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PRESS RELEASE

Iwokrama wins two awards at Visit Rupununi's award ceremony.

Georgetown, Guyana. The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development (*Iwokrama*) today announced that it has received two awards at the recently held Visit Rupununi awards ceremony held at Lethem last Saturday evening.

Iwokrama is grateful for this recognition by Visit Rupununi for Best Lodge 2023 (Iwokrama River Lodge) and Best Cook 2023 (Iwokrama's Chef Colin Browne). The Centre has been serving guests for almost 25 years and these awards are testament to the hard work, commitment and dedication of Iwokrama's staff almost all of whom come from the surrounding local indigenous communities. Over the years Iwokrama has built capacity in many residents of the North Rupununi area in various tourism and other related disciplines. Tourism training includes tour guiding, rangers, drivers and boat captains, hospitality and food and beverage amongst others.

Colin Browne is a professionally trained Chef who has served Iwokrama for almost 17 years and is known for his culinary skills throughout the region and country. The tourism team is led by veteran Tourism Manager Michael Patterson for almost eight years and who is also a highly trained Iwokrama Ranger.

Iwokrama has also been helping develop community tourism operations both on the coast and in the hinterland through support from ExxonMobil Foundation and other donors.

To support the tourism thrust by the Government of Guyana through the Low Carbon Development Strategy, the Centre will be investing in more accommodation facilities and new products in 2024 and beyond. Already new tours for fishing and hiking have been launched in 2023 with the support of the Guyana Tourism Authority and a biking tour is currently in development. The Centre also plans to roll out a health and wellness facility, including a yoga Centre.

The Centre achieved Good Travel Seal Certification for its tourism operations in 2023 and recently retained international certification for its sustainable forestry operations.



The mark of
responsible forestry

The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development is an autonomous non-profit institution established by Guyana and the Commonwealth. The Centre manages the nearly one million acre (371,000 hectare) Iwokrama Forest in central Guyana to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used for ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

Special thanks also go out to the Iwokrama tourism team for delivering these sterling results especially our team members from the local communities and our community partners, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB). Without them, these accolades could not have been achieved.

The Centre would also like to offer its appreciation to Visit Rupununi and the Guyana Tourism Authority for their support in achieving these results.

Iwokrama remains grateful to the Government of Guyana for their continued valuable and ongoing support to the Centre.

(Photos at end of document)

Notes to the Editors:

1. About Iwokrama

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) was established in 1996 under a joint mandate from the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat to manage the Iwokrama forest, a unique reserve of 371,000 hectares of rainforest “in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”.

The Centre, guided by an international Board of Trustees, is unique providing a dedicated well managed and researched forest environment. The forest is zoned into a Sustainable Utilization Area (SUA) and a Wilderness Preserve (WP) in which to test the concept of a truly sustainable forest where conservation, environmental balance and economic use can be mutually reinforcing. The IIC collaborates with the Government of Guyana, the Commonwealth and other international partners and donors to develop new approaches and forest management models to enable countries with rainforests to market their ecosystem services whilst carefully managing their resources through innovative and creative conservation practices. In more recent years, the Centre has received support from corporate partners such as Exxon Mobil (Guyana) Limited who has funded the development of its Science Programme and continues to provide an annual contribution to the implementation of this Programme.

Iwokrama brings together:

- 20 local communities (approximately 7,000 people) who are shareholders and participants in the IIC’s sustainable timber, tourism, research operations and forest management activities through complex co-management and benefit sharing arrangements;
- Scientists and researchers engaged in ground breaking research into the impacts of climate change on the forest and measuring the scope and value of its ecosystem services; and
- A portfolio of sustainably managed and certified business models using innovative governance systems which include participation of the private and public sectors and the local communities, earning income from the forest and its natural assets whilst employing international social, environmental and economic best practice, whilst still keeping abreast of the ever changing thinking on funding for environmental projects in the face of climate change and the perennial scarcity of international finance.

This alliance and the Centre’s work programmes are committed to showing how a rain forest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change protection and real community benefit.

For further details about the Iwokrama International Centre please visit www.iwokrama.org , www.iwokramariverlodge.com or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on dgobin@iwokrama.org.

2. About Visit Rupununi (VR)

Visit Rupununi was founded in 2017 and is Guyana’s first Regional Destination Management and Marketing Organisation that provides marketing, networking, capacity building and advocacy to promote the development of sustainable, responsible, wildlife friendly tourism services across the Rupununi and throughout the tourism value chain.

The VR Tourism Awards and Induction Hall of Fame is an annual event that recognizes the outstanding contribution of tourism stakeholders in the Region including Best Hotel/Lodge, Best Local Guide, Best Cook, Tourism Personality of the Year, and Best Tourism Event. VR also inducts outstanding individuals who have contributed to the development of tourism in the Rupununi for over 20 years and this year’s honour went to Ms Shirley Melville.

Iwokrama has been a member of Visit Rupununi since 2018.

Photo 1- VR Awards – Best Lodge and Best Cook (Colin Browne) for Iwokrama River Lodge



Photo 2 Chef Colin Browne with Operations Manager Rohanie Roopnarine



Photo 3 - Iwokrama River Lodge staffers celebrate awards

