

The Gleaner
Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2017



Cruise ship visitors taking time out to enjoy the Ocho Rios Bay Beach in St Ann.

CONTRIBUTED

★ Best 2017 Getaway Book Early and Save on Special Packages. ★ Call Today!



Great Food | Friendly People | Family Fun
seagardenjamaica.com
Intl. Toll Free: 844.742.7778
Phone 876.979.7761



The 'Norwegian Epic' was one of two ships to visit the town of Ocho Rios on January 18.

CONTRIBUTED

Happy days are here again

Anti-harassment efforts working, says Belnavis

Camille Miller

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

CHAIRMAN OF the National Cruise Council (NCC) Michael Belnavis says that the Government's anti-harassment efforts have been working, noting that there are visible signs of visitors walking the streets without being badgered or followed.

According to Belnavis, the Courtesy Corps, a tourism security unit that falls under the Tourism Product Development Company, must be commended for doing a good job in keeping the harassers in check and allowing the visitors to interact freely with locals.

Belnavis also had high praise for members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, pointing out that policing in the resort towns was not always "a walk in the park".

"The early signs have been very encouraging," the NCC chairman told *Hospitality*



BELNAVIS



Guests seen here enjoying a variety of activities throughout their stay in Ocho Rios.

Jamaica in an interview last Friday. “Places like Ocho Rios have been experiencing an unusual amount of walking traffic from the cruise pier into the main thoroughfare of Main Street, and without the usual harassment from the pimps, touts, and drug pushers.”

Belnavis added that he was getting similar reports out of Montego Bay and Falmouth, noting that the news was coming at a time when Jamaica’s cruise shipping and stopover arrivals are enjoying a kind of purple patch that has not been seen in years.

“I am always at pains to point out that it is not the wisest thing to toot the horn too early,” Belnavis, who is also the mayor of St Ann’s Bay, cautioned. “It is, however, a remarkable thing to see the tourists walking the streets, making their own deals with the vendors, and interacting freely at the streetside bars and local stores.”

He further explained that visitor harassment has been one of the leading ills facing the tourism sector, contributing to problems and causing tensions with the cruise lines.

“If we can keep it under control, then there is really nothing to stop us from being the preferred destination in the region for stopover and cruise shipping combined,” he noted.

The change in temperature has also not been lost on residents and members of the business community who also have been commenting on the situation. “I am seeing a change for the better,” said Garfield Dussard, owner of Garfield’s Diving, a water sport operation located on the Urban Development Corporation Beach, Ocho Rios.

“I am seeing more traffic coming my way minus the accompanying pimps and the touts. The people are walking freely.”

Roger Hyatt, a tour bus operator who plies the Falmouth to Ocho Rios and also the Montego Bay route, said that except from the usual pestering by some of the taxi drivers, visitors for the most part have been freely walking the streets. “On ship days in Falmouth and Ocho Rios, you can see a noticeable change in behaviour,” he noted.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

A number of visitors felt like the best way to spend the day in the resort town is to enjoy the pristine white sand at the Urban Development Corporation beach, where the ambiance is also something to savour.



Guests seen here having a very relaxing time eating and liming.



Guests dining in Ocho Rios.



Guests seen here enjoying a variety of activities throughout their stay in Ocho Rios.



Easy does it! Guests are seen here enjoying an ambiance of peace and tranquility.

Kingston to the world!

'M/V Monarch' revisited

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

JAMAICA AND Spain have a centuries-old connection. When Columbus stumbled upon the land of wood and water, he was on a mission in the name of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. After the Spaniards eventually destroyed the Taino societies and set up their own political and social systems, their Jamaican colony, too, was decimated by the British.

Fast-forward to present-day Jamaica. The Spaniards are back setting up luxurious hotels, and making cruise ship calls to our ports. And late last year, the cargo port of Kingston got an unusual visit from a cruise ship named *M/V Pullmantur Monarch*. Operated from Spain by Royal Caribbean Cruise Ltd, it was the biggest cruise vessel ever to dock at Kingston.

At the plaques and keys presentation ceremony held on board, there were many brief speeches. Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador, charge d'affaires in the Embassy of Spain in St Andrew, was one of the speakers. The long-standing connection between Jamaica and Spain was not lost on her, and with her sunny and affable style, she evoked smiles and laughter from the gathering of crew, journalists and government officials.

Ruiz-Tapiador was quick to remind the gathering why Jamaica and Spain remained popular tourist destinations: "We are two fun-loving countries, and people love us". She said tourism was the driving force for the Spanish economy. It enabled Spain to grow, and has helped the evolution of democracy in Spain. And while the tourism focus for both countries is on sun and sand, we are also looking at other types of tourism, including 'cultural' tourism. She was thrilled that the *M/V Monarch* stopped at Kingston, one of her favourite cities, she said, her "home now."

"I have to congratulate you for being pioneers, and bringing back the attention to Kingston in the cruise ship world," she said to the crew members and the government officials. She believes the idea of cruise passengers stopping at a cargo port is a very interesting one. Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett laughed loudly at that utterance.

"I think, from a tourism perspective, it is extremely interesting to land at a cargo port and learn about how you bring these containers in and how people work, that's also an attraction by itself," Ruiz-Tapiador said, "I truly believe Kingston has a lot to offer to the world."

This is evidenced by her dealings with the city. Ruiz-Tapiador can be seen cycling around downtown on Sunday mornings.

The synagogue on Duke St, the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Coronation Market, National Heroes Park and the churches on Sunday were singled out. So was Ward Theatre, in



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Spanish tourists happy to be in Jamaica. Chargee d'affaires in the Embassy of Spain, Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador, said she believes Kingston has a lot to offer to the world.



A section of the interior of the 'M/V Monarch' which docked in Kingston late last year.

the heart of Kingston. She told the smiling Bartlett that he needs to fix “that amazing theatre”.

And turning to Captain Arkadiusz Branka, she said, “I want to organise a Rae Town party on board.” This was followed by much laughter. “I tell you, if you organised that party on board, you would have been overbooked for five years. Kingston would be the preferred destination. We did it at the embassy, you know. The people from downtown, the dancers, and they came to the residence of the Embassy of Spain, and there was a revolution.”

Ruiz-Tapiador said she is looking forward to the betterment of the relationship between Jamaica and Spain, and when she passed the microphone to Bartlett, uncharacteristically, he could not find words.

Captain Branka, in responding, said there have been hard rock, rock and roll, and disco cruises, but never reggae. Yet, he said, “Diplomatically, we are technically ready for it.”

Looking at the broader picture, Ruiz-Tapiador said Jamaica has something amazing, “a special magic” that she does not find anywhere else. And because of that, Jamaica has “crazy fans” from all over the world. She spoke of meet-



Miguel Medina of Honduras, a waiter on the ‘M/V Monarch’, said he will definitely come back to Jamaica on his own time.

ing non-Jamaicans who know the lyrics of songs from singers like Alton Ellis, Beres Hammond and Dennis Brown, better than some Jamaicans, “and they want to come here,” she explained.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

From left: Captain Nicholas Pagonis, assistant vice-president at Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd; ‘M/V Monarch’ Captain Arkadiusz Branka; Minister Horace Chang of the Office of the Prime Minister; Minister of Tourism Ed Bartlett; Grantley Stephenson, CEO, Kingston Wharves; and Paul Pennicook, director of tourism.



Captain Arkadiusz Branka (left) and Tourism Minister Ed Bartlett exchanging gifts.



The ‘M/V Monarch’ at the Kingston waterfront.



‘M/V Monarch’ passengers waiting to be transported to attractions in Kingston and St Andrew.

Tracking visitors' every step

David Jessop

Contributor

SINCE LATE last year, a small number of ships in Carnival's Princess Cruises fleet have been offering something very different on their Caribbean sailings.

In order, they say, to enhance their clients' vacations, they have introduced a new way in which those on board can, as they put it, "make the most of their time", "be inspired to see and do more", and "experience a truly personalised and effortless" break.

What the cruise line is offering to help achieve this is an 'Ocean Medallion'. This can be worn like a wristwatch attached to a brightly coloured wrist band or as a pendant or medallion. By doing so on board, or on some trips ashore, the client and the ship, as it were, are able to constantly communicate with one another.

The idea is that this medallion holds a unique digital identity and is able to communicate with equipment located throughout the ship and in certain parts of selected ports to tell the company exactly what you are doing throughout the voyage. This then, using sophisticated algorithms, enables Princess to anticipate and better meet their clients' requirements.

More prosaically, the medallion allows the crew to know who you are, and, in effect, recognise you personally; to be aware of your food and drink preferences; allows you to make cashless on board payments; and by following a guest's movement throughout the ship can, for instance, enable food or a drink to be brought directly to you by a server who has access to your photograph. It can also be used for unlocking your stateroom door, to speed up embarkation and disembarkation, and to help clients locate friends and family on board.

It is a technology that is in its infancy and which others in the industry have introduced in different forms or are rapidly developing.

MONITORING LIKES & DISLIKES

It will, as it develops, revolutionise much of the tourism sector, not just on cruise ships, but on larger properties such as resort hotels and all-inclusives, and no doubt with certain refinements and personal guarantees, come to play a role in some of the region's smaller up-scale properties as well.

For the industry, it has the advantage of not only enabling the closer monitoring of guest likes and dislikes and enhancing security, but it makes sales and service more efficient and less subject to error and facilitates the retention of information for future marketing.

For the guest, on the face of it, such apps offer not just enhanced attention and effi-



“... the medallion allows the crew to know who you are, and, in effect, recognise you personally; to be aware of your food and drink preferences; allow you to make cashless on board payments”



JESSOP

ciency in a busy service environment, but, for instance, can provide other benefits such as awareness of where their children are.

However, all such technology comes at a cost to personal privacy.

DATA MINING

Although in recent years, hotels and cruise companies, along with almost every other commercial supplier, have been accumulating data on individuals, which third party companies then bring together to sell-on to a growing number of cross-border entities involved in personalised marketing of everything from automobiles to garments, the issue seems to be of little concern to most consumers.

While all this could change, were there to be a significant data breach with negative consequences for the guest, most companies at present make it clear that it is the company, rather than the device they provide, that stores the data.

Moreover, Princess, and others moving into this area, makes it clear that its clients are at liberty to decline the use of the device, although in years to come it is hard to see how the same service levels could be provided to guests in properties or on ships where the majority are using the new technology.

In the end, however, the choice to use such devices is likely to become closely related to personal preference, life style, and an individual, couple, or family's needs from a vacation, suggesting that to accommodate such differences, hotels and cruise ships may have to become much more diverse, with some offering complete escape, and at a price, simple old-fashioned personal service.

BACARDÍ
CARTA ORO
SUPERIOR GOLD RUM

ESTABLECIDO EN 1862
SANTIAGO DE CUBA
UNA EMPRESA DE LA FAMILIA BACARDÍ

Cheers CPJ
with SPIRITS

Must be 18 years and older to drink. Drink responsibly!

Introducing Taste of Jamaica Authentic Tour

An all-inclusive, eco-friendly culinary experience



Drummers and dancers, part of the tour package.



A beautiful house, partially hidden, seen along the route taken by Taste of Jamaica Tour.



Elizabeth Broderick (front row, right), principal of Taste of Jamaica Authentic Beach Cookout Tour, with sales representatives, members of her team, and some of the entertainers at the beachside property in Priory, St Ann, at the end of the tour.

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

LASCELLS AND Elizabeth Broderick have developed and launched a tour aimed at highlighting some of St Ann's natural offerings and are pleased with the response, so far, from tour operators and guests.

Described as an all-inclusive eco-friendly culinary experience, The Taste of Jamaica Authentic Tour offers eco sightseeing, beach cooking, real Jamaican food, and music. And you can add dance lessons for the fun of it.

The tour begins in Ocho Rios and ends on a beachside property in Priory.

In between, the tour takes you on a journey through Fern Gully, where craft vendors display their wares – you see the wide variety of Jamaican ferns that gave the gully its name – through the community of Colegate and on to Golden Grove, where if you're lucky, you will catch the children at play during break time at the local primary school.

Moving on to Clarendon, the rustic country setting, green hills and valley, houses perched on hillsides, farmers in their field, Jamaicans playing dominoes at roadside shops, all go together to make the experience uniquely Jamaican.

All throughout the tour, the knowledgeable driver will keep you informed and educate you about things Jamaican.

After Clarendon, you make a stop at a coffee plantation in Higgin Town then pass by Liberty Hill Great House in Lime Hall and Marcus Garvey's former home in St Ann's Bay before moving on to a beachside property for the other side of the experience.

Here, you sample a wide range of in-season Jamaican fruits, try your hand at jerking chicken, then have it and taste Jamaica's national dish, ackee and saltfish.

Be entertained by recorded reggae music and an African themed dance group that is more than happy to teach you



Shanna Gay from Grand Bahia Principe about to sample the Jamaican food provided by Taste of Jamaica Tour.

dance moves to match every Jamaican beat from ska to rocksteady to reggae and dancehall.

And there's more.

Broderick said the grand finale at the beachfront will see guests being served a typical Jamaican lunch that includes

ground provisions such as yam and potato, along with ackee and salt fish and jerked chicken.

"We also have a live entertainment section where the guests learn to do the Jamaican dancehall dances," she said.

"Guests who have been on the tour just love the dancing. They love learning how to jerk and love eating the jerked chicken. They love Jamaican fruits. They love the Jamaican countryside, especially the coffee plantation."

Several tour representatives who have been on the course have given the new tour the thumbs up.

According to Moon Palace's vacation planner sales supervisor Nickesha Clarke, "I would say it's really Jamaican. It's cultural and different. It more tells you about what we grow in Jamaica and what you see when you're off the main thoroughfare. It's a good tour."

Georgia Black, vacation planner, also of Moon Palace, said at first that she thought the Taste of Jamaica tour was all about food but said after the tour: "I got a taste of Jamaica on a different side as it relates to tasting the richness of our culture. I got to learn a whole lot of stuff. For persons coming from the outside wanting to know more about Jamaica, nothing was watered down. This is the perfect tour. I love it! I love it!"

Britney Campbell of Amstar DMC Jamaica was impressed with the educational value of the tour.

"It was very good, very educational and informative about island Jamaica. It's a good tour to learn more about Jamaica," she said.

Visit taste www.tasteofjamaicatours.com for more information.



Dancer Sheena Irons was part of the group offering entertainment.



Jerked chicken with breadfruit and callaloo.



From left: Kathleen Hudson, tour guide with Taste of Jamaica, keeps Nickesha Clarke, vacation planner sales supervisor, Moon Palace Jamaica Grande, and Georgia Black, vacation planner, Moon Palace, entertained.

WELCOME TO JAMAICA



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jamaica welcomes inaugural Apple Vacation flight for the winter season: Eric Wyatt (left) was elated when he disembarked Apple Vacations' inaugural flight at the Sangster International Airport recently. Arriving on January 9, passengers on this historic flight from Rockford, Chicago, were treated to a warm Jamaican welcome. The welcome party included Janice Allen (right), Jamaica Tourist Board's regional director, Jamaica and the Caribbean, who presented them with beaded necklaces. The service, which is a welcomed addition out of the United States' Midwest, will continue through the winter season to April 17, 2017, with flights arriving on Mondays for seven- to 14-night duration. Representatives from Amstar Destination Management Company were also on hand to greet the passengers.



Margaret Jones (right), visitor relations manager, Jamaica Tourist Board, showed Brian Sayre a few dance moves soon after he disembarked Apple Vacations' inaugural flight at the Sangster International Airport. With the mento band providing sweet Jamaican music, Brian was game for this fantastic start to his Jamaican vacation. He was among the 132 passengers who arrived on the island from Rockford, Chicago, on the inaugural flight on January 9. The service will continue through to April 17, 2017 with flights arriving on Mondays for seven- to 14-night duration.

Ja's sports tourism offerings augment destination's appeal

SPORTING EVENTS form a *bona fide* part of the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) strategy in promoting Destination Jamaica. Marketing the island is a dynamic undertaking and the Ministry of Tourism's plan to strengthen sports and entertainment provides added impetus to the JTB's promotional efforts.

The events on offer add to the appeal of the island as the ideal destination for sports tourism. As the sporting capital of the Caribbean, Jamaica continues to celebrate the superb talents of her athletes in diverse events. As such, sport is a formidable attraction for visitors to the island, as players and sports enthusiasts alike travel far and wide to enjoy their sport of choice.

Sports tourism is open to all, from amateurs to professional athletes, from fans to trainers and coaches. Events feature international championship competitions, friendly games and training camps. The common thread that connects all attendees is the love of the sport while relaxing and enjoying their vacation.

TRADITIONAL SPORTS

Jamaica has made her name in traditional sports such as track and field, netball, cricket and football. But more and more, the island is holding her own in non-traditional sports like surfing, Tae kwon do, rugby, basketball, diving, beach volleyball and gymnastics. In addition to the positive attention the

JAMAICA
TOURIST BOARD

island already receives from traditional sports, the foray into these events has significantly increased the attractiveness of Jamaica as a sports tourism destination.

"The continued extraordinary performances of our athletes create the perfect opportunity for us to leverage the unique attributes of

Destination Jamaica to a very captive audience.

We have the enviable privilege of being the home of the fastest man alive. The fantas-

tic work of our athletes has opened doors for us as a tourist destination," said Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook.

The island plays host as the venue of choice for several international competitions. For example, since 2007, the Makka Pro Surfing Competition serves as a final leg in the Caribbean Champion Tri-Nation competition.

In 2013, Rally Jamaica hosted the final leg of the NACAM Rally championship series. Also, in 2014 the Montego Bay Convention Centre was the venue for the International Taekwondo Federation World Cup. Likewise, the first and second rounds of Women's Beach Volleyball Olympic for the Rio Olympics as well as numerous qualifiers for the



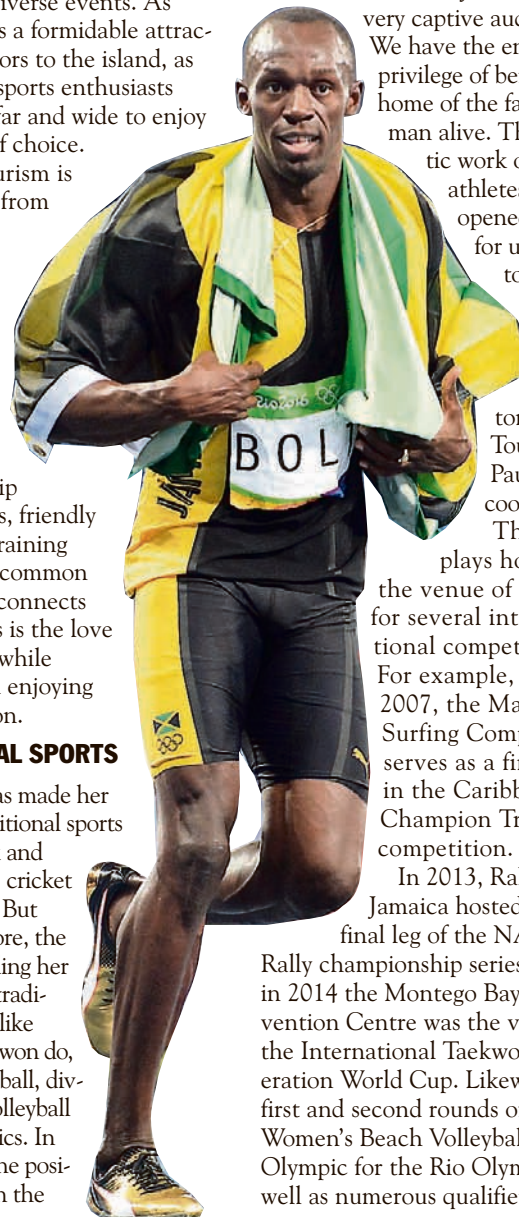
PENNICOOK

FIFA World Cup were held on the island. In addition to the family members and spectators who visit the island to enjoy the events, these occasions also attract a large contingency of internationally renowned media, which provide added exposure on Jamaica's image as a sport destination.

HOSTING FACILITIES

The physical infrastructure and the international accreditation of Jamaicans in various disciplines make Jamaica a very attractive destination to host sporting events. Pennicook said: "Jamaica is definitely a destination for sports tourism as we boast stellar facilities that nurture and empower athletes. Facilities like those at the University of the West Indies, Mona; the University of Technology and the G.C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sport, the first in the English-speaking Caribbean. Additionally, the National Stadium features world-class track and field and football amenities. Jamaicans and international athletes alike love to train and perform in Jamaica."

Upcoming events include the JSP High Mountain Coffee 10K Road Race, Jamaica Fat Tyre Festival, 14 Rivers Challenge (kayaking) and Kingston City Run. To enjoy the spills and thrills of the island's sport offerings, see www.visitjamaica.com for details.



JetBlue only airline with free, high-speed Wi-Fi at every seat



JETBLUE'S FLY-FI(R), which clocks in at broadband speeds beating sluggish and pricey Wi-Fi offerings on board other carriers, keeps customers connected with an Internet experience similar to what they have at home, including the ability to stream video and use multiple devices at once.

The service enables JetBlue to deliver Amazon Video streaming entertainment to customers on board to their personal devices, as well as web surfing and chatting on favourite messaging apps.

First introduced in December 2013 on a single aircraft, JetBlue has expanded Fly-Fi, recently completing installation on its entire fleet of 227 Airbus A320s, A321s, and Embraer 190s. During this time, Fly-Fi has become one of JetBlue's most popular features, joining other customer-favourites like free DIRECTV (r) at every seat, all-you-can-eat brand-name snacks, and the most legroom in coach.

"It's 2017, and our customers expect to be connected everywhere, whether that be from the comfort of their sofa or 35,000 feet above it," said Jamie Perry, vice-president of marketing, JetBlue.

"That's why we're so proud that JetBlue is now the only airline to offer free, high-speed Wi-Fi, live TV and movies for all customers on every plane."

ANOTHER FIRST: GATE-TO-GATE CONNECTIVITY

JetBlue continues to set its experience ahead of other airlines by becoming the first in the United States to offer gate-to-gate Internet connectivity on every aircraft. Gate-to-gate Fly-Fi eliminates the need to wait until reaching cruising altitude to get connected. Instead, customers can email, surf, stream, tweet, and shop from the moment they board until they reach the arrival gate.

ENDLESS IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

With access to fresh and free content in and out of Fly-Fi coverage areas, JetBlue's entertainment portal, 'The Hub', offers customers the ability to read, watch, buy, and learn while on board. The newest content partner in The Hub is Vox's premiere technology and culture platform, The Verge, which reaches people curious about the future.

Fly-Fi builds on JetBlue's existing in-flight offerings offered on seatback televisions and personal devices:

- 36 channels of free DIRECTV on E190 and A320 aircraft and 100-plus channels on A321 aircraft.
- 100-plus channels of free SiriusXM fleet-wide.
- Free Hollywood blockbusters on seatback televisions.
- Newly added audio/visual on-demand (AVOD) on A321 touchscreens at every seat, allowing customers to choose and control playback of nearly 30 curated movie selections, including the latest Hollywood blockbusters and JetBlue crewmember picks.
- Curated video from Amazon, PureWow, and more on the JetBlue TV channel.

“It's 2017, and our customers expect to be connected everywhere, whether that be from the comfort of their sofa or 35,000 feet above it.”

Customers can also use Fly-Fi's high-speed connection for true Internet streaming of Amazon Video on their personal devices or shop on Amazon.com to earn three TrueBlue points for every dollar spent on every purchase.

CTO declares 2017 'Year of Adventure' in the Caribbean

ON THE heels of last year's successful Year of Romance, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) has declared 2017 the Year of Adventure in the Caribbean. This year, the region will celebrate everything from adrenaline-pumping pursuits to local culture and casually sampling culinary experiences unique to a specific CTO destination. "Adventure comes in different degrees for travellers. For some, it is zip lining high above a valley or speeding around a motor racing circuit. For others, an adventure is simply exploring local communities to learn their language and customs and teasing the senses with new cultural and culinary experiences," said Hugh Riley, secretary general and chief executive officer of the CTO.

The 2017 Caribbean Year of Adventure will be promoted through social media and traditional media channels and will create opportunities for travellers and vacation planners to share their experiences and ideas of an adventure-filled Caribbean vacation throughout 2017. The CTO has adopted the hashtag #CaribbeanAdventure and encourages all member countries and hotels to use the hashtag when posting images via social media networks.

COMMON DENOMINATOR

While each destination is unique and inviting in its own right, the common denominator of all Caribbean destination vacations is travellers yearning to enjoy a Caribbean adventure – no matter how laid-back or thrilling the activity may be. Through the campaign, the CTO and its member countries and hotels will highlight the Caribbean as the leading choice for a vacation filled with adventure for consumers and travel planners selling the region. The theme is designed as a catalyst for sellers and promoters of group travel, family adventure, and 'friends-cation', as well as weddings and honeymoons.

Visitors, too, will be invited to submit thoughts on their most memorable Caribbean adventures. "With a variety of destinations to discover, the Caribbean provides the ultimate vacation playground



RILEY

highlighted by picture-perfect landscapes and ideal weather for an abundance of land and water activities," said Riley.

"The Year of Adventure will highlight the range of activities offered throughout the Caribbean. It's a theme which can easily be embraced by all CTO member destinations 365 days a year," Riley noted.

Throughout 2017, the CTO, in cooperation with its private sector partner the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association will assist member countries and hotels with an assortment of ideas that can be implemented around the theme of adventure to appeal to consumers, travel agents, and tour operators. Initiatives will be developed around:

- **Once-in-a-lifetime getaways** – (volcano discoveries, helicopter tours, etc)
- **There's a first time for everything' vacations** – (zip lining, scuba diving, go-kart racing, etc)
- **Family and 'friends-cation' discovery journeys** – (whale watching, swimming with dolphins, world-heritage site explorations, etc)
- **Wellness adventures** – (paddle board yoga, aqua parkour, tai chi, etc)
- **Dine-around delicacy vacations** – focusing on unique food offerings.

Whither Accompong Town?

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE ACTIVITIES of the January 6 celebrations at Accompong Town in St Elizabeth have not changed much over the years.

They include the 'ben dung' plaza-style selling, loud non-traditional music, trade of food and beverages, gambling, the cooking of and jostling for unsalted food, traditional music and dancing under the Kindah Tree, the marching with some of the food to feed the ancestors in the 'peace cave', the prevention of non-Maroons from taking part in the procession to the cave, the march from the cave through the community, the official ceremony, and all-night partying.

And just like that, the activities, the format for the official ceremony remained the same this year. It is not all about cultural entertainment; it is also a platform for political speeches under the guise of 'address' and promises to fix the long, rough, winding, narrow roads to the historic village. These promises are invariably not fulfilled.

Because of the unfilled promises this year, the vehicle I was travelling in had to turn back when we were near the main entrance to the hilly community. Two vehicles had met with an accident at a point where no other vehicles could pass.

PARKING CHAOS

The drive along the alternative route was long and bumpy, and when we reached the other gate, an entry fee of \$500 was requested. I refused to pay because I intended to cover the event as I had done many times before. A donation of \$500 for which I would get a ticket was requested instead. I refused to donate. Entry was allowed, and we drove into a parking chaos.

Soon after we parked in a spot where the vehicle could not be blocked in, we headed to the Kinda Tree. There, people were waiting for the procession to return from the cave. We had missed the excitement because we had to turn back. Nevertheless, we got a little drumming, singing, and dancing. The wiry male dancer was in his usual contorting mode, and the cameras could not get enough of him. After the march through the community, the official ceremony took a while to start, but the wait was accompanied by an entertaining band onstage.

And yes, the ceremony was riddled with addresses. Everybody had something to say. Some of the utterances such as the execution of criminals by



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Spirited singing is a major part of the rituals at Maroon celebrations such as the ones at Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.

A Maroon dancer (centre) in his usual element, dancing with the ancestors.

firing squads, the building of a police post in crime-free Accompong, and the importation of "bilingual" dogs from Cuba to catch "dutty criminals" drew laughter and derision. Someone grumbled that the maker of such utterances should be put before the firing squad himself, locked up in the police post, and set upon by the bilingual dogs. I wavered between agreeing and disagreeing.

TALKS AND PROMISES

The biggest announcement yet came from Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett. He said, among other things, "We will make Accompong the first destination and we will now place the anniversary festival on the calendar of events and market the community alongside the destination when we go abroad to market experiences in Jamaica."

And the road to the destination was a hot topic once again. In addition to the \$9 million that the Tourism Enhancement Fund is to provide to repair the roads from New Holland to Accompong, the roads in the area will be rehabilitated with \$20 million.

I reflected on the big talks, and I wondered why the Maroons are waiting for the Government to fix the roads when they call themselves a sovereign state, a state within a state. Why not use the proceeds from the annual celebrations and daily tours to fix the roads and put other things in place like a world-class Maroon museum, trained ushers, valets, protocol officers, signage to inform and direct visitors.

There were many things I was not pleased with at Accompong this year, including the curried goat gravy, which made me sick for two days. But take me out of the picture. It is a very interesting place, an important part of the wider Maroon history and heritage. It is, in fact, the best-known Maroon village in Jamaica, visited by people from all over the world. When they arrive, let them travel on good roads, let them feel welcome and not lost, entertain them mostly, and spare them the firing squad, dutty criminal, and bilingual dog grand-standings.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

In a militant mood, the procession marches towards the parade grounds at Accompong Town, St Elizabeth, on January 6.



'Ebony' and 'Ivory' trying to put some harmony into the steps at the Accompong Town celebrations.



People singing and drumming under the Kinda Tree while waiting for the procession to return from the peace cave.



The procession returning from the peace cave after 'feeding' the ancestors at the January 6 celebrations in Accompong Town, St Elizabeth.

Right: Visitors trying to move to some traditional Jamaican music during the celebrations.



'Heaven on earth'

Couples Sans Souci guests say why they are repeat visitors

Allan Parker poses with Allison Catticker.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

COUPLES SANS Souci's repeat business is at a high of 48 per cent, with guests describing the Ocho Rios resort as their home away from home.

Recently, **Hospitality Jamaica** attended the resort's 11th anniversary celebration, which attracted guests from all over the world.

Those who came back more than once will tell you they return for several reasons, with the biggest being the staff and the rooms.

"Sans Souci is perfect," said Lyle F. of Weyburn, Canada, on the resort's website, "We have been there twice and will certainly go back. The reason we come back is for the *au naturel* beach; it is quiet and very serene. The rocks going into the water make it tough for people entering the water, but once you get in, it's beautiful and the peacefulness is wonderful."

Further down the thread of positive feedback, Cooker Vic of Lawton,





CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jackie Becker poses with Peter Chiakotko.

Oklahoma, said having spent three weeks in paradise (second consecutive year), and their sixth trip to Couples Sans Souci, this was his favourite place on earth. "We sometimes call it heaven on earth. The resort is a wonderful place to relax and unwind. We plan on spending our fourth consecutive Christmas in Jamaica at Couples San Souci."

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Over in Appleton, Wisconsin, Joe Tucker said his motivation to walk well again came from wanting to revisit the hotel.

"It is our home away from home. Sans Souci is our favourite place on earth. The grounds are stunning, they are the best. However, as beautiful as the grounds are, the



Drew and Alicia Gieselman.

employees are even more so. They are so kind, with huge, warm hearts. They all really care so much about their resort and guests. That's the difference between Sans Souci and other resorts."

Tucker added: "You can feel the love throughout the resort which I believe begins with the top employee, the GM (general manager) Pierre. He runs the resort with such kindness. We've stayed there, we think, eight times. We have not been there in five years because I have a progressive neurological disorder. But I am feeling determined to improve enough, to get well enough, to enjoy a visit at least one more time."

Hospitality Jamaica brings highlights of the guests who make the hotel their home away from home.



Desmond and Judith Lee.



Brian and Kathy Yansen.



Sibylle Frei in the company of Roger Frei.



Terry and Barb Laidlaw.

US largest national wellness tourism market by far

China made biggest gains from 2013-2015

THE GLOBAL Wellness Institute (GWI) recently reported that global wellness tourism revenues grew an impressive 14 per cent from 2013-2015 (to \$563 billion), more than twice as fast as overall tourism (6.9 per cent).

The institute also projected that this “unstoppable” travel category would grow another 37.5 per cent to \$808 billion by the year 2020.

And in November during the World Travel Market (WTM) in London, the GWI released new data revealing that international wellness tourism revenues have been growing at a significantly faster clip (20 per cent from 2013-2015) than domestic wellness travel (11 per cent). And that secondary wellness tourism (wellness services sought during travel, but where wellness is not the main purpose of the trip) is growing slightly faster than primary wellness tourism (where the main purpose of the trip is wellness).

The top 20 national wellness travel markets (inbound and domestic combined) were also released, and the US remains the global powerhouse with \$202 billion in revenues, or more than three times greater than the No.2 market, Germany. But China showed the biggest growth: jumping from the ninth-largest market in 2013, to fourth in 2015, with revenues growing more than 300 per cent, from \$12.3 billion to \$29.5 billion.

This new data was presented by the Wellness Travel Symposium at the WTM, which attracted more than 50,000 participants in 2016. The symposium had topics such as ‘Creating a Winning Wellness Strategy for Your Destination’ and how ‘Medical Wellness Concepts Are on the Rise’, featuring numerous global experts and executives – from Vinod Zutshi, secretary of tourism, India, to Joshua Luckow, executive director, Canyon Ranch.

INT’L WELLNESS TOURISM GROWING FAST

Domestic wellness tourism represents the majority of wellness trips (83 per cent) and revenues (67 per cent). But international/inbound wellness travel grew at a much faster rate than its domestic equivalent from 2013-2015 – 22 per cent growth in trips and 20 per cent growth in revenues for international, compared to 17 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, for domestic. While international revenues grew more than twice as fast as domestic, both categories saw strong growth from 2013-2015 –



international trips grew from 95.3 million to 116 million, while domestic trips jumped from 491 million to 575 million.

SECONDARY WELLNESS TOURISM DOMINATES AND GROWS SHARE

The bulk of wellness travel is done by secondary wellness tourists, those who seek wellness experiences during travel, but where wellness is not the primary motivation for the trip. Secondary wellness tourists accounted for 89 per cent of well-

ness tourism trips and 86 per cent of expenditures in 2015 – up from 87 per cent of trips and 84 per cent expenditures in 2013. While the travel and hospitality industry tends to focus on the primary wellness traveller (where wellness is the motivation for the trip), they need to pay keen attention to mainstream travellers who are increasingly incorporating more healthy experiences (whether spa treatments, fitness or food) into their overall leisure and business travel.

Top 20 Nations for Wellness Tourism

Revenues 2015 (int’l and domestic combined) – and global rank 2015 (vs 2013)

United States:	\$202.2 billion	1	(1)
Germany:	\$60.2 billion	2	(2)
France:	\$30.2 billion	3	(3)
China:	\$29.5 billion	4	(9)
Japan:	\$19.8 billion	5	(4)
Austria:	\$15.4 billion	6	(5)
Canada:	\$13.5 billion	7	(6)
UK:	\$13 billion	8	(10)
Italy:	\$12.7 billion	9	(7)
Mexico:	\$12.6 billion	10	(11)
Switzerland:	\$12.2 billion	11	(8)
India:	\$11.8 billion	12	(12)
Thailand:	\$9.4 billion	13	(13)
Australia:	\$8.2 billion	14	(16)
Spain:	\$7.7 billion	15	(14)
South Korea:	\$6.8 billion	16	(15)
Indonesia:	\$5.3 billion	17	(17)
Turkey:	\$4.8 billion	18	(19)
Russia:	\$3.5 billion	19	(18)
Brazil:	\$3.3 billion	20	(24)

According to the report, “The Chinese consumer’s appetite for wellness-focused travel is huge and growing, but the current infrastructure for delivering these services and experiences in China at an international standard is still limited,” noted Katherine Johnston, senior research fellow, GWI.

She said, given the country’s unique wellness ‘assets’ – from herbal medicine to energy work and martial arts – there is enormous potential for China to become both an international and domestic wellness tourism destination.

Most European countries, Japan, and Canada actually showed a decline in wellness tourism revenues since 2013 – and many fell slightly in the rankings – due to significant depreciation of the euro and other major currencies against the US\$ during this period.