

The Gleaner
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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2016

After 35 years ...

Sandals taking hospitality to the next level



Brand Trump
and the tourism
industry

Jamaica scores big
with the hosting of
luxury forum

Peter Fraser
counts his
blessings

35 years of Sandals Resorts International

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

WHAT STARTED out as a single hotel led by passion and financial need has turned into one of the most remarkable hospitality chains in the world.

Known for industry-leading quality, innovation, training, and development of its people and also as a giant in community outreach, Sandals Resorts International, after 35 years, is on a never-ending journey of fusing together quality and new levels of hospitality services.

“The most satisfying part is, right out of Caribbean leadership, we have developed the world’s only consumer-recognised all-inclusive hospitality brand,” Sandals’ chief executive officer, Adam Stewart, told *Hospitality Jamaica* during the chain’s 35th anniversary media tour on Sunday.

Asked if Sandals was forced to differentiate itself from the rest of the market, Stewart said in many aspects, the answer was yes.

“Competition motivates you to find your space, your niche, the place that allows your company to outperform the rest and win,” he admitted.

WANTING TO BE THE BEST

The Sandals executive, who was born the same year that the flagship resort, Sandals Montego Bay opened, said competition took the group down the road of wanting to be the best and to provide an experience second to none.

“This was the birth of luxury-included, a distinct difference in all elements of our experience. We hold ourselves to a higher standard in our conceptualising of ideas, our thinking, and most importantly, in our execution, which could also be called our guest experience.”

Today, the Jamaican-owned brand has changed the tourism landscape in Barbados, The Bahamas, The Turks and Caicos Islands, Grenada, St Lucia, and Antigua and Barbuda and lays



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

The Lagoon rooms at Sandals Barbados.



Sandals LaSource Grenada.

claim to being the first hotel to offer over-water butler suites in Jamaica.

Competing against themselves, the chain has unveiled five 2,500-foot luxury villas and 12 bungalows seated on 156 piles on the Sandals Royal Caribbean Private Island. The first five will be completed by November 15, with the others scheduled for completion in early 2017.

“Our over-water suites are sold out until spring 2018,” the group’s new chief operations officer, Shawn DaCosta, said with pride, boasting that Sandals had broken the mould that Jamaica was a destination with a price point.

From floating water hammocks to private glass floors, each villa delivers an immersive journey of the Caribbean’s finest turquoise waters and rich marine life. Couples can admire the majestic beauty of



A couple pauses to kiss during a game of pool at Sandals Barbados.

the ocean from their private infinity pool and Jacuzzi with outdoor shower.

“Every suite captures the height of luxury with stylish mahogany king-size beds adorned with soft Egyptian linens and plush pillows for the ultimate sleep experience,” was how DaCosta described the US\$16 million project.

“There is everything in these rooms to keep you entertained – full elite butler service and private chef, who will plan every single menu to please,” said Jeremy Jones,

director of corporate services.

Private-airport transfers, yoga classes, and special excursions to suit the need of each client are among the luxuries that Sandals has delivered on.

According to DaCosta and Jones, the people who travel are looking for diversity, so no two resorts look alike.

“We are always looking to see what the next generation is going to want and delivering on what their dreams would be,” said the

PLEASE SEE **SANDALS**, 4



Fernand Zievinger (second left), general manager at Sandals Barbados, and his hotel manager, Patrick Drake (fourth left), hosting members of the Jamaican media during the Sandals 35th anniversary media tour last Friday in Barbados.



The Sandals Barbados team poses for the camera.



Gerald Christ, general manager, Sandals Royal Caribbean and Private Island, is flanked by two junior butlers, Rackaye Miller (left) and Shana-Kay Williams, at one of the new over-water suites at the Sandals Royal Private Island.



The welcome party for Jamaican media at Sandals Barbados.



A lateral view of the bedroom into the luxurious bathroom.



The over-water suite adorned with a stylish mahogany king-size bed.



New garden rooms at Sandals LaSource in Grenada.



A suite at Sandals La Source Grenada.

SANDALS

CONTINUED FROM 3

chain's COO.

The two men revealed that their responsibility was to exceed and fulfil guests' expectations.

At Sandals LaSource in Grenada, where **Hospitality Jamaica** visited last week as part of a group from the local media fraternity, that resort had a certain charm hard to replicate elsewhere.

Home to 257 rooms, the resort is located on the south of the island on Pink Beach, Pointe Salinas, five minutes from the Maurice Bishop International Airport.

Winner for the last three years as Grenada's Leading Resort by the World Travel Awards, Sandals LaSource epitomises the true

meaning of magnificence.

Over in Barbados, at the chain's newest resort, it is all about simplicity with sophistication. Subtle turquoise and grey on the buildings speak to the luxury.

At nights, the property comes alive, and that's when the real beauty of the resort stares you in the eyes.

Guests can hop from one restaurant to the next or cuddle in any of the several lounge areas or pockets of space for which this resort is renowned for.

With a mere two years under its belt, Sandals Barbados can boast of 90-95 per cent occupancy level year round, and they are not the only ones benefiting. The entire country is feeling the effect.

"Sandals Resorts relies on an army of team members and leaders who refuse to give anything but the best, and boy, have they made my family and me proud!"



Shawn DaCosta (left), chief operations officer, Sandals Resorts International, and Jeremy Jones, director of corporate services at the new Overwater suites at Sandals Royal Private Island.



Sandals Royal over-water suite balcony jutting out into the sea.

Melia Braco Village fêtes Canadian travel agents

Richard Morais

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE CURTAIN came down on a visit of 80 travel agents from Canada who came to Jamaica to observe first-hand the nation's tourism product, with a reception at Melia Braco Village in Trelawny, recently.

Named Jamaica's 'Best New Hotel' at the World Travel Awards, Melia Braco pulled out all the stops in wooing the agents with some exquisite dishes, including an array of Jamaican culinary delights.

The resort did not stop at its food offerings, feeding the agents with top-notch entertainment, infused with a number of cultural presentations.

Pleased with the well-orchestrated welcome, the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) regional director in Canada, Philip Rose, said it propelled excitement for the agents, who, after experiencing the island, would be more equipped to sell the country to their clients.

He said the group was spread across Negril, Montego Bay, Trelawny, and Ocho Rios and was very important because Canada was among Jamaica's largest source markets.

GREAT IDEA

President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) Omar Robinson noted that it was a fantastic idea on the part of the JTB to bring the travel agents down to actually see and interact with the hotels.

"The Canadian market had suffered a slight decrease, but it is dear to Jamaica and such a strategy can bring it back to its pride of place," he stated.

Commending the effort, the hotel's general manager, Dimitris Kosvogiannis, added that it he believed in exposure and interaction.

The event was supported by the JTB's regional director, Jamaica and the Caribbean, Janice Allen and vice-president of the JHTA, Vana Taylor.

Melia's director of sales and marketing, Angella Bennett, chaired the evening's event.



Some of the 80 travel agents hosted by Melia Braco Village.



From left: Hostess Tonii-Ann Richards and food and beverage supervisor Rackell Whorms flash smiles after a job well done at the Jamaica Tourist Board reception at Melia Braco Village.



PHOTOS BY RICHARD MORAIS

From left: Philip Rose, regional director of the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) in Canada; Angella Bennett, Melia's director of sales and marketing; Janice Allen, regional director for Jamaica and the Caribbean at the JTB; and Dimitris Kosvogiannis, general manager of the Melia Braco Village, seem to be tickled by something at the JTB's Canadian travel agents' reception at the Melia Braco Village on Heroes Day.



Guests and staff dancing up a storm at the JTB reception at Melia Braco Village on Heroes Day.



Team Melia, the group that hosted the agents.

Brand Trump and the tourism industry

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MIXING BUSINESS and politics is regarded in most countries as unacceptable because of the conflict of interest it creates. The issue becomes particularly acute if the politician concerned not only seeks to link his campaign to his commercial interests, but also, seemingly oblivious to the implications, then insults a significant proportion of his potential market.

For this reason, the willingness of the Republican candidate for the US presidency, Donald Trump, to associate his hotels and other branded ventures with his campaign and then alienate many of his potential guests suggests an interesting opportunity for further study, particularly if a recent survey undertaken by **Travel Weekly** is correct in suggesting that his extraordinary political campaign may be having a toxic effect on bookings at his personally branded hotels and golf courses.

Right from the start of his campaign, Mr Trump made no secret of the fact that he would use the campaign to leverage his brand. Speaking in the first presidential debate, he said: "We're just opening up on Pennsylvania Avenue right next to



David Jessop

the White House, so if I don't get there one way, I'm going to get to Pennsylvania Avenue another."

COVETED REAL ESTATE

More recently still, together with his family, he chose to call a press conference at the same Trump International Hotel, a US\$200m property just a few blocks from the White House, to promote what he described as "the most coveted piece of real estate in Washington" by linking it with his campaign message about his ability to get things done.

Travel Weekly, the industry publication, has recently reported, however, that a specially commissioned survey and anecdotal evidence would seem to indicate that linking a brand in this way may not be advisable as business at his properties may be lessening in parallel



TRUMP

with what Mr Trump has said during the presidential campaign and recent lurid revelations about his attitude towards women.

Travel Weekly said that it had polled a representative sample of its readers to ascertain whether travel agents were seeing any impact, positive or negative, on demand for Trump-branded resorts and hotels. The survey indicated that around 61 per cent of travel agents – an industry dominated by women – responded by saying that they were recommending Trump-branded hotels and resorts less often than before he began his

bid for the White House. More alarmingly for Brand Trump, just over half of the agents surveyed said that their clients had told them that they were not interested in staying at Trump-branded properties because of his campaign.

Travel Weekly wrote that its results largely reflected other recent reports, including recent surveys conducted by the social media company Foursquare and Women in Travel and Tourism International. It also quoted a New York magazine story about the Trump International Hotel in Washington that suggested

that the property may have been dropping its rates at a time when 'all other five-star downtown hotels were sold out'.

MANIPULATED DATA

In response, Trump Hotels CEO Eric Danziger said that the branded hotels had been "tremendously successful" and characterised Foursquare's data as "manipulated to appear meaningful".

He said that Trump Hotels were exceeding all targets across a variety of metrics, including group bookings and reservations volume.

Other reports suggest that the campaign may have touched some investors as well. While some have said that the publicity is excellent and is encouraging them to take forward their joint investment plans to work with the Trump organisation, others in parts of the Middle East have expressed concern that the brand has become toxic to Muslims.

Meanwhile, the Trump organisation is holding initial talks with Trump television, a planned global brand seemingly intended to outfox Fox News.

In just a few days' time we will know the outcome of the US presidential race. It may take a little longer to know the commercial impact on Brand Trump.

Tourism Outlook Seminar 2016 to focus on navigating global changes to drive growth

MINISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett is urging his fellow ministers of tourism and other tourism partners across the region to use the forum, which will be provided at the upcoming Tourism Outlook Seminar (TOS) 2016, to develop a model that will drive growth in regional tourism despite numerous global challenges.

Speaking at the press launch for the event on October 27 at Kingston's iconic Devon House, Bartlett said that while tourism is undoubtedly one of the world's largest and fastest-growing sectors, it faces many complex challenges. These include terrorism, pandemics, natural disasters, catastrophes, economic uncertainty in source markets, and the ever-changing demands of travellers all of which pose serious threats to its sustainable growth.

He emphasised that TOS 2016, which is

slated for December 6-8 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre, will provide the ideal opportunity for national and regional tourism policymakers and stakeholders to examine these and other issues and discuss ways to address them in order to foster continued growth.

SLOW GROWTH

"The seminar will also look at how we in the northern Caribbean space can develop a model that is going to make us grow at rates that are higher than the current position because the Caribbean is arguably the slowest-growing destination in world tourism," said Bartlett.

"At the seminar, I will be hosting a Summit of Tourism Ministers from the region. We are going to discuss how we can change the game from the highly competitive

tourism strategies that have not given us growth to a new, more collaborative approach. We have extended invitations to tourism ministers from The Bahamas, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and The Cayman Islands," Bartlett added.

The event will be held under the theme 'Tourism: Navigating Global Changes for Continued Growth'. This year's staging is being hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The seminar is being funded by the Tourism Enhancement Fund.

It will see contributions from global experts on critical topics such as managing communications in the face of issues such as pandemics, terrorism, and natural disasters;

establishing multi-destination tourism; travel facilitation and connectivity; and packaging destination experiences, among other topics.

TOS 2016 will feature presenters and panellists from renowned local and international organisations such as the UNWTO, Airbnb; TUI; Harvard University's T. H. Chan School of Public Health; the World Travel & Tourism Council; the Caribbean Tourism Organisation; the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency; and Sandals Resorts International.

The minister also announced that Caribbean Airlines has thrown its support behind the initiative and is the preferred

PLEASE SEE **SEMINAR**, 13



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Hanover youth targeted at agri-tourism workshop

THE HOSPITALITY and tourism sector in Negril and other parts of Hanover came out in support of agri-tourism at the recent 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop, which was staged in Lucea by the Hanover-based Veteran Farmers Alliance.

The Rotary Club of Negril was the main sponsor of the sensitisation workshop, which was the first in a series of three planned events by the farmers group in a bid to create a new generation of food producers in Hanover, a parish in which the average age of a farmer is 55.

"Our objectives are to provide a supportive environment for, and to engage young people to get involved in agriculture, to see it as a lucrative business opportunity not as an option or a 'fall-back', but as a preferred choice. We aim to reach 150 young people over the next six months. Our next workshop will be in December in Green Island," a release from the Veteran Farmers Alliance said.

"We want to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to identify and take advantage of opportunities within the agricultural sector for improved livelihoods. It is hoped it will be a catalyst for increasing youth employment and income by building their skills and capacity and linking them to market opportunities in growth sectors that have potential for job creation," the group added.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The workshop series targets students who have chosen agricultural science as a future career choice and who are studying the subject at the CSEC level as well as youngsters who excelled in school but who are unable to finance further education at present. It also caters to other young people who either dropped out of school or completed schooling but failed to attain the requisite competencies to effectively transition into the labour market or to pursue higher education.

Other key members of the hospitality sector who supported the programme were the Round Hill Hotel, Charela Inn, Beach Pro-Tech, Florizel Court Villas, Vidals Cafeteria; JUTA taxi operator and farmer



PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA GARDNER
Hopewell High School students conduct a presentation on the information they learned during the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop.



President of the Veteran Farmers Alliance Ray Kerr offers a pod of cocoa beans for tasting to students of the Green Island High School who participated in the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop.

Errol Miller; and the Grand Palladium. Other supporting sponsors included councillor-candidate of the Riverside Division Albert Lee and volunteer Carter Van Pelt.

The presentations at the workshop were wide and varied and included Ernesto Wignall of the Development Bank of Jamaica; Everdon Dixon of the HEART

Trust/NTA; Pat Wright of Wrightlife Eatery and Raw Foods; Sharon Chambers of Let's Do it in the Caribbean; Katrin Casserly of Hanover Charities; Daniel Grizzle, vice-president of the Negril Chamber of Commerce; Theo Chambers of Positive Tourism; and Gary Kerr, sous chef at the Grand Palladium. From the agriculture sector,

there were presentations from the Jamaica Agricultural Society's parish manager, Kameil Scott; parish officer of the Apiculture Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Sherlock Pinnock; representatives of the Rural Agricultural Development Authority; and the Knockalva Agricultural School.



Ray Kerr, Veteran Farmers Alliance president, makes a presentation to Katrin Casserly of Hanover Charities.



Sous Chef of the Grand Palladium Gary Kerr holds an avocado aloft as he makes a point about the quality of goods required by the hotel sector on day one of the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop.



Grand Palladium's Gary Kerr (centre) speaks to Carter Van Pelt following his presentation at the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop. Looking on is Kameil Scott, parish manager of the Jamaica Agricultural Society.



Ernesto Wignall of the Development Bank of Jamaica speaks about the financial-support programmes offered to farmers by his organisation.



Sherlock Pinnock, apiculture officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, gives students a sample of honey during his presentation.



Sharon Chambers of Let's Do it in the Caribbean is presented with a gift basket by second vice-president of the Veteran Farmers Alliance Oran Davidson.



Daniel Grizzle, vice-president of the Negril Chamber of Commerce and proprietor of the Charela Inn in Negril, conducts a presentation on the do's and don'ts of supplying the hospitality sector with agricultural produce at the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop. At left is Sharon Holmes, chairman of the steering committee of the Hanover Bee Farmers Association.



Pat Wright of Wrightlife Live Foods Eatery and vice-president of the Veteran Farmers Alliance Collin Johnson are all smiles as he presents her with a platter of freshly picked fruits, following her presentation on the final day of the Veteran Farmers Alliance's 'The Future is Agriculture' workshop.



BARTLETT

Bartlett attends UNWTO Summit in Egypt and World Travel Market

MINISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett, who also chairs the Board of Affiliate Members of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), left the island last week for the 104th Session of the UNWTO Executive Council Meeting in Luxor, Egypt, from October 30-November 1.

Accompanied by the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Jennifer Griffith, Bartlett said the council meeting examined tourism trends and activities; mainstreaming tourism in the global agenda; as well as review administrative and statutory matters of the council.

The minister will then travel to London on Friday, November 4, where he will be joined by

Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook. While there, they will meet with key stakeholders and members of the diaspora and attend the World Travel Market, which runs from November 7-9.

The World Travel Market is the leading global event for the travel industry to meet industry professionals and conduct business deals. Through its industry networks and unrivalled global reach, WTM London creates personal and business opportunities, providing customers with quality contacts, content, and communities. It is expected to attract 50,000 patrons from 182 countries across the globe.

Bartlett is expected to return to the island on November 9.

Jamaica scores big with the hosting of luxury forum

JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD

JAMAICA WILL be the backdrop to the PRIVATE Luxury Forum The Americas from September 17-21, 2017, at Secrets, Montego Bay.

The forum focuses on the luxury travel market and provides a platform for exhibitors and buyers to forge long-lasting relationships and create profitable business.

PRIVATE Luxury Forum The Americas is specially designed for businesses in the luxury niche market and will feature pre-scheduled

meetings based on delegate preferences. Participation in this intimate business-to-business event is capped at 70 suppliers and 150 luxury travel specialists, with qualified luxury leisure buyers from across North, South, and Central America.

As a prerequisite to participating in this exclusive forum, properties will be selected based on their business over the previous 12 months. The business-to-business environment will facilitate opportunities to engage and network with representatives in this highly specialised niche market. There will also be gala dinners, cocktail receptions, and the profile of participating properties will be on the online Member zone and in print in the

Forum Show guide.

“Jamaica’s accommodation landscape features numerous luxury properties, which adds to the diversity of our offering,” said Paul Pennicook, director of tourism. “This variety has contributed significantly to the appeal of the destination, and the staging of this high-end forum augurs well for Destination Jamaica. For certain, it will boost the attractiveness of the island as a preferred luxury-leisure hideaway.”

All Jamaican properties that are within the niche segment are encouraged to register. The Jamaica Tourist Board is an event partner, and for more information on PRIVATE Luxury Forum, visit: www.privateluxuryforums.com.

Korean artiste proud to be singing reggae



Korean Reggae artiste Skull made a courtesy call on Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook at his New Kingston office recently. Not a stranger to Jamaica, Skull was delighted to be back on the island as he reconnected with the land of reggae. During his discussion with Pennicook, Skull spoke of the growing acceptance of reggae in Korea, which makes it a fertile environment for his music. A huge boost for Skull was his collaboration earlier this year with Stephen Marley and HaHa on the single ‘Love Inside’. Asia is one of the regions that the Jamaica Tourist Board has identified as a new market in its growth strategy.

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Peter Fraser counts his blessings

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

WHEN SEASONED hotelier Peter Fraser was asked to relocate to Grenada to open one of Sandals Resorts International's newest acquisitions in 2012, the request came as a surprise to him.

"I felt extremely honoured and proud but was also surprised because the company had a lot of younger managers to choose from," he told *Hospitality Jamaica* during a visit to the Eastern Caribbean resort Sandals LaSource last week.

Fraser earned his Sandals stripes at Royal Plantation, having served that property for 10 years. He packed lightly, moving to Grenada with a few paintings to keep him company.

After three years at La Source and a total of 13 years with the renowned chain, Fraser is counting his blessings while acknowledging the life-changing experiences and the positive impact the resort has had on the country.

He was at the helm when the hotel went through major construction, having to deal with five main contractors, their 1,300 workers, plus the chain's own project team.

"It took us 10 months to complete 157 new rooms, which we added to the existing 100 rooms that were here when we took over the hotel," he said.

FREAK STORM

The resort opened officially on December 21, 2013, and three days later, on Christmas Eve, a freak storm reared its ugly head, causing an erosion of mud, which flooded 28 rooms, Fraser reminisced.

Not easily discouraged, the hotelier, who has more than 50 years of experience in the hospitality sector, said every day became a better day. "The grass got greener, the plants had set and decided to flower, the birds and the bees were back."

Today, he has a staff complement of 500 and Grenada's Leading Resort under his wings.

"The 50 years have prepared me for this job. It's all about dealing with people. Managing is one thing, but leadership is key," he noted.

According to Fraser, in the last 25 years, managers have had to look at themselves and say, "How do we treat people", said Fraser, adding that he has also learnt over



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Peter Fraser (third left), general manager of Sandals LaSource, Grenada, shares lens time with some members of his team.



PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

Peter Fraser, general manager at Sandals LaSource in Grenada.

the years how to keep the right people on his team.

Having watched the growth of the human resources departments that were established in the island's hotels in 1983 and how they have

gone on to implement training for their staff, Fraser said once the right people are recruited and placed in the correct seats, it is important to know how to drive the bus.



General Manager Peter Fraser and his executive assistant, Vivian Lander.

"It's all about team building," he said.

Although he misses the liming and gathering in Jamaica, he said there is a time and place for everything.

"My life has changed consider-

ably. I go home to Jamaica once per year, and when I come back to Grenada, I need another vacation," he quipped.

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Family thrilled with Sagicor prize trip to Dolphin Cove

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

A FAMILY of four from May Pen, Clarendon, won't forget their prize trip to Dolphin Cove in Ocho Rios anytime soon it seems.

Linette Thomas-Wiltshire, who won third prize in Sagicor Bank's 'Spend It, Win It, Live It Campaign', took her family – husband Leon Wiltshire and daughters Trichan and Ameika – to Dolphin Cove recently and was impressed with what was her first visit to the world-renowned attraction.

"It's good to be here," Thomas-Wiltshire said on arrival that morning. That was just the beginning. For the rest of the day, the family totally enjoyed themselves swimming with the dolphins, sharks, and stingrays; watching the shows; kayaking, mingling with the love birds, and interacting the animals.

They took a break for lunch then went back to enjoying themselves and ended up relaxing on the beach.

The Sagicor Bank's MasterCard



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Linette Thomas-Wiltshire (second left) with (from left) husband Leon Wiltshire and daughters Trichan and Ameika as they arrived at Dolphin Cove in Ocho Rios, recently.



Third-place winner, Linette Thomas-Wiltshire, enjoying herself at Dolphin Cove.

Rewards Promotion was launched in May and ran until the end of July, after which the winners were decided.

Both Sagicor Bank MasterCard and Visa cardholders with Standard, Classic, and Gold products qualified to win prizes.

The prizes were three trips of four. The grand prize winner won an all-expenses paid trip for four to Orlando, Florida, to enjoy the

theme parks. This prize went to Joni Adair.

Second- and third-prize winners got trips for four to Chukka and Dolphin Cove, respectively, with Thomas-Wiltshire journeying from Clarendon early one Saturday morning to meet with Olive McNaughton, corporate marketing manager at Trafalgar Travel, which organised travel arrangements for all prize winners.

SEMINAR

CONTINUED FROM 6

airline partner for the seminar.

Registration for the event is already open. Persons are being encouraged to register online and access additional information at www.visitjamaica.com/tourism-seminar.

"I encourage everyone – policymakers, representatives of government ministries and agencies, hotel owners, and senior managers, investors, academics, airline executives, travel agents, travel media, tour operators, and other business partners – to go to the JTB website and register for TOS 2016 today," Bartlett said.



CONTRIBUTED

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (centre) shares a light moment with (from left) Chairman of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Godfrey Dyer; acting general manager of Caribbean Airlines, Trudy Chin; EXIM Bank's manager, trade financing and risk management, Valerie Crawford; and Director of Tourism, Paul Pennicook. The occasion was the launch of the Tourism Outlook Seminar 2016 at the historic Devon House in Kingston on October 27. The Tourism Outlook Seminar is a forum for national and regional tourism policymakers and stakeholders to share ideas, network, examine best practices, and discuss strategies for advancing Caribbean tourism. It will be held from December 6-8, 2016, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

'Pone', pear, and 'pitata' farm

IT WAS time again to get away from the drudgery of life in St Andrew, to absorb and embrace what nature has to offer on this fair isle. So, to the hills of Lincoln, Manchester, I went for a day, but ended up spending two.

The quiet district was cool and refreshing as usual, and the vistas of the verdant valley and the Santa Cruz Mountain range were still spectacular. My host, the inimitable Sharn Robinson, had not changed his comical ways either. He cracked me up all evening.

After the evening shadows were eclipsed by the black shroud of night, it was time to bake the 'pone'. It consisted of sweet potato, cassava, whole-wheat flour, peanuts, 'macka fat' (the nut of a variety of palm), and sugar.

The preparation took a while, and at 3 a.m., after the first round of sleep, it was ready. I couldn't help biting into a sizeable piece as Robinson struck while it was still hot. Pone and pear it was in the wee hours. And the millions of stars looked down and drooled. The compact pone eventually pulled me back to sleep as it weighed down my stomach.

Monday morning was very cool, and the fresh mountain air going through my nostrils was what the doctor ordered. I decided to accompany Robinson to a potato farm. He was going to assist some friends in reaping potatoes. So, in sandals, I followed. At a certain point, he left to tend to some other business, saying he would not be long.

INTERESTING DIRECTIONS

He had pointed up a slope, directing me as to where I should walk, and off he went. He left a little bucket of water with me. I contemplated whether I should return to his place because rural folk have a way of saying something is "right up deh so" when it is really miles away.

Now, me and my unfit self looked up the slope and then realised that the grind of life in St Andrew was not so bad after all. With great trepidation, I started up the incline. The red-dirt path, slightly winding, was wet, and there were rocks jutting from it.

As I ascended, I found that it was steeper than it had looked



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Sharn Robinson of Lincoln, Manchester is a farmer, natural jeweller and baker of puddings and 'pones'.

from below. The farther up I went, the more doubts I had about continuing, and Robinson's return was yet to be. Where were my ancestors in all of this?

I left the dirt path and trod on the grass-like vegetation only to find that it had covered partially embedded stones, which were everywhere. My left foot hit one of them and the bucket of water shook. Some of the cold liquid fell on to my sandal. I put down the bucket. Robinson would see it on his way up.

Finally, I reached the top of the slope. Surprisingly not winded. There was a path on the right leading to another slope, with trees on both sides. Straight ahead there

was a clearing. The ground was flatter.

I decided not to take the slope, even though I did not know where I was going. Then I heard a voice. Somebody was calling out for Robinson. That gave me some confidence, but where was he?

When I reached the middle of the clearing, I heard him calling me from above. How did he get up there? I answered, and that was it. No more calling. At the edge of the clearing a mound presented itself to me. To get to where Robinson was calling from I would have to climb over it. I held on to some small trees and pulled my ageing body up and over.

Breathless, I found myself at the



'Hospitality Jamaica' writer Paul H. Williams wipes sweat from his brows after unearthing sweet potatoes.



A slice of Sharn Robinson's 'pitata' pone.



View of an alumina plant in St Elizabeth from Lincoln, Manchester.



'Pitata' pone and pear, if you will.



Was this cat green with envy as it witnessed 'Hospitality Jamaica' writer Paul H. Williams eating 'pitata' pone and pear?

foot of a huge mountainside. Nothing below had prepared me for this overwhelming expanse of land. It was moderately steep, and a few trees were at the top.

It was there that the farm was. When Robinson and two other people saw me, they stopped working. I indicated that I was OK. He asked about the bucket. I did not answer, waiting until I got closer.

Upon reaching them, I explained what had happened. He said he had taken another path to get to the farm, thus his not seeing the bucket.

The two other people were a mother and her daughter. We exchanged greetings and pleasantries.

But it was the view of the valley below and the northern side of the Santa Cruz Mountain range, way over yonder, that was the prize for my making it up the slope. It was more spectacular than from whence I had come.

More joy pervaded my being when I saw the red earth from which they were pulling potatoes. I felt it. Cool. Slightly moist. Loose. I walked out of my sandals and dug



Freshly reaped potatoes.



People reaping sweet potatoes on a mountainside in Lincoln, Manchester.

my feet into it. Heaven! The older woman said she would not have done that. She was in waterboots and knew not what she was missing.

After much chatting, I started to remove potatoes from the ground. The things that these people have to do for a living. Only a few potatoes and I was done. I spent the

rest of the morning searching for semi-precious rocks. There are many embedded in the red dirt. After I had found a few, I said my goodbyes to get ready to return to 'Sin City'. It looked like it was going to rain.

While waiting for Robinson to return before I made my departure,

the rain intervened and bade me not go. To the soothing sound of her lullaby upon the zinc roof, in slumber I fell. When daylight came, I hurriedly left. I had things to do, not as hard as bending over to reap potatoes, but it was time to go away from the bosom of nature, pitata pone, and pear.



The Gleaner

Hospitality Jamaica *Awards*

Recognising organisations and individuals
who have contributed significantly to
improving the quality and experience of
the Hospitality Industry.

Date:
SATURDAY
November 19, 2016

Venue:
Montego Bay Convention Centre

