

Beat: Travel

## WHERE THE POWER OF TOURISM MEETS LOCAL CARIBBEAN COMMUNITIES

### WITH '40 FOR 40 INITIATIVE' PROJECTS

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**USPA NEWS** - In partnership with its philanthropic arm, the not-for-profit Sandals Foundation, Sandals Resorts International (SRI) announces the full list of projects under its 40 for 40 Initiative. Launched as part of Sandals Resorts' 40th anniversary celebrations, 40 projects were identified across eight Caribbean destinations where SRI operates that best showcase the incredible link between tourism and its power to transform communities and improve local lives.

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The 40 for 40 Initiative projects were selected across six areas: preserving natural resources through Conservation Efforts and Tours; Investing in Food Security by supporting and working with local farmers; Hospitality Training and Certification aimed at ensuring ongoing excellence; maintenance of cultural heritage through Support of Local Artisans and Music Education & Entertainment; and bolstering local economies through Small Business and Community Market Support.

Across the Caribbean, SRI team members from Sandals Resorts, Beaches® Resorts and the Sandals Foundation will be rolling up their sleeves to help bring these projects to life. Visiting guests can also support and participate in many of the activities taking place throughout the region.

"Tourism has the power to transform, not only the lives of the guests who immerse themselves in the charm and culture of the Caribbean while on vacation, but for our team members and neighbors who build their families' roots in the region," said Adam Stewart, Executive Chairman, Sandals Resorts International and President and Founder of the Sandals Foundation. "This is the important work we build on and celebrate today, as part of our relentless efforts to strengthen the transformative link between tourism and the empowerment of our local Caribbean communities."

#### - Conservation Efforts and Tours

Through the Sandals Foundation, SRI has made the environment a priority, investing millions in education and advocacy programs, establishing marine sanctuaries, out-planting more than 12,000 corals, and engaging over 55,000 people in conservation efforts. Now, the team will advance its efforts to protect the region's natural resources by expanding opportunities for marine conservation.

In honor of its late Founder, Chairman and philanthropic stalwart, Gordon "Butch" Stewart, the team has partnered with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) to implement its 'Sea the Legacy of Love' Scholarship Program. The program will provide 40 Caribbean nationals across six islands with dive certifications from open water to master level. This, together with opportunities for guests to take part in activities such as coral out-planting in Jamaica and St. Lucia, will have a lasting impact on life below the surface.

Additional projects include supporting the Andromeda Gardens, a 6.5-acre botanical garden in Barbados created in the 1950s, and providing funding to assist in the recovery of sand dunes in Lucayan National Park in The Bahamas that were heavily impacted by invasive plants and storm surges.

#### - Investing in Food Security

Together with the Sandals Foundation, SRI, which already sources over 90% of its food supply locally, is ramping up its investment in agriculture and the institutions training the next generation of producers. Various contributions will include equipment donation at the Agriculture Training College in Barbados, construction of hydroponics at Antigua's Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Centre, and establishing community composting practices on-resort. The Foundation will also support the Grenada Network of Rural Women

Producers (GRENROP), a group of 65 local women and at-risk youth charting their financial independence through agriculture.

- Small Business and Community Market Support

The Sandals Foundation is continuing to invest in local businesses like the Oistins Fish Fry in Barbados, where locals and visitors alike can meet with vendors and enjoy freshly prepared seafood. Guests at Sandals have the opportunity to embark on paid tours that directly support these vendors and their livelihoods.

With establishments such as these accounting for on average 30 percent of its island's global development product (GDP), the Sandals Foundation is committed to improving the welfare of operators as well as their earning potential by upgrading additional locales such as Cultural Market Place in Turks & Caicos and Pineapple Craft Market in Jamaica. The Sandals Foundation's community projects are highlighted on resort, inviting guests to support through donations.

- Supporting Local Artisans

For years, guests of Sandals and Beaches Resorts have had access to locally made items at its retail shops, proceeds of which are reinvested into local community groups. The Sandals Foundation will expand its hugely successful Caribbean Artisan Program by training more crafts people across more islands including Curaçao, St. Lucia, Bahamas and Turks & Caicos, providing more travelers the opportunity to take home a piece of the region. Sandals and Beaches Resorts guests can also look forward to meeting these craft men and women through pop-up shops on resort and seeing the magic unfold.

- Music Education and Entertainment

From ska and calypso to Jamaica's iconic reggae and dancehall, the unmistakable soundtrack of the Caribbean keeps visitors coming back and locals moving forward. Together with international partners, high school and college music educators will be trained on key techniques to further develop the region's iconic sounds. Additionally, the 40 for 40 Initiative will culminate with a musical showcase that brings the magic of Caribbean music to Miami in order to help raise funds for continued growth of the region.

- Hospitality Training and Certification

To ensure the continued training of future tourism industry players, the teams at SRI and the Sandals Foundation are supporting hospitality training and certification programs to strengthen vocational skills in the areas of food & beverage, health, beauty, and wellness. In Antigua, trainees can receive a health and beauty certification to gain skills for the fast growing wellness sector. In Exuma and New Providence, the Foundation will assist with year-long programs that supports commercial food preparation.

"We are very excited about these 40 projects of transformation and our role in helping realize the impact tourism makes in the Caribbean," said Heidi Clarke, Executive Director of the Sandals Foundation. "Tourism touches almost every corner of local communities and we are fully appreciative of its ability to make a real difference. We are extremely grateful to every guest, team member, partner, travel advisor, donor and supporter who have volunteered or supported our work to improve literacy, healthcare, youth engagement and the many areas in which we focus. Together with our SRI teammates, we will continue to use the power of tourism to bring lasting change," said Clarke.

Celebrating its 13th anniversary on March 18th, since its inception in 2009, the Sandals Foundation has implemented projects and programs valued at nearly US \$79 million, touching the lives of more than 1.1 million people.

For a complete list of 40 for 40 Initiative projects, visit: <https://news.sandals.com/article/1629/>.

For more information about the Sandals Foundation and to donate, visit: <https://sandalsfoundation.org>.

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