

The Gleaner
Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE ISLAND OF JAMAICA
TOURISM

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PET TOURISM

NO MONKEY
BUSINESS

Pet tourism is no monkey business

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

PET TOURISM has the potential to increase Jamaica's tourist arrival by two per cent over the next five years, pushing the country's earnings to over US\$17 million, said researchers at the reputed University of Technology (UTech).

Nigel Cooper and Deanna Marchallick, programme directors at the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, led a feasibility study tagged 'Allowing Tourists to Be Accompanied by their Pet Dogs while Vacationing in Jamaica'.

The two presented their findings at a special presentation at the Wexford Hotel in Montego Bay two weeks ago.

"Some 20,000 more visitors could be travelling to Jamaica, if the applicable laws were amended," Cooper told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

The archaic Animal Act has been on the books since 1948. Currently, Jamaica allow dogs coming in from Great Britain, Northern Ireland or the Republic of Erie. However, those dogs must be quarantined for a 14-day period.

"Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture have indicated that the law, originally intended to guard against rabies, is in the process of being amended," said Cooper.

INCREASE IN PET VACATIONS

The research, funded by UTech Jamaica's Research Development Fund, reveals that with the growth of pet-friendly hotels in most developed countries, including the United States, many more owners are taking vacation with their pets.

"An estimated two million live animals are transported by airlines every year in the United States," stated Cooper.

The researchers reported that while there was no consensus among hoteliers in the main resort towns of



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

Dr Gaunette Sinclair-Maragh (left), head, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM), University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica in discussion with Nigel Cooper, programme director, SHTM, during the presentation of research findings of a feasibility study on Allowing Tourists to Be Accompanied by their Pet Dogs while Vacationing in Jamaica, presented by UTech, Jamaica researchers Nigel Cooper and Deanna Marchallick held Friday, April 7 at Wexford Hotel in Montego Bay.

Dr Paul Ivey, associate vice-president, Graduate Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship, UTech, Jamaica.

Negril, Montego Bay, and Ocho Rios, most were not opposed to the concept of dog-friendly services.

Many requested more details on the actual operations and the expected impact on other guests before they would fully commit to offering such services, said the researchers, while 97 per cent of the respondents from the Jamaica Veterinary Association supported a pet passport model.

Such a model already exists in other Caribbean islands such as St Lucia, Dominica, and The Cayman Islands. The pet passport system allows dogs that meet the requisite conditions, such as having a microchip with evidence of relevant treatments, to enter into the country without any quarantine.

The researchers highlighted that the pet passport system model used with other controls should provide sufficient safeguards against importing a dog with rabies into Jamaica.

“The establishment of pet-friendly hotels in Jamaica would also require amendments to aspects of the Public Health Act allowing dogs conditional access to public spaces such as restaurants,” Marchallick pointed out.

She added that public education and training of tourism industry and airport personnel would also play a critical role in addressing cultural norms and current behavioural attitudes towards dogs considered in other countries to be like family members by their owners.

TASK FORCE

The researchers are recommending the establishment of a multi-sector task force comprising representatives of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Tourism Product Development Company, the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), the parish councils, UTech, Jamaica and other relevant stakeholders to examine all the issues pertinent to the implementation of introducing a pet-tourism industry in Jamaica.

Dr Paul Ivey, associate vice-president, School of Graduate Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship who chaired the TEF-sponsored presentation ceremony, noted that UTech, Jamaica as a national university, is committed to undertaking “purpose-driven

Pet Passports?

The graphic illustrates the concept of pet passports for Jamaica. It features a map of Jamaica with key locations marked. Arrows point from the map to the flags of Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, and the United Kingdom, suggesting regional or international travel considerations. A central image shows a dog silhouette with a microchip icon and a question mark, indicating the focus on microchipping and identification. Below this is a sample pet passport form for a dog named 'Blue', a Rottweiler, with a microchip number and other details. At the bottom right, a group of various dogs is shown.

II. DESCRIPTION OF ANIMAL

1. Name: *Blue*
 2. Species: *Canine*
 3. Breed: *Rottweiler*
 4. Sex: *F*
 5. Date of birth: *14/09/10*
 6. Coat: *Short Black & Tan*
(colour and type)
*as stated by the owner

III. IDENTIFICATION OF ANIMAL

1. Microchip number: _____
 2. Date of microchipping: *before 09/05/12*
 3. Location of microchip: *top of shoulder*
 4. Tattoo number: _____
 5. Date of tattooing: *as above*

The identification must be verified before any new entry is made on this passport

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research directed at solving problems that have applicability and relevance to sectors in the society”.

He asserted that the research on the feasibility of establishing pet-friendly hotels to boost revenue in the tourism sector provides a good basis on which public policy can be impacted.

TEF’s recently appointed executive director, Dr Carey Wallace, concurred, positing that persons may be dismissive of the pet-tourism feasibility research. However, “integrating this particular niche market where families from overseas who include pets as members of their family can actually travel to Jamaica to holiday and enjoy the benefits of sea and sun ... is worth the expense in getting the research done”.

He suggested that the tourism niche may be best filled by smaller hotels which are better positioned to open their properties to families and their pets.

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Dr Carey Wallace, executive director, the Tourism Enhancement Fund.

Royalton Negril Resort and Spa and Hideaway welcome their first guests

SUNWING VACATIONS has announced that Royalton Negril Resort and Spa and Hideaway at Royalton Negril welcomed their first guests on March 31.

With the addition of these two new properties, vacationers can choose between four different Royalton Luxury Resorts islandwide (Royalton Blue Waters opened at the start of winter 2016 to complement the consistently popular Royalton White Sands), said the travel company group in a media release last week in Canada.

Set on one of Jamaica's most legendary beachfronts, Royalton Negril Resort and Spa combines a breathtaking natural setting with an array of luxurious amenities including unlimited reservation-free dining, stylish outdoor lounges, and nightly entertainment.

Younger travellers will appreciate the extensive pool complex, children's splash park, and complimentary kids and teen clubs. Families can also take advantage of a variety of land and non-motorised water sports such as kayaking or snorkelling, also offered at no extra charge.

ADULTS ONLY

Hideaway at Royalton Negril is an adults-only haven nestled in the heart of the resort that offers couples, and honeymooners in particular, a tranquil enclave where they can enjoy a dedicated beach area, adult-only infinity pool, and their own bar and restau-



Royalton Negril's general manager Courtney Miller (left) welcomes and cuts the ribbon with his first set of guests on March 31 at the newest resort in the hotel chain.

rant while still taking advantage of all the features of the wider resort.

President of Tour Operations Andrew Dawson



Royalton Negril guests in a jovial mood as they welcome the first set of guests to their new resort.

welcomed the news, stating: "Jamaica, especially the vacation hotspot of Negril, has long been one of our most consistently popular destinations. We already offer vacation packages to a number of leading resort chains in the area and are delighted to be offering travellers even more choice when it comes to luxury-accommodation options here."

Known as the 'Capital of Casual', Negril is famous for its stunning seven-mile beach and

legendary fiery sunsets. Many vacationers flock to the resort town to spend an evening savouring some of the island's finest jerked chicken at the famous Rick's Café while divers plunge from the vertiginous cliffs. The lush interior surrounding the resort destination offers plenty of options for explorations – from ATV safaris that lead past mountain villages and thundering waterfalls to heritage tours of rum estates and old plantation houses.

Local bedding company lands \$60m contract with Hilton Hotel

LOCAL BEDDING company Therapedic Caribbean has won a \$60 million contract to supply mattresses and box foundations for the refurbishing of the 489-room Hilton Rose Hall hotel, Montego Bay.

The hotel, managed by Aimbridge Resorts, is owned by the Sagcor Group, which pushed to have the items manufactured in Jamaica.

This arrangement means that the Hilton International hotel chain has made an exception to its long-standing procurement procedures by appointing a Jamaican bedding manufacturer as a preferred supplier of customised sleep products to the hotel's international specifications.

The items were delivered on time in January this year.

"It was a rigorous bidding process, and we were selected above all the other Jamaican companies that tendered. We are very proud of



Aswad Morgan

this achievement, especially as this was the first time the Hilton International hotel chain was signing a Jamaican bedding company in keeping with its strict quality and design standards," said Aswad Morgan, director of Therapedic Caribbean – a member of the Morgan Group.

Hotel chains worldwide are increasingly placing significant emphasis on the design and construction of their beds due to the important role they play in the overall guest experience.

"What's the point of having



Therapedic Caribbean facility at Naggo Head, Portmore.

great food, a nice pool, and a terrible bed? It has to be the total package to meet guests' expectations," added Morgan.

According to the company director, Sagcor's tenacity and insistence on buying local is commendable because by so doing, the Jamaican bedding manufacturers were challenged to show the Hilton International chain that the island has the

expertise, capabilities, capacity, modern plant facilities, and a quality workforce that can do as good a job as anywhere else in the world and within the given timelines.

The director of Therapedic Caribbean noted that the execution of the work has been well received by both the local and international representatives of the Hilton Hotel International chain.

"This was because of the way we went about both the production and execution of the job. All goods were delivered seamlessly in 40-foot containers, and we did our best to communicate with the relevant hotel representatives on projected delivery times so they could prepare for each delivery. In fact, we set some very high production and execution standards among our team members, and that approach paid off. We have an amazing team," Morgan noted.

Lauding the company, John Miles, hotel manager at Hilton Rose Hall, said that he was very proud that a local bedding manufacturer could "step up to the plate" and execute at such high levels in terms of delivery management, product quality, and professionalism.

"This new sleep system is guaranteed to heighten our guests' sleep experience and we are delighted that it was made here in Jamaica."

Reggae Sumfest and Destination Jamaica reap real rewards

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) will ramp up promotions of Destination Jamaica in international markets as part of its renewed sponsorship of the week-long 'Red Stripe Presents Reggae Sumfest', slated for Montego Bay, July 16-22.

This is the 25th staging of the event, which continues to grow following a revision of the format last year. The new format shifts the focus of the festival to re-establish Jamaica as the place where reggae and dancehall music flourish.

Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook has high expectations for the reception of the JTB efforts as Jamaican music and culture appeals to large groups within Latin America, Europe and Asia. "The JTB places great effort on using authentic cultural events as an attractor for increasing visitors to Jamaica," said Pennicook.

"Reggae Sumfest, with its focus on truly Jamaican music, has great appeal to a wide audience, and fits squarely into our marketing strategy. We truly believe the festival has the potential to draw more people to the island for an experience of a lifetime."

Managing director of Down-sound Entertainment, organisers of the festival, Josef Bogdanovich, welcomes the renewal of the partnership with JTB. "The JTB has excellent marketing machinery in travel markets and this supports our aim to open up our music and culture to overseas markets. The JTB will also help us to encourage residents to vacation in the beauty that is Jamaica."

Capitalising on the global affinity for the Reggae Sumfest brand, the 2016 hi-definition broadcast and 360° live streams showcased the festival free to over 500,000 live individual views. A further two million-plus views on YouTube, one week after the festival, signalled increased global demand for the event.

FAN PARTICIPATION

Following the 2016 festival, there are some 90,000 videos taken from the live stream now being actively watched on YouTube. "Fan participation on this level has never been seen globally like this before. We are looking for ways to expand the access that the world has to Jamaican music and the live stream and partnerships, such as that with the JTB, provide that opportunity for us," stated Bogdanovich.

Reggae Sumfest takes place in Montego Bay, St James, and kicks off on Sunday, July 16 with a Beach Party then moves into the Sumfest Sunset Yacht Party on Monday, July 17. The staple All-White Party at Pier One happens on Tuesday, July 18 followed by Sumfest Blitz on Wednesday, July 19. On Thursday, July 20 Pier One will play host to the exciting Sumfest Heavyweight Clash, then Festival Night 1 at Catherine Hall on Friday, July 21 and culminates Saturday, July 22, with the pulsating rhythms of music and Jamaican culture.

Early-bird tickets and travel packages went on sale exclusively on www.eventbrite.com, in March.

Travelling at the speed of technology: Travel 2017 trends and forecasts

Arthur Chapin
Contributor

THE PACE of innovation across every industry and every company is astounding today – from natural language processing and data sciences to artificial intelligence and virtual reality. How exactly these mega trends are going to affect our industry, and hoteliers specifically, remains to be seen, but we do know that tomorrow will look very different from today.

The world is a lot flatter as a result of consumers' undying thirst for adventure. Combine that enthusiasm for travel with more disposable income, more information about the wealth of culture and experiences that await them, and a smartphone with which to book a trip, display a boarding pass or check into a hotel room, and you have an almost combustible recipe for growth and innovation.

We're fascinated by this, and work daily to understand, harness and apply the technology that will provide the best consumer travel experience and create the best business opportunities for hoteliers. In turn, consumer experience should dictate and drive hotels offerings – so hoteliers can give their guests relevant, timely, and tech-forward experiences.

TECH-FORWARD

It is not a question of whether the travel industry grows, but rather how emerging technologies and platforms will shape that growth – from artificial intelligence and virtual reality to chat bots and completely self-managed mobile check-ins. This is critical, and something that we are already building for and strategising around.

Since travel is visual and experiential by nature, augmented and virtual reality is a natural fit. Layer-



Arthur Chapin

ing historical knowledge into travel destinations and landmarks, or bringing travel experiences to those who can't travel, maps to the very nature of travel – curiosity and personal growth.

Personalisation and simplicity are core consumer demands today. As a service-oriented industry, we need to meet this need. From increasing the efficiency of natural language processing for real-time chat bots to voice computation with Amazon Echo and Siri, hotels need to get smarter about how technology interacts with consumers.

MOBILE NOW

Mobile now exceeds 50 per cent of our traffic and 40 per cent of our transactions, and this share will continue to grow in the coming years. Mobile is not only a platform where people browse for offers. The mobile experience is the only expe-

rience that customers use. People now want to be decoupled from devices and just consider an interaction with a travel brand, similar to a conversation with a friend they can start and stop at any time, independent of the device.

By allowing real-time conversations with hotels via mobile, through natural language growth and chat bots, consumers will have a better user experience and hoteliers will continue to make themselves accessible to consumers in new formats and platforms.

CONSUMER CONSCIOUS

To us, it's not big data – it's just data. It is big by nature. Today, we have 60,000 servers handling 50 petabytes (50 million gigabytes!) of data – and absorbing over one billion air searches per month. How and why consumers dream about, research, and purchase travel, is critically important to us.

Tourism seeks a central development role

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ONE OF the most common complaints about tourism is that it does not spread the wealth it creates into rural and urban communities. This is particularly so in larger Caribbean nations like Jamaica where many thousands are engaged in agriculture, opportunity and education are limited, and where urban drift has resulted in poverty and criminality.

The criticism is that despite the industry accounting for 14.6 per cent of the Caribbean's GDP in 2014, tourism directly and indirectly employing around 15 per cent of the region's workforce, and the industry probably contributing much more in other ways that are not statistically captured, its impact on development is not universal.

The reasons are largely related to the manner in which the industry developed.

Based on sun, sea, and sand, and a narrow perspective on the part of most early hotel and resort developers, the Caribbean created a product that, for the most part, is largely contained and unchallenging. That is to say, it does little to offer what increasing numbers of younger visitors now require: authenticity and experience.

While there is absolutely nothing wrong with the Caribbean's beach-facing model for which there will always be a market, it has had the effect of limiting the potentially much wider developmental benefits that the industry could create.

Put more directly, not enough has been done in the past to involve those in non-coastal locations and other sectors, particularly agriculture, by creating opportunity



David Jessop

for those who live in cities and on the land.

BARTLETT'S THRUST IN DIVERSIFYING THE OFFERINGS

There are indications that there is a thrust to diversify the market even more than ever, particularly in Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic – in ways that are likely to significantly broaden the region's tourism offering and spread the industry's benefits more widely.

Speaking about this recently, Jamaica's tourism minister, Edmund Bartlett, said that working with the private sector, he hopes to diversify significantly the country's tourism offering.

"We are trying to bring the wealth of tourism into the communities that are in rural areas like the Blue Mountains and our cities, starting with Kingston. The concept is a low-density, low-impact, soft tourism which drives a different type of demographic. It will bring a mixture of nature and creativity, with additional efforts on our part to include some hard infrastructure to enable access," he said.

His aim is to encourage higher-



spending, more adventurous millennials and baby boomers, who lead new trends in tourism, to visit and experience what Kingston and its surrounding parishes have, by offering authentically Jamaican music, parties, carnival, rural and urban experiences, cuisine, culture, heritage and history.

Separately, Nicola Madden-Greig, in her capacity as chair of Jamaica's gastronomy tourism network, cites as an example, the country's new Jamaican Blue Mountain Culinary Trail. The objective, she says, is for visitors to have culinary experiences, hike mountain trails, stay in bed and breakfasts, and see and experience

the country in a loosely organised way, while preserving the area's integrity and uniqueness.

"In no way are we seeking to push millions of tourists into this area. Currently, the trail receives most of its business from the so-called weekend warriors; typically, locals with visiting family and friends. But the objective now is to increase visits during the week from international travellers, giving business owners a steadier revenue stream," she says.

UNTWO'S GLOBAL CONFERENCE

Government and the private sector's initiatives have a broader significance.

In Montego Bay this November, Jamaica will host the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) 'Global Conference on Partnerships for Jobs and Inclusive Growth through Sustainable Tourism'. Then, governments from around the world will consider how tourism models now being developed by Jamaica and others might have global relevance.

If the Jamaica and the region can demonstrate that tourism can be used to create benefits for all – the opportunity could emerge for the Caribbean, one of the world's most dependent on the industry – the sustainable development of tourism could become a future UN goal.



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The lounge at Melia Braco Village.

Bridal Lounge for Melia Braco

Barbara Ellington
Contributor

SATURDAY, APRIL 8 was special for the Melia Braco Village all-inclusive team. The property saw the addition of its elegant and specious bridal lounge.

Located in the hotel's lush gardens, the lounge was born out of the need for a space in which to house prospective brides and grooms when they came for consultations.

Director of sales and marketing for the hotel, Angella Bennett, said available space was converted to the bridal lounge aptly dubbed Romance.

"Our marketing manager, Nersibelis Rodriques-Burrows, and I put it together with the blessing of our general manager, Dimitris Kosvogiannis," Bennett said.

She said the multi-purpose lounge includes a social area with a wedding specialist's office, an extended area where make-up for bride can be applied, two wardrobes for gowns,

and a pedestal where the bride can fit and do final alterations on her gown, if necessary.

"We also have a spa teaser station and someone who can create signature ice cream in the theme colours of the wedding," Bennett said. She added that venue can also be used to host a pre-wedding cocktail reception in lieu of a rehearsal dinner.

ELEGANT AMBIANCE

The ambience says elegance, comfort, style and a worry-free experience for that most special day in a bride's life.

For Saturday's opening of Romance, the first couple to use the new facility got a taste of the offerings which included champagne cocktails upon arrival, a lavish buffet of sweet and savoury nibbles and canapes, a well stocked bar of high-end liquors, live background music, signature ice cream, and top-class service from the hotel's staff.

The décor utilises soft pastels of

beige, pewter, slate and shades of grey, aquamarine and cream with floral arrangements, and accent pieces with cosy sofas and other seating nooks, resulting in the perfect atmosphere for private conversations and gatherings.

Bennett said the hotel now has a special arrangement with global brand, Destination Weddings for the Melia hotels internationally, and Braco will be among the destinations to be offered to clients.

Guests of Melia Jamaica Braco Village will get an all-inclusive package when they book their stay at the property. Best of all is the free W-Fi access at all points on the property.

Kurt Allen, son of Governor General Sir Patrick and Lady Allen, and Lebanese Reem Sabbagh, were the first couple to experience the delights of Romance. They were accompanied by some 40 family members and friends from the United States. Their wedding took place at the hotel on Sunday, April 9.

Easter celebration at Sandals Negril



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Every Bunny deserves love! Team members from various departments across Sandals Negril flock the Easter Bunny as he hopped around the resort.



An eggs-pert front office agent! Sandals Negril's Easter Bunny made a quick stop by the front desk to pay Romaine (left) and Keisha a visit.



Guests at Sandals Negril, Leopold Filiatraolt (left) and Danielle Martel have so much love for the Easter Bunny, they could not help but plant kisses on him.

Sandals Negril guests, Robert and Elaine Garnett are a picture of joy when they spotted the Bunny along the beach.

Tourism – Best investment route for Montego Bay

AS THE Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry seeks to lead the drive for investment in the resort city, Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett has pointed to tourism as a major catalyst for growth.

Bartlett was the keynote speaker at the business panel discussion of the recently staged Invest MoBay seminar, hosted by the chamber at the Montego Bay Convention Centre. Stating that "investment goes where it is invited, and stays where it is appreciated," Bartlett explored what Montego Bay was doing to invite investment.

"Montego Bay, for us to talk investment, the first and most important element that we must demonstrate is social stability," he advised.

Looking at stability from the viewpoint of the relationship between people in the different communities and how that relates to tourism, Bartlett underlined the importance of safety, security and seamlessness.

He also pointed to the importance of Montego Bay having readily available data about its demography, providing information about people and the size of the market, financial institutions, academic offerings and access to technology.

In all this, Bartlett said the role of the public sector is to create an enabling environment "to provide information for you with regards to policies and the framework within which business and investment can operate".

He stressed that to enable legislation and regulation, Government had to be informed and have a schedule of available key investment options. There must be readiness to respond to new investment opportunities, bearing in mind that innovation was central to the process of

creating and building new and exciting vistas, he noted. "So, we shouldn't be in a position where we lock ourselves into traditional investment forms and traditional industrial activities or traditional service activities. We must also be in a position where we open our minds to new investments, to new ideas, to new processes and to new systems," said Bartlett.

ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY

He also underscored the need to be in a position to absorb new ideas and new investment, advising that the absorptive capacity "is what truly determines whether Montego Bay will get further investment or not".

Tourism, he said, had the greatest opportunity for supporting the economy "and is what has given the highest level of penetration within the Montego Bay community and has the greatest level of resilience and potential for sustainability".

He said experiences are what now drive tourism and Montego Bay, regarded as the fastest growing city in the region, "will always offer numerous experiences that will be attractive to visitors".

To enable a sustainable tourism product and to drive investment, Bartlett said the Sangster International Airport is to be expanded with the customs and immigration halls undergoing significant expansion and the runway extended to accommodate larger and more powerful aircraft. "We have to expand Montego Bay airport, look to bringing in new facilities and to use new technology more effectively so that we have a seamless flow of visitors," said the tourism minister.



CONTRIBUTED

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (centre) being escorted to the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Invest MoBay seminar at the Montego Bay Convention Centre by general manager of the centre, Ditty Guise, and assistant general manager, NCB Corporate Banking Division, Winston Lawson.

DISCOVER JAMAICA

The many alluring reasons to staycation

HAVE YOU ever been to Firefly near Ocho Rios to tour the historic home of playwright Noel Coward? Did you know it was also the location of a pirate look-out with remarkable views of the north coast? What about the eastern end of the island, which has the best surfing beaches like Long Bay Beach in Portland and Makka Beach in St Thomas? When was the last time you drank peanut or cowskin soup at Friendship Gap in St Mary or toured the Hampden Sugar Plantation in Trelawny?

At first glance, some may ask if these places and experiences are available in Jamaica. The answer is a resounding yes! There are so many iconic and hidden gems in Jamaica. No wonder we are seen as the jewel of the Caribbean. This is because of the many authentic and unforgettable experiences available for all throughout the year.

“Whether it is to rest, discover new things, meet up with loved ones, or to have a unique experience, you can enjoy Destination Jamaica. And it is not cost prohibitive,” said Marcia McLaughlin, deputy director of tourism, marketing. “The unique features of the island make the destination such an easy place to sell for us at the Jamaica Tourist Board, and it is these treasures that we want all Jamaicans to experience every day of the year.”

TIME TO PLAN

As the summer months approach, it is an ideal time to plan an on-island vacation and experience the bountiful and exhilarating things to do here in Jamaica, the Home of All Right. Amazing encounters await in nooks and crannies across the island, giving persons exciting opportunities to hop from parish to parish. Here is a sneak peek at some of the treasures waiting for you to experience in each resort area on your next staycation.

Port Antonio: Go snorkelling at Monkey Island, where you will see



The Montego Bay Cultural Centre in Sam Sharpe Square.



Surfing at Makka Beach in St Thomas.

Dolphins swimming. Surf at Boston Bay Beach, or devour some succulent jerk at Boston, the home of jerk cuisine.

Ocho Rios: Experience an adventure like no other at Fire Hole/Windsor Spring in St Ann, the only mineral spring on the island

that can be lit; stroll through Shaw Park Gardens, an oasis that offers a panoramic view of Ocho Rios.

St Mary: One of the enduring

structures of the island's past is the Spanish Bridge in Newstead, St Mary. Swing from the bridge and plunge into the White River below. Take a trip to Johnny and Peggy Waterfalls in St Mary, two of the parish's best-kept secrets. Then there is Rio Nuevo, the battle site of the Spanish and the British combat.

Montego Bay: Take in the beautiful architecture of the Montego Bay Cultural Centre as you view displays in the art gallery and museum. It hosts live performances and has a bistro, an artisan village, and a gift shop. Tour the Greenwood Great House or take the Falmouth Walking and Cooking Tour.

South Coast: Reliable Adventures in Bluefields Westmoreland offers nature tours THAT include bird and butterfly interactions and an established fish sanctuary. Bluefields is also the home to one of Sir Henry Morgan's Jamaican residences. End the day with a farm-to-table dinner by moonlight at Jakes Hotel.

Negril: Let the rejuvenating water of Mayfield Falls soothe your aching muscles. Another adventure awaits at Rhodes Hall Plantation. Tour the crocodile reserve, view myna birds, seagulls, peacocks, pelicans, sandpipers, and even herons.

Kingston: Visit the historic Emancipation Square in Spanish Town, the site where the Emancipation Proclamation was read, or ride the waves as you surf the frothy waters of Bull Bay. Journey to the School of Vision in the Blue Mountains and get a unique insight into the way of life of the Rastafarians. While in the Blue Mountains, tour one of the coffee estates and discover why Jamaican coffee is arguably the best in the world. Further to the east, at the Easington community in St Thomas, you can tour the residence of National Hero George William Gordon.

Discover the magic that is Jamaica when you vacation here at home. By taking this exciting journey, you will make unforgettable memories with your loved ones one adventure at a time.



Chukka's Marc Melville (right) and John Byles (second right) explain the Chukka Good Hope tour to Jamaica Tourist Board representatives during a recent tour of the Trelawny attraction.



Marc Melville points to a painting depicting the original Good Hope Great House, where Chukka currently operates in Trelawny.

Chukka will continue to invest in Jamaica

DIRECTOR OF Group Revenue and New Development at Chukka Caribbean Adventures, Marc Melville, said that his company is convinced that Jamaica's tourism is heading in the right direction and, therefore, will continue to invest whenever the need arises.

Melville, in an interview with **Hospitality Jamaica**, added that Chukka's recent US\$4 million investment in the Good Hope, Trelawny, facility should be viewed in the context that the company sees tourism as a driving force for the country's economy and "us

doing our part to help promote the growth agenda".

"We started operation at Good Hope in October 2010, offering ATV, dune buggy, zipline, river tubing and kayak," Melville pointed out. "Culinary tours were also available such as Taste of Jamaica and High Tea."

In 2013, Melville said that phase two of the expansion plan began where operations were enhanced by adding the challenge course, bird aviary, pool, Walkerswood Jerk Centre, a covered dining area, and the Appleton Rum Tasting Experience. Two historic buildings, he

said, were restored to house the Jablum Café and Appleton Bar.

"Phase three expansion was designed to create an environment that encourages family fun and allows guests to be as adventurous as they want to be. This area now offers a bar, dining area, waterslide, zero-entry pool, and terraced river-walk to the waterfall," Melville added.

MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

"As we continue to grow throughout the Caribbean, we aim to provide our guests with memorable experiences while maintain-

ing the natural beauty that each destination has to offer. With locations across Jamaica, Grand Turk, and Belize, we offer a vast variety of tours that cater to thrill seekers, history buffs, and adventurers of all ages."

He said that his management team is very excited about the Good Hope property, adding, "There, you will find some very exciting adventures and also a little gastronomy with the first-class restaurant facility we have included.

"At Chukka, we have a reputation for excellence, and so we have to constantly be on our

toes, ensuring that our large customer base is satisfied with the product we are delivering," he said.

Located in Falmouth, Trelawny, Chukka Good Hope boasts over 2,000 acres of lush plant life, primary jungle, scenic views of the Cockpit country, the Majestic Martha Brae River, as well as the historic great house. Once a working village and sugar plantation, the 1700s Good Hope Estate is the Caribbean's first and only nature adventure park with an unparalleled variety of activities and cultural experiences.

Sandals Foundation helps nearsighted student to look ahead

ACCORDING TO child development experts, in first grade, children transform into true readers. They read a variety of texts for pleasure, write stories, notes and descriptions, and enjoy sharing their writing with others.

For six-year-old Jermanie Brown, first grade at the Green Island Primary School is coming to an end and he is yet to achieve many of these developmental wins. First-grade for the youngster was rife with frustration and lack of interest, and the shy and eager -to-learn child was seen as a troublemaker who constantly disrupted class, hindering others from learning.

It wasn't that he was rude, or even wanted to be. All Jermanie wanted was to see the board like his classmates could, or read his book without holding it a mere inch or two from his face. Not being able to do that engendered disruptive mannerisms.

SEVERE MYOPIA

Diagnosed with severe myopia at age two, Jermanie's inability to see objects from a distance has been a source of discomfort for him. The situation got even worse when the glasses he received in basic school became less effective when he transitioned to the primary level.



Jermanie Brown demonstrates his reading skills under the tutelage of his teacher, Saleem Johnson.

"My son got his eye condition from both sides of the family, I am nearsighted. I knew he needed glasses when he started school. I sought help from the church and was able to purchase the glasses. Unfortunately, the lenses were too weak for his condition, but he had to continue using it because it was the best we could do," shared Jermanie's mother, Tecia Brown.

This challenge took a toll on the child shortly after starting grade one and he lost interest in learning. "When Jermanie came into my class in September, he was a very shy stu-

dent who always tried to do his work. In early October, he stopped doing anything that required reading or writing and was always distracting others. I noticed this shift in his attitude and asked him why he wasn't doing his work. He told me he wasn't able to see the board or the words in his books. I surmised that the glasses he was wearing weren't helping and that was when I brought the situation to the principal," teacher Saleem Johnson shared.

Principal Vascianne Moseley immediately penned a letter to the Sandals Foundation in his bid to



Jermanie Brown and his mother Tecia Brown (centre) make a happy picture alongside Green Island Primary School principal, Vascianne Moseley (right), and regional public relations manager for Sandals, Beaches and Grand Pineapple Negril, Jervene Simpson.

get some assistance for his student. "When I spoke to Jermanie's mother and realised she needed help to purchase the glasses, I immediately thought of Sandals Foundation and reached out to them. I knew once the foundation heard of the situation, they would have helped in any way they could," he shared.

And, helped they did.

The foundation was able to provide the additional funds needed to pay for special high-index glasses. In the few days that he has been using his glasses, Jermanie has been reading more, writing and participating in class. "I am forever thankful for the help and look forward to him doing well in school," shared an emotional Brown.

Jamaica's food, beauty captivate British chef

HE WAS on the island to promote British/Jamaican cuisine pairings, but Derbyshire-born Chef Alan Coxon also learnt a thing or two about the world-famous jerked chicken and the beautiful Blue Mountains.

Flying compliments of British Airways to the UK Food & Drink Market in Kingston on March 15-16, 2017, Chef Coxon was a special guest at a series of events hosted by the British High Commission to Jamaica, which saw UK firms interacting with representatives of Jamaican and other Caribbean islands from the hotel and restaurant distribution and manufacturing sectors.

A regularly featured chef on UK television, Chef Coxon is the author

of several cookbooks, including *Singles, Separated and Divided* and *Ready in Minutes*. He has, over the recent past, been travelling on behalf of 'Visit Britain' to promote British foods and ingredients.

His travels have taken him to India, Bulgaria, Serbia and now Jamaica, and he vows he will be back.

Among his 'valuable finds' were jerked chicken, jerked pork and Blue Mountain coffee, all of which he declared were "splendid". He also had praise for his colleague chefs at British Airways and noted, "in-flight meals can be challenging. You produce them on land, you keep them cool, then reheat in the air – the British Airways team does a pretty good job."



CONTRIBUTED

British television chef, Alan Coxon (centre), with British Airways' Diane Corrie (left), commercial manager, Caribbean, and Stacy Mansingh, sales support executive, at the official opening of the UK Food & Drink Market Visit 2017 at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel on March 16.

Sir Royston Hopkin to address excellence at CHIEF conference

RESPECTED CARIBBEAN hotelier Sir Royston Hopkin, KCMG, will address the importance of excellence in Caribbean tourism when he delivers the keynote presentation at this year's Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF), set to take place at the Hyatt Regency Miami, from June 2 to 4.

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) announced that Sir Royston, the chairman and managing director of Grenada's Spice Island Beach Resort, will highlight 'The Power to Excel' in his presentation, drawing upon his vast experience in the industry and pointing to the tremendous opportunity which the Caribbean has to differentiate itself as the world's hospitality leader in delivering exceptional service and a rich, diverse product in a sustained, natural environment.

"We have been blessed to lean on the counsel of Sir Royston throughout the years and are especially honoured that he has agreed to share his expertise and



Sir Royston Hopkin

experience with attendees of the region's most important tourism development conference focused on helping the industry to become more profitable and efficient," said Frank Comito, the Miami-based director general and CEO of CHTA, producers of the annual event.

EXEMPLARY VOLUNTEER

Comito added that Sir Royston is "an exemplary volunteer and award-winning hotelier who exudes excellence in everything he does". The message of excellence is especially appropriate, Comito stressed, because the conference also will honour and celebrate excellence through its various awards, including Hotelier of the Year, Employee of Year, Supervisor of Year, as well as the Taste of the Caribbean culinary awards.

CHIEF will also recognise Caribbean businesses that masterfully implement best practices in the categories of operations, sales and marketing, environmental sustainability, and social

responsibility.

Sir Royston is a former president of CHTA and Caribbean Hotelier of the Year and has received a Lifetime Achievement Award from CHTA and the Caribbean Tourism Organization and more recently, the Six Star Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences, which recognises his untiring service of more than 50 years to Grenada and the Caribbean region.

CHIEF, a high-level educational forum where the region's hospitality industry assembles to network, learn, share ideas and collectively brainstorm creative solutions to current challenges, features a number of general educational sessions. Topics include leveraging marketing potential, investing in sustainable tourism concepts, and the purchasing power of the LGBTQ community. Other more specialized sessions will focus on areas such as branding strategies, cost management, customer service, local sourcing and upselling.

JetBlue will serve Haiti's capital from more US cities than any other airline

JETBLUE HAS announced its intent to operate service between Port-au-Prince's Toussaint Louverture International Airport and Orlando International Airport later this year.

JetBlue intends to launch this route, which currently does not have non-stop service, in December pending government approval, a release from the airline states. Seats are expected to go out for sale in the coming weeks.

Orlando will become JetBlue's fourth focus city with service to Port-au-Prince. JetBlue currently offers non-stop flights to the Hait-

ian destination from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, Boston Logan International Airport, and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. JetBlue operates nearly a third of its capacity in the Caribbean and Latin America.

"Service between Orlando and Port-au-Prince will provide a valuable link between Haiti's capital city and many communities in central Florida that currently lack non-stop flights from their closest major airport," said John Checketts, vice-president of network planning, JetBlue. "Now,

with flights from four of our focus cities, JetBlue will connect more US cities with Port-au-Prince than any other airline."

NATURAL HARBOUR

Port-au-Prince is set on a natural harbour on the Gulf of Gonâve, making it one of the country's premier destinations. The city's layout is divided with the commercial areas near the water and the residential areas in the hills. JetBlue was also a large supporter of rebuilding efforts following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, partnering with agencies such as the American

Red Cross to help with aiding efforts.

"I am pleased to congratulate JetBlue on this new air route, which it is inaugurating, linking the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, with the city of Orlando," said Haiti's Minister of Tourism, Jessy Menos. "This new destination will have the merit of better serving Haitians and Americans wanting to visit both states. Thus, new opportunities are opening to the tourism sector and operators, and to tourists, this through the diversification of North American destinations. So, we say JetBlue,

congratulations."

Toussaint Louverture International Airport is the busiest in Haiti and recently underwent renovations, which increased the terminal's capacity to about 800,000 passengers per year. The Haitian government spent over \$6 million in the restoration of the airport.

JetBlue intends to serve the route with its 100-seat Embraer 190 aircraft, offering the airline's award-winning service and the most legroom in coach, as well as complimentary and unlimited name-brand snacks and soft drinks and free first-run Hollywood movies.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

A 'loader man' standing in the middle of the road, in full view of a policeman near the Half-Way Tree Transport Centre, at a spot not designated to pick up passengers.

Apart from now being unsightly, the big, red metal stalls in Half-Way Tree are contributing to the pedestrian traffic congestion at night.

Half-Way Tree and me

DOWNTOWN KINGSTON, especially the shopping districts to the north, south and west of Parade, is the commercial lifeblood of the city parish of Kingston. In the day, the area is one big melting cauldron of entrepreneurial zest, a magnet for bargain hunters from all over the island.

Yet, it is not a part of my mindset to go shop 'dung a Town'. I can't stand the hubbub of the place. Noise grates my last nerve. It invades and sickens every cell in my brain. Yet, I visit the 'Capital of Loudness' from time to time. I actually like the sights of industry, and the narratives. And Town is replete with stories; stories to make you laugh, tales to make your cry.

And, because I am not into the crying game, I do not venture to Town unless it is absolutely necessary. Now, I am having the same attitude towards Half-Way Tree, the noisy, pulsating heart of the parish of St Andrew. For, when night descends upon the land and people flee from Town, Half-Way Tree is transformed into one big 'bend-down plaza', a hub of unrivalled nocturnal activities, through which I have to navigate for the



In the middle of the sidewalk, a slippers vendor has laid out his footwear.



A hooded vendor hanging his wares on barricades last Saturday evening.

past three months.

It is utterly crazy! For most nights, it is either 'grand market' or 'August night'. Bumping and boring, blaring horns, screeching tyres, CD carts playing pirated music, sidewalk repaved with infringed DVD. People are in your face, shouting, "Cash for gold!" I am not a gold-digger. "Fifty dollars fit two gizzarda!" I only want one. "Baby, baby wipe!" My baby is now an 18-year-old man, out of my way.

New Kingston! Mountain View! Town! Papine! Campus! Mona Road! Barbican! Three Miles! Price Right! White Hall! Everywhere you go, someone, some man, is bellowing. The 'Boss' must be paid, and there are seats to be filled. Yet, your ears ring. You want to sprint, away from the rat race, to another place, where you will not see those red, unsightly metal stalls, pain for an already sore eye. When will they remove them? They, too, are in the way, in your way.

Send in the clowns. Don't bother, they are there, in front of the transport centre, dressed in knee-high,

floral and striped socks, and flip-flops, gloves, hoodies, straw hats, at night, perhaps sparing us the sight of bright orange, bleached faces, tender to the touch. Despite the 'No Vending' signs, they must. The periphery is ripe, there are throngs of passers-by.

NIGHT ON THE TOWN

And without warning, a big, yellow bus is coming at you from the main, as it turns into the transport centre, that gaudy, architectural monstrosity, the meeting place for many who are going absolutely nowhere, children in lipstick, school uniforms tucked away in their bags. It is their night on the town, and they are going to paint it red.

But not before the place is decorated with sundry items. No space is spared. Everywhere the spirit of enterprise greets you, staring into your face. Even if it means getting into your way, and refusing to move. And Half-Way Tree is full of spirits at night, those that people imbibe, and those for which you have to have four eyes to see.



Above: Passers-by viewing pirated DVD on the sidewalk in front of Mandela Park.



At left: These phallic-looking objects were erected in front of a popular bank to discourage vending, but when night comes vendors find them very useful.

EXCELSIOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Comperer for the food expo was the bubbly Sabrina Parkes (pink blouse).



There was much Jamaican food for the taking – at a price, of course.

School of Tourism, Hospitality & Entertainment Management's all-island tour 2017

IN AN effort to adequately prepare their students for the tourism sector, the Excelsior Community College's School of Tourism, Hospitality & Entertainment Management includes as many practical experiences as possible in their courses of study.

One such experience is the annual all-island tour for their students.

The objective of this exercise is to expose the students to Jamaica's tourism product offerings through participation in the attractions and tours, food and beverage and accommodation subsectors.

The 2016-2017 tour was executed recently, with the route being Kingston to the south coast, to the north coast and back to Kingston.

This experience has proven to be very useful over the years as the average student is likely to have limited knowledge of Jamaica's tourism products prior to their starting the course.

Once they have had this experience, some students are better able to understand principles taught in the courses as well as apply the knowledge from this experience



Cherrienne Scott, manager of the food expo, having a chat with one of her exhibitors, Ras Smoothies.

through class participation and graded work.

The tour is organised and coordinated by lecturers of the institution.

Hospitality Jamaica brings you highlights of the tour.

SOUTH COAST

- Black River Safari
- Man Culture Bus/Museum, in Abeokuta Nature Park,

WESTMORELAND

- Drive through Negril
- Sea Gardens Hotel (overnight)

NORTH COAST

- Greenwood Great House tour
- Prospect Plantation tour
- Riu Ocho Rios (overnight)

EAST COAST

- Jamaica Palace Hotel tour
- Boston Jerk Centre



A section of the fruits and vegetables display.



Donovan Stewart was a comedic and dramatic riot.