calakmul is a unique stop in the Mexican Mayan World.

Articles and Photos by:
Promotion Tourism Board of Mexico– CPTM

The Portobelo and San Lorenzo Fortifications, a World Heritage Site.



The Portobelo and San Lorenzo fortifications, located on Panama's Atlantic coast, were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1980 and are examples of Spanish military architecture of the XVII and XVIII centuries in the New World.

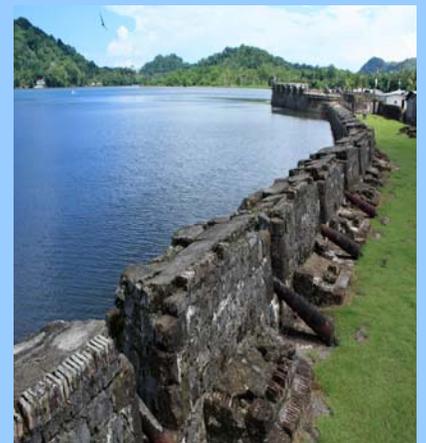
These entrances to the trans-isthmian and transatlantic trade routes were part of a regional defense system. The fortified port of Portobelo was one of the most important to the colonial trade between America and Spain, while the imposing Castillo de San Lorenzo El Real guarded the entrance to the Isthmus at the mouth of the Chagres River.

These sites preserve their main structures of forts, batteries and other defensive elements, which are integrated within the environment creating a landscape of great cultural wealth. Portobelo is included in UNESCO's the Slave Route and is host to the Pollera Conga Festival and the Black Christ festivities.

Article submitted by:

National Directorate of Historical Heritage of the National Institute of Culture Panama (INAC)

Photos: **Tourism Authority**



The Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park



Photo submitted by: St Kitts Tourism Authority

In April 1965 a group of forward thinking men and women came together and began the process of making history by creating the Brimstone Hill Society. The aim of these visionaries was to reverse the neglect and vandalism which the Brimstone Hill Fortress suffered since its last garrison was withdrawn, many of the soldiers being sent to fight in the Crimean War, 50 years on the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, the smallest sovereign nation in the Western Hemisphere, boasts the only Caribbean fortress, outside of the Greater Antilles, to be inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The role of the Brimstone Hill Fortress in placing St. Kitts on the tourism map and creating the opportunity for newer entities to thrive, from tour operators to zip lines, historic houses to scenic rail tours, cannot be overstated.

The Brimstone Hill Fortress attracts an average of 40,000-50,000 visitors every year and the Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society, through its promotional, outreach and research activities (the latter including public archaeology) has worked tirelessly to highlight the contribution of both Europeans and Africans to the creation and defense of this monument to a rich, complex, and despite a tragic past, ultimately triumphant Caribbean cultural heritage.

Article submitted by:

**Cameron St. Pierre Gill, General Manager,
Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park Society**



Photo by: Cameron Gill



Photo by: St Kitts Tourism Authority



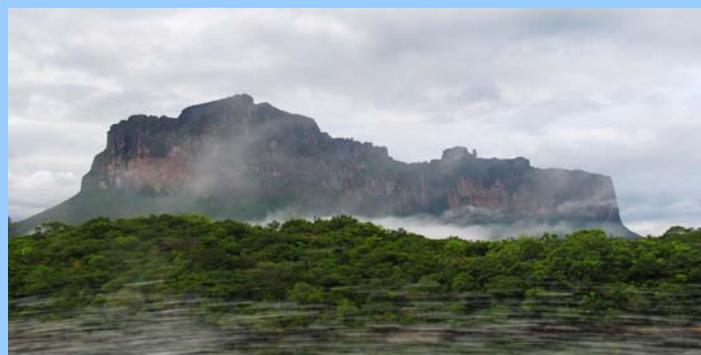
Photo by: Don Beale

Canaima National Park

Canaima is one of the most ancient places on the planet. It is located in Bolívar state southern Venezuela and was founded in June 12th 1962. It is actually the sixth biggest national park worldwide covering 30.000 km² with a unique biodiversity especially in Tepuis, sandstones that date back to a time when South America and Africa were part of the super-continent Pangea.

Canaima National Park was declared as UNESCO world natural heritage in 1994, holding important and significant natural habitats for insitu conservation of biological diversity, including threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science conservation. Also, the highest waterfall of the world, the Angel Fall, can be found in this amazing destination which cascades from a height of 1.002 meters. In 2014 more than 24 thousand tourists from around the world visited Canaima, one of the main natural attractions in Venezuela.

Photos and Article by:
Ministry of Tourism of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



Grenada, moving towards the preservation of its heritage



Photo: planetware.com



Photo: Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture



Photo: planetware.com

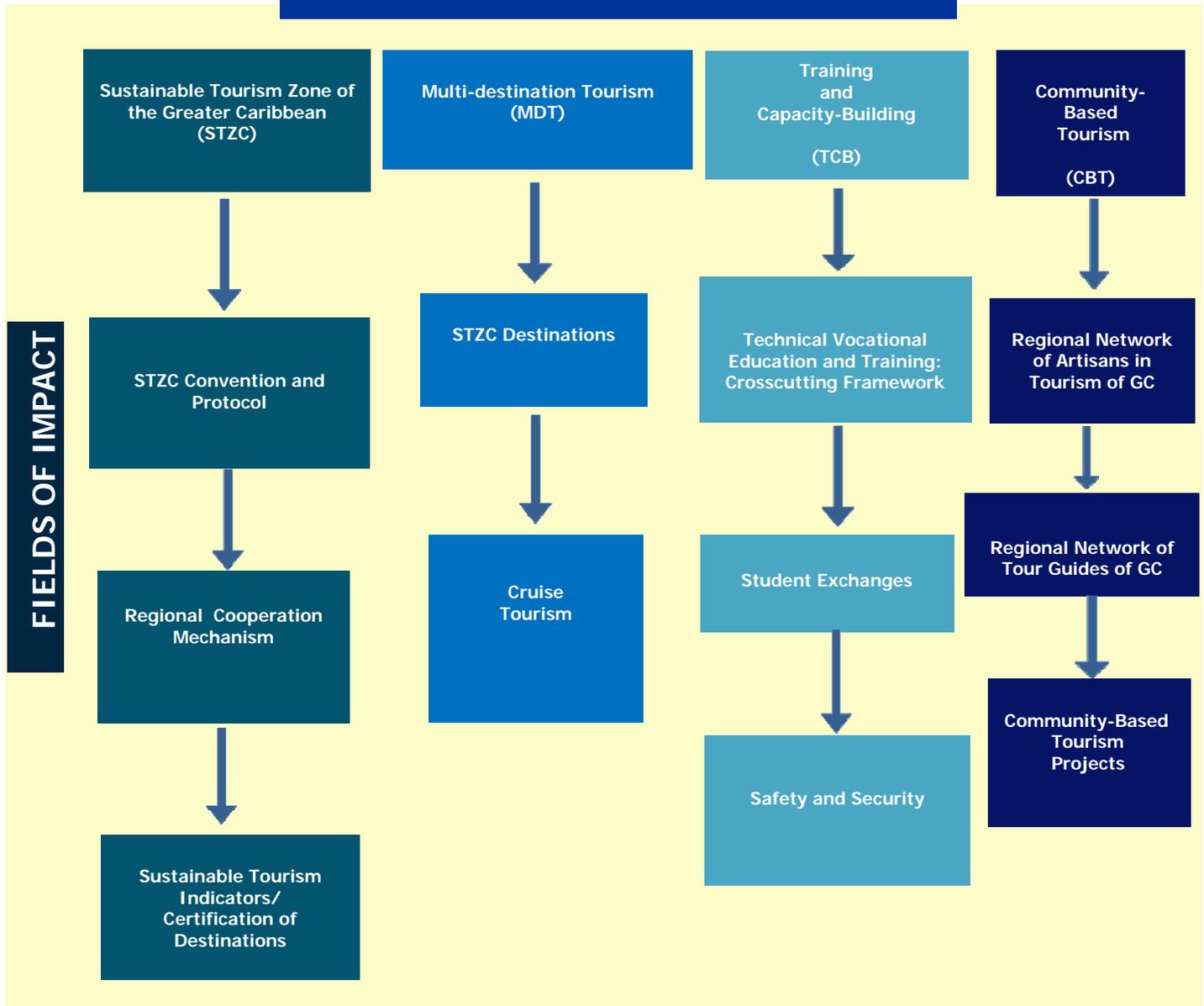
Grenada has taken a major step in moving towards the preservation of its heritage in general and World Heritage Listing in particular by the gazetting of the main forts in St. George's, as National Cultural Landmarks. These sites form part of the country's efforts of having the Fortified System of St. George recognised as some of the great monuments of the Caribbean. As such, this is part of the final stages of the declaration process. In December of 2014, Cabinet approved the setting up of Grenada's World Heritage Committee which will be working in close collaboration with the Natural and Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee of the Physical Planning Unit.

These sites which are part of the tourism offerings on the island are good examples of defensive systems developed during the colonial years of rivalry between the French and British. Fort George for example, which embodies all aspects of Grenada's past and recent political and military history, is a typical French Vauban Design Bastion Tracer Fort. It is regarded as the most important institution on the island, hence it is envisaged that this new development should strengthen possible cooperation with the French and a serial nomination with other Caribbean Fortifications.

Fort Matthew and Frederick to the east of the Town of St. George are also of interest. Designed during the era when many nations experienced difficulties in firing cannon from encasemated chambers, Fort Matthew embodied a new era or break-through in military architecture.

Article submitted by: **Ministry of Tourism, Civil Aviation and Culture**

2016-2017 THEMATIC AREAS



GOOD NEWS ON MARCH 2016

STZC WEBSITE:

The purpose of the Website of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC) is to function as a user-friendly and interactive platform, equipped with tools for the sustainable management of tourism destinations with information conducive to adopting sustainable tourism practices for Destination Mangers, Regional Governments and the public at large.

The STZC Website will support the development and advancement of the STZC by functioning as a centralised location for general information on the STZC and will also facilitate destination development and the management of the destination information collected, as well as increase the participation and interest of destinations of ACS Member States in becoming part of the 'Zone'.

In March 2016, the Website of the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Greater Caribbean (STZC) will be available for use by ACS countries and we encourage everyone to utilize this important tool.

NEW INTERNATIONAL ADVISOR FOR THE DST

From March 7th, the new International Advisor, **Mrs. Tanya Amaya** will join the team of the Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the ACS. Mrs. Amaya is a Honduran professional with extensive experience in the tourism sector having worked for the Ministry of Tourism of her country on national and international projects, mainly on topics related to developing sustainable destinations.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 7th Summit of Heads of States and/or Governments of the ACS (**July 4th, 2016 in Havana, Cuba**)
- 8th Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Council (**July 3rd, 2016 in Havana, Cuba**)
- STZC Indicators Regional Workshops (**dates to be confirmed**)
- SCST-27: 27th Special Committee Meeting on Sustainable Tourism (**dates to be confirmed**)

THANK YOU

The Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States expresses its gratitude to all the contributors of this Newsletter and look forward to your continued support as we work together to develop sustainable tourism in the Greater Caribbean Region.

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Concept, editing and layout: **ACS Directorate of Sustainable Tourism.**