

Seville Heritage Park reopened

The Seville Heritage Park in St Ann has reopened after extensive restoration works by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), just in time for the start of the winter tourist season.

A popular heritage attraction for students and visitors, the site had been closed since April 2011 to facilitate rehabilitation of the great house and the installation of a multimedia interactive attraction. Executive Director of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), Laleta Davis-Mattis, described the new exhibition as 'first-class' and is the only one of its kind in the Caribbean." She expressed thanks to the Tourism Enhancement Fund and the Spanish-Jamaican Foundation, which also provided funding, and curator of the exhibition, Dr Jonathan Greenland, who is also the director of the Museums of History & Ethnography at the Institute of Jamaica. The 18th-century plantation house has been beautifully restored, with roof, floor and bathrooms overhauled. A new state-of-the-art exhibition has been installed, which features carved stone pieces from the 1500s uncovered in archaeological excavations of an artisan's workshop on the property in 2002, as well as several other new pieces. In addition, historical reconstruction of Sevilla la Nueva (the Spanish village), both in paintings by renowned British reconstruction artist Peter Dunn, and computer-generated imagery, offer the visitor a glimpse into the rich history of the site. Earliest beginnings The artefacts on the site, from the Spanish sugar mill to the water wheel and replicas of the Taino and African houses, trace the history of Jamaica from its earliest beginnings to the end of the British era. As with the previous exhibition, there is a room with artefacts dedicated to each culture (Taino, Spanish, African, English). Davis-Mattis said the park is now open seven days per week, with the exception of Christmas Day and Good Friday. She is encouraging persons to book their tours ahead of time. The Seville Heritage Park, located along the north coast approximately four kilometres from St Ann's Bay, is regarded as one of Jamaica's most significant cultural heritage sites. It includes the archaeological remains of the indigenous Taino village of Maima, the 16th-century Spanish settlement of Sevilla la Nueva, and the post-1655 British sugar plantation known as New Seville. The encounter, co-existence, and intermingling of Taino, Europeans and Africans at the site typifies the current Jamaican demography and gives credence to the national motto, Out of Many, One People. The JNHT head said the heritage park, along with the underwater city of Port Royal and the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, have been placed on the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) tentative list for nomination as a World Heritage site. According to UNESCO, to be included on the World Heritage list, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria, which are explained in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.