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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2018

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Graphic designer Joleen Grant did what designers do best – create her own African-inspired jewellery and shoes just for this occasion. We say the girl's got skills, what say you?

The team that plays together stays together! Team members from Sandals Resorts International turned out in fine style on Monday, February 26, to enjoy a private viewing of the blockbuster hit, 'Black Panther'. From left: Jonique Gaynor, Marcelles Lee, Sheryl Douse, Megan Martin, Staschell Fraser, Crissano Dalley, Daniella Allen, Joleen Grant and Nadine Dennis.

# Sandals treats staff to private 'Black Panther' viewing

*Resort company rents theatre to say thank you to team*

IF ALL work and no play makes Jack and Jill dull, it's safe to say there are no dull team members at Sandals Resorts International, especially recently when the company treated over 100 staff members to a private showing of the highly anticipated and much-celebrated Marvel film, **Black Panther**.

The company, which has long had a tradition of celebrating its team members and investing in their development, rented a theatre at the Palace Multiplex and treated the team from its headquarters to a night at the movies, popcorn included, as a gesture of appreciation for their hard work and commitment to the brand. The event was dubbed 'A Night in Wakanda'.

In a video message played to the team, the company's chief operations officer, Shawn DaCosta, apologised for his absence and that of the chief executive officer, Adam Stewart.



Wakanda Forever! Team members from the company's Accounts and Auditing departments were obviously having a good time at the private viewing of the hit Marvel film, 'Black Panther'. In front with his best 'Wakanda Forever' pose is Andy Roberts, while from left are Cordilyn Heaven, Yanique Bailey, Sherifa Brown and Audi Cunningham.

Both were in the Turks and Caicos Islands at the company's annual general managers' meeting. DaCosta urged the team to enjoy the night's offerings, citing the gesture as just one of the ways the company chose to show its appreciation. "We wish we could have been there tonight.

This is a great movie for us to see together", he said. "Tonight we celebrate you ... tonight we celebrate you being here with us as great team members who go above and beyond every day. We appreciate you," he said.

Excited team members raved about the night's event days

later, expressing gratitude for the gesture and reliving their favourite movie moments.

Carmen Prout, company administrator, said, "This was such a kind gesture from the senior executives and a good reminder that in the midst of a hard work week, team members can actually take a break. Normally, in the corporate world this would be considered an unlikely act, but Sandals made it a reality. This will forever be etched in my mind."

Her excitement and gratitude was shared by Cassandra Douglas, local purchasing agent at the company's Procurement Division. She said, "This was a very good idea. It brought everyone together and it really felt like a family affair. I was even telling someone who works at an overseas hotel about it and she was amazed that our company did this for us."



Gimmi mi African princess! These ladies from the company's Procurement Division pulled out all the stops and were dressed to the nines to view the hit film 'Black Panther' at Sandals' private staff viewing at the Palace Multiplex on February 26. From left are Vensea Hudson, Shantoya Fraser and Leccian Rowe.

# Make way for the ‘brothers and sisters’

## *Big push for African American tourists*

**Camille Miller**

*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

FOR DECADES, tourism overseas interests have been frustratingly noting that Jamaica has not been doing enough to tap into the 35-million strong African American market.

According to them, the island, with its rich diverse culture and world-class attractions, has been “missing the boat” by “seemingly and foolishly” concentrating almost exclusively on an already-clustered and competitive “white-only market”.

Well, that appears likely to change!

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, who is currently on a European trip, told **Hospitality Jamaica** that the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) has been aggressively using social media and other promotional means to “make a strong push” for what he readily admits is a very lucrative, but vastly untapped market.

Bartlett added that in addition to booking advertising spots in the mainstream media, extra effort is being made to target minority groups.

“There is a vast African American market out there, along with other minority groups, that we need to capitalise on,” the tourism minister noted. “We need to appeal to their passion points. We need to get our message of being the friendliest and most relaxed destination in the region to their doorsteps.”

A United States Census Report shows the African American population at 34,658,190, representing over 12.3 per cent of the total amount of persons living within the continental USA.

Almost half (43 per cent) are homeowners, and nearly one quarter (23 per cent) hold bachelor’s degrees or higher from US universities. As consumers, African Americans spend over \$500 billion annually, or a household average of \$23,442. African Americans are also no longer rural.

Eight-five per cent live in urban centres, mostly the top 20 metro areas. The African American median age is 30, some six years younger than the total US population.

### **MORE IMPROVEMENT NEEDED**

Bartlett added that Jamaica’s share of the huge United States market, while showing signs of rapid improvement over the past year or so, is still too low and that a telling and more organised effort is being made in going after minority groups, including those with special needs.

Andrew Young, a former United States ambassador and former mayor of Atlanta, in a visit to Jamaica as guest of the St Ann Chamber of Commerce several years ago, raised the view then that the “vast and untapped” African American market could greatly enhance the tourism fortunes of Jamaica.

“The African American market, which is 35-million strong, is bigger than both Canada and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

### **Black American tourists.**

Mexico,” Young pointed out. “If you put your ads where African Americans can see them, I guarantee you will start seeing results.”

United States Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, in a recent visit to Jamaica as guest of the Montego Chamber of Commerce, agreed. She pointed to the fact that a lot of Jamaicans are living in the United States and that they should be used as part of the marketing tool to infiltrate the African American market.

### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Bartlett, in noting that “persons travel to fulfil their passion,” is in full agreement with the US officials. “There are also a set of young people who travel all over the world to participate in activities such as city runs and other health activities. There are also persons with disabilities who simply want a place to go where they can relax and where people are nice and caring.

These are new opportunities for us to build on our product,” he added.

The tourism minister said tourists usually have the innate desire to be pampered and that “there is no place in the world that does it better than Jamaica.

“We have an opportunity to go after these niche markets,” he added. “We have to ensure that we get our message out there in an effective way so people can understand that Jamaica is the place to feel all right. If this is done right, there is no telling what our growing potential could be.”

The African American community is also said to travel twice as often on packaged tours as the general population and they are led by the 2,500 travel planner members of the African American Travel Conference. This market is open to new destinations and they book with the travel industry suppliers they meet and build relationships with.



**T**WENTY-ONE semi-finalists will vie for the Tourism Service Excellence Awards (TSEA) later this month when the awards ceremony will be held.

The announcement and presentation of the qualifiers was conducted last month at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in Kingston by the award's implementing agency, the Tourism Product Development Company Limited (TPDCo).

The 10 individual and 11 organisation qualifiers were selected from 126 nominees and cover the regions of Ocho Rios, Negril, Kingston, the south coast, and Montego Bay. Ranging over various categories within the industry, including accommodation, ground transportation, attractions, and the craft industry, the semi-finalists were selected by a panel of judges through a series of evaluations and interviews.

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett in a video presentation, underscored the importance of creating a unique and responsive brand, which, he posited, is achieved through excellent service.

"Service excellence is everything in today's global tourism environment. The way a product or service is delivered to a visitor can make or break a destination. This is why I am passionate about building a service-excellence culture within the tourism sector and its value chain. I want to see Jamaica positioned as a globally competitive destination that provides quality service way beyond our visitors' expectations," he said.

He went further to say that the TSEA serves as a mechanism to develop the country's tourism offerings. "To maintain the high service quality for which Jamaica is renowned, we sought to incentivise the sector through the introduction of the TSEA. Events such as these, which recognise and reward shining examples of tourism excellence, are important to the industry. They raise the bar in terms of enhancing the visitor experience and reinforce the value of our tourism workers and the sector."

#### IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL

Speaking during the presentation, Dr Andrew Spencer, executive director of TPDCo, highlighted the importance of developing the human capital as this will ensure that the tourism sector realises its full potential.

"People represent the strongest link in this tourism chain. We want to continue to lift the standard of our already creative people, therefore, we often create programmes that place emphasis on our people. For example, our recently concluded District Constables programme, which incorporated TPDCo's flagship Team Jamaica training programme, was designed to improve security, particularly in the resort areas. This (training) was important to achieve the goal of training a group of district constables who could have a firm hand, and a smiling face, which is crucial in the tourism space," he said.

Spencer added that these programmes, particularly the Team Jamaica training, would allow tourism workers to share their skills and talents with visitors who are often keen on learning about Jamaica's culture and

# TPDCo announces 2017 Tourism Service Excellence Awards semi-finalists



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Dr Andrew Spencer (third left), executive director, Tourism Product Development Company Limited (TPDCo), and Dr Carrole Guntley (fourth left), chairperson for the Tourism Service Excellence Awards (TSEA) Committee, pose alongside the 2017 TSEA semi-finalists for the individual category. From left: Kevin Spence, Beaches Negril; Judy Henry Richards, Beaches Resort, Ocho Rios; Shanique Cunningham, Sandals Royal, Montego Bay; Janette Kaloo, Sunset Resorts and Villas, South Coast; Lennox Williams, Golden Eye Hotel, Ocho Rios; Winston Jones, Hyatt Ziva Hyatt Zilara, Montego Bay; Hopeton Powell, Olde Craft Market, Ocho Rios; Michelle Sterling, Amstar DMC, Montego Bay; Romaine Meggo, Sandals Negril, and Mikhailla Robinson, Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, Kingston.



Dr Andrew Spencer (second right), executive director, Tourism Product Development Company Limited (TPDCO), and Dr Carrole Guntley, (third right), chairperson for the Tourism Service Excellence Awards Committee, join the 2017 TSEA semi-finalists for the organisation category. From left: representatives of Chukka Caribbean Adventures, Montego Bay, The Judy House, Negril, Island Car Rentals, Kingston, Sandals Royal Plantation, Ocho Rios, Beaches Negril Resort, Courtleigh Hotel and Suites, Kingston, Hyatt Ziva Hyatt Zilara Resort, Montego Bay, Sandals Negril Resort, Dunn's River Falls and Park, Ocho Rios, and Sandals South Coast. Missing from the photo is the representative for Beaches Ocho Rios Resort. The occasion was the announcement of the 2017 TSEA semi-finalists. The event was held on Wednesday, February 28, at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel in Kingston.

heritage, thereby concretising the view that the Jamaican experience is well rounded,

made possible by those who continue to operate at a high standard.

The semi-finalists for the individual category are Kevin Spence, Beaches Negril; Judy Henry Richards, Beaches Resort-Ocho Rios; Shanique Cunningham, Sandals Royal-Montego Bay; Janette Kaloo, Sunset Resorts and Villas, South Coast; Lennox Williams, Golden Eye Hotel, Ocho Rios; Winston Jones, Hyatt Ziva Hyatt Zilara, Montego Bay; Hopeton Powell, Olde Craft Market, Ocho Rios; Michelle Sterling, Amstar DMC, Montego Bay; Romaine Meggo, Sandals Negril; and Mikhailla Robinson, Jamaica Pegasus hotel, Kingston.

The semi-finalists for the organisation category are Chukka Caribbean Adventures, Montego Bay; The Judy House, Negril; Island Car Rentals, Kingston; Sandals Royal Plantation, Ocho Rios; Beaches Negril Resort; Courtleigh Hotel and Suites, Kingston; Hyatt Ziva Hyatt Zilara Resort, Montego Bay; Sandals Negril Resort; Dunn's River Falls and Park, Ocho Rios; Beaches Ocho Rios, and Sandals South Coast.

The TSEA recognises both individuals and entities within the tourism sector that consistently provide exemplary customer service. This year's staging of the TSEA will be held on Saturday, March 17, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in St James.

# RASTA TACO

## – for Jamaicans and tourists alike

**Carl Gilchrist**  
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

**R**ASTA TACO had a quiet opening recently at Island Village in Ocho Rios, and already, its succulent mix of Jamaican and Mexican cuisine has created quite a buzz for Jamaicans and tourists alike.

Its quesadillas have already become a favourite of many, but so, too, its margaritas, guacamole, and other menu items such as burritos and escoveitch fish tacos.

The secret is all in the sauces, so think chipotle, teriyaki, jerk, garlic, and Scotch bonnet sauces and you begin to get the idea.

“The sauces are what really make it kick and what people will remember Rasta Taco by,” explained Nazma Muller, assistant manager at the restaurant. “The

food is fast, within 10 minutes, and it’s Mexican with a Jamaican twist.”

Manager Josee Lamontagne puts it into perspective, adding: “It’s the best of Jamaica mixed with the Mexican style, and the people, they love it! We get a lot of people from the ships, and we also want to be getting to the local people, for Jamaicans to come, and taste what we serve. We’re trying to make it very Jamaican-style so they can come and experience and enjoy.”

“When you come you can expect to get great food and great margaritas, of course.”

Owned by Mexican-American, Mario Meléndez, Rasta Taco’s genesis dates back to 2006 when Meléndez first came to Jamaica and thought of opening a taco stand after purchasing the domain [www.rastataco.com](http://www.rastataco.com).



When he returned to California, however, he started taco catering under the brand Rasta Taco, and the business took off. As the brand grew in popularity, Meléndez started learning more about the Jamaican culture and decided he would open a branch in Jamaica. But first, he tried it at home, opening the first Rasta Taco restaurant in Laguna two years ago.

Melendez also owns the world’s only margarita truck in California.

Next stop was Jamaica. After searching, he found a spot at Chris Blackwell’s Island Village shopping centre and established the second Rasta Taco restaurant in the world, in the land of Rasta.

At the end of January, Rasta Taco served patrons at the Grace Jones documentary: **Bloodlight**

and **Bami**, including Jones herself, before opening its doors officially and is ready to serve Jamaicans and the world.

Rasta Taco is still a work in progress and is more than a business venture for Melendez, Muller explained. It’s not just about making money. He wants to support the Rastafari culture, which is one of his missions in life.

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**A**LTHOUGH YOU may never have read J. R. R. Tolkien, you are probably one of the tens of millions of people around the world who have seen at least one of the three **Lord of the Rings** movies. If you are, you will almost certainly remember the stunning scenery that provided the backdrop.

All were filmed in New Zealand with support from that country's tourism board and government and caused hundreds of thousands of travellers to visit the country from around the world.

At a quite different level, a relatively obscure but historic small town in England's south-west and its dramatic nearby coastline now receives visitors year-round because of a hugely popular television series, **Broadchurch**, so that today there are associated vacations, tours, a trail, and quite literally dozens of websites promoting the locality as a mini-destination.

Surprisingly, the Caribbean has yet to fully embrace the idea that moviemaking, whether for cinema, television, or commercials, can help deliver significant numbers of additional visitors, if the relevant ministries, agencies and local industries are prepared to work with those who make and finance movies.

Attracting international productions to film on location is in general good for a country's econo-

## THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

# Moviemaking is good for tourism

my. It brings foreign exchange; significant short-term local expenditure; offers employment to a wide range of individuals from carpenters to fashion designers, caterers, lawyers and accountants; draws in other film, TV and commercial makers; and through exposure to best practice, helps enhance local skill levels, develops talent, and supports the creation of a sustainable domestic movie industry.

It also brings significant short- and long-term gains for tourism.

In the short-term, movie makers create a substantial demand for accommodation, catering and transport. Those who work in the industry note, for example, that there must be quality hotel and villa accommodation available to house, often for weeks and sometimes months, the expensive talent involved and the crew. An able and efficient local service industry partner is essential to look after the complex, demanding and time-



DAVID JESSOP

sensitive requirements of a high-budget production. Good quality transport is required to reach the sites where the movie is to be shot and there also has to be quality on-location catering.

But it is in the longer-term, big-

budget movies in particular that offer more significant, lasting opportunities, particularly if the location chosen or offered then comes to be seen by moviegoers as a must-visit destination.

### DYNAMIC CHANGE

As a fascinating on-line academic paper, 'Tourist See Tourist Do: The Influence of -Hollywood Movies and Television on Tourism Motivation and Activity Behaviour' points out: moviemaking has brought with it a "dynamic change in the world in terms of fashion, social status, behaviour, marketing, and tourism", bringing with it a new marketing channel for consumer goods and services such as tourism.

For the most part, attracting international moviemakers involves government developing a package of incentives and rebates. Despite this, some in the Caribbean are reluctant to understand the value, or the factors that

draw international moviemakers to choose where to film.

Jamaica, for example, has not seen any major foreign investment in film production since 2013, the year in which the Government, under IMF pressure, ended all fiscal incentives. Although the island's new Fiscal Incentives Act offers capital allowances and relief on the importation of 'tools of trade', nothing has been put in place to replace the island's Motion Picture Encouragement Act to sway international moviemakers to use the country as a location.

Speaking about this recently, Diane Edwards, the president of JAMPRO, said that encouraging moviemaking again in Jamaica will not only bring direct economic benefits and help tourism, but will also secure more jobs for Jamaicans working in the film industry, help sell the country's creative outputs, and enlarge international awareness. Her hope is that a private equity fund now being discussed might become the vehicle for a rebate system that would once again put the island back on the map for moviemakers.

To date, the tourism sector in the region has said little on the topic at either a national or regional level. This should change. The value of film-induced tourism, aligned with national incentives, has a strong pedigree. It requires the industry's serious study and support.

## 2016 TSEA national champion enjoyed prize trip to Barbados

### CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Simone Folkes (left) poses at the former home of international pop star and native Barbadian Rihanna, while on her seven-day trip to Barbados. She participated in a range of activities and met with the country's Minister of Tourism and International Transport Richard Sealy. Sharing in the moment are Pete Carter, chaperone, and Folkes' mother, Marlene McCormack.



2016 TOURISM Service Excellence Awards (TSEA) individual champion Simone Folkes, while on her prized trip to Barbados, met with the country's Minister of Tourism and International Transport Richard Sealy.

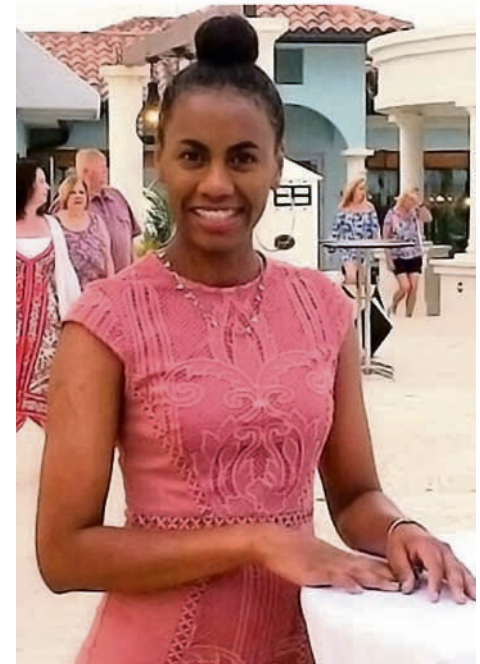
Sealy congratulated Folkes on her achievement and highlighted that, like Jamaica, excellent customer service was crucial to the growth of the tourism sector in Barbados.

He also provided information on tourism in Barbados, a country that also relies on its heritage and culture to appeal to potential and repeat visitors.

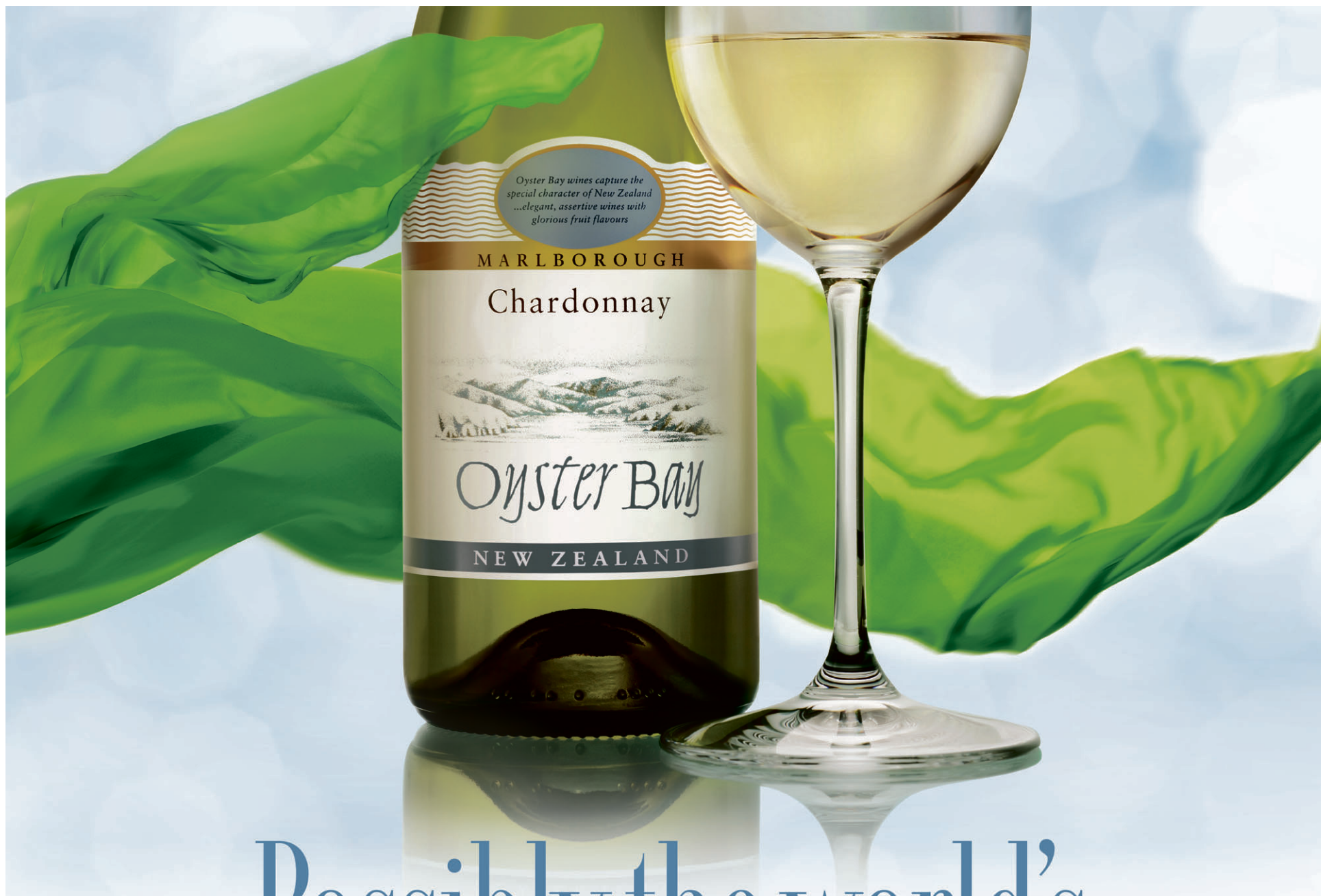
As part of her prize for providing exceptional customer service within the tourism sector, Folkes received a seven-day trip to Sandals Barbados; spending money, courtesy of the National Export-Import Bank; and air travel from Caribbean Airlines, all of which are sponsors of TSEA.

Folkes returned to the island on Sunday, February 18.

The 2017 awards ceremony will be held on Saturday, March 17, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre in Rose Hall, St James.



Simone Folkes enjoyed a Valentine's Day event at her recent Tourism Service Excellence Awards prize trip to Sandals Barbados. She spent seven days at the luxurious resort.



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Department of the Year – Kitchen. Here, team members pose with their award.



Anthony Walters, executive chef, presents the runner-up Associate of the Year 2017 award to Ramona Wray.

# Melia goes ALL IN for staff

CALLING THEIR hotel a quality entity “run solely by Jamaicans,” the management of the Melia Braco Village, Trelawny, went all out in honouring their own at the resort’s annual staff awards recently.

With a mixture of glitz, glamour and, yes, pageantry, the ceremony which kicked off at approximately 8:15 p.m. and which had Miss Jamaica Universe 2017 Davina Bennett as one of the main presenters, saw staff members walking away with a combined US\$1,900 in cash prizes.

In addition, there were other gifts ranging from an all-expense paid overseas trip, inclusive of accommodation and airfare, to a three days/two nights all-expense paid-vacation getaway, as well as smart televisions, microwave, gift baskets and plaques.

When the dust settled, crowd favourite Carlton Walters from The Level Department copped the Most Guest Nominated as well as Associate of the Year awards; O’Shane Holmes from Entertainment won the General Manager’s Special Award;

Coreen Chin from the Food and Beverage Department won Leader of the Year; Latoya Pusey from Human Resources for Supervisor of the Year.

Other winners were Davian Fuller from Maintenance for Smile and Courtesy; Chad Waugh from Entertainment for Most Improved; Denache Johnson from Spa for Revenue Earner; Christopher from Food and Beverage was given a special award, and Underwood Simmonds from Human Resources rounded off the proceedings by copping the Gem Awarded.

### HARD WORK AND SERVICE

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, while lauding the awardees, said it was through their “hard work, dedication and exceptional service” why Melia continues to be “an award-winning hotel.

“Your commitment to service excellence has contributed significantly to Jamaica’s appeal as a premier tourist destination,” he noted.

“I wish to express my sincere gratitude to you for being sterling tourism ambassadors. Service excellence is the bedrock of tourism success, and awards



From left: General Manager of Melia Braco Village Dimitris Kosvogiannis; Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett; Miss Universe Jamaica Davina Bennett; and Custos of Trelawny Paul Muschette.



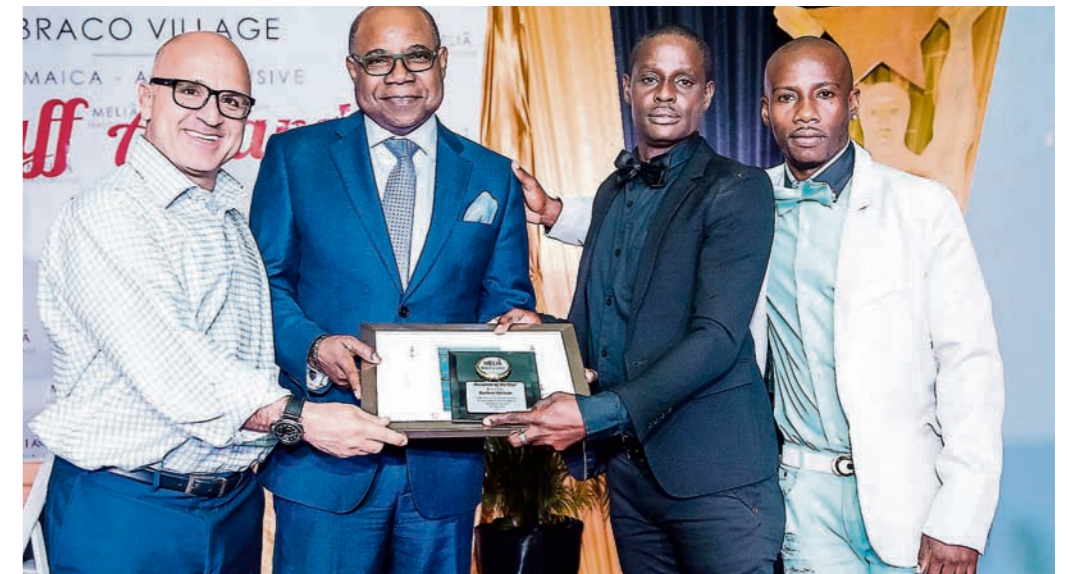
Camille Seaton (left), room division manager, presents Latoya Pusey with her Supervisor of the Year 2017 award.

programmes like these are a great way to say thank you to those who every day create exceptional experiences for our visitors.”

Bartlett also commended Melia for “recognising and encouraging” its team members with its annual awards programme, adding that “it is very important for everyone in tourism, from the most senior person to those who work at the most junior level, to understand that doing a great job adds value to the product that our visitors pay to enjoy.



From left: Nersibilis Rodriquez, Sheryl Kaye Thompson, Angella Bennett, Kitanya Mirander and Belinda Blake, who received the special award for Most Outstanding Performance from a Sales Team.



From left: General Manager of Melia Braco Village Dimitris Kosvogiannis and Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett present the Employee of the Year 2017 award to Carlton Walters. Sharing in the occasion is the 2016 winner, Homroy Thompson.

“It is also what keeps visitors coming back again and again. It is no accident that Jamaica has a repeat visitor rate of over 40 per cent.”

Bennett, whose grand entrance as well as onstage presence drew loud applause from the audience, also praised the awardees for their achievements, noting that “I, too, am a strong supporter of programmes that reward excellence.

“It is good when hard work is both recognised and appreciated,” she noted. “It is only natural that persons will give of their best and will be motivated when they know they are being appreciated.”



General Manager of Melia Braco Village Dimitris Kosvogiannis and Leader of the Year Coreen Chin, banquet manager.



# JTB recognised as Expedia Media Solutions 2017 Partner Award winner

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) is pleased to announce that it has been recognised by Expedia Media Solutions, the advertising arm of Expedia, Inc, as a winner of its annual 2017 Partner Awards programme. The Latin America Destination Campaign of the Year award was presented at the annual Expedia Partner Conference, which acknowledges partner campaigns that demonstrate innovation, creativity, and achievement in travel marketing.

“We are thrilled to have been recognised by Expedia Media Solutions as the Latin America Destination Campaign of the year winner for 2017,” said Donnie Dawson, Jamaica’s deputy director of tourism, sales. “We are truly proud of our team and the many accomplishments garnered through this campaign and will continue our efforts to promote Jamaica as a top destination for the Latin American market and beyond.”

The JTB has been a longstanding Expedia Media Solutions marketing partner, and in 2017, it enacted a multipronged strategy that would competitively position Jamaica against other popular beach destinations. The team worked together to develop two joint marketing campaigns, which involved a variety of hotels to drive demand for Jamaica. The first was a year-long co-op campaign with Expedia Media Solutions that started March 2017. The second was the Great Jamaica Winter Sale Joint Marketing campaign, capitalising on Black Friday and Cyber Monday and the new trend of gifting travel experiences.

In addition, the team produced a display campaign



to highlight the island destination and all that it has to offer across Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Hotwire, and CheapTickets. The campaign that ran in June generated 3,500 room nights to the destination within a three-week period. To date, these campaigns have generated a combined return of advertising spend (ROAS) of 126:1.

“This year’s partner award winners demonstrate the remarkable work of our valued partners who have produced successful campaigns through the use of creative content, groundbreaking technology, and strategic targeting,” said Hari Nair, senior global vice-president, Expedia Media Solutions. “We’re excited to honour this year’s award-winning campaigns and look forward to continued work with our partners to help them execute targeted campaigns and achieve their goals through Expedia’s platforms and valuable insights.”

The JTB was one of 12 brands recognised by Expedia Media Solutions at the 2017 Partner Conference. For more information, visit <https://info.advertising.expedia.com/2017-partner-awards>.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Minister Edmund Bartlett is ‘Caribbean Minister of the Year’. Director of Tourism Donovan White (left) presents Edmund Bartlett, minister of tourism, with a ceramic plaque during a Jamaica Tourist Board-hosted cocktail reception. The event celebrated Bartlett’s recent designation as the ‘Caribbean Tourism Minister of the Year,’ 2017, by the ‘Caribbean Journal’.

## JTB Flight Centre Travel Group USA Fiscal Award winner

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) is celebrating the recognition and achievements it continues to receive from industry partners for its stellar work in selling and promoting Destination Jamaica. Recently, the JTB was acknowledged for its Jamaica Travel Specialist One Love Rewards Program by Flight Centre Travel Group USA, which presented the agency with the 2016-2017 fiscal award for ‘Top Travel Consultant Training Program for Tourist Boards’. The Travel Specialist programme serves as a dedicated training platform for the travel agent community to become certified experts on selling the destination.

For the past eight years, Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has been awarding its partners for their exemplary service to the industry, as voted by FCTG the Americas, with Jamaica winning numerous awards. Flight Centre Travel Group is one of the world’s largest travel agency group, and has company-owned operations in 23 countries.



Jamaica Tourist Board’s Donnie Dawson, deputy director of tourism, sales, US; and Francine Carter-Henry, manager, tour operators and airlines, proudly display the award received from Flight Centre Travel Group USA for ‘Top Travel Consultant Training Program for Tourist Boards’.



CONTRIBUTED

From left: Betty Estrada, senior business development manager, Caribbean, Expedia Media Solutions; Francine Carter Henry, manager – tour operators and airlines, Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB); Ana Paradela, director, advertising sales, LATAM, Mexico and Caribbean, Expedia Media Solutions; and Kristopher DaCosta, digital marketing manager, JTB.



**SILVERA'S PICKS**

# NO ROSES (this week) for tourism industry

**T**HIS WEEK, I find it difficult to award any roses to the tourism industry. I am forced to highlight a mushrooming situation on Montego Bay's Hip Strip (Gloucester Avenue), which has fast become the home of the mentally ill.

Montegonians will tell you that the Hip Strip, being a relatively safe haven, is one of the main reasons for the migration of the mentally ill from downtown Montego Bay, where they are known to be beaten, raped, and even burnt, by heartless persons.

At least 10 mentally challenged men and women, abandoned by their families and ignored by the authorities, have taken over the section of the strip between Burger King and Dead End Beach.

As comfortable as their new home is to them, this cannot be allowed to continue. In fact, the situation is untenable as one of the females who has taken up residence close to the St James Plaza is extremely violent



**JANET SILVERA**

and has been known to attack locals and tourists.

Two months ago, she had a big brawl with several prostitutes who are also competing for the space. Two days before that incident, she asked a tourist for a cigarette, which she didn't get. So she hit the person, reportedly visiting from the USA, in the head.

Lest we forget, the USA remains



An aerial view of sections of Montego Bay's Hip Strip.

Jamaica's biggest and most important source market. It is enough that these same tourists are being bombarded with offers of cocaine ganja, sex, and harassment from robot taxis and unregistered tour guides.

To now face the wrath of an unsound mind must be quite disheartening. On many occasions, I have called the ambulance service to no avail. The response is always "We don't have an ambulance available."

It is also obvious that there is inefficiency with regard to the presence of an equipped community mental health team. Their job is to deal with aggressive behaviour.

I am also convinced that the

authorities have not removed the large contingent living in the area because of the 'street people' scandal, which saw us (Montegonians) forcibly removing a number of mentally challenged persons to St Elizabeth, where they were left stranded.

Obviously, we feel that another mass removal will result in an outcry by the citizens, but what well-thinking person want to see is a structural plan to facilitate the decrease in the number of people turning up on the streets.

Family support is going to be very critical. Public education, as well as one-on-one education, is necessary so that Jamaicans will understand

that they don't have to abandon members of their families because of this sickness. Mental illness is a chronic condition, just like heart disease, diabetes and hypertension, and can be treated.

It needs the same type of family support as these other conditions.

A system needs to be put in place so that healthcare is offered to mentally ill persons who have nowhere to live.

March 25-29 is Psychiatric Nursing Aides Week, and I implore families and the community at large to get involved in helping to remove the stigma attached to mental illness.

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# Record year for Barbados tourism

**B**ARBADOS MINISTER of Tourism and International Transport Richard Sealy has announced that Barbados enjoyed a record five per cent increase in stayover arrivals last year, an all-time high for the destination.

Over the course of 2017, the Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA) welcomed 663,441 visitor arrivals – 31,308 more than 2016. The Bridgetown Port Inc (BPI) also observed tremendous growth, recording 818,752 cruise arrivals over the previous year's 725,020, for a total increase of 12.9 per cent. Of these 818,752 cruise arrivals, some 137,541 passengers stayed over in Barbados, above 2016's total of 130,924.

"I am delighted by this news and what it says about Barbados' tourism product," said Sealy. "It is never easy as a mature tourism destination to maintain growth at these levels in the competitive business landscape in which we operate, but I am pleased that through strategic marketing efforts we have once again proven Barbados' value as shown by the record number of arrivals at both the air- and seaports throughout 2017."

The United Kingdom was once again the top producer of arrivals to Barbados with a 33.5 per cent

market share. Arrivals from this market were flat compared to 2016, totalling 222,322. The United States followed, contributing 28.4 per cent of business with 188,970 arrivals for the year. Canada contributed 12.8 per cent of the business, and recorded an increase of 7.9 per cent or 85,209 arrivals.

Of special note is the United States, which, while being the second-highest producer of business, grew by a whopping 11.7 per cent over 2016. The United States' 2017 performance was the highest for that market in three decades – since contributing 175,093 arrivals in 1987.

Sealy attributed the destination's noteworthy performance to a number of strategic and integrated marketing initiatives which were deployed across Barbados' top source markets. "I must commend our tourism teams, both here and in our global offices, whose efforts were instrumental in us achieving this record five per cent growth."

Some of the marketing efforts Sealy referenced included:

#### NEW NICHE EVENTS

Continuing to position Barbados as a formidable player in sports tourism; two new events were created for the traditionally softer period of September – the Barbados Beach and Wellness

arrivals at 386,127 and the cruise sector recording a 14 per cent increase, reaching 669,217, an additional 81,264 visitors despite the eight-month closure of the Pointe Seraphine Berth 1.

Commenting on the figures, Minister of Tourism Information and Broadcasting Dominic Fedee said: "The tourism industry continues to be an incredibly



Sandals Royal Barbados's General Manager Fernand Zievinger (right), welcomes Shaunagh and Thomas Anderson as his very first guests when the resort opened its doors on December 20, 2017.



FILE PHOTOS

#### Richard Sealy

Festival and the Barbados Cycling Festival. Receiving positive feedback and displaying strong potential for further development and accomplishment, Sealy announced that Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc (BTMI) will once again host the two events in 2018.

#### NEW AIR SERVICES

"One of the key components in achieving positive tourism performance is, of course, the accessibility of the destination to visitors around the world. Bearing this in mind, we have worked to ensure that we are

both maintaining our current airlift, while adding new, enticing services to our repertoire; for example, the new Copa partnership which I announced last month," Sealy said.

Barbados' new partnership with Copa Airlines will see a twice weekly Barbados-Panama service commencing this July 17, and tickets are already on sale on the airline's website. Late last year, the BTMI also joined with GAIA in welcoming Virgin Atlantic's new London Heathrow twice-weekly service to Barbados, which commenced December 12, 2017 until February 24, 2018; and later, the Thomas Cook new weekly flight from London Gatwick, which commenced December 16, 2017 and will run until March 17, 2018.

#### EXCITING NEW ATTRACTIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

"Considering the numerous new and increased services, we also saw it important to ensure that we had adequate and quality accommodations available to the additional arriving passengers," Sealy said. "We therefore saw a number of

hotels being refurbished and reopening just ahead of the winter season; hotels such as Sea Breeze, Fairmont Royal Pavilion, Treasure Beach, The House, and so on."

Sealy also welcomed the new business that the recently opened Sandals Royal, located on Maxwell Beach, has already brought to Barbados.

Describing the island's new attractions as "integral" in differentiating destination Barbados, Sealy said "I am happy to say that a number of new attractions have come on stream, attractions that will differentiate the product offering we have here in Barbados. There's the Nikki Beach club that opened at Port Ferdinand, and, of course, in 2017 we christened the new Rihanna Drive, which has already garnered much international media attention following our ceremony last November. If you've been to Speightstown, you'll also see that there's a buzz around the new restaurants that have opened there ... but overall, there are a lot of positive new developments happening across the island."

## St Lucia tourism arrivals register record-breaking increase for 2017

THE 2017 tourism performance saw St Lucia breaking all records with total visitor arrivals climbing to an all-time high of 1,105,541. The island also recorded the highest growth in 2017 among the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) member countries, registering an 11 per cent increase.

The year 2017 was characterised by sustained growth in the industry, with stayover

important and vital part of the St Lucian economy. We are happy with the levels of growth witnessed and as we continue our marketing efforts, we as well look to maximising the impact of tourism on our economy".

The St Lucia Tourism Authority worked assiduously with the CTO and trade partners to overcome the indirect

challenges faced by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, ensuring all markets that the destination was safe and available for travel.

At the close of 2017, the Association of British Travel Agents in Travel Trends Report for 2018, the most important document issued in the UK travel industry, selected St Lucia as one of the top 12 destinations for 2018.



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### Top 10 Travelers' Choice Hotels for Families in the World

- Beaches Turks & Caicos
- Beaches Negril





CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

# BA invests in new catering for world traveller customers

**B**RITISH AIRWAYS has announced a multimillion-pound investment in its World Traveller (economy) catering, introducing an exciting and expanded new menu which provides more quantity and quality to both meals and great snacking options throughout the flight.

Previously, customers travelling in the cabin were served a complimentary snack, a three-course meal or a light meal, depending on the time and length of their flight, as well as a complimentary bar service of hot and cold drinks.

The new catering introduced recently sees airline customers being welcomed with pretzels and a



drink. Once they are settled in, they are served a four-course meal such as a starter of couscous salad,

followed by a main course of chicken casserole with an ale sauce, olcannon mash and seasonal

vegetables, or a vegetarian tomato, farfalle and vegetable dish. Dessert is a Pots & Co salted caramel and chocolate mousse, followed by biscuits and cheese. The meal is accompanied by a bread roll and a bottle of water.

## A REAL DIFFERENCE

Carolina Martinoli, British Airways' director of brand and customer experience, said: "Our customers tell us that when they're taking a long-haul flight, great food and beverages make a real difference to them. It's a huge driver of customer satisfaction, so we want to make sure we deliver a great experience. With this multi-million-pound investment, we've focused on introducing more quantity and quality to the catering, delivering tasty meals and great snacking options throughout the flight."

"Our new four-course main meal has been developed by our team of chefs to be full of flavour at 35,000ft and we've created regional options, depending on the route. The second meal option is either a tasty sandwich or a more substantial pizza wrap, both served with additional snacks, depending on the length of the flight."

British Airways has, for many years, gone the extra mile in catering for Caribbean tastes with menus like coconut curry chicken,

Jamaican sweet potato stew, barbeque and jerked chicken with kidney beans (red peas) and rice, and vegetable stir fry with jasmine rice.

Passengers going beyond London on British Airways can enjoy meals like chicken in spicy chung du sauce on flights to and from China, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea; curry and dhal meals on flights to and from Indian cities; and chicken in spicy Arabic sauce on flights to the Middle East.

On shorter daylight long-haul flights from London to destinations from New York to Dubai, customers also have typical British options like egg and cress sandwiches.

The popular meal options for customers with special dietary requirements will continue to be available to book on [ba.com/management/booking](http://ba.com/management/booking) more than 24 hours ahead of their flight departing.

British Airways is investing £4.5 billion for customers over the next five years, covering the installation of the best quality Wi-Fi and power in every seat, fitting 128 long-haul aircraft with new interiors and taking delivery of 72 new aircraft. The airline is also investing £600m specifically in Club World, including outstanding catering and luxurious White Company bedding – plus, from 2019, a new seat with direct aisle access.



# Rebel Salute says thank you to hotels

**Camille Miller**

*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

ORGANISERS OF the 25th staging of the International Reggae Festival, Rebel Salute, are still raving about the overall support they received from the local hotel sector, notably in the resort town of Ocho Rios.

Team member Marcia Lawrence, who had the responsibility of seeking support from the hotels for the festival, described the partnership as invaluable, adding that it made for the continued overall success of the event.

“While we are happy with the support from all our partners, we have to single out host property, Jewel Dunn’s River, for the amazing way they handled all aspects of the partnership,” Lawrence noted.

“From providing rooms for our staff and also the performing artistes, the Jewel Dunn’s River team was simply outstanding and first class. It must also be noted that the property also hosted the festival’s International Media Launch, among many other things.”

## BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Lawrence added that the St Ann-based property “went beyond the call of duty” to ensure that everything ran smoothly for the festival, noting that “they were just absolutely amazing”.

“One of the key elements of hosting a two-day festival of this magnitude is to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available to staff, performers, and even patrons who desire to remain in



PHOTO BY LIONEL ROOKWOOD

Patrons and visitors to the island alike, enjoy the experience at Rebel Salute 2018.

St Ann for the time leading up to the festival,” she further pointed out.

“Therefore, the partnership with hotels in St Ann is extremely important. The additional support received came from other properties such as Beaches Boscobel (member of The Sandals Group), Jamaica Inn, Moon Palace, Sky Castle, Executive Inn, Old Fort Village, Club Ambiance, Cardiff Hotel, the Jamaica Pegasus hotel, and Marriott Courtyard in Kingston, as well as the Hilton Rose Hall Hotel in Montego Bay.

Lawrence said that the festival also received support from Caribbean Airlines, Knutsford Express, and Jamaica Tours Limited, adding that it is the intention of the festival through various travel partners, to provide Rebel Salute packages that will include airline seats, accommodation, attractions, shuttle service, Rebel Salute memorabilia, and tickets to the festival.

“We are actually in discussions now to make that a reality,” she added.

Rebel Salute is an annual music festival that is held over two days in the month of January. Conceptualised by artist and promoter Patrick ‘Tony Rebel’ Barrett, it is one of the country’s biggest music festivals, which is known for its focus on roots and conscious music.

Rebel Salute 2019 will be held on January 18 and 19 and is expected to continue its tradition of providing a family-oriented entertaining package.

## Sunwing Travel Group, Planet Hollywood create partnership

SUNWING TRAVEL Group, North America’s largest vertically integrated travel company, has signed a deal with iconic lifestyle brand Planet Hollywood to dramatically increase the footprint of Planet Hollywood’s hotel operations globally.

Initially, Planet Hollywood Beach Resort Costa Rica will open in the fall of 2018, and Planet Hollywood Resort Cancún will open in late Spring of 2019. These two properties mark Planet Hollywood’s first foray into the in-demand luxury all-inclusive category.

For more than 25 years, the Planet Hollywood brand has been positioned as the authority of entertainment and popular culture. Capitalising on its close celebrity ties and the universal appeal of movies,

television, music, and sports, the Planet Hollywood brand has been successful across the gaming, restaurant, lodging, retail, leisure, and entertainment sectors.

### PERFECT OPPORTUNITY

“The Planet Hollywood brand has always been about delivering unique and memorable experiences that translate into lifelong memories for our guests,” said Robert Earl, Planet Hollywood’s founder and chairman. “I am so excited to partner with Sunwing Travel Group and cannot wait to get started with the first spectacular locations in Costa Rica and Cancún. This is the perfect opportunity to bring ‘fame’ a lot closer to all customers by leveraging Sunwing Travel Group’s proven

track record of successfully operating and rapidly expanding premier hotel brands.”

As master hotel franchisor to the world-renowned Planet Hollywood brand, Sunwing Travel Group intends to establish a dominant position for Planet Hollywood in the luxury accommodation space. In addition to building and operating new resorts, Sunwing Travel Group will offer management services and franchise opportunities to prospective Planet Hollywood Resorts worldwide. “Robert Earl is a visionary that knows how to create exciting and engaging experiences”, said Stephen Hunter, president and CEO of Sunwing Travel Group, adding that “it’s all about capturing the little details that others miss.”

The new Planet Hollywood Beach Resort

Costa Rica will be the first resort under this new agreement, where customers can ‘Vacation like a Star’ and interact with Hollywood memorabilia, enjoy entertainment-themed facilities, purchase popular brand merchandise, and maybe even catch a view of a vacationing starlet.

The new Planet Hollywood resorts will be using technology to heighten the resort experience, from interactive touch-screen digital displays narrating the memorabilia experience to PHTV in-suite and throughout the resort, keeping guests up to date with live streaming of events and activities. The brand is investing in details from music architecture to help set the mood to Hollywood lighting to make sure everyone looks fabulous.



CONTRIBUTED

A scene from the panel discussion on 'Exploring links between Africa and Jamaica in the 21st Century', held inside Africana House, Great Huts, on Saturday, February 10.

# Great Huts resort observes Black History Month

**Paul H. Williams**

*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

**G**REAT HUTS Paradise on the Edge is an Afrocentric, eco-friendly resort located in Boston, Portland. The units, called huts, are designed and accented to look like some structures in an African village.

But apart from the physical manifestations and aesthetics, the resort promotes and hosts events that speak to the importance of embracing and preserving the arts and culture of Jamaica in particular, and the African diaspora in general. There is a cultural show every Saturday night in which guests are asked to participate.

This year, the telling of the black story went up a notch with the hosting of two events to observe Black History Month. The evening of Saturday, February 10, was billed 'Pamoja (oneness): Exploring links between Africa and Jamaica in the 21st Century'. It started with a discussion on 'reversing the slave triangle' and 'issues of reparation and repatriation'.

An African fashion show and dance party climaxed the evening. The African clothes on show were provided by Aya Wear, while Dub



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

Nadia Lowe, singer/songwriter at Wilks Bay Resort in Portland, performing a Bob Marley song.

Traffickers filled the Safari Deck with a selection of eclectic music.

The panel discussion for the second evening, Saturday, February 17, was themed, 'Dem a go tired fi si mi face, celebrating Jamaica's global icon Robert Nesta Marley', in which a panel and some guests at the resort discussed the global reach and impact of Bob Marley's music.

Later in the evening, spoken word performer Ras Rod of Dub Traffickers, in a very interesting outfit he designed, reeled off some of his 'poemtry', before spinning



Spoken word performer Ras Rod of Dub Traffickers in a very intense moment.

the music of the reggae icon, and others, in a session called 'Marley Magic'.

In speaking about the purpose of the events, Director of Cultural Programmes, Events and Public Relations Vivene Levison told **Hospitality Jamaica**, "The essence of Great Huts is a respect for mother nature and a celebration of Motherland Africa. Our Black History Month events are a very important aspect of our educational mission and cultural events programme.

"These experiences have been meaningful to our local educators, community members, and our international guests, who learned, but were also entertained during Pamoja and our tribute to the great Robert Nesta Marley," Levison further said.



CONTRIBUTED

A model shows off an Afrocentric piece by Aya Wear.