

The Gleaner

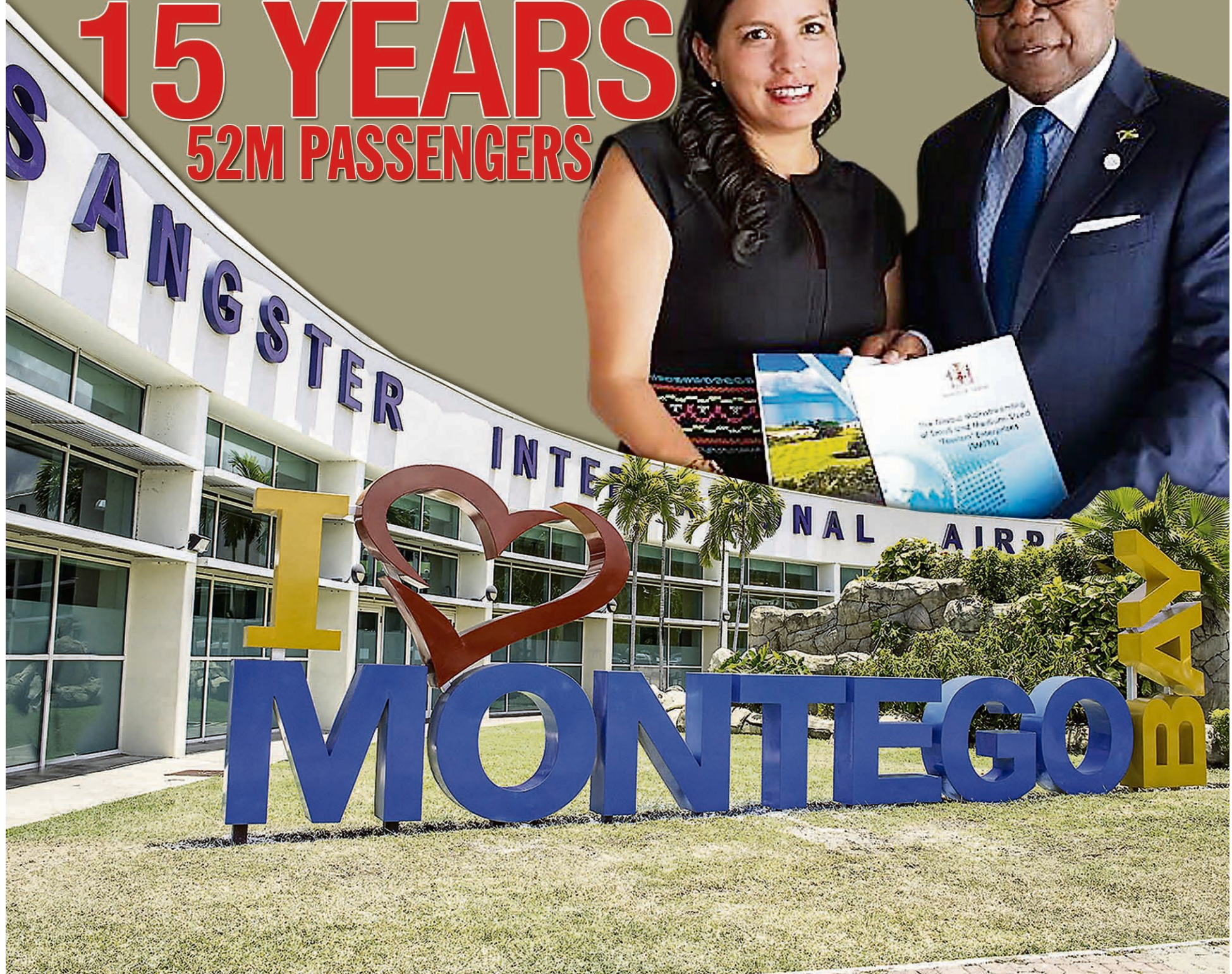
Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY,

MAY 2, 2018

15 YEARS
52M PASSENGERS



Reggae Sunfest targets visitors from the New York Tri-State

\$1.2-million support for Calabash Festival

UP-UP AND AWAY

Sangster International continues to soar



Evolution of Traffic – Total Passengers

Total Passengers 2003-2017



Camille Miller

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WITH OVER 52 million visitors over the past 15 years, the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay is not just the proverbial ‘goose that lays the golden egg’, but is now easily one of Jamaica’s biggest economic earners.

Celebrating its 15th year under its MBJ Airports Limited lease agreement, the Sangster Airport is now also one of the main gateways in the Caribbean.

The airport, which connects Jamaica to more than 50 international destinations and which saw some 4.2 million passengers passing through in 2017 – a new all-time record – has also emerged as a signature landmark for brand Jamaica.

“The airport, which, by the way, has been named the Caribbean’s Leading Airport for nine consecutive years, also provides employment to more than 150 Jamaicans,” Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MBJ Airports Limited Rafael Echevarne explained.

He added that it’s mind-boggling to calculate the actual revenue the airport has earned for Jamaica, adding, “Can you imagine the figure if even half of who passed through the airport spent at least US\$100

while in Jamaica?”

“It’s also not just that we are celebrating 15 years ... it’s kind of how we got here amid some of the initial challenges we faced. And to this, I cannot say enough about the quality people we have working here and who have been an important part of this journey. To have more than 52 million passengers over the past 15 years is also an incredible achievement,” he added.

“This landmark achievement by MBJ Airports Limited truly reflects the dedication

and professionalism of our entire staff, who work tirelessly to improve the traveller experience,” Echevarne further added.

He further explained that a concerted effort has been made over the years to improve the physical infrastructure of the airport and to create “an authentically Jamaican experience” for airline passengers and to serve as a world-class aviation facility that “assist greatly as part of Jamaica’s iconic tourism product.

“The Sangster International is yet another

example of how Jamaica is setting the bar for the entire region,” Echevarne beamed.

“For the past three years, we have been working on a number of initiatives, with the ultimate goal being to improve the passenger experience by reducing queues at security checkpoints.

“We have also been displaying Jamaican art throughout the airport and have ensured that all our retail concessionaires improve their product offering for the travelling public,” Echevarne further added.

The airport CEO also informed that the growth rate at Sangster over the past five years has been around five per cent, adding that “last year’s record 4.2 million passenger mark, could soon be exceeded.

“There is no doubt in our minds that this record will not last for long,” he added.

Echevarne also disclosed that MBJ has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Airports Authority of Jamaica, where “we will be upgrading and expanding the existing runway.

“There will also be major renovations in other areas to bring the Sangster International on par with all the major airports across the world,” he emphasised.

For his part, Mayor of Montego Bay



Chief Executive Officer of MBJ Airports Limited, Rafael Echevarne.

Homer Davis said the Sangster International is now being recognized as a major player in international aviation and strategic planning, pointing to the Caribbean Hurricane Awareness Tour (CHAT) by the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which sent a team from the National Hurricane Centre and the Hurricane Hunter Association to the island last Friday, specifically to Sangster Airport.

"This is very important, consid-

ering that Jamaica was the only English speaking country that was part of the 2018 CHAT," he explained. "We must remember that this is an initiative that is undertaken once per year and in different regions of the world. It speaks volume that the Sangster International Airport was chosen as one of the stops."

CHAT forms part of the public awareness, education and outreach campaign implemented by NOAA in partnership with the United States Air Force Reserve.

Echevarne said that MBJ Airports has a number of events scheduled throughout 2018 to commemorate the 15-year milestone.

"We just had an official celebration at the airport, where a historical exhibit and a commemorative sign was unveiled," he added.

"This was followed, of course, by an airport forum and also a visit by airport stakeholders, schools and civic groups, who came to view the Hurricane Hunter aircraft at the airport."

He added that MBJ will continue to support the community throughout 2018 with its 'Change for Children' initiative, among several other programmes.

Change for Children, he said, funds projects that support the growth and development of children in the Montego Bay area.

MBJ, he said, also continues to support the Autism Centre in Brandon Hill and Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf through this initiative.

"MBJ recently partnered with Spot Valley High School to provide mentorship support and will host a Labour Day project at the school on May 23. MBJ will also continue to participate in charity marathons and coastal clean-ups," Echevarne said.



The MBJ team



The Caribbean Airlines team at the MBJ Airports Limited 15th anniversary expo in Sam Sharpe Square

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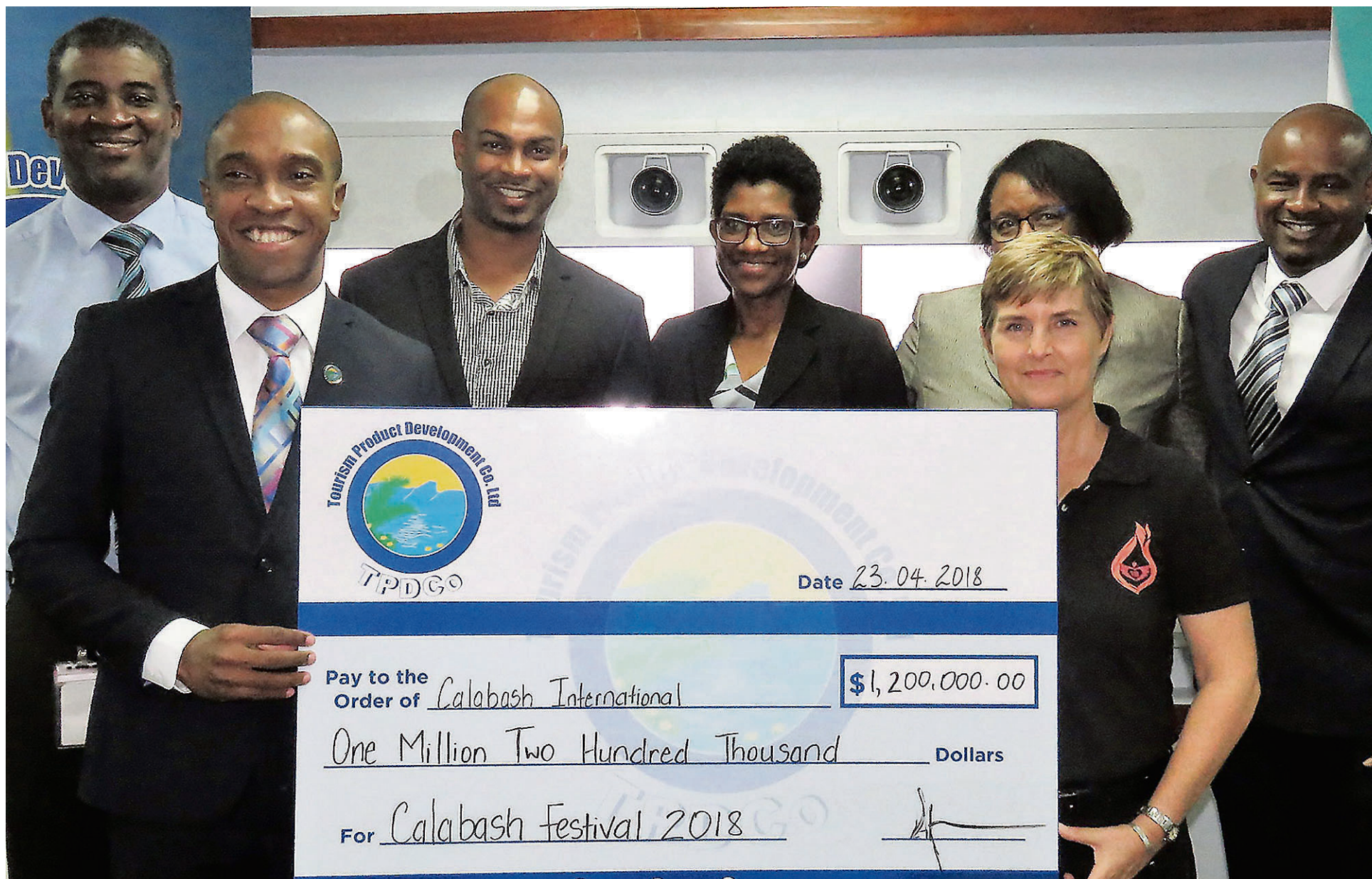
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Executive Director of Tourism Product Development Company Limited (TPDCo), Dr Andrew Spencer (left foreground) presents a \$1.2-million contribution to co-organizer of the Calabash festival, (right) Justine Henzell. They are joined by TPDCo staff members (From left, Back row) director, Corporate Services Deron Dixon; Stephen Edwards, director, projects; Financial Controller Georgia Robinson-Wong; Craft coordinator Violet Crutchley; and Director of Product Development Julian Patrick. TPDCo's partnership with Calabash 2018 is expected to add to the organisation's efforts boosting community tourism in Jamaica by highlighting the diversity of Jamaica's tourism product.

\$1.2 million support for Calabash festival

THE TOURISM Product Development Company Limited (TPDCo) has lent its support to this year's staging of the Calabash International Literary Festival. Providing funds of over \$1million, the partnership will add to the organisation's efforts of boosting community tourism in Jamaica.

The partnership with the Calabash organizers will also enable publicity for TPDCo-trained and certified craft producers and artisans. This will give the local artists an opportunity to

showcase and sell their work to nearly 1,000 persons who are expected to attend the free festival later this year.

Speaking at the cheque handover, held at TPDCo's headquarters in Kingston, Dr Andrew Spencer, executive director of TPDCo, emphasised the importance of the organization's involvement in a festival such as Calabash, and the leverage it will provide for community tourism in Jamaica.

"Community tourism is the vehicle for

development, and it has to be the model that we fully immerse ourselves in. We are excited to partner with the Calabash team as we work to introduce a more intellectual and artistic side of Jamaica. It is also fitting that the event will take place in Treasure Beach, which is the home of community tourism, where individuals can gain a homely and educational experience," he said.

The hosting of the festival in Jamaica's community tourism capital represents a model

that currently forms a key part of Jamaica's tourism product strategy; TPDCo's role, as per the Tourism Master Plan, includes inclusiveness and working with local communities as a way of developing the wider tourism product.

It is envisioned that the development of community tourism, through key partnerships, will communicate the diversity of Jamaica's tourism product by appealing to the different types of visitors who holiday in the island yearly.

The purpose of boosting community tourism, highlighted in the organisation's mandate, is also established to open avenues for economic benefit for local and small entrepreneurs who offer a unique, educational and authentic Jamaican experience.

The Calabash festival is held at Treasure Beach on a biennial basis. This year's staging will be held from June 1-3. The festival will operate under the theme 'Lit up' and will feature celebrated female poets, including Jamaica's own Poet Laureate, Lorna Goodison.



The new 'I Love Montego Bay' sign unveiled at the Sangster International Airport.

'I Love Montego Bay' unveiling at Sangster International Airport

MBJ AIRPORTS Limited (MBJ) unveiled a commemorative sign at the Sangster International Airport on the occasion of its Airport Forum held on April 26.

The iconic sign is yet another distinctive feature at the Sangster International Airport and is strategically located in a highly trafficked area between the departures and arrivals corridors, where visitors frequently stop to take photos. "We have worked hard to ensure this 'I Love Montego Bay' sign depicts all that is positive about the city and its offerings to the millions of visitors we receive each year. Our intention is for it to add to the allure of Montego Bay and become an attraction in and of itself" said MBJ Chief executive officer Dr Rafael Echevarne.

The commemorative sign has as its backdrop the name Sangster International Airport in bold lettering and is fast becoming a hit on social media.

"We expect that even more photos will be taken in this area now as passengers record lasting memories



From left: Councillor Leeroy William, deputy mayor of Montego Bay, greets Rafael Echevarne, CEO of MBJ Airports Limited, while Audley Deidrick, president and CEO of the Airports Authority of Jamaica, shakes hands with Mikael Phillips, opposition spokesman on transport, during the uncovering of the newest attraction to St James and the Sangster International Airport: MBJ's 'I Love Montego Bay' 15th anniversary commemorative sign.

of their time in Montego Bay to share with their friends and families. We hope the new sign will prove to be yet another unique selling point for our incredible

destination and will serve to remind travelers and the world at large that Jamaica is a vibrant and enticing place to visit, explore, and enjoy," the CEO added.

Jamaica to sign multideestination MOU with Peru

MINISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett will sign a Multideestination marketing memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Peru to strengthen tourism in both countries. The Multideestination MOU is slated to be signed in October this year.

"The MOU, which aims to strengthen partnership and tourism products, will connect with eco and cultural tourism to include entertainment and then training through the Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation," Bartlett said.

Bartlett added, "A major area of the MOU will be to look at how we build our resilience and crisis-management capabilities within the region."

Vice-Minister of Tourism for Peru Silvia Ruiz Zarate has welcomed the initiative and said "We have many things in common that we can work together on such as gastronomy, cultural tourism, and small and medium tourism enterprises and look forward to the collaboration in these areas."

"The additional flights scheduled to come on stream will also boost arrivals and help the cultural exchange between both countries," Zarate added.

MAIN ECONOMIC DRIVERS

In highlighting the importance of partnering with Peru, Minister Bartlett said SMTEs, which account for 80 per cent of tourism; Minister Bartlett said "This MOU will give energy to these key partners who are the main economic drivers in the industry but get the least share of the wealth. The aim is to enable small countries to get wealth from tourism because the power of that wealth is in the hands of the creative products".

Jamaica has signed Multi Destination MOUs with Mexico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

This arrangement will be beneficial to all countries involved as they will gain access to a significantly larger market which will lead to sustainable growth.

JTB Head, Donovan White; Senior Advisor/Strategist to Minister Bartlett, Delano Seiveright and other Ministry and JTB officials form part of the tour across South America that will take the team across Argentina, Chile, Peru and Colombia.

Engagements include meetings with the leadership of Latin America's largest airlines including COPA, LATAM and Avianca; the largest tour operators; leaders of travel focused TV, Radio, print and online media; Government officials and influential travel agents.



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (left) presents Vice-Minister of Tourism for Peru Silvia Ruiz Zarate with a policy brief on the Global Centre for Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management and a publication on the Global Mainstreaming of Small and Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprises.

Developing new markets requires improved language skills



ONE OF the most impressive aspects of any visit to Portugal's capital, Lisbon, is the language skills of those who work in the hospitality sector.

Having just spent a few days there mixing work with pleasure and speaking no Portuguese at all, I was amazed how everyone from the Ukrainian taxi driver to the staff of the small boutique hotel where I was staying, and in restaurants and obscure bars, almost everyone was able to switch effortlessly between English, French, German and Spanish, and in some cases Russian.

These are skills that the Caribbean tourism sector needs to do much more to acquire. Although Spanish is meant to be the second language taught in schools across the English-speaking parts of the region, it is remarkable, and perhaps a sign of falling standards in secondary education, graduates apart, how few in the Caribbean tourism sector have any language skills at all.

This is not the case in the Dominican Republic where good English is not only common among hotel staff at all levels, but for example in Punta Cana where I have commonly come across French and Italian, and in some



David Jessop

hotels and shops there, staff were able to speak confidently in Russian to the growing number of arrivals from Moscow and St Petersburg.

In Cuba, which now sees tourism as the key sector for sustainable economic development, language teaching and expectations have gone one stage further. There, proficiency in English is now a necessity for all high-school students and a requirement to graduate from a university. While students still learn Russian, French and other languages, English has come to be a necessary skill for all the country's young people.

For Jamaica and the rest of the anglophone Caribbean, having a tourism sector that is at least bilingual

in Spanish and ideally multilingual, is likely to become a real issue as source markets multiply in number.

While many visitors from the new markets in Europe, Latin America, Japan and China will speak enough English to get by, this is no substitute for the comfort and sense of welcome that comes from being able to converse even in the most general of terms with an immigration officer, taxi driver, hotel receptionist or waiter in one's own language.

WELCOMING DESTINATION

This is likely to become more important as Jamaica and others in CARICOM encourage airlines, tour operators and the media in Latin America and further afield to see the Caribbean as a welcoming new destination.

In the anglophone Caribbean, Jamaica is now particularly advanced in recognising the importance of the proximity of the Latin American market.

In the last few weeks alone, Jamaica's Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett has visited Peru, Chile and Colombia.

In Lima, he announced that a reciprocal multi-destination marketing memorandum of understanding will be signed with Peru in



October which will emphasise eco, cultural and gastronomic tourism. He also said that consideration is being given to the possibility of direct flights three times a week between Peru and Montego Bay by the LATAM airlines group, which has extensive South American routes that include Brazil; and that a decision by COPA to increase its service to Montego Bay to daily, out of its easy-transit hub in Panama City, will make same-day travel to Jamaica possible from almost all Latin capitals. The minister also indicated that he is exploring the possibility of Avianca developing airlift out of Colombia.

What this suggests is that there will be a rapidly growing number of opportunities in tourism for those who speak good Spanish, and if Brazil were to become a source market, Portuguese as well.

In most tourism-oriented nations, language training forms an important part of the curriculum in hotel schools for management trainees. National and regional industry associations in the Caribbean ought to be doing more to develop with educators a strategy that ensures that basic foreign language training courses are created for all who encounter, at the very least, Spanish, speaking visitors.



LA MARCA DE
CONSISTENTES
90+
PUNTOS

RECONOCIMIENTOS
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

COSECHA	PUNTAJE
2012	91 puntos
2011	93 puntos
2010	91 puntos
2009	90 puntos
2008	90 puntos
2007	91 puntos
2006	90 puntos
2005	91 puntos
2004	90 puntos
2003	91 puntos

Wine Spectator





Employee of the Year Dalbert Nembhard, from Jewel Paradise Cove.



Department of the Year at Jewel PC, Maintenance.



Omar Reynolds with his main prize, a Nissan AD Wagon.



Manager of the Year, Ermalyn Francis-Luke (second left), is joined by, from left, Patrick Bryan, Acting General Manager, Jewel Runaway Bay; Carlos Grant, Regional Manager Sagicor Investment and Nadine Reid, Human Resource Manager, Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa.



Winners at Jewel PC pose with acting Hotel Manager Daine Golaub (5th right) and Human Resource Manager Alicia Lynch (right).



Manager of the Year at Jewel PC, Lettechia Cole-Thompson.

Excellence rewarded

Jewel Resort team members get cars, cash, appliances for job well done

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

AFTER ANOTHER year of offering excellent service to guests during 2017, team members at the three Jewel properties in St Ann were handsomely rewarded recently at staff award functions.

Workers of the Year at Jewel Paradise Cove, Jewel Dunn's River and Jewel Runaway Bay were each presented with a 2012 Nissan AD motorcar for their effort, along with other prizes.

Overall, millions of dollars were presented to the deserving workers for a year in which they continued to display the top-class service that has helped to make Jamaica a prime tourist destination over the years.

Cash, appliances, holidays were among the gifts presented to the workers.

The workers were also exposed to motivational speeches, with radio personality Jennifer 'Jenny Jenny' Small, Cordell Green of the Broadcasting Commission, and Sagicor executive adviser Selena Chin addressing staff at Paradise Cove, Dunn's River and Runaway Bay, respectively.

Entertainment-wise, it was top-class performers who came to entertain the staff, with Richie Stephens performing at Paradise Cove.

At Dunn's River, Tony Rebel, Wickerman and Queen Ifrica all performed, while Kevin Downswell took the roomful of people inside Sunstone at Runaway Bay to church with an inspiring performance.

Some of the winners were:

Jewel Paradise Cove: Associate of the Year – Dalbert Nembhard, from Stewarding department; Manager of the Year – Lettechia Cole-Thompson; Supervisor of the Year – O'Leary Robinson; department of the Year – Maintenance.

Jewel Dunn's River: Associate of the Year – Walvin Panton, dining room supervisor, who won ahead of Frowlein Fullerton and Raneal Peart;

Manager of the Year – Carol Walters-Davis; supervisor of the Year – Fitzroy Jackson; Bartender of the Year – Andrew Thomas; Chef of the Year – Prince Somers; general manager's merit award – Clive Henry and Otis Mitchell; Department of the Year – laundry.

Jewel Runaway Bay: Associate of the Year – Omar Reynolds of maintenance, who won ahead of Charlene Henry and Lorna Bromfield; Manager of the Year – Ermalyn Francis-Luke of housekeeping; Supervisor of the Year – Jason Johnson of entertainment; Chef of the Year – Trishana Johnson; Bartender of the Year – Sherena Kelley; Department of the Year – sanitation.



Supervisor of the Year at Jewel Runaway Bay, Jason 'Purple' Johnson, is flanked by a trio of beautiful women. They are (from left) Tanisha Mullings, investment wealth advisor, Sagicor; Selena Chin, executive financial Adviser, Sagicor; and Charmaine Deane, area director of marketing and Communications, Hilton Rose Hall and Jewel Resorts.



Omar Reynolds (centre), Associate of the Year, Jewel Runaway Bay, with (from left) Bridgette Pouyat of Coffee Traders; Loven McCook, regional manager, Sagicor Investment; Norma Walters, custos of St Ann; and Patrick Bryan, acting general manager, Jewel Runaway Bay.



Chef of the Year Prince Somers (centre) accepts on award from Andrew Allen (left) of Best Dressed Foods while Chef Osmond Brown looks on



Walvin Panton, Employee of the Year at Jewel Dunn's River



From left: His Excellency Frantz Liataud, ambassador of the Republic of Haiti and dean of the CARICOM Group; Louise Paquette, business development manager for the Jamaica Tourist Board; Her Excellency Janice Miller, Jamaica's high commissioner to Canada; Glenroy Walker, executive chef, Sandals Resorts International; and His Excellency Garth Chatoor, high commissioner for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.



Glenroy Walker, executive chef, Sandals Resorts International poses beside the luncheon buffet during the Jamaican, Gastronomy Festival in Ottawa.

Jamaica's cuisine showcased during Gastronomy Festival in Ottawa, Ontario

JAMAICA'S CULINARY fare was recently showcased in Ottawa, Ontario, during a Jamaican Gastronomy Festival. Approximately 350 food enthusiasts from Ottawa and the surrounding area enjoyed Jamaican specialties during themed buffet luncheons and VIP dinners over the three-day

event, held at Carleton Grill at the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel. The event featured the culinary artistry of Executive Chef Glenroy Walker of Sandals Resorts International

Thanks to the hotel's proximity to Canada's parliament buildings, many attendees were government officials and local business people who not

only enjoyed the festival, but were interested in booking trips to Jamaica.

At the invitation of Louise Paquette, the Jamaica Tourist Board's business development manager in the region, local travel agents were in attendance during the festival. Paquette used the occasion to share stories of

Jamaica's gastronomy offerings with the attendees, inviting them to learn more about the island at www.visitjamaica.com.

The luncheon menu featured roasted pumpkin & codfish salad, pan-seared snapper in a coconut rundown sauce, and ackee and white chocolate cheesecake, while

the VIP five-course dinner served up escoveitched lobster, Blue Mountain coffee-rubbed beef tenderloin and coconut brulee with Appleton-flamed marshmallow for dessert.

The festival was a partnership with the Jamaican High Commission, JTB, Sandals and the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel.

Reggae Sumfest targets visitors from the New York Tri-State

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) is again on board as a sponsor for the 2018 staging of Reggae Sumfest, slated for July 15-22 at the Catherine Hall Entertainment Centre in Montego Bay. The JTB joined a host of sponsors, including title sponsors Red Stripe, for the recent New York launch of the event held at The DL in Lower Manhattan. The launch kicked off with Jamaica's Consul General to New York Trudy Deans welcoming the large turnout of media, influencers, industry personnel and entrepreneurs.

In his remarks, Christopher Dobson, business development officer, Jamaica Tourist Board, reminded the audience that

music was one of attributes that attract visitors to Jamaica. Reggae Sumfest, he said, provides a great opportunity for music aficionados and lovers of Jamaica's culture to enjoy Montego Bay. Reshima Kerry, assistant brand manager of Red Stripe, brought greetings on behalf of the title sponsors.

Delivering the keynote address, Josef Bogdanovich, chairman & CEO of DownSound Entertainment, noted that music is a unifying force and encouraged the Jamaican fraternity to work together to achieve greater benefits. He used the occasion to announce that starting this year, DownSound Entertainment, through Reggae Sumfest, will be sup-



From right: Christopher Dobson, business development officer, Jamaica Tourist Board; Josef Bogdanovich, chairman & CEO, DownSound Entertainment; Trudy Deans, consul general of Jamaica to New York; Robert Russell, deputy chairman, DownSound Entertainment; and Ricardo Bryan, SVP, sales & distribution, GraceKennedy Foods (USA), at the New York launch of Reggae Sumfest at The DL in Lower Manhattan on April 17.

porting Damian Marley's Welcome to Jamrock Cruise with ticket and travel giveaway packages to both the cruise

and Reggae Sumfest.

To purchase tickets, go to: reggaesumfest.com.

British Virgin Islands tourism sector looks ahead in confidence

Director of Tourism shares state of the territory seven months after storms

SEVEN MONTHS after Hurricanes Irma and Maria struck the beautiful British Virgin Islands (BVI), the territory's attractions, accommodations, and activities continue to rebound. The tourism industry and team at the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board have worked extremely hard to revitalise the BVI's tourism product – the lifeblood of our islands. We are fortunate to have the support of our Government, which remains steadfast in its commitment to BVI tourism. Now, more than ever, it is critical that we encourage visitors to come experience the BVI they know and love.

Over the last few months, our tourism season has come alive with vibrant events, property reopenings and new local initiatives, symbolic of a BVI renaissance. And as of April 10, the US Department of State has updated its BVI travel advisory to Level 1 (exercise normal precaution), another indication of the territory's return to normalcy.

The BVITB is pleased to provide a comprehensive update on accommodations, local businesses, and upcoming events around the territory as we emphasise that the destination is indeed open for business.

In terms of landside accommodations, some of the BVI's premier properties are



Director of Tourism Sharon Flax-Brutus

welcoming guests once again, including Oil Nut Bay on Virgin Gorda and Cooper Island Beach Club. On the island of Anegada, 10 of 11 hotels are operational, including Anegada Beach Club and Anegada Reef Hotel, among others. There are currently 552 total hotel

rooms (about 16 per cent) available for bookings throughout the BVI.

The remainder of our private island resorts are working fast and furiously to restore their cherished luxury experiences. Guana Island Resort will reopen in July as will Scrub Island Resort & Spa. Necker Island will have a partial reopening in the fall, while Rosewood Little Dix Bay and Bitter End Yacht Club – among the hardest-hit resorts – are expected to reopen in late 2019.

STRONG RECOVERY

Of course, the wonderful thing about the BVI's tourism product is that we offer both land and sea accommodations. After the storms, we immediately identified the yachting sector as the first to rebound. The yacht charters have made a strong recovery, and as it stands now, the territory has 1,860 charter boat berths/cabins available. This includes premier charter companies such as The Moorings, Marine Max, Sunsail, and Horizon.

Additionally, a total of 36 cruise ship calls have been made at the Tortola Pier Park since December, another encouraging means to bring visitors to the destination. This includes cruise lines such as Columbia and Silver Seas, while larger ships such as Disney

Cruise Line and Norwegian Cruise Line will resume cruising to the BVI in the fall.

Getting to the BVI has never been easier. InterCaribbean Airways has expanded service between San Juan and Tortola, adding another convenient connection option for travellers.

When visitors land on our spectacular shorelines, there are a number of attractions that are open for them to explore at their leisure like the iconic Baths on Virgin Gorda. Our exotic dive sites are open as well, so guests can enjoy underwater adventure and marine life at the BVI Art Reef and Wreck of the RMS Rhone. BVITB is also working in conjunction with the National Parks Trust to revive our parks (Sage Mountain, Mount Healthy, and others) and reopen them for locals and visitors alike. Local businesses around the islands are determined to provide the level of service and fun that patrons have come to expect. Legendary beach bars like Foxy's Tamarind Bar and Soggy Dollar Bar have reopened on Jost Van Dyke over the past few months. Additionally, museums such as Sugar Works and the Old Government House will return this fall.

Most recently, the BVI hosted the 47th BVI Spring Regatta in March. Sailors from around the world convened on our shores and celebrated another successful week of competition and island spirit.

We are confident that with the help of our yachting sector and the reopening of land accommodations over the next several months, we will continue sailing towards the full rebuilding of our beloved BVI. Looking ahead, we're excited to share a great line-up of events and festivals that will attract visitors as we move into the summer months.

UNWTO joins tourism ministers in calling upon G20 leaders to prioritise tourism

IN HIS meeting with the President of Argentina, Mauricio Macri, and current G20 Chair, United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili stressed the capacity of tourism to create jobs and the need to advance the adaptation of the sector to the digital transformation.

The 8th Meeting of the Tourism Ministers of the G20 Economies was held in Buenos Aires on April 17, under Argentina's presidency of the G20 with a focus on the 'Future of Work – Tourism's Leading Role in Sustainable Development: a Driver for Employment'.

In line with the priorities of Argentina's G20 presidency, which includes the 'Future of

Work', the meeting focused on how tourism can embrace innovation and technology and foster new skills development to create new decent jobs.

"We need to promote the role that tourism has in shaping the future of our world as the sector that will create more jobs in the coming decade" said the Minister of Tourism of Argentina, Gustavo Santos, opening the meeting.

Ambassador Daniel Raimondi, Argentina's vice minister of foreign affairs and worship, stressed the future of work as one of Argentina's G20 priorities and its link to tourism, a sector that is key to creating jobs, developing infrastructure, and exports.

"Let us embrace the technological

revolution and unleash its potential to create more and better jobs in our sector, making tourism a true pillar of the G20 objectives of inclusive and sustained growth" said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili in his opening remarks to the meeting.

Ministers of tourism of the G20 economies agreed to consider the following:

- Encourage policies that promote full and productive employment and facilitate the progress of innovation in tourism and foster the creation of decent jobs, sustainable enterprises, and entrepreneurship, in particular among women and the youth;
- Establish favourable frameworks to stimulate innovation and

entrepreneurship and connect ecosystems linking start-ups, main companies, investors, and governments along the tourism value chain;

- Create cooperation mechanisms among educational institutions at all levels, the private sector, governments, and technology partners to review educational programmes and skills development policies;
- Consider the importance of SMEs in the tourism, heritage, and cultural sectors due to their contribution to job creation as well as their role in preserving and promoting cultural resources;
- Promote the use of digital technology to facilitate travel as well as involve technology stakeholders in national tourism policies



New UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili

In 2016, G20 countries received 904 million international tourist arrivals, which generated over US\$ 1 trillion or 6.3 per cent of all G20 exports.

The Government of Japan will host the 9th Meeting of the Tourism Ministers of the G20 Economies in Kuchan Town, Hokkaido, in 2019.



Gina Okoronkwo (right) of Consulting Agency Travel and Tour talks about her plans for Ocho Rios and Fern Gully, as her team members look on.



Beside a bed, set up by Jam Creators Communication, evaluators listen keenly to a presentation.



Team members of T3M smile as their colleague, the 'pirate', Mark St John, tells the history of Port Royal.

Students 'relaunch' Jamaica resort areas

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ON TUESDAY, April 24, completing students in the School of Tourism Hospitality and Entertainment Management at Excelsior Community College in St Andrew 'relaunched' Jamaica's major resort areas, cutting ribbons and all. "The aim of this event is to reintroduce the many resort areas of Jamaica, but in a way for them to be seen through new eyes," the students say in their programme notes. It is actually a requirement for the completion of their public relations course. They

were divided into six public relations 'consultancy' groups, each focusing on a different resort region. In addition to highlighting the features that are already in these regions, they suggested ways in which products might be improved and proposed new features/attractions. **Hospitality Jamaica** was present to hear the presentations and view the displays.

The tourism trade publication spoke with some of the students about their ideas and plans for their respective regions.

Starting in the east, the lush, green parish of



Perfectos, the team that intends to make Negril the town that never sleeps.

Portland might see some new tourism features if Experiva Consultancy Firm has its way. Speaking on its behalf, Takiea Lattibeaudiere, 'public relations director', said, "Some of those include the party bus – we are looking forward to have a lot of locals participating in that." Jet skiing, the establishment of different branches of Boston Jerk Centre, and organic foods in the hotels are some of the other things Experiva wants to see happening in Portland.

"To highlight and maintain in a sustainable manner Lime Cay and Maiden Cay beaches" is one of the things group T3M wants to do with the Port Royal area. According to Shanice Martin these are not well-known spots, but her team intends to reverse that by marketing them through social media. New facilities will be established on these cays to which access would be gained through party yachts from Morgan's Harbour.

The male 'exotic' sculptures in St Ann's Fern Gully is a major pull factor to the area, Chenile Hanson of Consulting Agency Travel and Tour believe, and so she has been telling people about them. Yet, the road to these 'magnets' is a bit rough, so something has to be done about that.

Another concern she has, has to do with the prices offered to locals by the artisans. These, she believes, are too high, but it might be a challenge to get them to change, she said, "Because we can't just go there and tell them you need to change your price to please us." Thus, she also said, "It would have to be something where a group of us make a proposal to them and see how they, too, would benefit from it."

DIVERSE TOURISM PRODUCT

Representing Jam Creators Communication, Jodi-Ann Robinson said her company, working with the security forces, wants tourists to know that it is still safe to visit the tourist mecca of Montego Bay. She also spoke about the diversity of the tourism product in the Second City. "The essence of the booth was pretty much to give a little of what Montego Bay has to offer to tourists," Robinson explained.

Holland Bamboo, Alligator Pond Fishing Village, God's Well, Alligator Hole, Lovers' Leap, and Milk River Bath and Spa are some of the attractions along Jamaica's south coast, but what can Retreat Public Relations Consultancy Group do to pull more visitors into the Mandeville/south coast area?

"We are not planning to put up or build anything new there. What we have is sufficient and in sustainable tourism, it is to develop what we have Why don't we maintain what we have, since it already there? Make it something better. Add to it, and you can take what you don't want from it. So, that is our focus for Mandeville and the south coast," Samantha Genus told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Cosmetics makers partnering with local farmers is one of the things Tricia Edwards said her public relations firm would promote for the Negril region. The farmers would provide the ingredients for value-added products, such as soaps and shampoos, to be used in the resorts.

In terms of the nightlife in the 'Capital of Cool', Edwards said, "We are trying to add some diversity in terms of entertainment. Perfectos is actually working assiduously with the hotels to make Negril 'the town that never sleeps'. On weekends, we will be having a grand gala – when the locals would come in with their art and craft, as well as live entertainment," Edwards said.



Experiva Consultancy Firm, the team that wants to diversify the tourism products in Portland.



Portland jerked food, prepared by Experiva Consultancy Firm.



A model of the Kingston waterfront, created by T3M.



From left: Patrice Dixon, Samantha Genus, Anika Cross, Jada Tabanna, Monique White and Seychelle Evans, the women of Retreat Public Relations Consultancy Group, are set to improve the tourism products that already exist on Jamaica's south coast.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

GOD'S WELL, ARTEFACTS AND TAINOS



This majestic rooster could not help but strike a pose for Hospitality Jamaica at Alligator Hole in south Clarendon recently.



The sheer drop of a section of the mountainside into God's Well in the Clarendon section of Canoe Valley.

LEFT Kingston with some friends on Saturday, April 21, feeling very excited. I was on my way to see God's Well, located in the Canoe Valley of Clarendon and south Manchester, with some people I met two years ago.

They said they are "Arawak Indian (Taino)" and I have no reason not to believe them. In fact, I am intrigued by their claim, because for years I could not accept that they were all dead.

So, with water, 'blue drawers', and mangoes we set out, I hoping to find a story to tell, and I got more than I had thought about. Well!

God's Well in Clarendon, not far from the border with Manchester, was the big surprise. I had heard that the path leading to it is rugged, and for years it has been eluding me. So, when the opportunity to see it finally came, I seized it.

The road was rocky, all right, but it was flat land, good. No precipices. On either side of the



Raslin 'Ogo' Gordon of Bull Savannah, St Elizabeth, makes it very clear that he is of Arawak (Taino) ancestry.

narrow path there were trees with thorny, slender branches. My colleagues walked ahead of me as I am a leisurely walker. What's the rush for?

Though I was told the trek was 10-minute long, we seemed to

have got there faster. When I caught up with them, they stood at the edge of a massive hole with trees around it. I paused, for I had looked beyond them and saw a sheer drop of a mountain on the side of the crater. I looked up and



A view of part of the water inside God's Well, a massive sinkhole, located in the Clarendon section of Canoe Valley.



Scavenger birds swoop in for fish entrails on Alligator Pond beach in Manchester.

vertigo swirled in. I could not believe it.

I edged closer to them holding my camera tightly, until I saw green water way down in the hole. My knowledge of geography chipped in. It looked like a massive sinkhole, part of a subterranean water system. Looking down was as dizzying as looking up. Nevertheless, I took some shots, until the light-headedness intensified.

The post-tour research confirmed my thoughts. It is indeed a sinkhole "most probably produced by the collapse of a limestone roof over a major underground cavern. "The

opening is oval and measures between 25 and 40 metres in diameter – has near-vertical walls and the distance from the top of the depression to the water level below is approximately 25 metres," says a report in **The Journal of the Geological Society of Jamaica, Volume 33**, page 31- 41.

From God's Well we walked back to Alligator Hole *en route* to Alligator Pond. And there was not even one alligator in sight. We don't have gator in Jamaica, only crocs.

At Alligator Pond, I was again fascinated by the black and greyish sparkling sands and the big scavenger birds that swooped down to



Japhet 'Channa' McFarlane displays some pieces of clay smoking pipes found at a spot said to be a Taino site, not far from Bull Savannah in St Elizabeth.

gobble up fish entrails tossed into the sea. Yet, the overall sight of the fishing village was most unflattering, so we pressed on.

Then, it was unspeakable joy when I saw Taino clay pot and pipe remnants at a spot where an elderly farmer brought us. I was beside myself, as I have always wanted to find such a spot. There were several remnants lying on top of the red soil. Yet, in all of this, what I still cannot get over is the blue turtle painting on one of the little clay pieces. Why? One of the pendants I wore that day is that of the image of a turtle. Coincidence



Canoe Valley, spanning south Clarendon and south Manchester, is a region known for its rich biodiversity.



The population of this type of lizard has dwindled in Jamaica, but they thrive in Canoe Valley in south Clarendon and Manchester.

or ancestral energy?

There was more joy when I chanced upon Raslin 'Ogo' Gordon, one of the Arawak (Taino) people I was hoping to see. When he realised I was the person he met sometime ago, he hugged me tightly and laughed. It was like re-uniting with a long-lost brother. He then brought us to some other people who said they have Taino ancestry, and

there was more laughter and learning.

We left the area as the sun was setting over Lover's Leap, only to find out along the way back to Kingston that we would have to sleep in the vehicle until daylight. But nothing could spoil that day of blue drawers, mangoes, God's Well, artefacts and Arawak Indians.

Cruise group lauds US Virgin Islands partnership

MICHELE PAIGE, president of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), says the partnership with the ports of the US Virgin Islands (USVI) is “at an all-time high”.

Her comments came after last month’s FCCA’s Operations Committee meeting, which allowed the USVI delegation to exchange hurricane preparedness best practices and lessons learned with colleagues from the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, St Maarten and Puerto Rico.

Paige observed that the partnership between the USVI and the FCCA spans decades and stands even stronger in the aftermath of last September’s storms. “If you just look at what transpired during the hurricane, we were never wondering who to talk to. We always had the commissioner and the governor, they were always there, very accessible; and we never questioned what they said, because we had that confidence,” she said.

The relationship between the trade group and the US Virgin Islands is very firm. “It goes way



The Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association’s Operations Committee meeting in Miami last month.

beyond partnership,” she observed, referring to a statement USVI Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty made at Seatrade Cruise Global last month. “Before, we thought we were family. Now,

we know we’re family.”

Paige described the success of the meeting in, for example, setting a new protocol for communications. “We’ve now set the standards for excellence. We’ve now

set the way forward (and) everyone is absolutely blown away that the Virgin Islands is going to be, not only better than before, but (to) be that demand product that we’ve always talked about. It takes the

private sector and the public sector working together with the cruise industry. This is the first step in (many) that we’re going to be (taking) together.”

Commissioner Nicholson-Doty, who attended the meeting with David Mapp, executive director of the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA); Damian Cartwright, VIPA’s assistant executive director and director of engineering; and Clifford Graham, CEO of the West Indian Company, thanked the FCCA and its member lines for their spirit of collaboration and for helping destinations to strengthen their product offerings.

“By working together to develop strategies to enhance the visitor experience in our destinations, we’re making sure we stay part of the highly sought-after Eastern Caribbean cruise itinerary,” Commissioner Nicholson-Doty said.

During the regularly scheduled FCCA’s Operations Committee meetings, high-level executives from FCCA member lines – which operate about 200 vessels, making up 95 percent of the global ocean cruising capacity – gather to discuss operations and opportunities in the region.

Carlos Torres de Navarra, vice-president, commercial port operations, Carnival Cruise Lines, is the current chairman of the FCCA’s Operations Committee.

Comfort Suites Paradise Island reports strong winter performance

Newly rejuvenated pool deck offers visitors refreshed area to relax and splash

WITH A focus on family travel for 2018, a popular hotel on Paradise Island in The Bahamas is reporting strong performance this winter season.

Providing an update during the recent Caribbean Travel Marketplace in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Yasmine Mills-Strachan, director of sales for Comfort Suites Paradise Island, reported that the hotel fared especially well over the Christmas holidays and she continues to receive encouraging feedback from travel partners.

“We currently have attractive promotions in the marketplace and, as a result, have

been able to consistently maintain solid ground,” she added.

Tia Forbes, director of revenue and information technology, who also was in Puerto Rico for the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association’s flagship event, noted that advanced bookings are encouraging.

“We are a very unique hotel, a distinctive nugget of Paradise Island,” Mills-Strachan underscored, explaining that the hotel offers all of the recognizable amenities of Choice Hotels, including free Wi-Fi, a daily complimentary full American breakfast buffet available to all guests, and free parking.

Comfort Suites guests enjoying the restaurants, bars and lounges at the adjacent Atlantis Paradise Island can charge consumption to their rooms. “This puts us in a very special position,” she noted.

To complement the hotel’s in-house value-added amenities, guests at Comfort Suites Paradise Island also have complimentary access to Atlantis’ 11 pools, three beaches and one of the largest water parks in the Caribbean. Altogether, the 141-acre Atlantis resort offers 20 spots for swimming.

At Comfort Suites Paradise Island, the ownership team has spent in excess of \$11

million upgrading the product in recent years, and guests can now experience its newly rejuvenated pool deck. “The entire deck, pool and pool areas have been resurfaced, retiled and redone. We have acquired new pool furniture, new and comfortable restaurant furniture in our outdoor veranda spaces, and our pool bar has been rebranded and relaunched as the Splash Pool Bar,” Mills-Strachan said, as she invited travellers to enjoy the hotel’s “refurbished and relaxing pool area”.

Responding to questions about new competition that Comfort Suites Paradise Island is facing from Cable Beach, she pointed to the unique value proposition of the hotel, especially for families. “Our property is well suited for family travellers because kids stay, play and eat free. Children 11 years and under are able to stay free in any of our junior suites with a paying adult,” she explained. In addition to complimentary breakfast for all guests, each child enjoys complimentary lunch and dinner with a paying adult at the on-site Crusoe’s Restaurant.