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Tourism optimism at all-time high

... as hospitality sector is rewarded for lifting standards

Camille Miller

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MINISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett said the tourism sector is so uniquely poised that the next five years should see visitor arrivals and earnings soaring to heights that were once unimaginable and considered far-fetched.

In a wide-ranging interview with *Hospitality Jamaica* last Saturday, Bartlett said that if the current trajectory plays out, Jamaica, by 2021, could see arrivals jumping to five million visitors and earnings reaching as high as US\$5 billion.

"I cannot recall a more exciting period for tourism than what I am seeing now," Bartlett noted. "Never before have we seen so many projects in the pipeline or under construction, giving rise to an unprecedented level of optimism on the part of stakeholders."

The tourism minister further noted that there will also be a lot of job opportunities from which Jamaican workers should be able to capitalise.

"We just have to look at all the jobs that will become available and position ourselves to fill them. We also want to ensure that our workers are indeed certified to the point where they can effectively compete for top-tier level positions and earn prominent salaries."

HIGH CONFIDENCE

He explained that the tourism industry was currently enjoying a high level of investor confidence, pointing to the nearly 15,000 hotel rooms that are slated to come on stream over the next four years and the commitment by cruise shipping giant Royal Caribbean Cruise Line to have all its Oasis class luxury vessels, including one that is currently under construction, dock in Jamaica.

"We are starting to see some remarkable things taking shape throughout the industry," the tourism minister noted. "Cruise shipping is starting to take off in a big way and we have a lot of new rooms coming on stream. When you have cruise shipping and stopover working in sync and complementing each, the result can



Tourism stakeholders celebrating the success of the Jamaica Travel Market.

FILE



A rendering of Hotel Royalton Blue Waters.

only be great for our country."

And as it relates to public projects, Bartlett said the ministry has made it clear to all developers and project managers that the public's interest is paramount and that timelines will be set and monitored.

"There will be full transparency and accountability on all projects," he added. "We will also be having a monitoring team from the ministry to ensure everyone is on the same page and that guidelines are followed."

Bartlett also pointed out that there are ongoing discussions between the public and private sectors as the ministry continues to formulate strategies to improve and strengthen the tourism product and infrastructure in the resort towns.

"Developing our product is the key to future success, so it is essential that we continually ask what more we can do to keep pace with other world-class destinations," Bartlett advised.



The Hyatt Ziva and Hyatt Zilara hotels at Rose Hall, Montego Bay.

He added that while he welcomes the big investments from the more established players, a thought should also be spared for "the little man" who "also has an important role to play."

"We have to change this perception of elitism in the tourism sector and open up opportunities for the little farmer who can't produce enough to go to the European

Union but can produce enough for the small hotelier or for Miss Maude's restaurant around the corner," the tourism minister pointed out. "He is a player, too, and we have to improve his building capacity."

Bartlett further added that there are, indeed, a lot of reasons to believe "we are on the verge of turning the corner".



The Gleaner's business development manager, Nordia Craig, presents a gift to sponsor, Fred Smith, of Tropical Tours.



From left: Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook; Managing Director of The Gleaner Company (Media) Limited Christopher Barnes, and Basil Smith of Basil Smith and Company.

JTB head lauds the Hospitality Jamaica Awards

DIRECTOR OF Tourism Paul Pennicook said The Gleaner Hospitality Jamaica Awards is a great way to honour and show appreciation to those who have been consistently committed to making a difference in the hospitality sector.

According to Pennicook, the Hospitality Jamaica Awards, which is held every two years, has taken on a life of its own and is now an important addition to the national calendar of events.

"We have all been personally elated to see this event evolve into what can now be described as one of the tourism marquee events in the country," he said.

"In fact, there are persons who are now calling it the 'Academy Awards' of the local hospitality sector, which, if the 2016 edition is anything to go by, then that description is not far from the truth."

Pennicook further pointed out that showing recognition and rewarding excellence can only help to boost morale and also give persons the motivation to work harder.

"That might well be the single most important aspect to this kind of awards ceremony," Pennicook added. "People are more inclined to want to do better and give of their best if they know that their work is being scrutinised and that they will be rewarded for excellence. This is the kind of impact the Hospitality Jamaica Awards will have on the hospitality sector."

The tourism director also noted that he would love to see the show move to becoming an annual event, adding that it has the potential to be even bigger.

"There are more categories that can be added to make it even bigger," he advised. "Perhaps there could also be some more individual awards. The overall concept, however, is a winning one, and I can't wait to see what the next event will be like."

He said the popular choice of Jamaica Pegasus' owner Kevin Hendrickson as Gleaner Hospitality Jamaica Award's Personality of the Year was well deserved, calling him "a giant in the industry" who goes about his business in a very unassuming way.

TRUE AMBASSADORS

He also singled out the cabaret group, 'Pakage', for its outstanding performance at the 2016 awards ceremony, saying the women who made up the trio of Patricia Edwards, Gem Myers and Karen Smith have been true ambassadors who continue to have a huge impact on the entertainment industry.

"Having Pakage there as one of the featured acts was a stroke of genius," Pennicook added. "They are among the best we have ever had on the cabaret circuit, and it was only fitting that they got to be a part of the awards ceremony; and based on the rousing reception they got, you can see why they are so revered."

The event, which was a joint collaboration between The Gleaner (Media) Company and the Jamaica Tourist Board, seeks to honour tourism-related entities for outstanding achievements on a biennial basis.

Royalton White Sands and The Jamaica Pegasus walked away with a combined total of six awards. The other winners were: Hedonism II which won two awards for Jamaica's Best in Cuisine and Jamaica's Best Entertainment; Chukka for Jamaica's Best Attraction; Knutsford Express for Jamaica's Best in Transportation; Rainforest Seafoods for Jamaica's Best Purveyor; Half Moon Hotel for Jamaica's Best Eco/Sustainable Resort; RIU Palace for Jamaica's Best All-Inclusive Under 300 Rooms; and Hermosa Cove, which won the Special Award for Most Eclectic Resort.

Hermosa Cove gets first hospitality, tourism recognition

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

CLAYTON AND Des Korver are still reeling with excitement after their Ocho Rios property, Hermosa Cove, received its first ever hospitality and tourism recognition, which took place at the Hospitality Jamaica Awards 2016 on Saturday, November 19.

Hermosa Cove copped the 'Most Eclectic Award', which was one of 15 bestowed on some of the finest players in the tourism sector, in what was the second staging of the biennial event at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St James.

The winner of the Most Eclectic Award is presented to a property which is small and less prominent, yet extraordinarily beautiful and



One of the nine villas at Hermosa Cove.

unique, with high standards of operation that are similar to larger, well-established properties; one

that offers exceptional cuisines, and has done everything possible to remain sustainable and to preserve



CONTRIBUTED

Deb and Clayton Korver, owners of Hermosa Cove, accepting their plaque from Go Jamaica Travel's Dave Chin-Tung (left).



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the environment.

"The feeling is very emotional ... My wife and I have been on a high for the past few days because we have put so much passion and love into building this place, and from an artist's point of view, to have some of your work recognised. It is very uniquely designed and all custom-built. We left all the trees intact and ensured we preserved the natural environment," Korver told *Hospitality Jamaica*.

Hermosa Cove consists of nine Caribbean-style boutique villas, which are positioned in a private garden, just a stone's throw from the beach. It also offers, among an array of amenities, two restaurants, Christopher's and The Broken Rudder Bar and Grille; triple cascading pools, private pools, complimentary snorkelling and kayaking, undisturbed forest trails which are home to several endemic bird species, as well as spa pavilion and

yoga facilities.

One of the remarkable things about the property is the extent to which the owners made a concerted effort to preserve species' habitats by conserving the general forest cover and shrubbery there, through, among other things, commissioning habitat surveys and geological studies.

Despite the natural beauty and uniqueness of the 12-acre property, which has been dubbed by many visitors as "breathtaking" akin to "paradise" and a "gorgeous estate", it is the staff members whom Korver credits for its high accolades.

"You can build the biggest and most beautiful property, but it is the staff that everything begins and ends with," he said. "When we showed the award to the staff – this award which is so beautiful, such a beautiful work of art – what I saw immediately were the huge smiles on their faces."

Hedonism II

'Jamaica's Best in Entertainment', 'Best in Cuisine'

THE 35-YEAR-OLD Hedonism II hotel stamped its authority as the epicentre of entertainment in Jamaica's hospitality sector when it was accorded 'Jamaica's Best in Entertainment' title at the **Hospitality Jamaica 2016 Awards**, two Saturdays ago.

Not only did the internationally renowned resort take back that award to Negril, Hanover, but it also cemented itself as a major centre of gastronomy, having copped the 'Best in Cuisine' award, and was also a finalist in the Best All-Inclusive Hotel (Under 300 rooms) category.

Located at Rutland Point in Negril, Hedonism II has been widely acclaimed as being one of the world's top nudist resorts. The property was first opened in 1976



General manager of Hedonism II, Kevin Levee (left), and Anthony Miller, executive chef, pose with their 'Best in Cuisine' award during the Hospitality Jamaica Awards.

as Negril Beach Village but was renamed Hedonism II in 1981.

Over the decades, the resort has garnered one of the highest repeat guest rates in the world. A remarkable 60 per cent of its visitors are repeat guests, attributed, to a large extent, to the bonds guests form with each other and members of the hotel staff.

The resort describes its entertainment as being at the heart of the property and a specially designed combination of seduction and sensuality. Entertainment at Hedonism II is uniquely Jamaican and features some of the island's most talented musicians, vocalists, and dancers, who perform in some of the most outlandish costumes, to the delight of guests.

Negril's fame as a tourist destina-

tion is predicated on seven miles of white-sand beach by day, but on live authentic Jamaica music by night, which is embodied in Hedonism II's use of a live band, which plays from 8:30 p.m. to 11 p.m., six nights per week in its main terrace dining room, and a bar pianist, who plays nightly between the hours of 10 p.m. and 1 a.m.

The cuisine at Hedonism II has got better with each passing year, and the Best in Cuisine award it received is testament to that. It boasts a beach grill; its newest restaurant, Flame, is a hotspot; so is the Pastafari Italian restaurant; Harrysan, which offers Japanese cuisine, and a buffet restaurant with a wide-ranging list of Jamaican and international dishes, all of which contribute to an amazing vacation for any visitor.



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Hospitality Jamaica coordinator Janet Silvera (left) presents the 'People's Choice Award' and the 'Best All-inclusive over 300 Rooms' award to the Royalton White Sands team.

Royalton White Sands scores big at Hospitality Jamaica Awards

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IT WAS a 'trinity' for Trelawny's Royalton White Sands at the **Hospitality Jamaica Awards 2016** recently as the hotel took home three awards: the 'Best in Innovation', 'Best All-inclusive – Over 300 Rooms', and the 'People's Choice' awards.

The Royalton was also a nominee for the Best Eco/Sustainable Tourism Award, Best Cuisine, and the Best in Jamaican Entertainment categories.

If variety is the spice of life, then that phrase could be the Royalton's mantra as the resort has every amenity a visitor could ever need from an all-inclusive hotel. "A stunning hotel, impeccable service", "very compact resort", "paradise visited", offering "very clean, "modern with unparalleled staff service" are some of the phrases that the hotel's many satisfied visitors have used to describe the property.

Royalton has proved itself to be an ideal place for relaxation, but guests will also find lots of thrilling things to do on property as it offers varied options for those who wish to be active. The hotel offers motorised and non-motorised watersports, a photo gallery, and an entertainment plaza featuring movie nights and live shows. For sports enthusiasts, there is also the Scores Bar, which streams top international sporting events.

In terms of cuisine, Royalton has made a name for itself with its high standards. Beverage-wise, the resort

sports a lobby bar, beach bar club, martini bar, grill bar, and a swim-up bar. Food-wise, there are two buffet restaurants – the Zen, which is a Japanese Restaurant and the Italian Trattoria – and a café offering pastries, cappuccinos and espressos.

BEAUTY THERAPY

The state-of-the-art Royal Spa offers all the top-of-the-line beauty therapy treatments that exist, including, but not limited to, an array of facials, body treatments, massages, pedicures, and manicures.

One of the grandest features of the Royalton is the Diamond Club, which offers, among other things, a lounge with premium drinks, snacks, 24-hour room service, a full-service business centre, and a dedicated butler service.

The suites that make up the Diamond Club are lavish and beautifully decorated. Each is equipped with a mini-bar fully stocked with beverages. Each suite comes with a king-size bed, two televisions, and opens up on to its own private balcony, which offers a lovely view of the ocean.

The All In Connectivity was one of the key services that propelled the Royalton to cop the **Hospitality Jamaica 2016 Innovation awards**. This concept enables guests to stay in touch with loved ones through unlimited free in-room calls to North America and sections of Europe. In addition, there is free wi-fi throughout the resort and a Royalton app, which enables free app-to-app texting while on property.



CONTRIBUTED

REWARDS FOR HARD WORK: Regional sales and marketing director at Royalton White Sands Kerry-Ann Quallo Casserly (left); hotel manager at Royalton White Sands Montego Bay, Frederico Mareira (centre); and financial controller, Cornelia Brown, show off the three awards that the resort copped at the 2016 Hospitality Jamaica awards ceremony on Saturday, November 19. The resort took home the awards for being the 'Best in Innovation', 'The Best All-Inclusive Resort with over 300 rooms', and 'The People's Choice Award', and was a finalist in two other categories – 'Best in Jamaican Entertainment' and 'The Best Eco-Sustainable resort'.

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Kevin Hendrickson on the construction site of the former Wyndham Kingston which he currently owns.

Kevin Hendrickson is Hospitality Personality of the Year

A HUGE round of applause erupted when veteran hotelier Kevin Hendrickson was named Hospitality Personality of the Year during the **Hospitality Jamaica** 2016 awards at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

Hendrickson, who heads the Hendrickson Group of Companies, was lauded for being a committed contributor to Jamaica's tourism industry by investing continuously in upgrading and refurbishing his properties and providing service and products beyond expectations.

He was also applauded for, among other things, his heavy investment in staff training, personnel development, and preservation of the natural environment.

Hendrickson began his foray into the hospitality sector in 1981 as general manager of the then Courtleigh Hotel on Trafalgar Road and later acquired other properties over the decades including The Ruins at the Falls in Ocho Rios, the Knutsford Court Hotel, Holiday Inn Resort in Montego Bay, the former Wyndham Kingston in 2014, and The Jamaica Pegasus hotel, which were also big winners on Saturday night, copping two awards for the Best Conference/Business Hotel and the Best European Plan hotel.



Hospitality Personality of the Year Kevin Hendrickson (right) accepts his award from Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett.

"I was shocked!" Hendrickson told **Hospitality Jamaica** following the awards. "I wasn't even prepared. I was extremely surprised and honoured, I must admit. The feeling is fantastic! It is very rewarding, you know, any-



Kevin Hendrickson, walking tall through his lobby at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel in Kingston.

time you win an award for anything. More importantly for the team, the whole morale of the team is lifted because even if they are not in that particular property, it is still a team effort."

"I am just proud to have been part of this Hospitality 2016 awards. It really is nice, the

recognition that **Hospitality Jamaica** gives to the industry overall and the exposure not just to us Jamaicans, but to the entire world. The publication shows off a lot of fantastic products, the culture, the people, the whole range of what Jamaica is all about as a location," he added.

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From left: Melia Braco's director of sales Angella Bennett presents the Best Purveyor award to Rainforest Seafoods' Sashan Anderson, hotel/food service sales representative; Everol Wilson, food service/export development manager; and Ophelia Wright-Johnson, hotel/food service sales representative.

Rainforest Seafoods lauded as sector's purveyor of choice

RAINFOREST SEAFOODS' representatives were met with huge cheers as they took to the stage to accept their award for being the hospitality and tourism sector's purveyor of choice at the **Hospitality Jamaica 2016** awards ceremony on Saturday, November 19.

The Caribbean's leading supplier of fish and seafood, Rainforest copped the Best Purveyor Award for the second time. In 2014, the organisation walked away with the title.

Established in 1995, the company has since enabled the tourism sector to soothe their guests' appetite for fresh, premium-quality seafood, which was in high demand by guests, but low in supply locally, or were highly priced due to Jamaica's waters being among the world's most overfished.

Over the years, the hotels island-wide have proven to be the company's largest customers. Rainforest provides more than 500 references of fish and seafood, caught from Caribbean waters, as well as Asia, Chile, and Canada.

During Jamaica's lobster and conch open season, Rainforest provides hotels and supermarkets with the delicacies, which are supplied by local fish-

ermen with whom they work closely to ensure that they are fishing in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Rainforest Seafoods is headquartered in Freeport in Montego Bay, where it also operates a distribution centre. It also has a 30,000 square foot state-of-the-art processing plant in Kingston, which is certified under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point food safety management system and which produces value-added products via smoking, brining, battering, and breading, among other methods.

NEW ITEMS

The company has introduced several new items within the last few years to its food service and retail customers even as seafood remains its core product. These include a line of shrimp, jerk fish, turkey, seasoned beef and jerk beef burgers, among others.

Rainforest's two facilities, collectively, have the capacity to carry 10 million pounds of frozen product at any time, and its fleet of 35 refrigerated vehicles enables the company to deliver island, within 24 hours following an order, a standard of operation that is a delight to any purchasing manager or chef.

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From left: Sales executives at Rainforest Seafoods Ophelia Johnson, Louis Reid, and Sashan Anderson.

Chukka cops Jamaica Best Attractions award

CHUKKA EARNED the accolade as Jamaica's Best Attraction at the **Hospitality Jamaica 2016 Awards** ceremony two Saturdays ago, ahead of contenders Kool Runnings Adventure Park and Jewel Runaway Bay Water Park.

Established in 1983, Chukka, at the time, offered horseback riding and swimming activities at Chukka Cove in St Ann before establishing its second facility at Blue Hole in Sandy Bay, Hanover, years later.

Over the years, Chukka has expanded its offerings beyond horseback riding to become Jamaica's leading nature-adventure company. It now offers a plethora of highly acclaimed tours, which boast strict safety standards, at locations in Montego Bay, Negril, Falmouth, Sandy Bay, and Ocho Rios. This has made it a first choice and a one-stop shop for the highly active and daring and even for the mildly adventurous.

Chukka's properties now include the 2,000-acre Good Hope Estate Park in Trelawny,

which is home to 16 buildings of historical significance, including a 16th-century great house. Scheduled activities at Good Hope include, among other things, dune buggies, zip-lining, horseback riding and carriages, river tubing and kayaks, a challenge course, a bird aviary, and a swimming pool. Visitors are also treated to a great house tour and Appleton Rum tasting.

The Sandy Bay property continues to have horseback riding as its mainstay and sees guests being taken through sections of the Hanover countryside, visiting an 18th-century sugar plantation, and then, still astride the horses, riding through the sea. A 4x4 safari through sections of Jamaica's interior is also another option that is offered there.

Chukka's tours promote Jamaica to visitors as being much more than sun, sea, and sand. Its extensive list of tour package combinations includes what has been described as the epic Zipline Canopy at Montpelier Outpost; Jungle River Tubing; Best of the West Island Experi-

ence; Best of the West Motorised; Zip, Tube, and ATV Quad Safari; Zipline Horseback; and Quad and Cliff Jumping, which are led by what visitors say are friendly and energetic

tour guides.

Other combos are the Jungle River Kayak Safari; Montego Bay white water rafting; Flight of the White Witch Zipline Adventure; Blue Hole 4x4 Jeep

Safari; 4x4 Jeep Safari and Mayfield Falls; and the Llandoverly Amazing ATV and Cliff Jumping, which, according to accounts given by visitors, amounts to "pure bliss".



Hospitality Personality of the Year 2014 Dr Cecil Cornwall (left) presents the Best Attraction award to Chukka's Taylor Carmichael, Romaine McNab, and John Byles.

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Celebrating Jamaica's best



From left: Marlon Edwards, Dwayne Bennett, Michael Baugh, Evrod Lewis, Lincoln Robinson and Patrick Loeser.



The Caribbean Producers Jamaica team (from left), Ryan Peart, senior manager, operations; Jan Polack, chief financial officer; Dr David Lowe, CEO; Debbie Clarke, human resources director; and Hugh Logan, director of hospitality sales.



Hedonism II's entertainment manager, Winston Bartley, and Kadiann Pinnock.



From left: Royalton's Andre Hudson, the Jamaica Tourist Board's Janice Allen, and Marcia McLaughlin.



From left: President of the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce Gloria Henry, Edward Bowen, and her deputy, his wife, Sonia.



Deja Resort's Anna-Kaye Russell and Chukka's John Byles.



From left: Denice Grant, Adrian DaCosta and Diana Fields.



Iberostar Resorts' Tamika Higgins-Baker and Kerith Carey.



Sponsors of the Hospitality Jamaica Awards, Jamaica Broilers' Lincoln Robinson, Kimberley Naar and Andrew Allen.



Regional director of the Jamaica Tourist Board Janice Allen at the awards ceremony.

Knutsford Express celebrates 10th anniversary with Best in Transportation award

LIKE THE proverbial icing on their 10th anniversary cake, Knutsford Express was named the 2016 Hospitality Jamaica 'Best

in Transportation' winner, topping contender, Island Car Rentals and Tropical Tours.

Established in 2006, Knutsford

Express has served as a comfortable and safer alternative to the Coaster bus service that plies the Montego-Kingston route. It has, however,



General Manager of the Montego Bay Convention Centre Dittie Guise (left) presents the award for Best in Transportation to Knutsford Express's Joan Johnson and Kedon Peterkin.

expanded to include other townships such as Negril, Savanna-la-Mar and Mandeville in the south, and Falmouth to the north. In addition, Knutsford also now offers car rental and airport-transfer services.

The company offers scheduled departures and arrivals, online pre-booking, passenger and luggage check-in, an air-conditioned waiting lounge and a structured boarding process, plus free wi-fi on board its buses. Most are outfitted with lavatories and reclining seats.

Knutsford's new airport-transfer offerings have been particularly welcomed by the tourism sector.

The company connects from New Kingston daily to the Norman Manley International Airport (where it also operates a desk) via shuttle service. In St James, its direct coach airport-transfer operates seven days per week, except Christmas Day, and transports passengers from its Montego Bay terminal to the Sangster International Airport.

Over the last 10 years, commuters from across the world have been wowed by the service offered and the

ease of travel afforded by Knutsford to Jamaicans and non-nationals.

SMOOTH RIDE

"The ride was very stress free ... the customer service from start to finish was impeccable. The bus ride was so smooth. Actually, I didn't know whether I was going up or down hill," noted one satisfied traveller in Kingston.

One now-committed Knutsford 'fan' from the United Kingdom also expressed pleasure with "the entire service", in particular, the friendly check-in agents, the easily navigable website, and prompt responses to emails, while another noted: "After a 14-hour flight of hardly any sleep, it was certainly a relief and such comfort to be transported from Montego Bay to Kingston."

Among the other highlights that guests have given Knutsford an 'A' rating for are the on-time departure, the clean toilet facilities and water, and the smooth ride with "no jerks and sudden stopping", which allows them to relax and feel like royalty.

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Best Purveyor

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From L-Melia Braco's director of sales, Angella Bennett presents the Best Purveyor award to Rainforest Seafoods' Sashan Anderson, hotel/food service sales representative, Everol Wilson, Food Service/Export Development Manager and Ophelia Wright-Johnson, hotel/food service sales representative.

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Hospitality Personality of the Year, Kevin Hendrickson (fourth right), surrounded by his winning team and his family.

The Jamaica Pegasus wins two Hospitality Jamaica awards

ONE OF Kingston city's most elegant hotels, The Jamaica Pegasus, copped two of the 15 Hospitality Jamaica 2016 Awards, which were bestowed on some of the tourism industry's finest entities and individuals on November 19.

Not only did the hotel take home the award for the 'Best European Plan', but it was named 'Best Business/Conference Hotel', while its owner, veteran hotelier Kevin Hendrickson, copped the Hospitality Personality of the Year Award, which, in reality, made it a triple for the New Kingston-based hotel.

"I have to thank the entire team from the hotel group," Hendrickson said in his response on the night of the awards. "That effort has contributed to the success and growth, because it would be impossible for any one person, or just even a handful of people, to achieve this phenomenal growth over the last few years.

"It really is nice, the recognition that **Hospitality Jamaica** does for the industry overall and the exposure not just to us Jamaicans, but to the entire world," he added.

The Jamaica Pegasus offers a total of 14 venues to host conferences as well as business and social functions. These can easily accommodate from two to 1,000 persons. Approximately 1,300 square metres (10,000 square feet) of flexible

function space are available.

The hotel has been described as exuding a very cosmopolitan flair. It encompasses 300 rooms and suites which provide a panoramic view of the neighbouring Emancipation Park, sections of the city of Kingston and the port, and parts of the Blue and John Crow Mountains to the north. There is a wide selection of amenities, including restaurants, free Wi-Fi and cable television in all rooms and across the property, a gym, swimming pool and tennis courts.

The 24/7 Cafe, as its name suggests, is always open – 24 hours per day, seven days per week – and offers items such as sandwiches, salads and pastries, while the Blue Window restaurant serves up delicious meals between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. each day. The very elegant Blend Bar and Lounge is open from 4 p.m. to midnight and offers Jamaican cocktails delights and food fusions, including several seafood dishes.

The hotel has been lauded by many for its extraordinary service, and friendly and helpful staff, who have been described as the ones who make it an ideal destination. From the front desk representatives to the bellmen, housekeeping and restaurant staff, they all have been applauded as "friendly, courteous and attentive".



From left: Editor-In-Chief of The Gleaner, Garfield Grandison (left), congratulates The Jamaica Pegasus team – the hotel's general manager, Peter Hillary; Prudence Simpson; Roxanne Williams; and Kevin Hendrickson.

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The disruptive now becomes the new normal

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE PROBLEM with disruptive technology is not just that it disrupts what we have become comfortable with, but that it has unpredictable consequences that can go far beyond what was intended.

Take Airbnb, a simple idea that is a form of matchmaking between travellers and individuals with a spare room or rooms. It offers a visitor somewhere that is cheaper than a hotel, while providing a genuine sense of place and experience of the country they are visiting. So successful has this simple idea become that the company, which only started in 2008, now has around two million listings globally in 34,000 cities and 191 countries.

Although still in private hands, analysts suggest that Airbnb is now worth around US\$30 billion, a figure close to the combined listed valuations of Hilton and Hyatt, the next most valuable hospitality companies in the world, at roughly US\$30.5 billion.

Airbnb's growth in the short-term vacation home-rental business in the Caribbean has been "explosive" according to the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. Earlier this year, it reported that the company now has around 25,000 listings, with the most being in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Cancun, Martinique, and Barbados.

NEW PROBLEMS

It has, however, created a political conundrum in the Caribbean. While governments recognise that it is enabling many citizens, as hosts, for example, to pay off their mortgage or to be able to improve their standard of living, it has raised new problems for both politicians and the industry.

Typically, Airbnb offerings do not pay taxes, are not regulated in the same way that hotels are, and do not participate in joint marketing programmes. They also present fiscal challenges to governments, which



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (left) announced on November 14 that the Ministry of Tourism is set to sign an agreement with Airbnb to augment and drive growth within the tourism industry. Here, Bartlett greets Shawn Sullivan, Airbnb's executive with responsibility for public policy – Latin America and the Caribbean; and Carlos Muñoz, head of public policy and government affairs, Airbnb, during a courtesy call on the minister at his New Kingston offices on November 14, 2016, where they discussed plans to forge the partnership. A memorandum of understanding will be drafted and signed at a later date.

observe that by increasing visitor numbers, they indirectly place pressure on public facilities that taxes pay for. In addition, there is evidence that they are reducing capacity on airlines for higher-spending hotel visitors and suggestions in some locations that nearby property prices are being pushed up as investors, as opposed to owners, sense commercial opportunity.

But whether tourism professionals and governments like what is hap-

pening or not, Airbnb and its competitors, like budget airlines, have expanded the Caribbean's tourism offering to increasing numbers of consumers, especially millennials, by making the Caribbean affordable. Moreover, according to most studies, Airbnb local visitor spend is significantly greater and has more impact than that of hotel or cruise visitors as they make purchases directly into the domestic economy.

In a response intended to

embrace the disruptive, Aruba has recently established the first partnership between Airbnb and a Caribbean country. On November 7, the company and the Aruba Tourism Authority signed an agreement that enables the Aruba Tourism Authority and Airbnb to address a range of issues, including taxation, host accommodation standards, and regulations to ensure that they are in line with Aruba's tourism policy. "The goal is to



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remain competitive and create balance. A healthy mix of on-island accommodations is crucial to the success of Aruba," a statement from Rosella Tjin Asjoe-Croes, the CEO of Aruba's Tourism Authority, said.

MORE OPTIONS

For its part, Airbnb, which reportedly hosted 13,000 international guests in Aruba and saw its hosts there earn, on average, US\$4,400 in 2015, said that the collaboration will give those visiting Aruba "more traveling options while promoting sustainable tourism as part of the local economy".

Jamaica is expected to be the next country to sign a similar agreement following recent meetings between Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett and Airbnb officials in Kingston.

What these and other decisions being taken by cities and governments around the world indicate, in some cases through legislation without Airbnb's involvement, is that the disruptive, consumer demand, and economic need in the shape of those owning the host properties is causing tourism, a largely conservative and protectionist industry, to have to embrace the incomers. In short, the disruptive is about to become the new normal.

Round Hill adds to its collection of accolades

THE LEGENDARY Round Hill hotel has added the **Hospitality Jamaica** 2016 Best Small/Boutique Award to its extensive collection of accolades.

The hotel, which is located in Hanover, was also winner of **Hospitality Jamaica's** 'Best in Cuisine' award in 2014.

The 110-acre property is highly acclaimed as one of the most beautiful and elegant resorts in the West Indies. It consists of a series of 27 charming private luxury villas and 36 spacious Ralph Lauren-designed oceanfront rooms, which afford guests a spectacular view of the ocean.

Villas range from two to six bedrooms and include niceties such as private pools and event lawns and are in proximity to tennis courts, a jogging trail, the resort's fitness centre, the Pineapple Kids Club with (trained nannies), and the Round Hill private beach.

Round Hill houses, among other things, a spa, and two restaurants – the Seaside Terrace and The Grille, which offers a wide menu comprising mainly local organic foods. For players of golf, the resort provides complimentary shuttle service to the Tryall Golf Club's 18-hole championship golf course.

The impeccable service, outstanding food, and the willingness of staff members to go the extra mile to meet requests are among the things that have given the resort an international stamp of approval over the years, that is, in addition to the fact that physically, as it has often been described, Round Hill is a naturally beautiful, serene, tranquil, mesmerising, quaint, and fabulous place.

Round Hill is not seen as only just a hotel. The resort is an integral part of the Hanover landscape as it has always been a good corporate citizen, demonstrated through its consistent sup-



Caribbean Producers Jamaica's Dr David Lowe (left) presents the Best Boutique/Small Hotel Award to Round Hill's Hillary Stewart and Omar Robinson.

port of social and humanitarian activities across the parish and sections of western Jamaica. Its charitable arm, Hanover Charities, is the largest organisation of its

kind in western Jamaica and was established to improve the quality of life of the people of the parish by funding community health, education, and welfare projects.



Two employees at Round Hill serving a combined 89 years. Kingsley Black (left), concierge – 44 years; and Nehemiah Haughton, room service manager – 45 years.



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Half Moon voted Jamaica's Most Eco-Sustainable Resort

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE HALF Moon in Montego Bay, for the second time, earned the accolades as Jamaica's Best Eco/Sustainable Hotel at the 2016 Gleaner Hospitality Jamaica Awards.

According to marketing communications manager Laura Redpath, it is a recognition that the hotel is thrilled to have earned again, especially in light of its consistent environmental stewardship and sustainable tourism practices.

"It is great to be recognised for our efforts in eco-sustainability, and this award is a reminder that we must continue our vigilance in this area," Redpath said.

The 400-acre property, which is now in its 62nd year of operation, has been unflinching in its bid to



The Gleaner Company (Media) Limited's managing director, Christopher Barnes (left) presents the 'Most Eco/Sustainable Hotel' award to Half Moon's Arlie Dyer and Conroy Thompson.

integrate environmental conservation efforts and green initiatives within its operations. In fact, so comprehensive is its conservation efforts that every single department at the hotel and even its guests are involved.

RECYCLING PROGRAMME

Half Moon has an impressive and unique raft of recycling initiatives. Among them are a fabric recycling/reuse programme in which old beach towels are converted to cleaning cloths and old linen is converted to stuffed toys; as well as another, where shredded paper from the administrative offices is sold to local funeral homes or used as padding for transporting of guests' craft items. In addition, wood chips from the furniture shop are used as mulch in landscaping, at the Equestrian

Centre as horse bedding and also for toy-making, while horse dung is used as organic fertiliser at the plant nursery.

Half Moon is also contributing to sustainable agriculture as approximately 90 per cent of its food is bought from local providers. Waste cooking oil is used in the manufacturing of poultry feed and waste auto oil in the manufacturing of bio-diesel, while old batteries are sent off property for recycling.

Where utilities are concerned, Half Moon has replaced high-wattage light bulbs with low-energy ones, which has resulted in a sharp reduction in energy consumption. Water conservation and recycling has also been given paramount importance as treated waste water is also used in property irrigation instead of potable water.

RIU Palace Jamaica – 'Best All-Inclusive' Under 300 Rooms

THE RIU Palace in Montego Bay sparked at the Hospitality Jamaica 2016 Awards on Saturday, November 19, copping the much-yearned-after Best All Inclusive Hotel (under 300 rooms) prize, ahead of Jewel Runaway Bay and Hedonism II.

It was a wide array of factors that contributed to the RIU Palace win, chief among them being the resorts amenities. The property is outfitted with free Wi-Fi, infinity pools, and offers an extensive list of entertainment and sporting activities, including, tennis and golf, windsurfing, scuba diving and a fully equipped gym.

All rooms at the 200-plus room hotel have their own balconies, satellite television, coffee machine, a sofa, and a full bathroom, with other comforts available, including 24-hour room service and an equally equipped all-day snack and drink bar carrying whiskey, vodka, gin, rum, and an array of soft drinks in the mini-bar in each room.

The rooms are well-equipped with large, plush beds, air conditioning, Jacuzzi baths, and walk-in showers, and are well maintained by a very thorough housekeeping staff, who also offer an evening bed-turn-down service for guests' comfort.

A hallmark of every all-inclusive



RIU Resorts director of sales, Nurka Garcia-Linton (centre) accepts the Best All-inclusive under 300 rooms which went to Riu Palace Jamaica, from Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook (right). Sharing in the occasion was Manuel Mano, food and beverage manager at RIU Palace.

hotel is its cuisine, and the RIU Palace is no exception. RIU Palace offers a multiplicity of culinary options, including a wide-ranging

Jamaican menu, international dishes from the Orient and Italy, fusion cuisine, and a steakhouse offering some of the most delectable dishes

around.

The resort's gastronomy is so highly regarded that it was also one of three front-runners in the island

for Hospitality Jamaica's Best in Cuisine award and was given high accolades for its 'variety and freshness' and what one visitor describes as the "awesome food" and "amazing breakfast".

PROOF IN THE PUDDING

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating," the old adage says, and, indeed, RIU Palace's guests have left the property totally 'wowed', with some vowing to return soonest possible. "The hotel is spotlessly clean, with staff endlessly cleaning every day, ranging from the pool areas to toilets to polishing glasses on the tables for dinner ... it's so meticulous" is among the things guests have had to say about the property.

The hotel's staff has been accorded the distinction, by guests, of being its "biggest asset". They have been lauded as "friendly, hard-working, courteous, able to pay attention to details and to make visitors feel special". In the words of one North American visitor: "They are one of the main reasons why we loved this hotel so much", and "they are all a credit to the hotel and is one of the reasons we will be coming back to the RIU Palace Jamaica."

CONGRATULATIONS



Minister of Tourism
Hon Edmund Bartlett CD, MP

Hospitality Personality of the Year
Kevin Hendrickson

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Best Small/Boutique Hotel
Round Hill

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AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

Gibraltar Camp survivor and relatives tour former campsite

IN THE 1990s when I was a student at the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communication, located on the Mona campus of The University of the West Indies in St Andrew, we were told the concrete cisterns located not far from the entrance of the building were what World War II refugees washed their clothes in.

We learned that they were from Gibraltar, and that's why the site was called Gibraltar Camp. But, we were not told the full story, especially why they came to Jamaica, and that there were other refugees apart from the Gibraltarians.

And over the years as I pass through the campus, I would read the storyboards about Gibraltar Camp 1 and 2 mounted at various spots on the former campsite. It is a fascinating story, but never in my wildest dream did the idea of meeting one of the camp survivors pop up.

On Friday, November 11, it was not in a wild dream that Inez Schpektor, now Inez Baker, suddenly appeared. She was as real as real could get. I met the 85-year-old survivor, her two sons, a nephew, and a Joan Arnay Halperin, who were in the Corporate Area to visit the former campsite and other related places, in a reunion called 'From Nazi Europe to Jamaica: Holocaust Survivor and Descendants Return to their place in the Sun'.

JEWISH REFUGEE SITUATION

They were part of a bigger group that included tour coordinator Professor Diana Cooper-Clark of York University in Canada. Her book, **Dreams of Re-Creation in Jamaica**, looks at the Jewish refugee situation in Jamaica during World War II.

Halperin's older sister died in the camp and was buried in the Jewish cemetery along Orange Street in downtown Kingston, which she visited Sunday. She had never met her sister who came to Jamaica as a Polish refugee with her parents, and she had written a book about her called **My Sister's Eyes: A Family Chronicle of Rescue and Loss During WWII**.



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

The Gibraltar Camp touring party and some University of the West Indies officials in a group photo opportunity.



Eighty-five-year-old Inez Baker, née Schpektor, who lived in Gibraltar Camp in St Andrew after fleeing Holland with her family to escape the atrocities of World War II, takes a picture of the laundry cisterns that were used by refugees.



Joan Arnay Halperin displays a copy of her book, 'My Sister's Eyes'. Her eldest sister, who was a Polish refugee at Gibraltar Camp in St Andrew, died in Jamaica and was buried in the Jewish cemetery on Orange Street, downtown Kingston.



Inez Baker, née Schpektor, who was a Dutch refugee who lived at Gibraltar Camp in St Andrew, holds a picture of herself and other children at the camp during WWII. From left are her sons Ron and Ross, and her nephew, Jack Schpektor.



Visitors in The University of the West Indies Museum looking at pictures of scenes from Gibraltar Camp.

At that time, many Jews fled Europe to avoid being killed by Hitler's men. Jamaica hosted many European Jews, including some from Holland, Poland, Finland and Czechoslovakia. After a spellbinding escapade from Holland, narrated in Cooper-Clark's book, Inez, her brother Willem, and their parents finally made it to Gibraltar Camp.

The story of Gibraltar Camp is also told in **Mona Past and Present**, written by Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown, the curator of the UWI Museum, located in the UWI regional headquarters along Mona Road. That was where the tour started on Friday.

Dr Francis gave the visitors a brief history of the campus and the camp, its history and showed a pictorial. It was so poignant to see Inez pointing out herself from among other children. Wide-eyed, she bent over and put a finger on to her image. Everybody gathered around her and the cameras went off.

TOUR NEAR THE END

The next stop was at the Undercroft, where the group was introduced to campus principal, Professor Archibald McDonald; campus registrar, Dr Camille Bell Hutchinson; and Dr Carol Edwards, director of the office of marketing and communications. After Professor McDonald responded Professor Cooper-Clark presented him with a copy of her book.

The final segment of the campus tour, guided by Dr Francis-Brown, took place on the former campsite, and Inez Baker recalled some of the moments from way back. But it was when she saw some of the physical remnants that she got a little excited.



Dr Suzanne Francis-Brown, curator (right) at The University of the West Indies (UWI) Museum, briefs visitors who travelled to Jamaica to tour the former WWII refugee campsite, located on the UWI Mona campus.

She recalled learning to dance the foxtrot in the Old Dramatic Theatre, and who taught her. On the top of the steps, she posed like a Radio City Rockette after recalling that she and other girls used to dance like

the famous New York City dancers. That was after the old brought out the new.

Yes, she quickly grabbed her modern phone to take pictures of the aforementioned cisterns. She was beside herself, and the cam-

eras could not get enough pictures of her standing over a cistern pretending to be washing at Gibraltar Camp over 73 years ago.

And I was glad to get some shots for my posterity. Lovely day it was.

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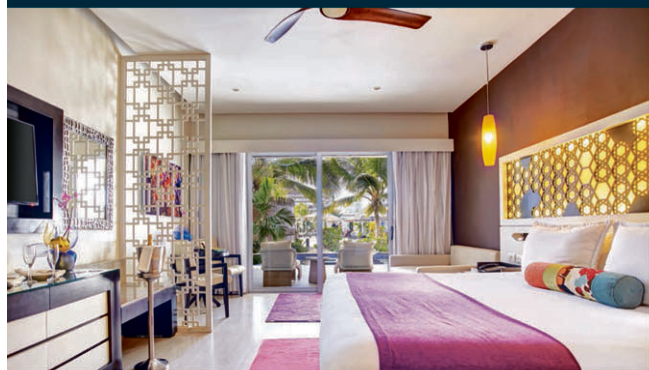
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