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KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2014

Half Moon throws Orange Bay fishermen a **LIFELINE**



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

A section of the pristine Half Moon Beach in Orange Bay, Hanover.

**‘Switch Blade’ —
sharper than ever**



**Old graves, tears
and grass lice**



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Let the discourse on tourist safety begin

David Jessop
Contributor

ALMOST ALL visitors who come to the Caribbean have a peaceful, happy, and enjoyable experience, feel secure and leave with the sense that the Caribbean, the world's most tourism-dependent region, is somewhere that is safe.

That said, and recognising that security in relation to tourism is not an easy subject to write about, and emphasising there is no present threat to the region, it is clear that this may have to become more of a global issue that governments and industry professionals, including those in the Caribbean, will need to consider closely.

Up to now, most regional discussions have been focussed on the thankfully rare occurrence of crime against visitors. While tourists are not a special case and all crime against residents and visitors alike is abhorrent, it is now



JESSOP

widely accepted by Government and the police that this must be addressed in relation to tourism, so as to avoid seriously damaging Caribbean economic development.

Less recognised, however, is the broader international impact on all global tourism, of events of the kind now happening in Kenya.

As with the Caribbean, Kenya has placed emphasis on developing its tourism product to the level at

which has come to underpin its economy, bring in much-needed foreign exchange and result in demonstrable economic growth. However, in recent months, this situation has gone into reverse with the prospects for its tourism industry and the overall economy now beginning to look decidedly bleak.

This is because fundamentalist groups operating in parts of Africa have attacked areas close to a popular Kenyan tourist destination and have formally issued a warning to foreign visitors: 'Kenya is now officially a war zone and any tourists visiting the country do so at their own peril'. Another consequence has been for many governments to issue travel advisory notices against all but essential travel there.

While thankfully there are no such groups in the Caribbean – not least because of the region's proximity to the United States and

because there are many agencies in the region and overseas that work together to ensure that this remains so – what has happened in Kenya points to the vulnerability of any tourism-dependent economy to the threat of insecurity let alone the misguided actions of fanatics.

Last year, the United Nations Development Programme published a report on Caribbean Human Development. It noted that the region's now heavy dependence on the sector had created new vulnerabilities. Potential tourists, it suggested, were alienated by perceptions of violence and criminal activity and searched for other locations where there was no threat to personal safety.

Addressing the issue of crime and tourism let alone security is not easy, as there is always the danger that by drawing attention, it dissuades visitors from booking a perfectly safe and happy vacation.

Events in Kenya suggest however that tourism needs a more joined-up global approach, a better understanding of security issues, the impact that this can have on the tourism, and whether there are joint responses.

Tourism's continuing ability to prosper should also be seen to a much greater extent to represent a key component in the region's and every nation's long-term defence of economic security. For this reason, many of the costs associated with it, such as at cruise ports or airports, should not be seen, as is sometimes the case in the Caribbean, as being for others to meet, but instead as central to maintaining the region's viability.

There are few easy answers to the problem now facing Kenya and its tourism economy, but there is a case for the industry to channel, through private comment and discussion, their thoughts about the issues that it raises.



FILE

Tourists enjoy a ball game in a pool. David Jessop speaks of the vulnerability of tourism-dependent economies to the threat of criminality.

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE THREAT of fish-stock depletion and coral reef degradation has prompted the operators of the Half Moon Beach and attraction in Orange Bay, Hanover, to offer alternative sustainable livelihoods in the marine recreation sector.

Spear fishermen who have been hunting within the fish sanctuary there have now adapted a 360-degree turnaround and are now protectors of the marine life.

“Half Moon Bay has been turned into a fish sanctuary – it actually hasn’t been gazetted yet, but it has been declared a fish sanctuary, which really runs from this point here (Half Moon Bay) to the tip of Orange Bay,” proprietor of Half Moon Beach, Andrew Marr told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Half Moon Beach property shares a border with the Rhodes Hall Plantation which specialises in horse-back riding. Both properties are credited as having some of the healthiest coral reefs on the western end of the island. However, because Half Moon specialises in marine-based activities such as bamboo rafting, motor boat and snorkelling excursions, its existence depends heavily on having good water quality and healthy reefs.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, had, in December 2010, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Negril Area Environment Protection Trust to serve as a watchdog to monitor the Orange Bay coastal zone, which the Government had at the time designated as a no-fishing zone for the protection of juvenile fish. There has been no official update on the status of that agreement so far this year.

However, Marr said so far, 12 fishermen from the Green Island and Orange Bay areas, who would have been displaced when the area is gazetted as a sanctuary, are undergoing training with the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) to take up jobs



PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

A raftsman takes two Jamaica Tourist Board representatives on a tour in the Half Moon Bay, in Orange Bay, Hanover, recently.



Andrew Marr, proprietor of Half Moon Beach.

at the property as tour guides and raftsmen, among others. Some of the fishermen who were not fully literate, have enrolled in literacy classes.

“The classes were conducted through a church, and so we partnered with them. Part of the prerequisites for some of the jobs is that you have to be able to read and write. If you can’t, then you won’t be able to fill some of the vacancies,” he said.

Of the 12 fishermen, three have



A section of the pristine Half Moon Beach in Orange Bay.

been trained as lifeguards.

“They take care of the beach and do the rafting. Instead of them making money from killing the fish now, and the fish is gone, what we are doing now means that they can show the same fish 10 times to different people as opposed to taking away the fish,” he said.

According to TPDCo statistics, between 10,000 and 12,000 people are directly employed in Jamaica’s marine recreation sector. This

includes dive operators, dive masters, glass-bottom boat operators, as well as chartered boat operators.

In a document posted on the University of the West Indies Centre for Marine Sciences webpage, titled **Development of Best-Practice Strategies for the Use of Scuba Gear in Fisheries Exploitation – A Community Based Fisheries Education Programme to Promote**

Sustainable Fishing Practices in Jamaican Waters it was noted that the fish-stock depletion has negatively affected the fishermen themselves healthwise, as is the case of some fisherfolk on Jamaica’s south coast.

Marr said in an effort to preserve the area, his company had initiated the establishment of a non-profit arm, in the form of an ecological and cultural centre.

“We are working on a management programme for the area involving the fishermen, so it’s about how we can help the environment to aid sustainable tourism. We are working with some marine biologists – looking at ways in which we can improve what is here already and how to keep it from getting any worse. Because we are lucky that out here hasn’t been trampled by the tour operators, jet skis, and those kinds of things,” Marr said.

He added: “The state of the reefs here is in very good condition. Certainly in Jamaica, this is one of the best areas. What it needs is a little TLC.”

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Jewel Water Park project was launched with the symbolic tilling of the soil by, from left, Aimbridge Hospitality's senior vice-president of Caribbean Operations & Development, Rich Cortese; Minister of Tourism Dr Wykeham McNeill; president and CEO of Sagicor Group Jamaica, Richard Byles; and executive vice-president, Sagicor Life Jamaica, Rohan Miller, at the Jewel Runaway Bay Hotel in St Ann on June 12.

Jewel Water Park to be one of the largest in the Caribbean

Claudia Gardner

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

GENERAL MANAGER of the Jewel Runaway Bay Beach and Golf Resort, Scott Robbins, is upbeat about the expanded recreational opportunities the resorts' new state-of-the-art water park will bring to Jamaican residents and guests of the island's north coast.

Ground was broken for the water park, which is to be completed by the end of the year.

Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for the attraction recently, Robbins said the establishment of the park had been a major part of the initial development plan for the resort.

"The idea of the water park had its genesis from the moment the idea of an all-age family resort was envisioned. A water park that would be unlike any other water park, this would be a major addition to the (tourism)

landscape in St Ann and also in Jamaica," he said.

"We first opened our doors in June 2012 and it has been an amazing two years of continuous improvement to the infrastructure, of both rooms and public spaces. Not only will this park have special designs and features, but it will be one of the largest in the Caribbean, adding to the offerings for our island community to experience more of Jamaica. It is a known fact that St Ann, as The Garden Parish, is also considered the attraction capital in Jamaica, and we are pleased to now be a part of that," he added.

The water park is an initiative of Sagicor Life Jamaica, owners of the Jewel chain of resorts. Sagicor has partnered with SplashTacular Waterslides and Waterpark Attractions and H2O to create what will be one of the largest water parks in the Caribbean, at a cost of US\$5 million. The attraction is scheduled to open in time for the

2014-2015 winter tourist season, and will include, among other things, family raft rides, private cabanas and waterfall coves with a raindrop umbrella feature, beach entrance with in-floor shooting geysers, and a waterslide splash-down pool.

Guests to the facility will also have access to an oceanfront 5,000-sq ft sundeck, a raised entertainment stage for live music, a full-service dining plaza, bar and grill, as well as private club locker rooms with showers. The park will be open to guests of the hotel as well as to the public, and will also be available for the hosting of private evening functions and events.

The park will bring to US\$60 million (J\$6.6 billion) Sagicor's total investment in the tourism sector over the last two years. The Sagicor Group has a total of 741 hotel rooms in Jamaica, having acquired Jewel Runaway Bay 24 months ago, Jewel Paradise Cove just over a year ago, as well as properties within the Dunn's River area.

Sustainability awards programme to be launched on July 9-11

A NEW sustainability awards programme aimed at the region's tourism private sector will be launched at the Caribbean's first Symposium for Innovators in Coastal Tourism, in St George's, Grenada, next month.

The Skyviews Sustainability Awards enable all businesses, irrespective of size, to measure their progress towards sustainability and to create a resilient supporting environment. The programme measures businesses' impact on biodiversity, energy, waste, water, and social governance with guidelines on how to achieve best practice in each category. It was developed by Skyviews Inc, a Barbados-based business that produces maps and pocket guides of Caribbean destinations.

"We are at a pivotal point in the course of history and the degradation of Earth's supporting ecosystems. We have before us an urgent call and challenge to adopt sustainable business practices and decouple environmental degradation from economic progress in order to create continued well-being," said Jessica Bensley, the chief executive officer of Skyviews Inc.

"We often talk about measuring what matters, therefore, the awards data will provide Caribbean governments with vital information on the private sectors adoption towards sustainability and provide quantitative data that directs policy and backs rationale for partnerships in order to create climate resiliency," she added.

INNOVATIVE CARIBBEAN INITIATIVES

The Skyviews awards programme is just one of several innovative Caribbean initiatives which will be announced at the July 9-11 symposium, a partnership between the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, the Washington-based Center for Responsible Travel, Grenada's Ministry of Tourism, and the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association. These include a new 'green' certification programme for holiday homes and several new programmes designed to strengthen Grenada's recently unveiled Pure Grenada marketing campaign.

Delegates will stay in four of Grenada's leading eco-boutique resorts, while the proceedings will be held mainly at St George's University.

For symposium details and updates, including how you can participate, visit www.CTOCRESTSymposium.com, or contact Samantha Hogenson at CREST at shogenson@responsibletravel.org, or call 202-347-9203, ext 414, or the CTO New York office at CTOnewyork@caribtourism.com or 212-635-9530.

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'SWITCH BLADE' SHARPER THAN EVER!

IF YOU have just started your tenure at Grand Palladium Jamaica and Lady Hamilton Resorts and Spa, or you are celebrating six years at the 1,056-room, Hanover-based hotel, you probably know Steve Watkins, affectionately called 'Switch Blade', and chances are he knows you too.

The name 'Switch Blade', like nearly all other peculiar aliases, holds an interesting historical origin. Watkins explains, "I was given the name Switch Blade simply because I handle every issue with a sense of urgency ... I have a sharp personality, and I am always quick with a response."

When asked to complete any assignment, no matter how tedious, Watkins says his most popular response is always "A me name Switch Blade, ennuh." In an effort to provide assurance that the task will be completed efficiently and urgently.

As a native of the resort's home parish, St James, and a resident of the rural community of Askenish, Hanover, Watkins knew that the unemployment figures were increasing rapidly, as a result, he vowed to work above the required standards at all times.

Watkins started at Grand Palladium as painter, and with his eyes on the prize, in no time, was promoted to his current position as room maintenance technician.

HIS FIRST FEW YEARS

As one of the first team members at the resort, he recalls his first few years. "When I joined this family in 2008, I was working through areas which were still under construction. Many of the facilities that exist now were only a dream then, nonetheless, we achieved great success through teamwork."

Known for his charisma, honesty, and ability, Watkins belts out some of the sweetest melodies, causing many to wonder why he opted to work in the hospitality industry instead of being a full-time musician.

"I have an equal love and passion for singing as I have for providing service in the tourism sector. I enjoy working in the maintenance department, particularly because it



Steve Watkins

allows me the opportunity to sing while I work ... my work is my stage and I rehearse almost daily."

Longevity may be an accessory to many, but for Watkins, this has been a badge of honour. "Being at Grand Palladium for six years makes me feel like a Palladium Ambassador. It makes me feel like I am part of the brand," he argues.

Very keen on fashion and deportment, he is arguably one of the best dressed male team members at the resort. He prides himself on being a devoted Christian and husband who sees singing as second nature. That innate passion, he believes, propelled him to the top spot in the

Talents of Palladium Competition in 2013.

"Working at Grand Palladium has been one of the best aspects of my career so far. I am forever grateful for the Talents of Palladium competition as I was able to benefit from media coverage on a major level. I have also composed a new single titled **No Limit**, which has been getting heavy rotations on both local and international radio stations," he remarked.

Like any other industry, tourism has its challenges, but Watkins says his motivation to surpass each day's challenge comes from this Bible-inspired phrase: 'With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.'

CHTA's Caribbean Travel Marketplace returns to Puerto Rico

CARIBBEAN TRAVEL Marketplace, the region's largest and most important marketing event, will be held at the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan from January 28 to 30, 2015 for the first time since January 2010.

Produced by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), Caribbean Travel Marketplace is attended annually by more than 1,200 delegates, from international tour operators and wholesale companies, as well as representatives from Caribbean hotels, destinations and attractions.

"We have chosen Puerto Rico as the host country for Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2015 because of the world-class facilities offered at the Puerto Rico Convention Center as well as the accessibility of the destination for the CHTA membership and the international delegates that will be in attendance," said Jeffrey Vasser, CHA, director general and CEO of CHTA.

In addition to CHTA, the Puerto Rico Destination Team, comprised of the Puerto Rico Hotel & Tourism Association, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, and Meet Puerto Rico, will organise Caribbean Travel Marketplace along with host sponsors, Interval International and MasterCard.

"Puerto Rico is honored to have been chosen by the CHTA as host of the Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2015, an event vital for the hotel and tourism industries of the entire CHTA membership," stated Ingrid Rivera Rocafort, executive director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company. "As host country, we can showcase our five-star destination to delegates so they can experience our excellent accommodations, attractions, meeting venues, and sample our unique culture first-hand," Rivera Rocafort added.

"We are very excited to host the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association's premier tourism marketing event, Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2015," said

“Puerto Rico is honored to have been chosen by the CHTA as host of the Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2015.”

Clarisa Jimenez, president and the CEO of the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association. "In the five years since Puerto Rico hosted Caribbean Travel Marketplace, there have been many changes to our tourism product in that time. We anticipate a high participation rate from our local association, who will share the latest developments at their respective properties," Jimenez added.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

During the two days, Caribbean Travel Marketplace affords hotels and destinations of all sizes the opportunity to meet face to face with wholesalers selling Caribbean vacation travel.

Registration for Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2015 will open up in July 2014 with full conference details available via the CHTA website www.caribbeanhotelandtourism.com.

In 2014, Caribbean Travel Marketplace saw 11,560 pre-scheduled appointments between Caribbean hoteliers, destinations and attractions and the international buyers. Another highlight from the 2014 edition was first-time buyers from Chile, the Czech Republic and Hungary as part of the wholesaler companies from 20 total countries, which also included Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.



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HOBNOB MERLOT

Wine grape variety: Merlot

Character: Rich like a black currant cobbler

Country: France

Food Pairing: Ideal with red meats, fish and rich Marinara sauces.

TRAPICHE OAK CASK MALBEC

Wine grape variety: 100% Malbec

Character: Intense aromas of smoky vanilla and spices

Country: Argentina

Food Pairing: Ideal to serve with match meals such as roast beef, barbeque pork ribs, burgers and hard cheeses.



CASILLERO DEL DIABLO CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wine grape variety: Cabernet Sauvignon

Character: Gorgeous aromas of cherry, black currant and dark plum

Country: Chile

Food Pairing: Red meats, spicy dishes and ripe cheeses.



COMMONWEALTH GAMES JTB to host Jamaica House, Glasgow 2014

JAMAICA WILL again bring its own unique, vibrant and colourful brand of celebration and fanfare to the sporting calendar this summer. The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) has announced that the Jamaica House, Glasgow will open its doors, this time during the 2014 Commonwealth Games, taking place July 23 to August 3, 2014.

Jamaica House 2014 will be located at 29, a members-only club in Glasgow. It will be hosted in partnership with Barrhead Travel, one of the United Kingdom's (UK) largest independent travel groups, boasting a network of 55 locations across the UK. Situated in the heart of the city, 29 will be Jamaica's hospitality and media hub during the games, and thanks to the venue's giant screens, will host two exclusive media and travel-trade client events. These events will coincide with the men's and women's 200m finals on Thursday, July 31, and the men's and women's 100m and 400m relay finals on Saturday, August 2, races in which Jamaica's fastest athletes are likely to compete.

Think: the Jamaican flag, and bunting adorning the streets and venue's roof terrace ... reggae rhythms floating through 29's clubs, bars and restaurants ... and delicious Jamaican jerk, rum cocktails, and Red Stripe beer on the menu keeping the vibe nice and 'irie'.

HUB FOR ALL THINGS JAMAICAN

Elizabeth Fox, JTB's regional director for the UK and Northern Europe, said: "Jamaica House at 29 will become Scotland's hub for all things Jamaican, and we're really looking forward to hosting our travel trade partners as we all watch and celebrate Jamaica's dominance in the Commonwealth Games' most eagerly awaited races.

"Jamaica has a long history of involvement in the Commonwealth Games and was in fact the host nation in 1966. This Jamaica House event will be our reward to those journalists and clients who have supported Jamaica over the years



and helped to make our island one of the most popular holiday destinations for Brits to jet off to."

Sharon Munro, chief executive of Barrhead Travel, said: "Our business has Glasgow at its heart, and every year, we book thousands of Glaswegians who flock to Jamaica to lap up its sun-drenched shores and unique culture. Partnering with the JTB to bring Jamaica House to Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games is the perfect extension of our close relationship with the country."

Jamaica has teamed up with its tourism partners to give away a host of prizes, including holidays, courtesy of Jewel Resorts, Secrets Resorts & Spas, Sandals Resorts and Virgin Atlantic Airways. STV is the Jamaica House media sponsor, and will be running competitions for the opportunity to win Jamaica breaks in the lead-up to the Commonwealth Games.

In July, Barrhead Travel will run a Jamaica month promotion, decking out its shops Jamaican-style, and feature a special seven-night, all-inclusive package offer to Jamaica for just £795. Barrhead Travel is confident that this offer will be snapped up by customers in lightning speed!

The Jamaica House concept opened for the first time at the London 2012 Olympics in Jamaica's 50th-anniversary year of Independence, and was hosted again in Moscow in 2013 for the IAAF World Championships.

■ **For more information on Jamaica, please visit www.VisitJamaica.com.**



ROUSSEAU SISTERS BRING TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN TO NEW YORKERS: Dubbed 'Two Sisters and a Meal', Jamaican chefs, Suzanne and Michelle Rousseau launched their new cookbook, 'Caribbean Potluck: Modern Recipes from Our Family Kitchen', during Caribbean Week in New York City. To celebrate the launch, the Rousseau sisters held several events and cooking demonstrations at locations around Manhattan, including Bloomingdale's, Williams-Sonoma and The Brooklyn Kitchen. New Yorkers got a glimpse of the diverse fusion of flavours and ingredients from Jamaica to Trinidad that has influenced the sisters' cooking style.



EXPERIENCE JAMAICA LUCKY WINNER: Sandra Scott (left), deputy director of tourism, marketing, at the Jamaica Tourist Board, presents a Dolphin Cove gift certificate to Nicola Stephenson as part of the organisation's Experience Jamaica promotion. Nicola collected the prize on behalf of her grandmother, Helen Grant, who won the complimentary gift during HITZ 92 FM's Lucky Wednesday feature.

CONTRIBUTED
PHOTO

The Jamaica
Tourist Board's
deputy director
of tourism,
USA sales,
Donnie
Dawson, with
Marcia Erskine
(left), 2014
Marcella
Martinez
awardee,
and Baz
Dreisinger,
2014 Marcia
Vickery-
Wallace
awardee.



CTO honours travel writers

THE CARIBBEAN Tourism Organisation (CTO) recognised travel journalists for their outstanding coverage of the region at the CTO Travel Media Awards Luncheon during Caribbean Week in New York. The luncheon, held at the Wyndham New Yorker Hotel on Thursday, June 5, was co-sponsored by Jamaica and was attended by several Caribbean tourism ministers, directors and dignitaries, as well as industry executives and other well-regarded journalists.

The CTO's secretary general, Hugh Riley, who presented the awards to well-deserving travel journalists, acknowledged the important role that the media plays in driving Caribbean tourism.

"The value of the media coverage alone exceeds the combined marketing budgets of our members. What is even more invaluable is the quality of the work that these journalists continue to produce, which help to shape the Caribbean brand as a premier travel destination."

■ **Been There, Wrote That – Best Feature Article in a Consumer Magazine:** Ann Vanderhoff for her feature article on Trinidad & Tobago titled, 'Trinidad in 50 Tastes a Day' in *Islands*.

■ **I Couldn't Have Written Better Myself – Best Feature in a Consumer Newspaper:** Terry Ward for her feature article on St Kitts entitled, 'Float Your Boat in St Kitts' in the *New York Post*.

■ **Inner Circle Queen – Best Feature Article in a Trade Publication:** Gay Nagle Myers for her story on Cuba titled, 'La Verdadera Cuba' in *Travel Weekly*.

■ **Virtual Visitor Award – Best Online Feature:** Alexander Britell, for his story about St Vincent & the Grenadines titled, 'In Downtown Kingstown, Finding the

Spirit of St Vincent and the Grenadines' in *Caribbean Journal*.

■ **Golden Mic – Best Broadcast Feature:** Tonya & Ian Fitzpatrick for their feature on Palm Island and the Tobago Cays in St Vincent & the Grenadines on World Footprints Media.

■ **Oh Snap! – Best Photograph accompanying a Feature:** Joaquin Trujillo and Brian Paumier for their photographs accompanying a feature on Martinique titled , 'Spirited Away' in *Afar*.

In addition, the CTO's chairman, Beverly Nicholson-Doty presented the following best overall award:

■ **They Like Me, They Really Like Me! – Best of the Best:** Gay Nagle Myers for her story on Cuba titled, 'La Verdadera Cuba' in *Travel Weekly*.

The CTO Travel Media Awards entries were judged by a team of public relations and journalism experts, including head judge, Roberta Garzaroli, the president of The Atrebor Group.

Caribbean Week was supported by Academy Engraving, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Association of Travel Marketing Executives, the Atrebor Group, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bloomingdales, Blue Sky Luxury, Bonaire, the British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Cititech Solutions, CTO Allied Members, Curaçao, Dominica,

David Williams Funeral Service, El Dorado, Empire State Building, Grace, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Haven's Kitchen, Health City Cayman Islands, Hilton San Juan Collection, Jamaica, Laura Davidson PR, Martinique, Necker Island, Nevis, Sandals, the Sandals Foundation, Saint Lucia, St Kitts, St Martin, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Travel + Leisure, Trinidad & Tobago, the US Virgin Islands, Whole Foods Market Culinary Center, and Williams-Sonoma.



Beverly Nicholson-Doty, CTO chairman.

McNeill lauds hoteliers

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MINISTER OF Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill has lauded investors in the tourism accommodations sector for their commitment to upgrading their properties across the island.

Many of the country's tourism stakeholders have pumped millions into the refurbishing of their properties.

The minister made the comments during his keynote address at the Jewel Runaway Bay water park groundbreaking ceremony in St Ann recently.

According to him, owners of the resort, Sagicor Jamaica, like many of its counterparts, has shown a level of confidence in Jamaica through its emphasis on constant upgrading and refurbishing of its hotels.

"Not only has Sagicor been about acquiring properties, but there has been a constant move over the years at upgrading these properties and getting them better," Dr McNeill said.

UPGRADING AND RENOVATION

The minister said an emphasis on upgrading and renovation was the key to hotels getting optimal rates for rooms.

"This is how you get up the rates; by constantly upgrading, by putting new elements in them, where we can get more out of them and (therefore) raising the quality. Often in Jamaica we talk about investment and the only thing people think about is new rooms – and we have had new rooms: in the last year, we have seen the ground-breaking of the Marriott; we have seen the completion of the RIU Palace, and these are good. But a lot of times we underestimate the amount of work that takes place in the industry itself in terms of just refurbishing and keeping it on cutting edge," Dr McNeill said.

"In the last year, expenditure on refurbishing and projects in



MCNEILL

Jamaica has been in excess of \$40 billion. And that is just to show the extent to which our product is improving year by year," he added.

Dr McNeill said there was hard evidence of the effect of the returns on investment channelled towards refurbishing of properties, as the statistics show a resulting increase in not only the levels of occupancy, but the room rates over the last year.

"Our figures have shown that our occupancy rates across the island in all properties have increased and our (room) rates are up, somewhere between 10 and 13 per cent. And it is really good to see that our investors are seeing the effects; they are seeing the increased occupancies and they are seeing the increased rates and we want to continue along that trend because we believe Jamaica has the best to offer anywhere in the world," he said.

He also said the Government was also committed to spending funds on upgrading surrounding infrastructure in resort areas to complement the works being undertaken by resort owners.

"And it's not just the hotel product that are improving; as a government, we are also moving to upgrade the product we have in our resort areas," he said.

"When we upgrade our products in our resort towns, in our properties, what it does is that it brings more value to what we are selling. Our visitors are willing to pay more for that, so it must be a joint effort," he added.

THE JOURNEY from St Andrew to Sturge Town, St Ann was long and tiring. It also involved missing a vital turn-off, and a near miss of the road that leads to this hilltop village situated in the Dry Harbour Mountains.

The road network is like one giant roller coaster. Up and down the news team went on narrow winding roads replete with hairpin bends. One moment we were in a basin, the next we were on an incline, and that is the rhythm of this Cockpit Country landscape.

Upon arrival in the community, we found it to be quiet and laid-back. Clearly, it isn't a commercial or transport hub way up in the hills. History waved frantically from the old and/or dilapidated dwellings, some of which seemed to be around since the town was established in 1839, one year after slavery was abolished.

Then one of the ironies of my life went into overdrive. I hate the subject of death, but I like to view the inscriptions on tombs, and am fascinated with their designs. The old graves we passed throughout the community fed my fascination, but we were more concerned about meeting people who could talk about the community with authority.

From our research on Sturge Town, I figured the Baptist church would be the best place to start, since it was instrumental in setting up the village. Up a rough lane we were directed and went. We found the church perched on a hill from where the sea, miles away, could be seen. But disappointed I was when I saw no tombs in the yard surrounding the church that was built in 1838.

How could that be? An old church with no graveyard. Where have all the graves gone? I asked myself while walking around the church. The sound of industry coming from a building on the slope to the south of the church got our attention. We could see it was a school, so we walked towards it. It was a basic school operated by the church.

We engaged the principals, teachers, the students and cook into discussions on Sturge Town. From the chats, we were told of someone with whom we could talk. A request was made, and in a short while, Deacon Albert James appeared. He, along with the cook, Andrea Lawrence, and Jonice Taylor, a teacher at the school, turned out to be our guides for the day.

They took us all over the place.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

Old graves, tears and grass lice



A former residence of the descendants of enslaved Africans in Sturge Town, St Ann.

PHOTOS BY ERROL CROSBY



This building that looks like a great house once housed the post office in Sturge Town, St Ann.



PHOTO BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

The journey from Kingston to Sturge Town can be very long and tiring.

There were dilapidated great houses, abandoned wattle and daub dwellings, graves, graves, graves. I was in my ackee. But what 'sweet' me, turned out to be quite 'sour'. More anon.

But the joke of the day for us –

or was it really? – was when we saw three women travelling on foot before us. We stopped the vehicle, and as we were about to alight, the women started to complain that we couldn't take their pictures just like that. One of them, the oldest, just

glanced back, and as we say in Jamaica, she 'put her foot inna har an, an tek the wings of the morning'.

The other two were also clearly upset it seemed, but why? We didn't even attempt to take their

pictures, and they didn't give us a chance to ask. So we proceeded to look for a woman who, we were told, was 102. Then I heard a voice shouting something about **Gleaner** to someone else. When Deacon James made contact about the woman, he was told she couldn't speak with us.

But we were to encounter the two upset women again. When we were visiting another church and its graves, we saw two women



PHOTOS BY ERROL CROSBY

The 102-year-old Kathleen Tracey brought tears to the eyes of Hospitality Jamaica writer, Paul H. Williams.



The main source of drinking water in Sturge Town, St Ann, is a spring that runs through a manmade structure.



These women were upset with a Gleaner news team for wanting to take their pictures “just so”.

sitting on a tomb. Their backs were towards us. I cleared my throat, and the women turned around. They were the same ones whom we had upset.

Though we found the issue a little strange we still were able to charm them into talking about the hard-knock life in Sturge Town. But why were they upset with us? They said they didn’t look their best and we wanted to take pictures of them. Well!

It also turned out that one of them was the caretaker of the 102-

year-old woman, and it was she who raised the alarm of **The Gleaner’s** presence. She said she was instructed by the woman’s son not to allow her to speak with the media. Yet, we found another 102-year-old, the vivacious and the hilarious, Kathleen Maud Tracey, who brought tears to my eyes. What a woman!

Other poignant moments were when 88-year-old Leonard Tracey was telling the story of his life while sitting on beloved relatives’ tombs. I

was enjoying the chat when I felt nips at my flesh. And then there were more. It was a grass-lice attack! That was early in the tour, and I had to endure all the itches throughout the day. When we were touring the Marley Spring, which is the major source of drinking water in the community, I wanted a bath so much to ease the itching. But alas!

It was a day of laughter, fun and learning, after which it took me two weeks to recover from the grass-lice attack.



PHOTO BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

The community of Sturge Town, St Ann was established by the Baptist church.



Many old graves such as these can be found in Sturge Town, St Ann.

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MAROONAGE IS a term in Caribbean history and historical discourses that describe the total experience of enslaved African people who defy the whims and fancies of European oppressors and carry out their own social and political lives in the interior areas of Caribbean islands, and South and Central America.

The defiant enslaved people have come to be known as Maroons, and they are located in communities all over the Caribbean region. The system of governance is different from place to place, with some communities having autonomy from mainstream governance.

In Jamaica, the communities are led by colonels who sit together on a Maroon Council. Each community has its own council and colonel.

In Suriname, each tribe is led by chiefs, and a gaa'mang, who is the paramount chief. The gaa'mang is a well-respected person in his community, where certain protocols are observed in his presence. All the gaa'mang are men, but things became historic on Sunday, when Jamaican chieftainess Gloria 'Mama G' Simms was installed as a gaa'mang in a poignant ceremony in Charles Town.

It is a peculiar situation though, as the office of gaa'mang doesn't exist in Jamaican Maroon politics. Peculiar, but historic it is as Simms is now the only female gaa'mang in all Maroon communities, and up to two years ago, her rise to this unusual position was not even a thought.

It came by chance in 2012, when Simms, leader of the Maroon Indigenous Women's Circle, met Fidelia Graand-Galon, president of the Maroon Women's Network at the Charles Town Maroon Conference. Simms was invited to Suriname on a cultural exchange, which she did in 2013. Then she signed a memorandum of cooperation with her hosts, but a gaa'mang would have to be informed.

The Saramka Maroons, gaa'mang was approached with assistance from the Ministry of Regional Development, the ministry responsible for the indigenous tribes. By boat, a delegation went to see the gaa'mang. "When we went there, the gaa'mang, when he saw Mama G, in her attire, water came in his eyes because he said he saw his grandmother, and the spirit that carried Mama G. She was like



Charles Town hosts SURINAMESE MAROONS

Some members of the Charles Town Drummers and Dancers, who entertained the gathering at the 2014 Charles Town Maroon Conference in Portland.



Gloria 'Mama G' Simms was installed as gaa'mang, Maroon chief of chiefs, by the Surinamese Okanisi Maroons.

his own ancestral spirit. He could connect with her spiritually," Fidelia Graamb-Gala, now the Surinamese ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, said.

The gaa'mang saw Simms as a leader, and not a follower of African traditions, and immediately got the idea of elevating Simms to gaa'mang. A ritual was carried out as the foundation Simms' installation, but it could not take place in Suriname. It had to take place among her own people, and thus, a decision was made to journey to Jamaica. Simms said it



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Ambassador Fidelia Graand-Golan interprets the language of the talking drum being played by Da Talie Malonrie during the installation of Gloria Simms as paramount Maroon chief at the 2014 Charles Town Maroon Conference in Portland. Looking on are Okanisi Maroon chief, Gaa'mang Johannes Ballong (left), and Basja Carlo Kerie.

was when she was returning from the Saramaka gaa'mang by boat that she realised how important the position of gaa'mang is, after she was briefed.

She approached Charles Maroon Colonel Frank Lumsden about having the installation at the Charles Town Maroon Conference. He agreed, but months before the event, the

Saramaka gaa'mang got ill and was not able to come to Jamaica to install Simms. Another gaa'mang had to be found.

The Ministry of Regional Development was instrumental in getting Gaa'mang Johannes Ballong of the Okanisi tribe to come to Jamaica to install Simms. The leader of more than 50,000 people, along with six



Basja Carlo Kerie, a member of the Surinamese Maroon delegation at the 2014 Charles Town Maroon Conference, in a traditional Okanisi Maroon costume.

other delegates, came to Jamaica last week to participate in the historic event. “Not even in Suriname do we have a female gaa’man, and I don’t think we will have that in the near future,” said Ambassador Graand-Galon.

MAROON WOMEN FEEL HONOURED

Enthralled by the development and the embracing of Colonel Lumsden, who incorporated the installation into the Charles Town Maroon Conference Programme, she said, “Words cannot express how important, and how honoured we feel as Maroon women that things can happen

when we connect”.

Simms, in acknowledging her new status told **Hospitality Jamaica**, “I was surprised because I didn’t expect it ... I am very grateful and I feel honourable, but in the long run, the honour goes with responsibility.”

Mynairfa Joeke, policy officer in the Ministry of Regional Development, representing the minister, said the preparing for the visit to Jamaica was a big job, that Simms’ installation “was a great event for me and for all of us ... we are very happy”.

The delegates stayed in Charles Town where they were given full Maroon hospitality.



From left: Kamuri Gravesandy and Brook Keiahani Rodriquez, Tainos living in New York, listen while Joanne Adraai, a member of the Surinamese Maroon delegation at the Charles Town Maroon Conference, makes a point, on Sunday, June 22.



The Surinamese Maroon delegation at the 2014 Charles Town Maroon Conference, (from left) Mynairfa Joeke, Kabireng Baja Gason, Gaa’mang Johannes Ballong, Basja Carlo Kerie, Joanne Adraai, Da Talie Malonrie (talking drum), and Ambassador Fidelia Graand-Golan.



Members of the Okanisi Maroons from Suriname relaxing in the Asafu Yard at Charles Town, Portland on Sunday, June 22.



Colonel Charles Lumsden (centre), of the Charles Town Maroons, was the host of the Surinamese Maroon delegation, which was at the 2014 Charles Town Maroon Conference to install Gloria Simms as paramount Maroon chief. Beside him are Colonel Ferron Williams (left) of Accompong Town and Colonel Wallace Sterling of Moore Town.



Aram Zerunian (left) coaches Beckham Henry on the intricacies of resort management before commencing the day's work.

Eight-year-old Texas resident named GM for a day at Half Moon

NOT MANY eight-year-olds know the career path they wish to pursue, but little Beckham Henry is sure he wants to become a general manager at a world-leading resort.

For more than 20 years, Beckham's family, who reside in Dallas, Texas, journey to Half Moon for their summer vacation. This visit marks Beckham's ninth time to the resort, as he proudly shares that his first visit was when he was only eight-months-old. "I don't remember

anything then, but I really look forward to the summer holidays and coming to Half Moon with my family," he gushed.

During his last visit in 2013, Beckham met Aram Zerunian, Half Moon's general manager and shared with him his desire of one day becoming a general manager at a resort. Zerunian then promised to make him acting general manager for one day during his next visit.

That promise was fulfilled on June 18 when

Beckham spent the entire day shadowing Zerunian. He attended meetings, answered the telephone, and also did a full tour of the back-of-house resort operations.

Feeling accomplished at the end of his day's work, Beckham was quick to point out that he's even more certain now he wants to be a hotel general manager. "I loved riding around on the golf cart, going to the different meetings and greeting everyone. It was one of the best days of my life," he said with great enthusiasm.

Hospitality from All Angles Career Day Expo tomorrow

PARAMOUNT TO the success of any economy is a highly educated and skilled workforce. As leaders within Jamaica's premiere industries, hoteliers have a social responsibility to help in securing a bright future for Jamaica by investing in and aiding in the development of our young people.

Sandals Resorts in the Montego Bay region is passionate about this, and as such, has enlisted the support of several like-minded organisations for the Hospitality from All Angles Career Day 2014 Expo, scheduled for Thursday, June 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Montego Bay Boys and Girls' Club in St James.

The expo, which is free of cost and open to the public, forms part of a youth empowerment programme being spearheaded by Sandals Resorts in the Montego Bay region in partnership with the Montego Bay Police Youth Club. The Montego Bay Police Youth Club falls under the St James Divisional Council of Police Youth Clubs, which, through its membership network, connects more than 300 young people throughout the parish of St James.

The purpose of the Career Day Expo is to expose these young people to the various jobs available within the hospitality/tourism industry as well as give them a clear understanding of the skills and educational requirements needed to perform effectively within the industry.

The Hospitality from All Angles Career Day Expo will feature displays from the Sandals group, the Jamaica Tourist Board, the Tourism Product Development Company, Heart Trust/NTA, the St James 4-H Clubs, National Youth Service, the Social Development Commission, Chukka Caribbean and Island Routes.

Reggae Sumfest 2014 launch



PHOTOS BY STEVE BROWN

From left: Tryall Club’s Richard Ferdinand was spotted looking cozy with fiancé Melissa Chang at the Reggae Sumfest 2014 launch, held at Iberostar, Montego Bay.



From left: The Digicel team of Ricky Purkiss, Sherilee Smith, Steffan-Chad Haughton, Olivia Tate, Howard Dyer and Joy Clarke were spotted at Reggae Sumfest 2014 launch, held at Iberostar, Montego Bay.



From left: Iberostar team members Tamika Higgins-Baker, Philipp Hofer and Tamika Bryce at the 2014 Reggae Sumfest launch.



Montego Bay-based artiste Prissy G (left) and Daena Lovelace were spotted at the Reggae Sumfest 2014 launch, held at Iberostar, Montego Bay.



From left: Errol Watts; Inderia Adjudah; Dr Luz Longsworth of the University of the West Indies; and Hospitality Jamaica coordinator, Janet Silvera, were in attendance the Reggae Sumfest launch, held at Iberostar, Montego Bay.



From left: Race car driver Matthew Gore, Reggae Sumfest organisers Johnny Gourzong and Godfrey Dyer share a laugh at the show’s 2014 launch.



From left: The Royalton White Sands team of André Hudson, Staysie Spence, Kerry Ann Quallo Casserly, Alexander Arias and Stayce Ingram are all smiles at the 2014 Reggae Sumfest launch.



From left: Race car driver Matthew Gore is joined by manager of Iberostar, Sonja Nalkiran and Richard Hunter at the 2014 Reggae Sumfest launch.