Rainforest Alliance – Our Work in Sustainable Tourism

Our Mission:

The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming environmental, business and consumer practices.

Tourism, one of the world’s largest industries, employs more than 235 million people worldwide and generates 9.2% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While tourism is a vital source of income and wealth generation for many developing countries, it can also result in pollution, deforestation, inefficient energy use and cultural exploitation.

The Rainforest Alliance offers training and education to tourism businesses and provides them with the techniques they need to run efficiently and sustainably. Businesses that have completed the programme and can demonstrate good sustainable practices are able to use the Rainforest Alliance Verified Trade Mark on promotional materials.

As a traveller, how can you know you are having a positive impact on the places you visit?

The answer is by visiting the SustainableTrip.org website, where the Rainforest Alliance provides travellers, tour operators, and travel agents with a comprehensive list of destinations that are not only beautiful, but also benefit communities and the environment. The website also details commercial organisations who are committed to positive sustainable destination management.

Sustainable tourism has been defined by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as satisfying current tourist and community needs, while protecting and improving future opportunities. It is seen as a guide in managing all resources, in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs may be met, while maintaining cultural traditions, ecological processes and biological diversity.
With a population of about 55,000, the Cayman Islands are often regarded as one of the safest islands to visit and its people, the friendliest in the Caribbean. Specialist tour operators have been organising tours to the Cayman Islands for several years with many tourists coming to see the artistic traditions on the Islands. There are numerous independent art galleries on the Islands, offering an insight into the influences that create Cayman culture. In 1997, the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands was formed.

It is currently the responsibility of the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism to develop and sustain tourism to the Islands by working in partnership on strategies to support and extend tourism provision.

**Preserving Artistic Tradition**

The Cayman National Cultural Foundation (CNCF) is an important supporter for preserving artistic traditions. The foundation supports performing, visual, and literary arts of the Cayman people. CNCF protects rich cultural monuments such as Miss Lassie’s House, a living masterpiece and one of the most important homes in the Cayman Islands.

The Cayman Islands have a long history of rope making. The ropes are made from the national tree, the silver thatch palm. The making of handmade traps to catch local rabbits is also a popular Cayman tradition.

Several art festivals take place at different times throughout the year in the Cayman Islands. Cayfest is the National Festival of the Arts in the Cayman Islands. Sponsored by the CNCF, this festival takes place over a few months and includes fashion shows, comedy acts, musical performances and art exhibitions. Gimistory is the Cayman Islands International Storytelling Festival held during the autumn, bringing together storytellers from all over the world.