

'Come Meet a Jamaican Village'

The Braes River community of St. Elizabeth has added to Jamaica's tourism offerings, with the opening of the 'Come Meet a Jamaican Village' community tourism initiative.

The large, attractive village complex, located in the heart of the rustic farming community, offers an authentic experience that goes beyond shopping to sharing and connecting with the locals. It boasts individual shops where persons can purchase art and craft, local cuisine, and fresh farm produce. Also contained are restrooms, and a stage area for live shows and entertainment.

It is a project of the Braes River Community Development Association in collaboration with the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo). Member of Parliament for North East St. Elizabeth, Raymond Pryce, addressing the opening of the 'Come Meet a Jamaican Village' community tourism initiative in Braes River, St. Elizabeth. "Protect it, build and preserve on what has started. Before you think of renting or leasing this place make sure the users of this facility, when they would have finished their events, it is left in an impeccable condition, so as not to throw this thing into disarray. It is not every event that can be hosted here... I don't want to hear that the stage mash down. There are different products for different places, and I am saying to you residents of Braes River, this is historic for you," the Mayor said. Noting the scores of persons from across the island and overseas, who attended the launch, he said their presence is proof that the product is attractive and if managed properly, can be economically sustainable. The Mayor welcomed plans to expand the community tourism initiative to include tours of nearby farms. "The farmer can offer his farm as a farm vacation tour experience, as many visitors enjoy walking on farms and will pay to learn how we plant local crops. The farmers can also be included in the health and wellness market by learning the nutritional value of his products and participate as a community tourism guide," he suggested. Member of Parliament for North East St. Elizabeth, Raymond Pryce, told the gathering that he is giving the venture his full support as many local jobs can be created. He said that the plan is to provide training for tour guides and people, who operate the shops, so that they can better interact with and showcase the facilities to visitors, while partnerships will be sought with established tourist facilities to encourage tours of the area. "We intend that this village concept for tourism in Braes River is also going to become a standing feature on the calendar of activities in the parish. Along with TPDCo, we are going to do the training for community hosts, the people who are going to be tour guides. We are going to do a marketing strategy with the hotels to see if we can have visitors coming in," Mr. Pryce said. Source: JIS