

Restoring Cockpit County's unique forest landscape: TUI Care Foundation launches new TUI Forest Jamaica

- *Two-year initiative will plant 40,000 native and agroforestry trees across 223 hectares in Cockpit Country, one of Jamaica's most biodiverse regions*
- *Project combines forest restoration with ecotourism development, creating sustainable livelihoods for local communities and impacting over 1,700 locals*
- *Project is launched as part of TUI Care Foundation's Forest February, which emphasises the global importance of reforestation*

Berlin, 19th February 2026. *Cockpit Country in west-central Jamaica spans 94,000 hectares of unique karst limestone terrain and is one of the island's most critical ecosystems. It supplies 40% of Jamaica's freshwater and supports a high number of endemic species. However, with approximately 70,000 residents across 59 surrounding communities facing limited employment opportunities, many rely on unsustainable forest resource use. Additionally, uncontrolled fires destroy the forest, damaging ecology, causing soil erosion, and polluting water sources. Climate change also exacerbates these challenges through extended dry periods and rising temperatures. Although 73,000 hectares of the forest are designated as a protected area, several sections, along with adjoining private lands with similar ecological value, remain vulnerable.*

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To address these challenges, the TUI Care Foundation has launched TUI Forest Jamaica in partnership with the Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA). The two-year initiative implements a sustainable alternative livelihood model that stems forest degradation whilst creating economic opportunities for local communities.

The project will plant 32,000 native trees in forest reserve areas where gaps occur due to agricultural conversion. Working with Local Forest Management Committees, STEA will mobilise local residents to participate in restoration activities, creating educational and recreational sites for conservation awareness programmes whilst opening possibilities for ecotourism expansion. Additionally, 8,000 agroforestry trees will be planted for ecotourism activities. This approach increases the attractiveness of the ecotourism site, reduces land erosion, and offers incentives for private landowner participation in forest restoration. The agroforestry component will provide the community with access to commercially available food whilst enhancing farm-to-table experiences for visitors.

A seedling nursery will be established to supply new plants, with community members employed to manage the facility. The project will train 25 women and men as tour guides and hosts, emphasising the significance of conserving local biodiversity. Facilities including restrooms, a visitor centre, and an outdoor kitchen will be refurbished, whilst trails will be reopened to accommodate visitors. The recreation area will host farm-to-table experiences featuring local cuisine, with storyboards and educational signage providing ecological information.

The project will directly benefit more than 1,700 people through targeted awareness campaigns and involvement in restoration and conservation activities, with 53 jobs being created for the local community. Enhancement of eco-tourism opportunities and infrastructure improvements will enable over 2,000 tourists and schoolchildren to participate in nature-based tourism experiences. An adopt-a-tree programme creates meaningful ways for visitors to financially support the community's conservation efforts, whilst income generated through replanting and tour guiding serves as the primary incentive to sustain benefits beyond implementation.

The TUI Care Foundation's 'Forest February' is a month of activities dedicated to reforestation. Through a series of project launches and educational activities, it emphasises the importance of community-managed reforestation solutions and sustainable agro-forestry tourism practices to safeguard forest ecosystems for local communities and generations to come.

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About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands. www.tuicarefoundation.com

About Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency

Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (STEA) aims to address environmental problems affecting South Trelawny and Cockpit Country in Jamaica. As such, the organisation facilitates economic and community development activities that are environmentally friendly and it promotes the sustainable use of the natural resources of Cockpit Country. Throughout its operations, STEA undertakes projects in the areas of soil conservation, environmental awareness, ecotourism development and advocacy. It has also introduced Jamaica's first Agrotourism & Food Festival, which promoted agro and eco enterprises for Cockpit Country. <https://stea.net>

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