Tobago Heritage Festival

The Tobago Heritage Festival is an annual event, held from mid-July to early August, created to preserve the unique cultural traditions of the island. The festival is fast becoming the main event on the Tobago calendar and it has become accepted as its signature event, becoming for Tobago what Carnival is for Trinidad.

The Tobago Heritage Festival is the largest single, most outstanding annual cultural event to take place in Tobago. The brain child of renowned Tobagonian anthropologist Dr. J. D. Elder, the festival was started as a pilot project in 1986 and has had nine annual incarnations since.

Throughout the entire Heritage period visitors and residents are able to visit the many quaint and friendly communities that dot this island paradise as they explore the various aspects of its past. Every day or night one is treated to the indigenous cultural art forms which are the heart of this island. Patrons may savour the traditional culinary delights and thrill to the pulsating rhythms and dances and the varied oral traditions.

Heritage is unique since each participating village depicts or re-enacts an event relative to the heritage and/or history of its immediate area. For example Black Rock presents a Sea Festival, being an important fishing centre; Les Coteaux - Folk Tales and Superstitions; Moriah - The Ole Time Wedding and Roxborough - The Belmanna Riots.

The general nature of the festival is a non-competitive presentation of the cultural heritage of the island since all the presentations are indeed unique elements in the total fabric of the celebrations. However an aspect of competitiveness was introduced in the form of the Folk Fiesta production - which showcases presentations in dancing, singing, drumming and by various speech bands.

The festival is famous for being an event which has broken down many political, social and religious barriers. Everyone comes together to ensure that his or her village has an outstanding presentation. Differences are gladly set aside as the spirit of Heritage is re-created anew.

Tobagonians are very proud of their culture and history namely The Tobago Heritage Festival that occurs every year from the middle of July to early August. Villagers from different communities comes out in their glory to perform with folk singing, dancing and feasting. The villagers dress up in traditional costumes that depict village life from the early 1900’s. During the year each Community has its own
festival. Each Villages have different events which range from ole time mas, ole time dance, old time wedding, limbo and jig to stick fighting.

The woman in society is always seen as a bounty of resource and industry. Often they succeed under the most adverse of conditions and have consistently done so from the times of slavery to present day. Women triumph each day in their daily lives as parents, providers and cornerstones of society and admittedly are the means via which most of the cherished elements of heritage is transmitted.

The Ms. Heritage Personality element of the Tobago Heritage Festival seeks to bring to the spotlight the women in our society and the contributions that they have made to the community. It is more than just a mere beauty pageant, indeed it seeks to emphasise that the woman is complete in her beauty and her talent - for industry, for craft, for her elegance.

There is also a special place for Heritage in the hearts of many nationals, Tobagonians especially, since children are encouraged to participate amongst their peers in a number of aspects of the festival. The festival also keeps the rich traditions of Tobago's unique culture alive for future generations and therefore has a special significance for the entire nation.

The Tobago Heritage Festival has now grown to such an extent in both popularity and complexity that the organising committee is now forced to select villages who eagerly vie to participate in the annual programme. What initially started off as a pilot project has now matured and come into its own, no longer is any village sure of its selection because there are always more villages desirous of presenting their particular heritage to the nation. Villages are selected on the basis of geographic spread, quality of production and readiness to participate.

These cultural expositions showcases the traditional "long time Tobago": Ole Time Tobago Wedding, Heel an' Toe, Bele, Folk Tales and Superstitions, re enactment of the legendary Belmanna slave uprising in Roxborough and much more.

The Heritage Queen Show is where the beautiful women of Tobago are brought on stage to be judged to try to determine who best represents all round beauty and the theme of the year’s festivities. The Heritage Festival gives a glimpse into Tobago's past, its traditions and its beliefs. It shows where Tobagonians have come from and the things are treasure the most.
Logo Concept

The stylised African image in a state of pregnancy depicts the continuance of predominant heritage. The flower in her hair, symbolises the germination and flowering of European influences. The style and design of lettering, the land of the aboriginal Amerindians which they inherited.

The Heritage Festival starts and ends with gala opening and the closing performances and parades in Scarborough at the island's centrally located cultural complex. It is well attended by hundreds of locals, dignitaries and visitor and presents highlights of previous years dynamic village productions - it places in the spotlight some of the island’s best performing groups. Visitors can look forward to an exciting extravaganza during the two weeks of activities that move daily from village to village.

Tobago's cultural traditions are shared and documented as villagers demonstrate their history in food, dance, song, or a combination of all. The Tobago Festivals Committee invites all to come an experience a renewal and remembrance of "Footprints," even as new footprints are created for future generations.

Location and Contact:

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For details events of the Tobago Heritage Festival, visit: http://www.tobagowi.com/herit/index.htm