

Sandals to begin designing new resort for St Vincent next year

ST VINCENT



Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves, centre, about to sign an agreement with the chief executive officer of Sandals Resorts International, Adam Stewart, standing, on Monday. CMC PHOTOS

The chief executive officer of Sandals Resorts International (SRI), Adam Stewart, says the company will in 2026 begin working on the design of the Beaches resort it intends to build here.

Sandals had initially announced the construction of a Beaches resort at Buccament Bay, but changed it to the Sandals that opened there in March 2024.

“That was our original commitment to the country, ... to build a Beaches. And of course, we pivoted after COVID to the Sandals,” Stewart said at the signing of a multi-million dollar agreement on Monday.

“So, prime minister, we are here to sign today an agreement to build at this stage what looks like the vision of a 500-bedroom, \$500 million (One EC dollar=US\$0.37 cents) Beaches resort in this country,” he said ahead of the signing of the confidential documents with Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves. Stewart said that at full capacity, the resort will employ nearly 2,000 Vincentians.

“But we’ll phase it and, Minister [of Tourism Carlos] James, we have to hit the ground running.

We’re going to have to go to American Airlines and JetBlue and Virgin and many other airlines that are not here, and the Sandals effect will take flight to another level,” he said.

“... we’re going to do something remarkable. We’re going to put the sandals design studio to the test,” Stewart said, adding that the spa will be a work of art.

“This is a volcanic island, and we’re going to use those minerals, all that history, and infuse it into the next generation of Red Lane Spa,” Stewart said.

“Gastronomically, Buccan, which sources all of its ingredients from farmers right here on island, farm to table, has been an amazing beta test for the brand.

So gastronomically, we’re going to go overboard. From a water park point of view, we’re going to build something extraordinary.

“Every facet of this hotel will be the best of the best, and it would not have happened without the support, without the mutual respect between the people of this country and our organisation,” Stewart said and asked to be given a pen quickly “because I have a document to sign”.

He said his job at the event was to say thank you.

“We couldn’t be more excited.

We will start designs in 2026 and we will move as expeditiously as we can to start digging Earth, and do something amazing,” Stewart said. “So, to everybody here, everybody in the room, everybody listening. I just really wanted to say a huge thank you. I see somebody offer me a pen. Anything free I take, you know. Give me a pen,” he said to laughter.

Stewart said that what Sandals had achieved in St Vincent and the Grenadines so far is the beginning of what it could actually be.

“We are going to train thousands of Vincentians beyond the direct employment here. We plan on going further. Prime Minister, we have 250 Vincentians on the cusp of going to Turks and Caicos to go and take over and lead the latest Beaches resort, which opens in Turks on March 1, 2026.”

Stewart said the company has more than 150 other Vincentians working in four other islands across the region.

He praised Gonsalves’ “constant leadership at Caricom about Caribbean connectivity and integration.

“Let me say it here: Nobody is coming to rescue this region. It is on the people of this region to recognise that the almighty created the most beautiful tapestry for us to share with the world, and tourism, in many instances in these islands, is the largest economic driver, and Sandals is so unbelievably proud to be the most decorated and awarded hospitality in the entire Western Hemisphere.

“And to be Caribbean-led, born and bred, it is a shining, living example of what we can do together.”

Stewart said that whenever someone refers to the Caribbean as “Third World”, people should “point to the brand, point to the success and the pride, the calypsos, the reggae, the socas, the gastronomic flair that comes out of this region, the athletes, there are too many to name, overall.

“We should be so unbelievably proud of where we come from,” Stewart said, adding that he will continue with his team “in partnership with the government [of St Vincent and the Grenadines] and the governments of the Caribbean to champion and explain to the world that if they give us that opportunity to come here, that we will give them the best holiday that money can buy anywhere in the world, bar none”.