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Hospitality Jamaica


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WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2017

HUGE POTENTIAL FOR
HORTICULTURAL TOURISM

EXED TOURISM, HOSPITALITY
STUDENTS HOST FOOD EXPO

RESPONDING TO THE
RISE AND RISE OF
CUBAN TOURISM



**TROPICAL
BLISS**

EXPERIENCE PERSONAL
EUPHORIA IN THE WEST



CONTRIBUTED

A view of the beach at Tropical Bliss at Whitehouse in Montego Bay.

TROPICAL BLISS

Experience personal euphoria in the west

Janet Silvera
Senior Gleaner Writer

WESTERN BUREAU:

RESPLENDENT SUNSETS, scrumptious food, tranquillity and great entertainment are among the assets that Jamaica's newest beach attraction, Tropical Bliss, boasts.

One year after opening its doors, Tropical Bliss (formerly Tropical Beach), in Whitehouse, Montego Bay, has become one of the most popular venues for cruise ship passengers, destination management companies (DMCs), and locals.

"We are your one-stop shop that maintains high standards, ensuring that our clients, mainly Carnival

Cruise Line, continue to send their passengers here," Brian Thelwell, one of three directors, told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

His partners are Norman Deon, who is directly involved in the day-to-day running of the business, and Wayne Brown.

PRIVATE BEACH

Situated on 3 3/4 acres of land, the beach at Tropical Bliss is approximately 800 feet long, is private and free from harassment.

For the investors, the idea to develop a beach attraction in Montego Bay was borne out of the need for a location, given the closure and subsequent sale of the former Cornwall Beach.

"Beach options became limited, and after looking around, this offered the proximity to the cruise ship terminal and the hotels along the Elegant Corridor," explained Thelwell.

He was quick to point out that focus and special attention is paid to locals, who are given a big discounted rate to access the property, "because we know that when locals flock your place, the tourists will come".

In the year that Tropical Bliss has been operating, it has offered a hassle-free environment, Thelwell boasted, added that harassment was the bane of the industry.

In addition to filling the void left in the absence of public beaches, Tropical Bliss' presence has resulted in



PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

Co-owner of Tropical Bliss, Brian Thelwell.



Escoveitched fish and bammy, one of the many meals on the menu at Tropical Bliss.

PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

Chef Damian Kelly

employment for several persons in the Whitehouse community. A total of 32 people now have jobs and an additional six are employed temporarily on a cruise arrival day.

According to Thelwell, preferential treatment is given to residents who are trained in hospitality.

The beach is lined with several cabanas, which add a Balinese feature and on any given day, accommodates over 1,000 persons. Live entertainment on the beach is mastered by a coordinator fluent in three languages, while wheelchair ramps are located throughout the property.

“The physically challenged have no problem accessing the facility,” stated Thelwell.

Already in expansion mode, Tropical Bliss will be the only public beach in Montego Bay with a swimming pool and before long, a water park is to be added.

A state-of-the-art gift shop, multistorey dining room, sports bar and

jerk pit are now currently under construction.

The idea is to have a boardwalk, revealed Thelwell.

MOVIES, PARTIES AND WEDDINGS

Having accommodated last year’s Dream Weekend opening party, Tropical Bliss was also selected by Britjam for its all-white affair. Couples are exchanging vows regularly on the beach and the businesses in Montego Bay are utilising the beachside property for their office parties.

Lifetime Television’s **Married at First Sight** is one of two movies that will be filmed there, with the ‘Amazing Race’ set to take over the facility on May 26.

“We have brought a difference to beach life in Montego Bay and it’s working beautifully,” stated Thelwell.

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Tropical Bliss staff (from left) Anecia Streete, Rishawn Steele and Amanad Samuels.

Appleton Estate Rum Tour opens Seminar and Experience in Falmouth

FOR J. Wray & Nephew's Academy manager, Debbie Spence-Minott, it was simply an opportunity that was too good to pass up and one that was worth exploring ... an Appleton Rum Seminar and Experience concept in historic Falmouth.

It was a chance meeting on an overseas trip that got Spence-Minott in touch with the owners of a property that sits just within a whisker of the Falmouth Pier and which was begging for the right kind of attraction that would be able to woo the adventure-seeking passengers who have been calling on the port in droves, she tells **Hospitality Jamaica**.

With the Siloah, St Elizabeth, Appleton Rum Tour closed for massive refurbishing, this was the perfect opportunity. The plant reopens in October.

Spence-Minott described it like this: "The Appleton experience and the fact that this was a popular product worldwide meant that it could be packaged and marketed from almost anywhere," she shared.

The fact that it was so close to the historic cruise ship pier made the prospect even the more tantalising, she admitted.

"When they told me about the property, I just told myself that if it is what I was envisioning in my head, then maybe we were on to something special," she noted.

IDEAL LOCATION

Spence-Minott returned to Jamaica, did the inspection with the Appleton team, and immediately realised that with their Rum Tour in Trelawny under construction, they could take advantage of something very close to the biggest cruise port in the Caribbean, "and where we could somewhat duplicate the tour with a Rum Seminar and Experience concept. The rest, as they say, is history".

Last Friday, April 28, the academy manager took the media on a tour of the facility, stating that the idea was to continue giving visitors a



CONTRIBUTED

J. Wray & Nephew's Academy manager, Debbie Spence-Minott.

taste of the Appleton experience until the Rum Estate Tour is resumed in October so as to keep both the momentum and their customer base intact.

"J. Wray & Nephew Limited, a subsidiary of Gruppo Campari, is the sixth-largest player in the global beverage industry, with a portfolio of over 50 premium and super-premium brands marked and distributed in over 190 countries worldwide," she pointed out.

"It is an important story and experience that we share on our Appleton Estate Rum Tour in St Elizabeth. This is something we are

confident can be successfully duplicated here in Falmouth."

She said that the company is already seeing where a lot of interest is being generated and that guests who would not have had the time or the opportunity to experience St Elizabeth from faraway places like Ocho Rios will be more inclined to want to travel to Falmouth for the experience.

"Falmouth is strategically located and is in proximity to probably all the cruise-shipping ports and also to many of the hotels," she added. "Having a presence in this major tourist area is very good for Appleton and our products."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From left: Wife of Italian Ambassador, Michaela Barbagallo; J. Wray and Nephew's director of public affairs and sustainability, Tanikie McClCarthy-Allen; and Ambassador Armando Varricchio.



CONTRIBUTED

Italian Ambassador to the USA and Jamaica Armando Varricchio guesses the age of the Appleton rum.

Puerto Rico to host 2018 Caribbean Travel Marketplace

PUERTO RICO will host the 2018 edition of Caribbean Travel Marketplace, the Caribbean's largest marketing event, at the Puerto Rico Convention Center from January 30 to February 1, 2018.

Produced by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) in collaboration with the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, and the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association, next year's event will feature two days of business meetings that match hotels and destinations with online travel agents, tour operators, and Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) planners through a busy programme of thousands of pre-scheduled appointments.

"We are honoured to host the most important Caribbean tourism event of the year as we evolve our position as a regional leader in the meetings and conventions business," said Omar Marrero, executive director of the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority.

"CHTA's strategy to bring more MICE planners to next year's Marketplace is very well aligned with our objective to continue to grow this crucial category," said Marrero, who is also the executive director of the Puerto Rico Ports Authority and the Puerto Rico Public-Private Partnerships Authority.

"Puerto Rico takes great pride in announcing that this prestigious travel event will be returning to our island," said José Izquierdo, executive director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC). He said that the PRTC looks forward to working with CHTA officials, its members, and all on-island partners to welcome delegates to 'La Isla del Encanto' (The Island of Enchantment)."

"This is an excellent opportunity to partner on the ground with our regional affiliate," said Miguel Vega, chairman of the board of directors of the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association. He noted that the CHTA plays a key role in driving business to the destination and the region by developing and maintaining strong ties with global buyers interested in the Caribbean. "Caribbean Travel Marketplace is a marquee event that provides an excellent opportunity for stakeholders here to network with some of the world's leading travel professionals, and, more importantly, share what we offer on our islands to the world."

LOOKING TO PARTNER

In a joint statement, CHTA's president Karolin Troubetzkoy and CEO Frank Comito said: "We look forward to returning to Puerto Rico and partnering with both the public and private sectors in such an incredibly welcoming destination."

The CHTA officials, whose organisation represents the interests of national hotel and tourism associations, noted that they anticipate working with local partners, including the team at Meet Puerto Rico and destination management companies, to attract global meeting planners as well as buyers who specialise in niche markets such as spas and wellness.

In 2017, Caribbean Travel Marketplace, hosted by The Bahamas, attracted 114 buyer companies from 20 countries. More than 1,100 delegates from 31 countries participated in more than 10,000 pre-scheduled appointments.

The conference opens on the evening of Tuesday, January 30, and will be preceded by educational sessions that day. For more information, visit www.chtamarketplace.com or call +1 305 443-3040.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The water park at Jewel Runaway Bay.

Jewel Runaway Bay celebrates five years with week of activities

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

SINCE OPENING its doors five years ago, Jewel Runaway Bay Beach and Golf Resort has risen to become one of the top family resorts on the island.

As a way of saying thanks, particularly to the many loyal Jamaicans who have made the property their favourite holiday haven, the hotel will be presenting a week of activities to mark its sapphire anniversary from May 28 to June 3.

The week-long celebration brings together guests and staff with friendly competitions as well as teamwork events. The week begins on Sunday, May 28, with a 10 a.m. thanksgiving service in the hotel's ballroom.

Included in the activities is a charity duck race around the lazy river, a 5K Jewel Runaway Bay Run, a talent show, the Manager's Anniversary Cocktail Party, a nine-hole golf tournament, a poolside barbecue, and a beach extravaganza.

THE HIGHLIGHT

However, the highlight of the week will be on Friday, June 2, when the hotel hosts an event for the St Christopher's School for the Deaf at the Jewel Lagoon Water Park.

Additionally, spa enthusiasts will benefit from a huge 50 per cent dis-



Scott Robbins and staff with the TripAdvisor Award.

count on a second spa treatment when booking two spa treatments during a stay at the hotel between May 26 and June 7. The discount will apply to spa treatments of equal or lesser value to the first.

Great service and fun and innovative programming have always been the motto at Jewel Runaway Bay and have helped the resort achieve top Trip Advisor ratings and awards year after year. And according to general manager, Scott Robbins, the management and staff at the hotel are thrilled to be part of the fifth anniversary celebration.

Under Robbins' leadership, Jewel Runaway Bay has made great strides since it opened five years ago.

Of note, the hotel launched what is considered one of the

Caribbean's largest and most successful waterparks, Jewel Lagoon. There was also a modern redesigning of all rooms and suites; the addition of the Moonstone by Vincenzo Italian Restaurant; and a more formal dining experience at the lovely Platinum Restaurant.

Last year, The Great Escape Restaurant was added to the Runaway Bay Golf Club and is now open to the public.

"Our goal is to make sure our guests enjoy each and every moment when they are with us," Robbins said. He added: "We want to make memories that will last a lifetime and that our local community of guests keeps coming back for more fun, and this is a great way to say thanks to our guests and to our staff."

Responding to the rise and rise of Cuba's tourism

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WHEN THE former United States president, Barack Obama, announced that he was easing travel restrictions on US citizens wishing to visit Cuba, a frisson ran through the industry in the rest of the Caribbean.

Seminars and conferences were hastily convened, papers produced, and Caribbean governments sought to understand the extent to which Cuba's opening to the US market might divert visitors.

However, their fears were largely offset by the absence at that time of scheduled airlift from major US cities, and then as US visitor numbers grew, by capacity constraints in Havana, rapidly rising room rates, and relatively poor service levels.

As a result, two years on, and because, more generally, Caribbean visitor arrivals and revenues grew strongly in 2016, most concerns about competition from Cuba dissipated.

Despite this, the industry in the region would be wise to consider more closely Cuba's development plans, which suggest that it is aware of its shortcomings and is now moving rapidly to address them and to diversify its product.

The reason for this is that its economy is struggling and will have to rely more and more on growing its tourism product, increasing arrivals, and maximising revenue.

Although some 2016 Cuban industry forecasts had suggested



Two passengers deplane from JetBlue flight 387 waving a United States and Cuban national flag in Santa Clara, Cuba on August 31, 2016. JetBlue 387 is the first commercial flight between the US and Cuba in more than a half century.



David Jessop

that tourism growth might slow in 2017, exactly the opposite has happened, and arrivals are now surging from multiple markets.

CUBA'S VISITORS UP

Speaking about this recently, Cuba's Minister of Tourism, Manuel Marrero, said that in the first quarter of 2017, visitor arrivals grew by 14 per cent compared to the same period in 2016, a trend, he said, that he expected to continue throughout the summer months because of increased airlift.

The minister said that while his ministry was gratified by the increase, it was now focusing on encouraging

visitors to stay for longer, as well as on providing a more diversified offering and improving service levels. He also noted the importance of the role being played by private rental properties and restaurants, which, he said, were creating new possibilities to cope with the steady growth in tourist arrivals.

His remarks come as articles are appearing in the state media emphasising the economic importance of industry and the country's ability to grow and improve its tourism sector.

Coverage in recent months indicates a new focus on encouraging visitors to stay in provincial cities; the creation of new resorts and city-centre tourism away from Havana; encouraging investment in real estate, in part alongside the 13 golf courses now under construction; offering external parties management of 100 per cent Cuban-owned marinas; the creation of fishing and diving centres in protected areas; the establishment of an international equestrian club; and the construction of theme parks, using the latest technology.

Cuba is also focusing on new hotel developments, the remodeling of existing facilities, and creating more four- and five-star properties in Havana in particular. One recent report said that the country's hotel product is now growing at a rate of 2,400 rooms per year, a figure expected to double to 5,000 rooms per year by 2019. In addition, non-state hotels and rooms are being brought into state marketing programmes on the basis

that all forms of management in the sector can participate equally.

All this is happening as the country's tourism infrastructure is being upgraded, with many of the country's airports, including Havana's, undergoing major changes, and cruise ship docking facilities are being expanded to meet the rapidly growing number of cruise ship arrivals.

Just as significantly, given the country's relatively low levels of repeat business, there is an emphasis on improving service levels and repeat business, with agreements recently signed, for example, with Portugal, to develop training-exchange programmes. Cuba has also said that it will regrade all tourist facilities following a thorough analysis of each establishment and will do more to develop and update 'specialised tourism', including heritage and eco-tourism.

While any change in US policy may slow Cuba's tourism growth, industry experts suggest that it is diversifying its markets rapidly and has the potential to become the second most important tourist destination in Latin America after Mexico, ultimately catering for 10-12 million visitors a year.

All of this suggests increased competition in the Caribbean market and the importance of plans of the kind being developed by Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, to develop with Cuba and the Dominican Republic multideestination tourism.

Ethiopian Airlines to be official African carrier for GOJ UNWTO Global Conference

MINISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett has announced that one of Africa's largest airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, has been designated the official carrier for African states attending the 'UNWTO, Government of Jamaica and World Bank Group Conference on Jobs & Inclusive Growth: Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism', scheduled for November 27-29, 2017, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

The decision was made during

Bartlett's just-concluded trip to Ethiopia, following a meeting between Bartlett and Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam.

"Ethiopian Airlines is one of the most accomplished airlines in Africa. It has excellent connectivity into the United States, which will make that arrangement work perfectly. In fact, Ethiopian Airlines has codeshare arrangement with United Airlines, which offers daily



BARTLETT

flights into Montego Bay. So I am very happy to be partnering with them for this very important conference," Bartlett said.

EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY

He added: "The airline has shared that this is an excellent opportunity to become the carrier for the entire African region, and to be able to bring people into the Caribbean for the conference would be a good start to setting up

connectivity within the region. We think also that the opportunity for the exchange of ideas, practices, technology, and marketing expertise are going to serve us well in those four countries in particular."

Bartlett, who was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to attend the 59th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for Africa and a High-level Meeting on Chinese

PLEASE SEE AIR, 16



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Couples Tower Isle, Sans Souci say thanks to staff



PHOTOS BY CARL GILCHRIST

Alecia Thomas with her General Manager's Award.



Guest performer Cameal Davis managed to get General Manager Pierre Battaglia on stage to help her sing 'Spotlight'.

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

TEAM MEMBERS at Couples Tower Isle and Couples Sans Souci hotels in St Mary were showered with lots of gifts for their contributions to the respective properties during 2016, as the resorts hosted back-to-back staff awards ceremonies last Wednesday and Thursday.

Couples Tower Isle kick-started the two-day recognition exercise lauding their workers, who were fêted by General Manager Leonard Henry, who was joined by the resort chain's chief operations officer (COO), Glenn Lawrence; vice-president of operations Gary Stephens; director of operations, Abe Issa; and director of human resources, Petra-Ann Williamson, to share in the occasion.

Carlesia Marshall from the Accounts Department was named Team Leader of the Year for 2016.

The General Manager's Award went to Andrew Miller from the Housekeeping Department; Manager of the Year recipient was front office manager Gretchen Cadien, and the Junior Manager award went to Tizan Coore of human resource. The kitchen was chosen as Department of the Year.

MORE CELEBRATION

The executive team then moved to Couples Sans Souci the following day to join General Manager Pierre Battaglia in celebrating that hotel's success during 2016.

For her outstanding contribution, Marion Walker of the dining room was chosen Team Leader of the Year 2016, while Sasha Lewis of accounts collected the Back of House Award and Milton Lewis of entertainment the Front of the House awards, respectively.

The Manager of the Year award went to Michael Walters of watersports, while Shiann Smith of administration copped Junior Manager of the Year. Bar was chosen as the Department of the Year.

A new addition to this year's awards was 'Talent', which was won by Lovell Anglin of watersports, whose witty DJ lyrics about rat in his house had the audience in stitches.

In his commendation, Battaglia praised the effort of the team members, congratulating them on their achievements.



General Manager Pierre Battaglia speaks to members of the Department of the Year – Bar Department.



From left: Marion Walker, Suzette Keane and Shiann Smith hanging out before the start of the awards ceremony at Couples Sans Souci.



CONTRIBUTED

General manager at Couples Sans Souci, Pierre Battaglia, shares a photo opportunity with Junior Manager of the Year Shiann Smith (left) and BOH award winner Sasha Lewis.



CONTRIBUTED

Manager of the Year at Couples Sans Souci, Michael Walters, accepting his award from financial controller Ethlyn Crooks.



CONTRIBUTED

Shiann Smith (right), Junior Manager of the Year Couples Sans Souci, accepting her award from the hotel's director of human resources, Petra- Ann Williamson.



CONTRIBUTED

Team Leader of the Year at Couples Sans Souci, Marion Walker, collects her award from General Manager Pierre Battaglia.

Ja women's bobsleigh team helps to woo Korean travel professionals

THE EXCITEMENT is building as Jamaica's first women's bobsleigh team takes on the world in qualifications for the upcoming 2018 Winter Olympic Games to be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The Jamaican team of Jazmine Fenlator, pilot, and Carrie Russell, brake woman, are on their way to making their historic debut.

Under the moniker 'Gold Squad: Fire on Ice', the Jamaican team is making excellent strides to take on the world at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, exactly 30 years after the original men's 'Cool Runnings' team debuted at the 1988 Games in Calgary. The ladies have set their sights on winning gold and are fired up. And they have lofty ambitions, as in addition to being the first Jamaican female team to take on the world in bobsleigh, Fenlator and Russell are looking forward to medal at the event at the 2018 instalment in Pyeongchang.

The team recently participated in an international training week in Pyeongchang. Their participation in the training is part of preparations for the Games. While in South Korea, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) organised a meet-and-greet event with the Jamaica bobsleigh team members and Korean media representatives at Jamaica Wang, a Jamaican restaurant in South Korea.

Speaking on behalf of the Jamaica bobsleigh team, Jazmine Fenlator noted, "My teammates and I have been in Pyeongchang, learning and training on the bobsleigh course that will be used next year at the 2018 Olympic Games. We have been working hard and embracing this wonderful experience in South Korea with the intent of being back here next year to make history!"

She was delighted to talk about Destination Jamaica. She said, "This is such

an amazing event to showcase our beautiful island's culture, food, music and adventurous areas to explore. I want to encourage all of you to come and experience the tropical bliss of our island. No matter what you are looking for – music, food, historic and cultural monuments or relaxation – Jamaica has something to satisfy your desires."

SPECIAL LUNCHEON

The JTB also hosted a business-to-business luncheon in Seoul, South Korea, which was co-sponsored by Delta Airlines. Among the attendees were Hana Tour, Tour Baksa and Very Good Tour. A presentation on the offerings of the island's resort areas as well as airlift options was shown to the attendees.

There has been a growing interest in Jamaica as a destination among South Korean travellers, and information shared about the island found a captive and expectant audience.

"Asia is one of the regions that the Jamaica Tourist Board is pursuing in its growth strategy," said Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook. "The strong spend and large outbound travel from the Asian market influenced our decision to engage Japan, China and South Korea. We started to lay the groundwork to develop that market and have held discussions with tour operators, travel agents and airline companies. Through strategic arrangements, we aim to increase the number of arrivals from that region to the island. We know that we have the experiences that they demand, and market intelligence reveals that South Koreans are long-haul visitors, and their interests include honeymoon, sightseeing, gastronomy, history and culture, experiences that are among the primary offerings of Destination Jamaica.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Members of Jamaica's bobsleigh team (JBT) with South Korean media representatives at the Jamaica Tourist Board meet-and-greet in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Front row (from left): Heekyung Kim (blogger), Jazmine Fenlator (JBT) and Suhyun Lee (travel writer). Back row (from left): Michael Blair (JBT), Bob Chang (influencer), Carrie Russell (JBT) and Surf Fenlator (JBT).



South Korean tour operators and travel agents attend a business-to-business luncheon in Seoul hosted by the Jamaica Tourist Board.

Ja is top C'bean destination for Canadian meeting planners

THE RESULTS are in and Jamaica is ranked the most popular Caribbean destination among Canadian meeting planners. The findings were published in the *Meetings & Incentive Travel* magazine's 2016 *Incentive Travel Survey*.

Sixty-nine per cent of all survey respondents booked a Caribbean meeting, and of this group, 62 per cent booked groups to Jamaica over

other Caribbean destinations such as The Bahamas – 24 per cent, Aruba – 19 per cent and Barbados – 19 per cent. The respondents sourced destinations mostly by word of mouth (71 per cent), but also on the destination's website (68 per cent) and at trade shows (61 per cent).

"We are thrilled that Jamaica was the top 2016 destination for meeting planners booking in the



Caribbean," said Philip Rose, regional director for the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) in Canada. "Planners reported that word of mouth was the top way they

sourced a destination and we can attribute this to the outstanding experiences past meeting planners have had with their groups in Jamaica."

The survey, conducted by Bramm Research Inc, drew 99 complete surveys from a variety of planners (all of which had to have planning incentive travel programmes as a key responsibility). The JTB sales team in Canada

consistently promotes Jamaica as a top pick for planners at various trade shows and events throughout the year. The results of this survey prove that these efforts are paying off, with planners regularly booking groups to the island.

The Jamaica Tourist Board has a special website section for planners interested in booking groups and meetings to Jamaica at www.visitjamaica.com/conventions.

Pineapple Court Hotel reopens refurbished restaurant with new menu

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE PINEAPPLE Court Hotel in Pineapple Place, Ocho Rios, recently completed a refurbishing exercise and is ready to continue offering its traditionally top-class service to its guests.

With 14 comfortable rooms, the hotel has, over the years, gained a favourable reputation among local and overseas guests alike.

“Ocho Rios is full of all-inclusives, so we present Pineapple Court Hotel as the affordable, comfortable and clean accommodation option in Ocho Rios, outside of the all-inclusives,” explained manager Tracey Lettman Duncan.

She said the refurbishing exercise included the restaurant which, over the years, had become a favourite pizza joint but is now offering a full menu.

“We have a full Jamaican menu – chicken, curried goat, stewed pork, fish done in any style, as well as we still have the pizza and the burger and the wings available,” Lettman Duncan pointed out.

In explaining, the hotel manager added: “We are a budget hotel, our prices are reasonable and affordable and we try to offer a lot of amenities in the package. All our rooms are air-conditioned, all have refrigerator and microwave, cable television, and we offer complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the property. The rates that we have now include breakfast, but the guest has an option. Our menu is wide, so guests can choose; and then there is a bar here as well.”

VARIOUS FACILITIES

The hotel also offers facilities for meeting, weddings and events. There is also a kiddies’ area, complete with swings and slides which, over the years, have been a favourite venue for children’s birthday parties.

“The thing about it is, we pride ourselves on being a clean, comfortable, friendly hotel and our staff members are always being commended for their personality.

“We’re not on the beach, so there are certain things that we have to stick out for that we have to have control over, which is how we treat our guests, who are very special to us.”

Speaking of guests, Pineapple



PHOTOS BY CARL GILCHRIST

Pineapple Court Hotel



Shauna-kay Scott, receptionist at Pineapple Court Hotel.

Court Hotel has a large Jamaican clientele, which includes travelling sales people, weekend partygoers from Kingston and other areas, and, especially during the summer, many persons from the diaspora who return here for holidays.

“In the summer, it’s the place for many Jamaicans to come home to.

We have families, we have Europeans that come for long stays, and it’s like the home for Jamaicans when they come back here,” said Lettman Duncan.

Last year, the hotel was awarded a plaque for being top performer in the Scotiabank Vision Achiever Programme.



Kiddies’ play area



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS
When gardens take a seat.

Huge potential for horticultural tourism

JAMAICA, THE land of wood and water, has a great variety of flowering and non-flowering plants that grow wild or are grown for gardening and ornamental purposes. Many of these plants are indigenous to the island. And one of my joys in my travels around JA is to see the rare species, some of them looking very exotic.

As a plant lover, I had a few pots, mainly orchids and cacti, over the years, but I didn't have time to nurture them. Thus, I stick to a variety of palms, and have a little nursery of

fruit trees that should produce my pension and sustain my health when I get older. They are growing a bit too fast, so I have to hurry to buy the land on which they will be planted.

The need to get this orchard going became more urgent last weekend when I attended the 2017 Jamaica Horticultural Society (JHS) flower show, held under the theme 'Garden Fusion'. From the variety on show, I saw many non-fruiting plants that could share space with my fruit trees. But, another thought also recurred,

because it had already come to me at the last two shows.

There is a huge potential for horticultural tourism, under the bigger banner of ecotourism.

BOTANICAL GARDENS

The packages would not include only visiting shows and nurseries, but there would be trips to see our botanical gardens at Bath, Castleton and Cinchona. They could also go into the lush interior to see the orchids, ginger lilies, heliconias, huge flowering trees, etc.

There is something so priceless about seeing these plants in their natural ecology, whether along the coasts, in the mountains, on swampy lands, among the rocks, or in the semi-tropical rainforests. Perfume wafting through the air, beads of raindrops rolling off petals, the symbiotic and parasitic relations between these plants and birds and insects would just be parts of memorable experiences of horticultural tourists.

The accommodations themselves could support the horticultural

industry by having more of our indigenous plants on display in rooms and other parts of their properties. And who is going to produce the books of indigenous Jamaican plants for the bedside and coffee tables?

In addressing the opening ceremony last Saturday, president of the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS), Senator Norman Grant, mentioned the "incredible" beauty of the flowers along the hiking path to the Blue Mountain Peak. "It brings into sharp focus ... the need to invest more into the horticultural



The Jamaica Horticultural Society flower show is a great opportunity to showcase landscaping products.



Senator Norman Grant receiving a plant from Margaret Sinclair.



Cacti on show.



Some of the winning entries in the recent Jamaica Horticultural Society flower show.

industry,” Senator Grant said.

He wants to lobby the Government in this regard, because the industry is poised to earn much foreign exchange as is the case of Australia, where horticulture is big business. “So, why not Jamaica?” Senator Grant asked. He expressed a desire for the JAS to collaborate with the JHS for the development of the horticultural industry. The setting up of a flower show at this year’s Denbigh Show is one of the things he wants the JHS to do on its path to development.

The JAS, then, could partner

with the agencies of the ministry of tourism and the JHS to market Jamaica as a horticultural destination. The plants are here, expert horticulturalists are here, the popular flower shows are here, and there is nectar in the flowers, but is the horticulture industry hungry enough? Does it want tourists to be coming here in droves to see and buy our plants? Time will tell.

And since I do not want to spend my last days in hunger, I will continue to nurture my fruit trees, and who knows, I might take on some horticultural work myself.



Patrons admiring plants at the recent Jamaica Horticultural Society flower show.



Staghorn ferns thrive better in wet, mountainous environments.

EXED tourism, hospitality students host food expo

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ON THURSDAY, April 6, the third-year tourism management students in the School of Tourism, Hospitality, and Entertainment Management of the Excelsior Community College, held a Jamaican food exposition called 'From Palatable to Delectable ... A Twist on Jamaican Food'.

The project, an assessment exercise for their special-events management course, the objective was to successfully plan and execute a public event, and in keeping with the theme, there was an abundance of Jamaican food, from the gourmet to the gizzarda, created by the students themselves, for sale and for display purposes.

Smoothies, natural-ingredient cosmetics, costume jewellery, hot and cold beverages, local confectioneries, and health consultancy were some of the things that vendors showcased, and for this, the gracious students gave them certificates of appreciation.

Much of the day's entertainment was provided by students from the school and other schools and departments. Rivalled only by the phone credit give-aways, the drinking and bun-eating contests were chock-full of tension and excitement, but it was the supertalented, second-year student, and president of the Students' Union, Donovan Stewart's dramatic and comedic performances that brought the house down.

Stewart's future in the entertainment industry looks very bright.

DANCE MOVES

When it was time to let loose, the young men, for once, allowed the young women to take over the natural settings 'dance floor', showing that they still had the moves. Yet, the

young men reminded the women that they were not going to be outdone as near to the end of the activities, a duo thrilled the females with a well-coordinated presentation.

The compère for the day was the effervescent Sabrina Parkes, who turned up the vibes with her own style, making the activities very interactive and engaging. "I am very proud of my team ... I have had fun, my team has had fun ... And I am pretty sure our grade will be A, A, A ... I love events, entertainment. That's my forte ... I think that's my gift ... They have seen it in me and made me MC for the day, and I am very honoured," Parkes told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

In speaking about the tourism and hospitality programme at EXED, Christina Plummer, a "proud Excelsorian", said that it was very dynamic, preparing students for the various subsectors of tourism and hospitality, and it had more than adequately prepared her to seek employment in the industry.

Plummer's colleague, Tanea Baker, part of the entertainment team, believed the event was a successful one. The manager for the day, Cherrienne Scott, who had the overall responsibility of making the event successful, concurred with Baker.

Scott said that planning an event with 26 people was not easy, in addition to their commitment to other courses and preparation for exams. "But we are a set of sisters, and a brother, and today, we united and executed well," she said. The positive feedback also came from their lecturer, Alladeen Knight, who said, among other good things, "I like the way they used the natural products. Most of the items they did sold out ... I really appreciated that."



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

A section of the fruits and vegetables display.



Some of the food prepared by the students.



Kimberly Spence in a spoken-word performance.



The drinking contest is on in earnest.



Patrons waiting for their smoothies from Ras Smoothies.



Students sampling hot coffee.



Phew! It is over. Time to let loose.



A patron inspecting cosmetics made of natural ingredients.

Barbados targeting families for summer with new campaign

THE BARBADOS Tourism Marketing Inc's (BTMI) summer campaign, 'Brilliant Barbados: Kids Stay and Play Free', is placing a strong emphasis on added value for kids as they promote Barbados as an ideal destination for families.

"Summer is traditionally a heavy family travel period for us," said William 'Billy' Griffith, CEO of the BTMI. "In response to that, we've developed this campaign in association with key partners here, including hotels and attractions, as we aim to be more competitive to the family audience."

Under this campaign, kids 16 years old or younger stay free in participating hotels and play free at participating attractions when accompanied by at least one paying adult. The offer is valid for travel dates between May 1 and October 31, 2017.

"We currently have over 50 accommodations participating in the summer campaign across several categories," Griffith added. "From all-inclusive options such as Savannah

Beach Hotel on the South Coast to luxury hotels such as The Crane in the East, as well as a number of villas, condos, and apartments. We made sure we are appealing to every class of traveller."

Rudy Grant, CEO of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association (BHTA), lauded the BTMI for working with the BHTA to develop the summer campaign. "Joint marketing actions by the BHTA and the BTMI, the marketing arm of Barbados' tourism industry, creates the ideal partnership for the development of the tourism industry. It allows us to execute comprehensive, cohesive programmes that will appeal to our target markets. The variety of accommodation properties participating in this programme illustrates the diversity of the Barbados tourism product and creates a better opportunity to entice diverse families looking for the perfect summer holiday. Programmes like these help to reduce the seasonality we normally experience in the hotel sector."

Entry to several attractions is also being offered to families to enrich their stay. Kids and their parents can enjoy a unique underwater experience in the Atlantis submarine, tee off at the Barbados Golf Club, and explore the rugged side of Barbados on an island safari, just to name a few.

ENHANCING WITH DIGITAL

"We are already marketing the Brilliant Barbados campaign aggressively in all of our international markets through our traditional channels. However, we are also supplementing these efforts with a strategic, integrated digital marketing component," Griffith announced.

The BTMI launched a microsite, www.brilliantbarbados.com, which houses all of the information for the campaign, including descriptions of participating accommodations and attractions. Visitors can discover the uniqueness of destination Barbados and follow the steps to book

their stay.

The campaign is also supported by other digital initiatives, including robust social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram, as well as newsletters and online advertising in prime digital real estate.

"As consumers' booking habits continue to diversify, we are charged with ensuring we remain competitive, particularly in the digital field. Barbados was recently ranked number one in the English-speaking Caribbean for overall Tourism and Travel Competitiveness in a biennial report published by the World Economic Forum. One of our strongest-performing areas was prioritisation of travel and tourism competitiveness, where we ranked number eight in the world. We also had a particularly strong performance in ICT readiness compared to the rest of the region. We, therefore, see investing in digital as a tactical means of honing our strengths as a destination," Griffith said.

AIR

CONTINUED FROM 6

Outbound Tourism to Africa, also shared that during his discussions with the UNWTO Commission for Africa, memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were formulated to create arrangements to increase connectivity between the African states and Jamaica.

"We were able to discuss and to agree on MOUs with the Ministry of Tourism for Ethiopia, the Ministry of Tourism for Ghana, the Ministry of Tourism for Cape Verde, and the Ministry of Tourism for Nigeria. The importance of those four MOUs is going to be very noticeable during the conference and after," the minister said.

"Cape Verde, for example, has an enormous diaspora in the Boston area. We feel that the connection of Jet Blue Airways out of Boston is going to be significant in allowing connectivity from that area. The middle class of Nigeria is also growing rapidly, and the affordability, therefore, to come to destinations like Jamaica is strong," Bartlett said.



CONTRIBUTED

EARTH DAY OBSERVATION: Team members and guests at Royalton Blue Waters and Royalton White Sands in Falmouth, Trelawny, on Saturday, April 22, joined forces in observing Earth Day 2017. Several ornamental trees were planted across the resort. Pictured are hotel manager in charge of the rooms division at Royalton Blue Waters, Kamarla Simms (fourth left) assisting guests in planting a poui tree, while other guests and members of the hotel's management team, look on. Simms, who headed the Royalton team on the project, is part of the resort's corporate social responsibility effort. Earth Day is recognised annually on April 22 worldwide by demonstrating support for environmental protection. It was first celebrated in 1970 and is now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network and celebrated in more than 193 countries each year.