

3 Rivers Eco Lodge, Sandals Montego Bay win Caribbean tourism environmental awards



From left to right: Dianelys Rodriguez, (Establishment Services, Latin America & Caribbean); Horace Peterkin, General Manager, and Lisa Simpson, Environmental Manager of Sandals Montego Bay; Berthia M. Parle, and Jem Winston, Owner, of 3 Rivers Eco Lodge.

The 2006 American Express Caribbean Tourism Environmental Awards went to 3 Rivers Eco Lodge & Sustainable Living Centre, Dominica (Small Hotel Category) and to Sandals Montego Bay, Jamaica (Large Hotel Category). The two hotels obtained the highest combined scores, based on their performance in the criteria Environmental Management & Stewardship, Infrastructure, Awareness, Conservation and Health & Safety.

Sustainable tourism in the Caribbean is understood as the optimal use of natural, cultural, financial and human resources for national development on an equitable and self-sustaining basis in order to provide a unique visitor experience and an improved quality of life for its citizens.

The 2006 American Express Caribbean Tourism Environmental Awards, presented in Miami during a special awards luncheon as part

the annual Caribbean Hotel Industry Conference (CHIC), paid tribute to the hotels that are models of responsible environmental and social performance in the region.

"The relationship between tourism and environment must be intimate and continuous, especially in the Caribbean, where sustainability is indispensable to preserve our tropical paradise" says Dianelys Rodriguez, Vice President Establishment Services, American Express Latin America and Caribbean Division. "Our congratulations to both winners for taking the lead in environmental practices and serving as role models for the Caribbean region."

The 3 Rivers Eco Lodge & Sustainable Living Centre in 2006 reiterates its commitment to sustainability after earning this award in 2005. Located in Dominica, this family business lives by a fundamental goal: to live in harmony with and have as little harmful impact as pos-

sible on the unspoiled natural beauty of its surroundings and community. Their philosophy is driven by a belief in their role to

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3 RIVERS ECO LODGE

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protect and enhance the environment for guests as well as the residents of the local community. Keeping in line with their goals, every aspect of the hotel has the environment in mind. The management embraces a sustainable lifestyle, minimizing the use of all resources and monitoring all systems.

The sun powers the entire property. Even the water supply is pumped from the river using a solar powered pump, which works in silence to avoid disturbing the surrounding natural habitats. Likewise, solar hot water heating systems are used. To minimize water consumption, grey water is treated and then re-used in the garden and campers use dry toilets.

The hotel composts all kitchen and garden waste and uses that compost to grow as much organic food as possible without the use of chemicals or fertilizers. A truly original invention is the modification of a pick up truck that has been retrofitted to run on used vegetable oil as well as diesel fuel.

With the "cooking oil truck" they have reduced harmful emissions by some 93 per cent, and are able to re-cycle oil that was previously discarded by local restaurants in local rivers and ravines. Whenever possible, the hotel avoids purchasing packaged goods.

The hotel shops locally, recycles and uses biodegradable products and tries to keep waste products to a minimum. Water, electricity, gas, solid waste and paper consumption are monitored daily to continuously find new ways of reducing usage.

An important aspect of 3 River's philosophy is to involve the local community. Employees come from local villages and they are trained in sustainable living. As an Eco-Lodge, the hotel owners feel that community-based tourism is essential in order to ensure that their local friends benefit from the hotel's existence. Bearing this in mind, the hotel offers a number of local community based activities for the visitors' enjoyment, which at the

herbal medicines & remedies, and tasting various bush teas.

--Coffee and cocoa preparing and roasting - where tourists can take some home at the end of the day.

--Visits to the local village primary school - getting to know the kids, sharing experiences with them and learning the local history.

--Band practices with the local Reggae and Calypso stars - The Blazing Squad.

--Learning ancient knitting or flower crafts, among others.

These are just some of the responsible practices that 3 Rivers Eco Lodge proudly undertakes.

"Environmental issues concern not just the air we breathe and the water we drink, they also concern our obligation to each other and to future generations to protect our planet," said CHA President, Berthia Parle, MBE. "In the Caribbean hospitality industry, businesses that utilize the most solid social and environmental practices benefit communities and save not only our environment, but our heritage as well."

Sandals Montego Bay in Jamaica has a fully implemented an Environmental Management System and Health and Safety programme. This programme received Green Globe 21 certification in January 2001. Since then, Sandals Montego Bay has been continuously improving its operation, with programmes such as:

- Energy Conservation Management
- Freshwater Resource Management
- Waste Minimization
- Improved Social and Cultural Development
- Safe Care, Use and Handling of Chemicals

They also created an Emergency Disaster Plan Manual, as well as an HIV/AIDS Workplace Programme Policy. Sandals Montego Bay has a full time environment, health and safety manager, responsible for staff training, developing community awareness, and liaising with Montego Bay Marine Park and National Environment

clean-ups - both above and below the water.

The American Express Caribbean Tourism Environmental Awards

demonstrate the Caribbean travel and tourism industry's genuine commitment to pursuing sustainable tourism development in the region. The awards programme is designed to encourage investment in environmentally friendly technologies and sustainable management practices within hotels and resorts, by recognizing those properties that have realized significant achievements in "greening" their operations.

A team of qualified environmental experts performed site inspections and evaluated the properties in the categories:

-- Environmental Management & Stewardship.

This takes into consideration the integration of management, the comprehensiveness and accomplishments of the green team, the implementation of action plans as well as plans for the future.

--Conservation of Natural Resources. This takes into consideration the hotels ability to implement the principles of the three R's: recycling, re-use and reduction of wastes, energy and water consumption.

--Awareness & Community Activities. This reviews environmental and conservation training programmes for the staff, community awareness and outreach programmes, the efforts made to communicate the hotel's conservation and protection policies to guests, and future plans or commitments to act.

--Infrastructure & Technology.

This reviews the hotels use of sustainable or renewable energy technologies, the property design, the use of water and energy saving devices, and capital investments made towards greening the hotel;

--Health and Safety. This examines the maintenance of relevant equipment, disaster awareness programmes and emergency plans, and the use of natural alternatives for harsh chemicals.

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The activities give guests a true taste of life in Dominica, as seen by a Dominican, and are as innovative as they are engaging. They include:

--Learning traditional farming methods and how to make & taste one of Dominica's national dishes, Calalou Soup.
--A day at an organic herb farm, discovering traditional

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Staff members are encouraged to participate and become involved with Monthly Awards, Annual Health and Safety Expositions, Field trips, Committees, Clubs and Special Events, such as medical missions for children's infirmaries, AIDS hospices, and neighbouring mental hospitals, as well as youth training and recruitment programmes, and community

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The awards programme is made possible by the generous contributions of American Express, a Governing Council member of the Caribbean Alliance for Sustainable Tourism, a subsidiary of the Caribbean Hotel Association. To learn more about the winners or for additional information on how to develop an environmental programme, contact CAST, 787-725-9139; E-mail: dshurland@caribbeanhotels.org