



SAINT LUCIA NATIONAL TRUST

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**Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy
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PRESS RELEASE

WORLD HERITAGE DAY:

Broadening our understanding of heritage and its protection

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.'
Mahatma Gandhi

INTO, the international organisation of national trusts, brings together more than 60 national trusts and equivalent organisations from across the world, globally diverse but united by a shared commitment to conserving and sustaining our shared heritage – built and natural, tangible and intangible.

Through cooperation, coordination and comradeship between the international community of National Trusts, INTO works to develop and promote best conservation practices, increase the capacity of individual organisations, establish Trusts where they do not presently exist, and advocate in the interests of heritage conservation.

Every two years, INTO organises an international conference for its members and other interested parties. This year, from 30th September to 4th October, the conference is taking place in Uganda, the 'Pearl of Africa' and a foremost tourist destination. It will provide an opportunity for delegates to share and explore new insights on the diversity and relevance of heritage to our global well-being. It will also look into strengthening the heritage movement, including in the south where cultural assets are under increasing threat.



One of the unusual features of the conference are 1 ½ day learning journeys to underscore the conference themes and to provide delegates with an exciting opportunity to explore examples of intangible and tangible heritage promotion work in Uganda. This will, for instance, include visiting a forest site where traditional herbalists and healers are trained to provide important physical and spiritual healing to ordinary Ugandans; and to a National Park where efforts are being made to integrate the cultural values of neighbouring communities in its management. There will also be an opportunity to examine the cultural relevance of the Buganda Kingdom, with its long and rich history, to contemporary Uganda.

This year, INTO will therefore encourage its members throughout the world to make new linkages between their more usual work (often the conservation of our built heritage) and issues of sustainable development (in both 'rich' and less well-endowed countries) and people's rights to access and enjoyment of their culture.

The United Nations recently highlighted the importance of measures to ensure access to cultural heritage, whether tangible, intangible or natural, because this is “a precondition for fostering dialogue and understanding across cultures and civilizations and therefore, for creating an environment which enables the promotion and protection of human rights for all.”



In spite of this, one witnesses heritage at ever greater risk. Heritage resources (the built historical environment, other forms of heritage such as landscapes and natural resources; the intangible— our traditions and accumulated knowledge) are rarely highlighted as essential ingredients to guarantee our well-being, nor that of future generations. Yet, upon closer examination, cultural resources everywhere do provide an essential dimension to define and develop peoples’ skills, to reflect on our past and, most importantly, to shape our aspirations for the future.

The INTO Conference will share experiences to better define the link between heritage and responsible development. Encouraging the participation in cultural life by children, including children from poorer families, and migrant or refugee children will be one set of experiences discussed at the INTO conference.

Sadly, decision-makers across the globe still view heritage as elitist and/or irrelevant to the pressing challenges they face. The INTO Conference delegates are expected to endorse the ‘Entebbe Declaration’, which will call upon Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental authorities worldwide to place a much greater emphasis than is currently the case on the importance of preserving and promoting heritage resources in the quest for sustainable and responsible development.

For more information on INTO and its forthcoming conference, visit www.internationaltrusts.org.

Our heritage is a worldwide resource. INTO can help our Trust think beyond the built heritage to issues of sustainable development and cultural rights

*Written by: INTO
Photos by: The Saint Lucia National Trust*