



Barbados Chanté Springer

"Imagine you are the Minister of Tourism for your island. What would you do, and what projects could you create, to help bring locals and tourists closer together?"

Fellow Ministers,

"Tourism is our Business" and our country's chief earner of foreign exchange. As Tourism Minister in wonderful Barbados, I would create projects such as Community Heritage Villages, Friendship Clubs, Home Accommodation Programmes and Visitors' Craft Workshops to strengthen links between visitors and the Barbadian people.

Every community is different and has its own culture. Creating Heritage Villages with mini-museums displaying artifacts and selling local crafts and foods will surely highlight our culture. Also, visitors and locals can have nightly "meet-ups" to sing out exciting folk songs or play games like checkers, warri, and dominoes. Don't you think that exciting games of road tennis, followed by a delicious glass of coconut water or mauby would help to make visits to Barbadian communities more delightful? It would bring greater joy if visits to homes of residents to enjoy tasty Bajan dishes were included!

Forming Friendship Clubs is a must. Schools, Religious bodies, community clubs or business places can host visitors weekly or monthly. They can go on picnics, share ideas, create programmes to help the youth and elderly or just build friendships. By organizing exchange visits, they can help to make this world a better place. Why should visitors stay in hotels or guest houses whenever they visit this lovely island? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the accommodation was in local homes instead? Certainly, this is the easiest and least expensive way to gain "The Barbadian Experience." Soft night breezes, filled with the sweet smell of Lady-in-the-night flowers, the tinkling sounds of tiny whistling frogs and the smell of boiling cane-juice from a sugar factory can make this experience one to be treasured.

Each day, visitors purchase craft items. Wouldn't visits be more delightful if they could learn from skilled crafts-persons how to create their own souvenirs? Whether it is Pottery-Making at Chalky Mount, Earthworks and Indigenous Potteries, or basketry taught by local persons, visitors and locals are very sure to learn from each other. In fact,



this brilliant idea is already happening at "Netty Ted's", Rock Dundo and St. James. Children can spend the entire day painting t-shirts, making craft items, and going on picnics or walks with Barbadian children. Can you imagine the thrill they would feel, creating their own souvenir items to take back home or helping in Ted's plant nursery? Certainly, we can expand on this unique idea as well.

Visitors love our music. Some might have heard the Royal Barbados Police Band before, but I am sure that performances by the Barbados Youth Orchestra or Steelband would add to their "Bajan Experience." They would be even more overjoyed if they were taught to play a few tunes on a steel-pan by some of our leading players.

Going on day trips with local fishermen, tasting golden-brown steaks of fish at Fish-Fries, camping and hiking with local Scouts, Brownies, or 4-H-ers can also be included. With each one getting involved, friendships will be created, our tourism industry expanded, and greater international understanding built. Then, we would have "played our part," the "Bajan Way".

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