

The Gleaner
Hospitality **Jamaica**

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2020

Portland's renaissance

– big names invest in Jamaica's jewel

New rooms for Portland ... The Geejam strategy

Amstar celebrates 10 years

Top travel agents recognised at 'One Love Affair' gala

SeaGarden
BEACH RESORT

Authentic
JAMAICAN
ALL-INCLUSIVE VACATION



Book Direct & Save

www.seagardenjamaica.com
Phone: 876.979.7761
Intl. Toll Free: 844.742.7778
UK Toll Free: +442037695341

Portland's renaissance

– big names invest in Jamaica's jewel

The famous
Blue Lagoon.
JANET SILVERA



Boxer the boat captain.



Villas on the Blue Lagoon.

JANET SILVERA
Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

PORTLAND, THE cradle of Jamaica's tourism, and a renowned playground for Hollywood stars, is finally getting its long-awaited renaissance.

ACCORDING TO Jon Baker of Geejam, Portland, particularly its capital, Port Antonio, is in the final part of its gestation period, set to be capped by the impending construction of the highway from Harbour View in Kingston to the birthplace of jerk, which will reduce travel time from the Norman Manley International Airport to the resort town by more than one-half.

"I can actually say now, it does seem that the moon and the stars are aligned for real happenings, notwithstanding the road, which is coming from Harbour View all the way around to Port Antonio. I've seen the plans for that, and I know that is the game-changer," Baker told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

He said that for the past two decades, Portlanders have been waiting with bated breath for things to materialise, seemingly in vain, but now, the home of the world-famous Blue Lagoon and Blue Mountain Coffee is set to return to its former glory and prestige, with megastars such as Diplo of Major Lazer and others already making real estate investments there.

"You've got several people who have taken over old villas and old pieces of land and are building their own dream in their own way. And this is not dissimilar to what happened in the '50s when Baron Buntess and Aga Khan and the Weston family fell in love with the same place," Baker said.

And Jamaicans have taken advantage of the real estate offerings, among them Ronnie Elmhirst, owner of East Winds Cove. Wilks, another guest house, and the Tropical Lagoon have also been acquired by Jamaicans.

"I am seeing not just foreigners buying and renovating villas in the San-San area, but a lot of Jamaicans are," Baker said.

"So I think the renaissance is definitely on, and the road is going to make a huge difference. With the calculations done by the road people, and the plans I saw, it will be one hour and 20 minutes from Harbour View to Port Antonio. That's a game-changer," he stressed.

Historical records attribute the start of tourism in Port Antonio, and, by extension, Jamaica, to businessman Lorenzo Dow Baker (no known relation to Jon Baker), who came to Jamaica in 1870 and who was also credited with single-handedly jump-starting banana production for export on the island.

Baker, it was said, after a time, began to use his steamships to transport tourists in addition to bananas. The guest houses that were built for his workers and officers were also used to house the visitors at the time. He later built the 400-room Titchfield Hotel in the early 1900s, heralding the start of Jamaica's biggest income-earning industry.

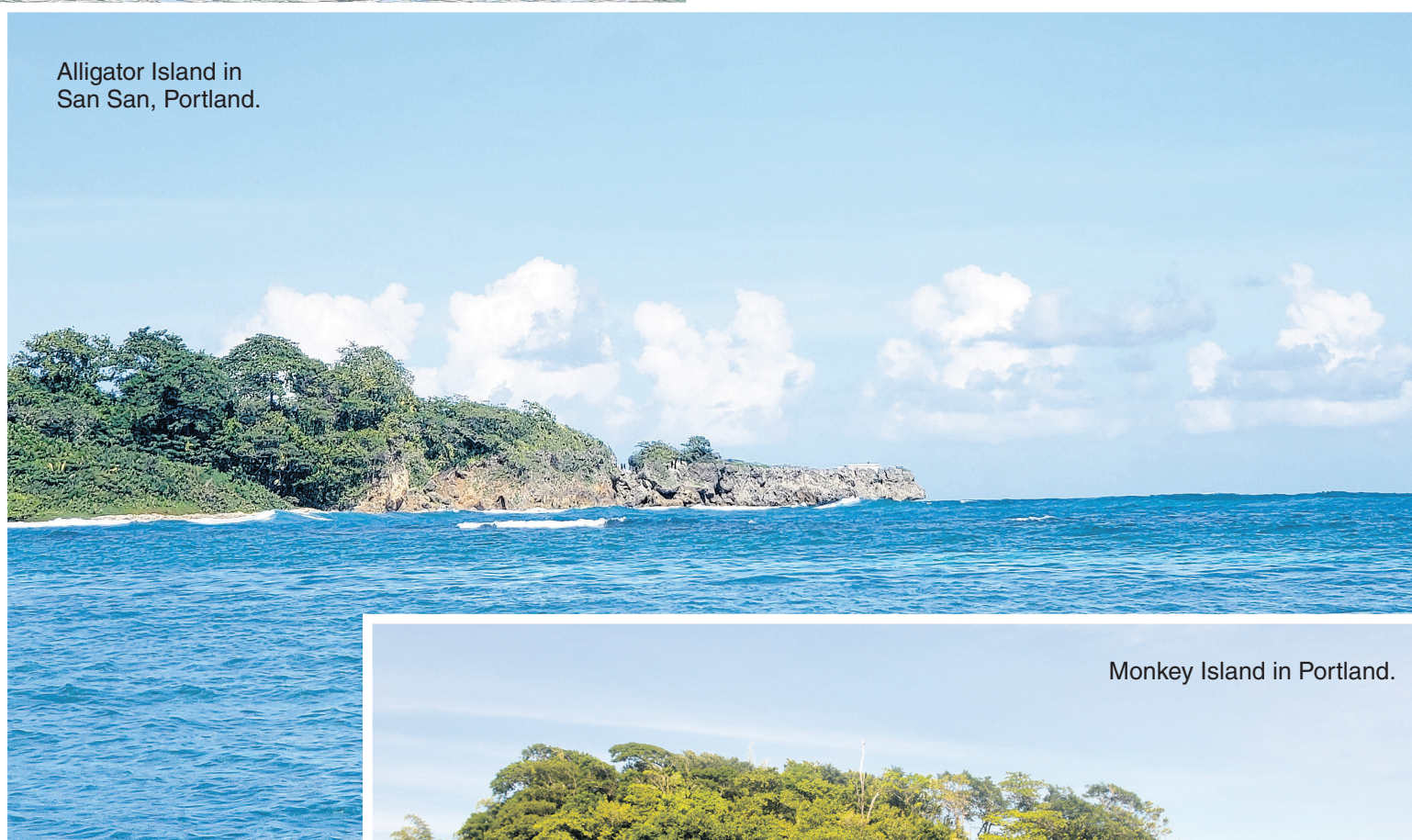
Portland as a destination is a popular haunt of the rich and famous. Port Antonio itself is the favourite destination of many Hollywood stars, including Errol Flynn and Rudyard Kipling, Elizabeth Taylor, and more recently, Jay Z and Beyoncé and Tom Cruise and others. It has the setting for numerous Hollywood films, the last being

A new villa on San San.



Maxine Garwon, Polish destination manager, enjoying Portland.

Alligator Island in San San, Portland.



Monkey Island in Portland.



the upcoming James Bond, which was shot there last year.

Baker said that Portland has what he described as a ‘phenomenal repeat business’ despite the roadway from Kingston having a stranglehold on the tourists. He said guests often describe their stay as an incredible life-changing experience, enhanced by the fact that unlike other resort areas, Portlanders are not pushy and they can roam the towns and the countryside unhindered just like ordinary Jamaicans do.

“It’s just a different mindset, a different energy than what you get where mass tourism has been there for so many years. People don’t feel like tourists when they are here; they feel like part of the community. That’s special to Portland and that is one thing that reoccurs in people’s account of their experience in Portland, and I think it is something money can’t buy; it’s just a natural phenomenon,” he said.

“I think we are coming to the conclusion of a very intense couple of years, and I think it’s time for

everyone to see what we are doing and celebrate. And it’s not just us. Here are numerous small pockets of people that are doing things in Port Antonio and that are both Jamaican and foreign. It feels right. I am very optimistic, not just for Portland, but for Jamaica,” he said.

janet.silvera@gleanerjm.com



The fabulous Panorama, one of the Geejam collection of villas CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

New Rooms for Portland ... The Geejam Strategy

JANET SILVERA

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

FOR YEARS, the resort town of Port Antonio has had the lowest share of visitors of all of Jamaica's six resort areas.

In fact, according to Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) statistics, between 2014 and 2016, Port Antonio averaged only 21,000 tourists per year, or just one per cent of the more than two million stopover visitors to the island. This was in stark contrast to Montego Bay, for example, which averaged 700,000 visitors, or 33 per cent of all visitors.

However, all of that is beginning to change in 2020 and beyond. According to CEO of Geejam Jon Baker, his company has come up with a strategy, akin to Timeshare, in which investors are able to pool capital for the construction of high-



The blue living room area at the Panorama.

end villas and apartments in the resort town.

Baker says the initiative grew out of expressions of interest in purchasing vacation homes, made by guests

to his property, who have been enthralled by Port Antonio's beauty and wowed by the experience they have had there with the residents.

"It's quite shocking the list of



The red hot and comfy living room at the Cocosan Villa in Portland.

people we have that say, 'Oh, if ever a piece of land becomes available, or if there is a project that you're doing, we would like to get involved'. So it goes beyond the returning of people for vacations, and that is in the 10 per cent of people who are interested in investing in Jamaica ... What we have been trying to do is make it easier for them to have a piece of paradise," Baker said.

The real estate shareholding initiative has already begun with the Panorama Villa, which is situated at the Geejam property. In this model, Baker says, the property is valued, then shares



CEO of Geejam, John Baker

are issued, which are then bought by interested investors. The shareholders are guaranteed



Cocosan Villa, one of the houses in the Geejam collection.

a certain amount of time where they can vacation at the property, and they “also get to enjoy income from the rental of the property when they are not there”.

“A part of the package is that we manage the property for the owners. We generally keep a stake in the property as well, so everyone feels comfortable. But we always say, once you purchase property or you purchase a shareholding, you will not need to send maintenance money or money down every month. We will cover that through rentals, and then at the end of the year, it is all totalled up and recouped,” Baker said.

“We did that with Panorama and have four partners in that. Four groups of people from overseas

now have a piece of Port Antonio because these are high-end resorts – US\$2 million-plus. So it’s a bit of a bite to use that as a holiday home. But we are looking forward to finding some more accessible smaller villas, or maybe a small development of villas, but in the Geejam way, where people can get involved, maybe US\$250,000 or US\$300,000,” he added.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR PORTLAND

Baker told **Hospitality Jamaica** that a concomitant marketing campaign for Port Antonio, under the auspices of Geejam, would be rolled out shortly to complement all the ensuing developments in the area.

“We are putting in a very big



The architecture at Cocosan is contemporary and fresh. CONTRIBUTED

marketing effort as well. Once we pull the trigger on our official reopening (Geejam has closed for six months for refurbishing and expansion), which is looking like probably March 2020, the PR (public relations) and the marketing campaign that we alone are putting together for Port Antonio, the tide is going to rise

for everybody, not just Geejam. We are not solely about Geejam. It’s always about Port Antonio. That’s my vocation,” he said.

With the surge in accommodation, he is hoping that the Kingstonians who would trek to Portland for staycations, or for parties in the past, would start to return in their numbers.

“One of the main reasons that Frenchman’s (party) left Port Antonio was lack of accommodation. Three hundred people would come down to the famous Frenchman’s party, and there weren’t enough rooms to house everybody, so people would be driving drunk at nights, and it wasn’t a good look,” he said.



The pool at Panorama



A bedroom at Panorama

“I don’t want to make my customers’ purchases faster and easier.”

...SAID NO ONE EVER!

Let’s talk about
E-COMMERCE
golservices.com | (876)932-6297



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Future-proofing Caribbean tourism

THE STATISTICS vary, but reliable Caribbean and international entities suggest that the region's tourism sector is now delivering on average, directly and indirectly, about 40.6 per cent of the Caribbean's gross domestic product.

David Jessop



THE VIEW FROM EUROPE

the world will have to adapt. They recommend that states begin to prepare for tech-oriented, newer generations of visitors with different aspirations; an increase in ageing travellers, who will have special needs; and determine how they will respond

to travellers from nations with different cultural norms and expectations, who will come to represent the bulk of international travellers.

They also suggest that unregulated tourism growth will increasingly impact on host communities and the natural environment. This, they say, will require governments to deliver policies that ensure a low-impact, low-carbon future for the industry and a require a political response to 'overtourism'. The report's authors argue that technology will radically reshape the industry, causing it and governments to have to think carefully about how a destination trades off cost savings and efficiencies against the value of customer experience.

The OECD's analysts explore, too, how newer generations will exert growing influence over international norms, modes of transport, security, free movement across borders, and the environmental impact of travel. Such issues will become the subject of intense international debate and behavioural change.

What is surprising is that the Caribbean, 'the most tourism-dependent region in the world', has no well-thought through, long-term analysis or strategy of this kind.

This suggests that not only should the OECD document be read in a Caribbean context by those who lead tourism in the region and by anyone with an interest in sustainability, but also that industry professionals should be asking why the region has no tourism-related vehicle able to analyse future change in this way in order to prepare it for the visitor of tomorrow.

One obvious way to achieve this would be to reinvent the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) as a body able to undertake long-term strategic research, but this would require significant long-term funding and a consistent approach. Another would be to have its private-sector counterpart, the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) convene a meeting that looks far over the horizon, and involving governments.

However, neither approach is likely to be enough. The issues involved require 'whole of government' thinking and policy solutions that can be delivered by the public and private sectors at both a national and regional level.

While some tourism ministers, most notably Jamaica's, are engaged in thinking about how to ensure that the industry spreads its benefits in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, what is also required is longer-term, holistic thinking about the megatrends identified by the OECD that could upend the industry internationally.

Although in Aruba, Antigua, Barbados, The Bahamas, the OECS states and most overseas territories the tourism figure is much higher.

Detailed country-by-country analysis and statistics produced by the International Monetary Fund suggest that sustaining the contribution tourism makes has become critical to the long-term economic stability of almost every Caribbean nation other than Trinidad, Suriname and Guyana.

Despite this, little thought has been given to how to future-proof the industry as disruptive technologies take their toll, the region's largely sun, sea and sand high-volume offering becomes subject to multiple global pressures likely to affect traveller sentiment, and international competition increases.

Industry analysts say that the megatrends that determine what visitors want, expect, and where they will go, are changing and that macro developments affecting travel and tourism globally may damage those industries that fail to understand how these will change every destination's prospects. Demographics, new ways of thinking about vacations among a globally expanding middle class, and the ability of large numbers of citizens of China, India, Latin America, and Russia to travel widely will, they believe, mean that tomorrow's tourism is likely to be very different.

Recognising this, the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which brings together thirty-six of the world's like-minded wealthy nations, has for several years been focusing on long-term trends affecting tourism and the reforms needed to ensure sustainability.

This has resulted in the production of detailed assessments of the structural changes it believes will shape the future of tourism globally.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

What the OECD concludes in its recent publication **Analysing Megatrends to Better Shape the Future of Tourism**, is that tourism policymakers need to develop a better understanding of trends and establish a strategic approach which sees regulatory frameworks and industry governance updated. It also proposes the adoption of policy responses to disruptive developments, such as growing consumer concern about levels of aviation and maritime carbon emissions, the use of artificial intelligence, data gathering, and the use of new monetary instruments, all of which it believes will become potent issues for visitors.

What the OECD's analysts indicate is that global demographic change will see the nature of visitor demand change and that industries around



Cabaret singers Chevonese Scott (left) and Melloy Shakes partied into the wee hours of 2020 with Sandals South Coast guest activities agents Tyron Barnett (second left) and Leon Simpson at the luxury-included resort's Winter Wonderland-themed New Year's Eve party.

WINTER WONDERLAND AT SANDALS SOUTH COAST

NEW YEAR'S Eve celebrations are always highly anticipated at Sandals South Coast, but this year the luxury resort, which was recently voted our Best All-Inclusive over 300 rooms, certainly outdid themselves with a Winter Wonderland themed party, featuring superb cabaret acts, exclusive themed bars, champagne-filled water fountains, and gorgeous angelic models.

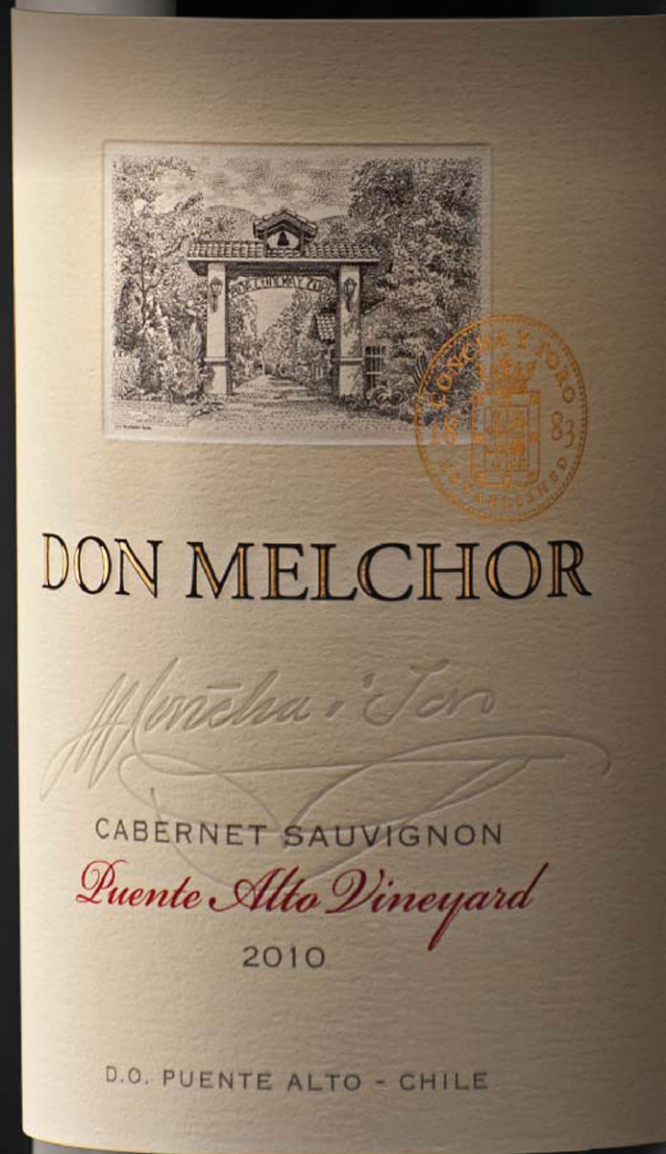


Lovebirds Julia and Guilherme Queiroz flew all the way from Brazil to ring in the new year in fine all-white style at Sandals South Coast.



Contemporary classical singer Rory Frankson (centre) strikes a pose for our cameras with model friends Antoinette Schmidt (left) and Davia Hines at Sandals South Coast's Winter Wonderland New Year's Eve party. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

DON MELCHOR
AMONG THE *TOP 10*
WINES OF THE WORLD



2010 VINTAGE • 95 PTS • N°9

Wine Spectator





Jamaica's Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, Director of Tourism Donovan White and Deputy Director of Tourism Donnie Dawson pose for a group photo with the top travel specialists. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



JTB staff and travel agents alike enjoying the musical feast during the One Love Affair welcome reception.



Angella Bennett (left), JTB regional director, Canada and Donovan White, Jamaica's director of tourism pose with the top-selling Jamaica travel specialists from Canada.

Top travel agents recognised at 'One Love Affair' gala

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) for the eighth consecutive year rewarded its top-selling Jamaica travel specialists with a three-night getaway at the Hyatt Ziva. The getaway, which included tours, world-class dining and shopping, culminated with the 'One Love Affair' gala, held at the Half Moon Conference Centre. The event, recognised the top 50 performing agents from across the United States and Canada, and top five from the United Kingdom.

Lindsey Johnson of Tropics Travel Agency in Kentucky, who emerged the top booker this year, was presented with her special award by Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett. She booked a total of 23,462 room nights. Rounding out the top five were Anthony Tucker of All Inclusive Outlet in Kentucky, Michelle Wiseman of Toms Tours in Michigan, Donna Daniels of Fox Travel American Express in Texas, and Matt Brelsford of BlueSun Vacations in Arkansas. The top agents booked a total of 174,837 room nights, collectively, for the year.

Jamaica's A One Love Rewards Programme serves as a dedicated training platform for the travel agent community to become certified experts on the destination. The programme guides agents through vibrant, picturesque online pages that provide insider knowledge about the island. It also takes the travel agent community into the heart of the destination, showcasing the island's rich history.

In addition to learning about the island, travel agents earn valuable reward points when they record their bookings at www.oneloverewards.com.



A good time was had by all on the Island Routes boat ride. In addition to rewarding the top-selling travel agents, the JTB's One Love Affair weekend also includes an itinerary filled with exhilarating destination experiences.



Donovan White (right), Jamaica's director of tourism, holds a vibe with one of the travel agents during the One Love Affair weekend.



Travel agents intently participate in team events during the One Love Affair weekend. Here they enjoy a game of beach Volleyball at Hyatt Ziva, sponsor hotel.



Top booker Lindsey Johnson and husband Scott celebrating at the Half Moon Conference Centre.



Travel Agents having fun competing in another exciting team event during Jamaica Tourist Board's One Love Affair weekend at Hyatt Ziva, sponsor hotel.



Jamaica's Director of Tourism, Donovan White (left), and Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett (fourth right), pose with 2019 top booker Lindsey Johnson. Others sharing the occasion are (from left) JTB's business Development officer, Sean Pierre-Webster; Miss Universe Jamaica Iana Tickle Garcia; Scott Johnson, Lindsey's husband; and Deputy Directors of Tourism Camille Glenister and Donnie Dawson.

Jamaica Tourist Board serves up authentic island flavours at Food & Wine Expo

CANADIANS WERE treated to a taste of Jamaica recently during the 25th annual Gourmet Food & Wine Expo in Toronto. Hosted at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the high-profile event is Canada's largest annual food and drink festival and attracted more than 450 exhibitors and more than 40,000 attendees over the course of the weekend.

Throughout the three-day expo, attendees were invited to visit the JTB booth to learn more about the destination, while tasting delicious food and drink samples from local partners. Guests enjoyed savoury beef, curried chicken, vegetarian Jamaican patties from Toronto patty purveyor Crumbs Patties and sipped on 'Tropical Rhythms', an island-inspired fruit punch featuring Grace Coconut Water.

Jamaica also turned up the heat on the Chef's Stage, hosting two live cooking demonstrations with Chef Lily Pottinger from award-winning Toronto restaurant The Real Jerk. Pottinger put Jamaican cuisine in the spotlight as she showcased her cooking techniques while preparing shrimp rundown – a classic Jamaican fish stew prepared with coconut milk, onions, hot pepper and spices served with rice and peas.

"Participating in the Gourmet Food & Wine Show allowed us to display destination Jamaica to a large group of consumers who are interested in food and inclined to sample Jamaica's culinary delights," said Dan Hamilton, district sales manager for the JTB. "Together with our partners Crumbs Patties, The Real Jerk Restaurant and Grace Foods, we brought a taste of Jamaica to patrons at the show and invited them to come try authentic Jamaican cuisine back on our island!"

Jamaica also partnered with Sunwing Vacations to host a prize draw for an 'Escape to Jamaica' giveaway, featuring a seven-night stay at Excellence Oyster Bay Resort, a luxury all-inclusive adults-only property in Trelawny, Falmouth.



Dan Hamilton (left), JTB district sales manager (left) and Angella Bennett (right), JTB regional director, Canada, present an 'Escape to Jamaica' giveaway to a lucky prize-winner, courtesy of Sunwing Vacations and Excellence Oyster Bay Resort. CONTRIBUTED



Angella Bennett, Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) regional director, Canada, distributes food and drink samples from culinary partners at the 25th annual Gourmet Food & Wine Expo in Toronto.

Toronto is Canada's multicultural hub and home to a large Jamaican diaspora community. With the winter season in full swing, the event served as a prime opportunity for the JTB team to connect with Canadian consumers to highlight the unique regional cuisine of Jamaica and promote the island



Chef Lily Pottinger from The Real Jerk Restaurant in Toronto prepares traditional Jamaican shrimp rundown during a live cooking demonstration on the expo's Chef's Stage.

as an exciting must-see culinary destination.

For more information about Jamaica, visit www.visitjamaica.com.



Emma Madsen, JTB business development manager – Western Canada, poses in front of the Jamaica-branded ice rink at the 2019 Zoominescence Light Festival in Edmonton, Alberta. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

JTB heats up Alberta at Zoominescence Light Festival

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) has been busy sharing the distinct warmth of the island with Canadian consumers this festive season during a special holiday-themed activation in Edmonton, Alberta.

As one of the title sponsors of the annual Zoominescence Light Festival, Jamaica helped to warm up one of the coldest cities in North America throughout the month of December. Hosted at the Edmonton Valley Zoo, the popular winter festival features more than 40 spectacular light exhibits by local artists, in addition to holiday-themed attractions and family-friendly activities.

In partnership with Jamaica, the festival's large-scale ice-skating rink was transformed into an island oasis branded with the Jamaica logo and surrounded by fire pits, sparkling light installations, and a tropical-themed Skate Shack, where visitors warmed up with refreshments while enjoying a lively reggae soundtrack.

"Jamaica was thrilled to partner with the Zoominescence festival and to be engaging with the community in such an active and visible way," said Dan Hamilton, district sales manager, JTB. "Few people expect to see Jamaica at a winter festival in western Canada, and that's



A Zoominescence staff member serves up food and drink at the Jamaican-inspired Skate Shack.

exactly the appeal; we're bringing Jamaican warmth to a location that's literally as cold as ice!"

The Zoominescence festival is a fundraising event for the Valley Zoo Development Society and was estimated to attract more than 30,000 visitors throughout the month of December.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

Bonfire, reading glasses and 2020

I HAVE been using reading glasses for the past few years. I do not like them, but they are very useful as I cannot clearly see anything close up on written documents, my phone, camera, and laptop without them.

I have had a few because they sometimes get lost, damaged, or mislaid like the ones I wore to the New Year Eve's bonfire on the beach at Great Huts Resort in Boston, Portland.

Before the fire was lit, I had a great philosophical discussion with Marcell Fuller (property manager and guest services) about ourselves and the mysteries and energies of this unfolding universe. It was a moment of reflection and introspection 20 years into the new millennium.

The fire took a while to rage, but when it was ready, it was 'fireworks on the waterfront' at Boston Bay. There I was, taking pictures and enjoying the warmth. As the wood crackled, glowing smithereens darted and zigzagged frantically into the air until 2020 came around, welcomed by shouts of "Happy New Year!"

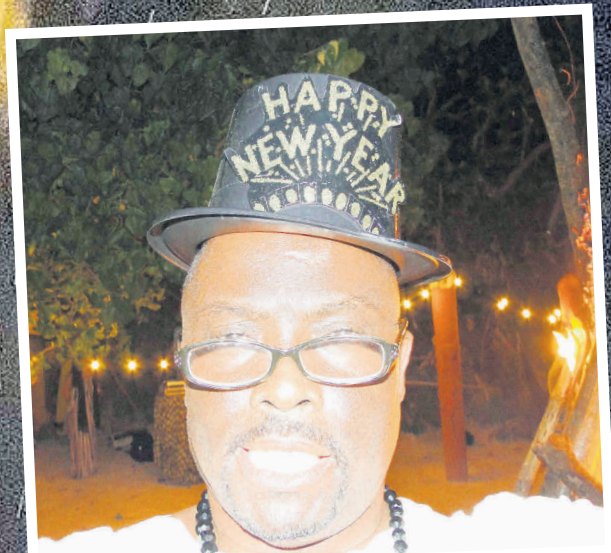
Shortly after, I reached for my glasses to take some more pictures. They were not on my person, not on the sands, not on the table. The search was futile, so we decided to wait until daylight.

In my sleep on Wednesday morning, I dreamt that it was nine o'clock, and I had missed the first sunrise of 2020. I wrenched myself from the dream. It was nowhere near nine, so I jumped into some clothes and slippers, grabbed the camera, and rushed to the point from which I could get the best shots.

I was in luck! The sun was just peeping over a long headland. There it was: the first sunrise of 2020 over Jamaica. Without the glasses, I just pointed the lens and clicked. After a few shots, I went back to the site of the bonfire, whose dying embers were glowing red.

With some help, we literally combed the beach with a rake. I went back to the spot on some rocks near the sea. No luck. The night before while I was sitting there I heard a little click like something had dropped. Did my glasses fall on to a rock and bounce into the sea?

And if that were the case, what was the message the universe had sent to me about the 2020 vision that I don't have and the VISION 2020 that I do have?



Paul Williams – where exactly are these glasses that I wore the night of the bonfire? CONTRIBUTED



The man, Marcell Fuller, who started the fire. PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS



The first sunrise over Jamaica for 2020, from Boston Bay, Portland.

The bonfire that burnt throughout the night.



The future of air and digital travel

ADVANCES IN digital and artificial intelligence for air travel are coming in thick and fast, delegates at the recent World Travel Market (WTM) in London heard.

Liam McKay, director of corporate affairs at London City Airport, told delegates it won't be long before biometrics replace paper documents and check-in will be carried out somewhere else.

During a session, titled 'Gathering Storms, Airlines and Airports', he said: "In the future, there will be less space than you expect for check-in. It won't be done in the future at an airport. It will be done at your office or at home.

"Currently, we have travellers flying from London City who work at Canary Wharf who can drop off bags at their offices.

"Soon you'll be able to turn up without

your passport. It will be more or less a paperless experience based on biometrics. That future is much closer than you think."

Hank Jan Gerzee, chief digital and innovation officer at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, told the moderator, John Strickland, the airport already has the facility for people to drop off luggage at the car park before they get into the terminal.

In another development, the world's first automatic bridge to allow passengers to walk off the aircraft and into the terminal has been installed at Schiphol, speeding up the disembarkation process for flyers and helping aircraft to be more punctual.

Virtual assistants, multi-language websites and wearable technology will shape the future of digital travel, a WTM London session also heard during the session.

The themes emerged in a discussion titled 'Genesys Session: The Future of Digital

Travel', led by Paul Richer, founder of technology consultancy Genesys.

EMPHASIS ON PREDICTION

Daniel Wishnia, chief digital transformation officer at German property company Aroundtown, said the \$2.1-billion purchase of FitBit by Google two weeks ago illustrated how important wearable health and tracking devices would be in future.

"The message is prediction – to try and understand a person's behaviour, to see what that person will choose and buy."

Virtual assistance and voice technology were part of this future, he said. "It's not only about the weather forecast, it's about where can I go? My assistant knows I like sushi, and recommends restaurants that are nearby. This kind of data will lead us to

understand how we approach our future customers."

Devices like Alexa and Google Assistant will eventually shape travel decisions through learning more about our tastes, lifestyle and health, he said.

"The assistant will be interactive; it will know your calendar and tell you it's time to take a break."

Joel Brandon-Bravo, vice-president of travel solutions

at translation service TransPerfect, warned of the

need for multilingual approaches. He said that of the \$30-trillion growth in middle-class consumption predicted between 2015 and 2030, only \$1 trillion would not come from Asia. Similarly, there were no English-speaking countries among the top 10 emerging markets.

Proxy technology, where an enquiry is redirected to a hosted site in the client's own language, would permit new market penetration, he said. He also urged companies not to think that no new social media channels would emerge, citing the enormous recent growth of short-form mobile video site TikTok.

Top tips for attracting Chinese visitors

TOURISM BUSINESSES that want to attract their share of the burgeoning Chinese travel market need to make sure they have a Chinese-specific website and brush up on their language skills to attract a new breed of more independent travellers.

This was among the arguments proffered by a panel at the China Tourism Forum held at World Travel Market London.

Delegates attending the session at the 40th edition of WTM London were told that the Chinese have already made 81 million trips so far this year compared with a total of 150 million last year.

They are the world's highest spenders on overseas travel, splashing out \$277 billion in 2018, which was twice as much as Americans, six times more than the French, and four times more than the British.

While previously, they preferred to travel in groups, 56 per cent now take FIT (Free Independent Traveller) trips. "There is widespread information available. One point two billion are using WeChat. We go directly to you, the incoming service providers," said Adam WU, CEO of CBN. "The Chinese FITs like to book directly with the service providers. You might want to be ready."

The most popular destinations for the Chinese in 2018 were Thailand, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, USA (having fallen from fourth place in 2016), Cambodia, Russia, and the Philippines.

European destinations working closely with China to increase visitor numbers have seen big rises, including Croatia, up 540 per cent; Latvia, up 523 per cent; and Slovenia, up 497 per cent.

What Chinese visitors want are heritage, culture, and authentic experiences, said Wu. More than 20 per cent said attractions were their most important consideration, followed by food (15 per cent) and shopping (6.5 per cent).

"To the Chinese, heritage matters. We pay attention to this," added Wu. "Anything that we have seen on film is also important. I take my daughter to anything to do with Harry Potter. It's not heritage, but when they have seen a film, they want to experience the real thing."

He said tourism businesses needed to make it easy for Chinese visitors by having websites in their language, guides able to communicate with them, and payment via WeChat. "You need to make it easy for Chinese to pay. I can guarantee that someone who has WeChat pay will get more sales than one that doesn't. We want ease of spending."

However, Tom Jenkins, CEO of the European Tour Operators Association, disagreed that companies should specifically target independent Chinese travellers, saying that the greatest growth would come from first-time visitors, who would still want to visit the "honeypot" destinations and travel in larger groups.

"There are millions of Chinese who have already visited Europe but there are billions who haven't, and when they come, they will want to come to the major cities in Europe – London, Paris, Venice, and Rome."



The world of travel influencing could be ABOUT TO CHANGE

INFLUENCERS' LACK of originality and authenticity on Instagram can contribute to both overtourism and unrealistic expectations, delegates heard at World Travel Market (WTM) London – the event where ideas arrive.

"Instagram does tend to create a kind of herding mentality and they [influencers] could do better," said Robert Michael Poole, 'digital nomad' and CEO of Plus Alpha, speaking in a session on 'Illusion or Reality? Influencers and Branded Content'.

But he added, some were shying away from the well-worn travel clichés. "There's a small niche of influencers trying to explore the truth of a country ... not just the obvious photogenic spots."

Staged pictures that give an unrealistic impression of what to expect as a tourist are also an issue, panellists pointed out.

Visit Britain's head of global public relation Emma Mead said she asks influencers to make it clear, for instance, that if they took a crowd-free shot of a **Game of Thrones** location in Ireland that they did so at 4 a.m.

Poole pointed out that it was ironic that people increasingly sought 'authentic experiences,' yet followed Instagrammers, who pushed the opposite.

Jason Freeman, legal director of the

UK's Competition and Markets Authority, said the body was cracking down on inauthentic and inaccurate social media posts, including un-flagged incentivised endorsements.

He warned that brands working with influencers were also responsible for the way in which they were represented and should ensure that sponsored posts were tagged as such.

Audio platforms like smart speakers – Amazon Echo and Google Home – are going to be the next big thing in influencer marketing, experts predicted at WTM.

Content Creation 2019-2025: What the next five years hold for influencers looked at the growth areas since 2014 and gave predictions for the future.

IMPORTANCE OF AUDIO

Lisa Binderberger, founder of Boom Creative Lab GmbH, said that voice-activated search was becoming much more important, and it was her key prediction for 2025. "We think about photos, about videos, and about podcasts, but we should also be thinking audio snippets."

Audio content for devices like Alexa and Google Home was also one of the growth areas noted when Traverse, which hosts the largest influencer event in the European travel industry, revealed the

results of its recent survey of members of the sector.

Ben Ebbrell, co-founder of food and travel platform SORTEDFood, similarly predicted that voice search on smart TVs would see a big increase as a marketing tool.

In terms of the way that influencers work, Binderberger predicted: "Influencer marketing has to move in house. I have an agency, but we're not here to do your social media. We're here for inspiration, to talk through the strategy through you."

Traverse found that blogs and Instagram had grown as the favoured platforms over the last five years, with Pinterest increasingly rising. For the future, Tik Tok was expected to have a greater share.

There were indications, too, of influencers becoming more professional. In 2019, less than half of influencers surveyed by Traverse had never asked to sign a contract, down from 70 per cent in 2014. Likewise, in 2019, seventy per cent said that they now always disclosed sponsored content against 30 per cent in 2014.

These sessions provided all those attending with tangible takeaways from which to develop their own businesses to reflect the future of travel.



Shelly-Ann Fung-King of VIP Attractions and Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association's Area Chapter Chair, Robin Russell.



From left: Amstar President Eugene Rybicki and Amstar Managing Director Richard Bourke pose with 10-year awardees Patricia Alridge, Glen Campbell, Keysha Coke, Lance Gibbs, Gary Stewart, Gillian Wright, Gillicon Hines and Michelle Sterling. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Amstar Managing Director Richard Bourke with Stascha Smith.

Amstar celebrates YEARS

AMSTAR DMC celebrated its 10th year of operations at a gala recently, where the team members and key partners were fêted in fine style.

Replicating 'Elegant' dress code, team members of the destination management group which represents several of the island's hotels, went out of their way to take the style quotient to the highest level. The ladies were spectacular in their red carpet-worthy fashions, and the gentlemen were equally impressive in their finest suits and tuxedos.

The guest speaker for the evening, Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, was effusive in his praise for the Amstar team. Having done research



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (right) and Managing director of Tropical Tours Fred Smith at the Amstar 10th anniversary event.



Amstar beauties (from left) Nickeisha Palmer-Campbell, Kelishiah Wallace, Taneisha Thorpe and Alecia Buchanan-Waite.

on TripAdvisor, he was able to highlight a number of individuals for personal mention in his presentation.

He also used the opportunity to update the team on the impending implementation of the Tourism Pension Plan.

Omar Robinson, president of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist

Association (JHTA), also brought greetings on behalf of his organisation, while Amstar's President, Eugene Rybicki, lauded the team's performance and growth over the last 10 years.

Richard Bourke, managing director of Amstar Jamaica, in his overview of the company's performance and impact on the Jamaican economy, highlighted the fact that 100 per cent of the team members were Jamaican.

Hosted at the Hilton Rose Hall ballroom, the hotel presented a spectacular buffet of the finest foods and a premium all-inclusive bar.

Saxophonist Howard Messam entertained the celebrants during dinner, and his mastery was matched only by the effervescent Fab 5 band.

The event was coordinated by Jackie Jackson, who provided sound, lights and stage, while Jamaica Audio Visual Company did the backdrop. Compère Jackie Norman of Mello FM and Amstar fame carried the evening's proceedings like a true maestro.

The 10th anniversary event attracted all the major tour and



Amstar Customer Service Manager Taneisha James-Francis and Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett.

transportation providers in the tourism sector, who also played a major role as sponsors of the prizes,

valued at over \$2 million.



Amstar beauty Roxanna Henry.



Secrets Resorts Group Sales Manager Lylibeth Eaton and Amstar President Eugene Rybicki chat at the gala.



Amstar beauty Shereish Cowan walks the red carpet.

Scheed Cole's crocodiles made of recycled materials.



360 Recycle

TRANSFORMING LIVES

from rubbish



Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

SCHEED COLE is no stranger to media coverage. The 2017 Jamaica Energy Global national awardee is known as the man at the helm of 360 Recycle, an entity that turns trash into 'treasure'.

Yes, he has been spending his life since 2016 transforming people's refuse into planters, rubbish bins, playground fixtures and outdoor seats under the tagline of 'Transforming the environment, transforming lives'.

Recently, **Hospitality Jamaica** caught up with him at the Health, Home and Garden Expo at the National Arena and based on

what was observed, his booth was a hit, and he was perhaps the star of the show.

Cole's lifelike sculpted animals and life-size sculpture of National Hero Marcus Garvey were the pull. They are made of the same material as the aforementioned items, but the images look so "alive" and "real", patrons could not resist touching, and taking selfies with 'Garvey'.

Cole said he has been creating the animals and other sculptures for a while and they are mounted all over. On display at the National Arena were an iguana, an elephant, and two lions' heads. There are two massive horses on a property



It's a family affair, Scheed Cole, his wife Keisha Delisser-Cole, and five of their six children.

along Eastwood Park Road in St Andrew, and at the Montego Bay Legends Circle there are two lions and two crocodiles, and an elephant is at Heritage Plaza in Spanish Town. The 'sandcastle' at the entrance to Hellshire Beach is also his work, and there are metal pieces in private collections.

PASSION FOR REALISM

He said animals are his "passion", and the realist that he is, he sculpted them to look as real as possible. "Realism was always my passion ... I was never the abstract or the expressionism type of person. I was always trying to get things as real as possible, and I think that's where I branched out, and I kept true to myself," he said.

The trained art educator said

though he studied art at the then Mico Teachers' College his training did not prepare him for what he is doing with the sculptures. He was taught art history and the theory of art, and mounted exhibitions, but he was not trained to be an artist or an artisan.

"I haven't got any form of training," he said, in reference to sculpting. Yet, it was at Mico that the former visual arts teacher said he discovered that he could sculpt. There are two pieces of his work still at Mico since 2000, and two years ago he started a sculpture park there.

Though he did not want to be boxed in the category of 'sculptor', he has grown to accept the tag, and sculpting has been his life. Over the years, the artist/sculptor has worked on large pieces for

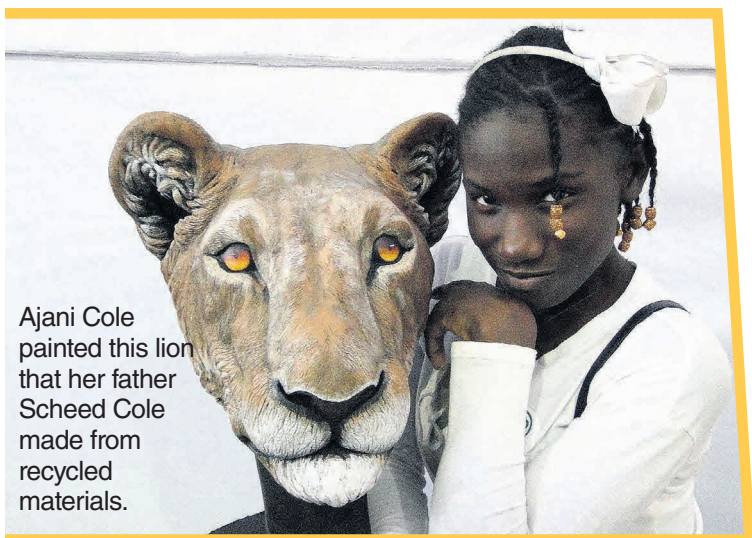
A patron at the recent Health, Home and Garden Expo at the National Arena could not help giving Scheed Cole's sculpture of National Hero Marcus Garvey a hug.

a telecommunications company. He has done Marcus Garvey, Bob Marley, former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, and the late Roger Clarke.

He first got into business in 2010 after 15 years of classroom teaching, and has worked with cement, fibreglass, metal, etc. He started using recycled material in 2016. As a "material scientist", he went in search of a lightweight, eco-friendly, durable material with which to do his sculptures. He found garbage (paper, plastic, styrofoam, etc) and transformed them into a "blend of recyclables".

He invented a mixture called 360 RM to replace cement, and this is the material from which he now makes his sculptures. He has infused recycled material in his art and now operates a spin-off business called Sculptural Elements and Construction 01 Limited.

With his wife and some of his six children active in the business, the family is actively protecting the local environment from harmful man-made refuse. They are into the business of "responsible artistic excellence".



Ajani Cole painted this lion that her father Scheed Cole made from recycled materials.