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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2014



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FAILING TO LIVE UP
TO EXPECTATIONS**

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HOLISTIC LIVING AT ST THOMAS' ECO-VILLAGE

The Falmouth model has failed – Mafessanti

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ST ANN businessman Marino Mafessanti believes that the development of the Falmouth pier in Trelawny has failed to provide the expected jobs and other economic benefits to the town.

“The Falmouth model has failed,” Mafessanti told a Gleaner Editors’ Forum in Ocho Rios last Wednesday.

According to Mafessanti: “We have failed to have an accommodating way to have guests travel comfortably from ships to attractions.”

One of the grouses that has emerged from cruise passengers that disembark at the Falmouth pier, is the extended time they have to spend travelling the long distances to attractions in the neighbouring parishes of St Ann or St James.

Trelawny has very few attractions to delight visitors, and despite the pier being opened for several years now, there has been a failure, on the part of both the private and public sector, to develop additional attractions in the town or even the parish.

As a result, townsfolk are not getting the desired benefit of having a port that is capable of hosting some of the world’s biggest cruise liners.

Falmouth resident, Brian Elliott, while expressing disappointment that Falmouth is not benefiting from the pier, believes the model is not yet a complete failure.

“I think it is failing,” Elliott told **The Gleaner** last Friday. “And it’s very disappointing.”

“There is no direct benefit to the residents of Falmouth because the town is being bypassed. The pier is used primarily to sell tours outside of Falmouth,” he argued.

“On a typical ship day, all the hustle and bustle is of buses shipping out the tourists to other parishes. You can’t tell it’s a ship day by just looking at the town because there is hardly any activity relating to tourism outside of the pier.”

“I think the real benefit is the perception that Falmouth is benefitting from the pier, so what we have now is more people buying premises in Falmouth. But in terms of employment because of the pier, there is nothing like that. Added to that, there is

hardly any local-based business that benefits either. It is really disappointing,” he lamented.

The Ocho Rios pier lost out big when the Falmouth pier opened around four years ago. Several ships changed their itinerary, cutting off Ocho Ocho at the inclusion of Falmouth. However, last month, Ocho Rios was voted the Caribbean’s Leading Cruise Destination, sparking hope that it will lead to increase in arrivals at the port.

NORMAN GRINDLEY/CHIEF

PHOTOGRAPHER

Marino Mafessanti, director, St Ann Chamber of Commerce.



FILE

The Falmouth Cruise Pier.



The Running Girlz of Canada.

Overseas groups, media for Reggae Marathon

MORE THAN 12 groups, as well as representatives of some 14 media organisations from North America and Europe, will be travelling to Negril this year for the annual staging of the Reggae Marathon, Half Marathon and 10K on Saturday, December 6.

Now in its 14th year, the Reggae Marathon event continues to attract overseas participation and impressive international media coverage, which, according to race director, Alfred ‘Frano’ Francis, is due mainly to “the strong overseas marketing support of our main partners PUMA Running and the Jamaica Tourist Board, and the success of our own digital marketing and new look and more user-friendly website, which facilitates effective online registration for both local and international entrants”.

The groups and media, which hail mainly from the United States of America and Canada, also include representatives from Sweden, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Japan.

With more than 91 members strong, the US group, Reggae Runnerz comprises the largest overseas contingent at this year’s event, and they will celebrate with a balloon release at the Negril Tree House hotel to mark their Reggae Marathon participation. Other groups include: Quicksilver Striders, Run NYC, Yellowbird Reggae Runners, Easy Skankin, Andre’s Crew and Black Girl’s Rum & Reggae from the USA, as well as Reggae Rebels, Running Girlz and Runners Mark from Canada.

They will also be joined by two Canadian teams that run for charity; Lace Up for Liver from the Canadian Liver Foundation, and Joints In Motion from the Arthritis Society.

“A number of these groups are not only repeat visitors, but committed Reggae Marathon participants as reflected in their names,” said Francis. He also added, “Some have also chosen to support the community, and this year, for example, Black Girl’s Rum & Reggae will be donating supplies to the children at the Negril All-Age School.”

ESTABLISHED MEDIA OUTLETS

“Reggae Marathon will also be covered by a number of established and respected media outlets and magazines including **Runner’s World** from Sweden, **Runner** from Belgium, **Get Out There Magazine** and **Ottawa Life Magazine** from Canada; **Spiridon** from Germany; the United Kingdom’s **Running Fitness** as well as the **Los Angeles Times**, **Competitor Magazine**, **Women’s Health** and **Women’s Running** from the United States of America,” said Francis.

He indicated that a number of the media personnel will also be participating in the event, which means, “They will not only be observing from the sidelines, but will be active on the course. This will help them to tell their stories from the perspective of someone who was involved in the race.”

A number of local corporate groups and other teams have also registered to participate in the event.

Tourism investments a major economic boost – Minister

THE LOCAL economy continues to receive a major boost from billions of dollars which are currently flowing into the island through investment in the tourism sector.

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill has indicated that “current investment in the industry stands at some \$35 billion. This is in keeping with a growing demand for rooms to satisfy the increasing interest in the country as a preferred tourist destination”.

Following a tour with McNeill of four tourism investment sites in Montego Bay, Trelawny and Ocho Rios on the weekend, Minister of Finance and Planning Dr Peter Phillips expressed delight with the developments and their contribution to the Government’s growth agenda.

The locations visited on the tour included the Hyatt Ziva and Hyatt Zilara resorts in Montego Bay, Royalton White Sands Resort in Trelawny, the Ocho Rios Cruise Ship Pier and the Moon Palace Jamaica Grande Resort and Spa.

RIGHT DIRECTION

With more “world-class brands lining up to enter the sector”, Dr Phillips said this was “proof that we are heading in the right direction”. He added that “what we have seen here in Ocho Rios, as well as in Montego Bay and Trelawny, is that there is tremendous employment potential in the tourism industry”.

It was outlined that over 1,000 construction workers are now toiling round the clock to have the luxurious Hyatt Ziva and Hyatt Zilara resorts ready for a soft opening soon. An additional 600 permanent staff is already on the job. General manager, Carl Hendriks, said that figure will be doubled when the hotel is in full operation giving guests “service from the heart”.

The hotel’s parent company, Playa Resorts, is spending some US\$150 million to transform the former Ritz Carlton property with the addition to several new features, including an additional 193 rooms.

In Falmouth, the ministers were given a guided tour of the former Trelawny Beach Hotel, which has been extensively transformed into the Royalton White Sands. Resident manager, Alexander



General manager of the Moon Palace Jamaica Grande Resort and Spa, Clifton Reader (far right), is emphatic as he points out the luxurious features that are being constructed to transform the Ocho Rios hotel for its January 2015 opening. Obviously pleased are (from left) Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill, Minister of Finance and Planning Dr Peter Phillips, and executive director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Clyde Harrison.

Arias, said occupancy was now at 100 per cent and this would continue into the upcoming winter tourist season, which begins on December 15.

Dr Phillips then got a first-hand view of work being done by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment through the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) and other stakeholders, to renovate the Ocho Rios Cruise Ship Pier and add amenities in the resort town to benefit both locals and visitors.

MISSION TO TRANSFORM ‘OCHI’

Dr McNeill pointed out that this investment was being made by both the private sector and Government. “Over the last year, we embarked on an initiative between the TEF, the Port Authority of Jamaica and the Urban Development Corporation, and we’re working on a project which will transform Ocho Rios.”

It was also outlined that the Moon Palace resort is set to open its doors in January 2015 and over 2000 construction workers are engaged in the refurbishing of the former Sunset Jamaica Grande property. The hotel, which has over 700 rooms, is being developed into an elegant resort with Jamaican

hotelier, Clifton Reader, as general manager.

In a bid to retain valuable members of the original workforce, the new operators have kept some 500 employees on their payroll during the hotel’s temporary closure. More than 100 workers have also been sent to Mexico for training. The hotel will eventually have 1,200 permanent employees.

Dr Phillips noted that, “Along with other developments which may come later, what we’re seeing is the extent to which the recovery of competitiveness in the Jamaican economy, which has resulted from our economic reform programme, is driving a new wave of investment, generally. We are in an early phase of this process, and if the early phase looks as encouraging as we have seen today, then we can only imagine the tremendous possibilities which will exist for the country as a whole.”

He was particularly encouraged that “almost every one of the investors and operators that we met with has expressed an interest in expanding beyond their existing properties, which, again, is an indication of the real prospects that await Jamaica as we complete this economic reform programme.”



CONTRIBUTED

From left: Hyatt Ziva Director of Sales Mureen James shows ministers Dr Peter Phillips (centre), minister of finance; and Dr Wykeham McNeill, minister of tourism and entertainment drawings of the two resorts, Hyatt Ziva and Hyatt Zilara, which are to open early December.



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‘ROYAL PALM ESTATE’:

20 YEARS of promoting Ja’s tourism product

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Carol Campbell-Williams, who plays the role of Jennifer Chambers, enjoys a bubble bath at the Royalton White Sands in Trelawny.



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

Beth Hyde, who plays the role of The Blackburns’ villianess, Julia Blackburn, goes through her lines ahead of a scene at the great house.

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WHEN CVM Television started airing the **Royal Palm Estate** soap opera 20 years ago, little did they know that the programme would have become a prime contributor to the international promotion of Jamaica’s tourism product.

“CVM went on the air in 1993, and one year later, we put on the pilot and ran the series. The house that we shoot at is in Runaway Bay – Belair Great House,” executive chairman, Mediamix, the show’s producer, Lennie Little-White explained.

“The whole property, 3,000 acres that the Government took over in the time of land lease, and we happened to have access to the Great House. So, coming from Kingston, we used to drive down every weekend on a Friday, film Saturday and Sunday and sleep in the

house with mattresses all over the place.

“And it was a kind of pioneering spirit, because CVM had just started – I was one of the original three people with CVM – and we made a commitment that we were going to do quality Jamaican programming. So there was a kind of enthusiasm where people didn’t mind roughing it ... three people would sleep in a bed, *et cetera*, then we would pack up in everybody’s car and drive back to Kingston,” he added.

Little-White said as time progressed, the show’s crew and cast of the programme (now **The Blackburns of Royal Palm Estate**), began to yearn for more sophisticated accommodations.

“People wanted to be treated a little bit better than roughing it out with mattresses on the floor. Luckily, Paul Issa, who is a part of the Couples (resort) family, had been in the show

from year one and we approached his brother, Lee Issa ... we showed them how we could position the hotel and show off its attributes,” he said.

“So when they agreed to that, we found a way to always have somebody (in their role) staying in the hotel. And so it started with Breezes, Couples, and the different Superclubs properties; then Sandals got involved. People in Kingston, like The Jamaica Pegasus and Terra Nova, were very supportive because we had, for example, ministers of Government having secret affairs – our own scandals – and they would check into these hotels,” Little-White told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Over the years, the programme has featured other hotels in Kingston, including The Knutsford Court, Morgan’s Harbour, Courtleigh, Strawberry Hill, the former Wyndham Kingston, Hotel Four Seasons and the Liguanea Club. In Ocho Rios, the

former Jamaica Grande, Crane Ridge, Hermosa Cove, and in Montego Bay, the Iberostar Suites and Sunflower Villas, Gran Bahia Principe in Runaway Bay and the Royalton White Sands in Falmouth, Trelawny.

“We moved from hotel to hotel – the deal is, we come to the hotel for a week, so we write scenes for that particular hotel. After a week, we leave the property and go to the (great) house, but we still stay at the hotel. So we do a reconnaissance where we come and see the important things the hotel wants to show off – so if they want to show off their, their spa, or their mani and pedi, food or kids’ village, we write it into the script, and show them,” Little-White told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

CUT COSTS

He added that this was how they were able to cut down on costs, “We could set the scenes in a hotel room and we do a trade off with the hotel in terms of the exposure that they are going to get. The hotels lend themselves for romantic scenes, so we try not to show anything negative from within the hotel.”

According to him, the cast is shot in the various restaurants and his production team is able to show the customer relations by how they are greeted at the front desk and in the dining room.

“So after a while, it caught fire, everybody wanted us to be at their property,” he added.

Over the two decades that the programme has been running, **Royal Palm Estate** has focused on showcasing Jamaica in a positive light, incorporating the best of the island’s tourism offerings and excluding anything that could be damaging to the product.

“I have said to people, we might show poor people, but we never show poverty; we don’t show any zinc fences. So it has a kind of glamour ... we show Montego Bay airport with all the gloss and the fancy things and the Kingston airport; we show shopping ... we have gone to the best attractions such as Dunn’s River Falls, Mystic Mountain and Dolphin Cove,” he said.

The live streaming of the show on the Internet, which has attracted an international audience, is a feat with which Little-White is particularly pleased. He said many of the hotel’s house counts have increased due to Internet streaming.

“When people realised it was being streamed live around the world, many of them became far more positive, because the Jamaicans who watched the show in London and New York or wherever were now seeing,” Little-White said.

The show he said, mushroomed, and now that it has a wider international audience.

“It has always been shown overseas, but on a selected basis – in Barbados and Trinidad ... because it is now on the Internet, the same time you see it here, you can watch it anywhere in the world, so it has a much wider audience,” he stated.

Little-White said the success of the show has been incredible, “We have not had one hotel that does not want us to come back.”



Executive producer of ‘The Blackburns of Royal Palm Estate’, Lennie Little-White, watches as a scene is shot at the Great House.



The Royal Palm Estate Great House.



PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

Actress and production assistant Marguerite Tulloch is all smiles after a day’s worth of work at the Great House, on the set of ‘The Blackburns of Royal Palm Estate’.

RIGHT: Jennifer Chambers (Carol Campbell-Williams) and Richard Blackburn (Adam Hyde) relax in the lazy River at the Royalton White Sands.



Make-up artist and hairstylist Michelle Clarke prepares Diane Clarke, who plays the role of executive chef Tiffany, for a scene at the Royal Palm Estate Great House recently.



THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Cybercrimes – a threat to Caribbean tourism

David Jessop
Contributor

EARLIER THIS year, one of my colleagues booked a villa holiday in a coastal resort in Europe. She was late in doing so and was surprised when just what she was looking for appeared online and available. It was on the website of what she thought belonged to a reputable company; one known across Europe for representing owners wishing to rent out their properties.

She was pleased with the price and duly made the reservation. However, she then received an email from the alleged company saying that as it was a late booking, full payment would be required to the owner's account, so she duly made the transfer.

A few days later when no confirmation or documentation was forthcoming, she called the legitimate company concerned, only to discover that the villa had been fully booked for more than a year. Not only had she logged on to a copy of the legitimate website, but unaware, had transferred thousands of dollars to a criminal operation engaged in internet fraud.

CYBERCRIME TARGET

I note this as increasingly, tourism has become the target of ever-more sophisticated cybercrime. This is because criminals recognise that travellers seeking their dream vacation are more prone to making rapid, emotionally led buying decisions without thinking about whether, for example, the site they have logged onto is legitimate or not.

According to US and European police forces, vacation-related fraud is growing rapidly, with those committing the crimes using fake websites, false advertising, bogus phone calls and email scams. Related research shows that fraudsters are most likely to target those booking airline tickets, seeking package holidays – especially those related to sports or religion – or self-catering villas and apartments. There is also a growing number of fraud connected with online applications for foreign visas.

In the Caribbean, anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that this

has the potential to become a significant problem. Although there is some public awareness of, for instance, fictitious cruise offers, larger hoteliers, tour operators and banks are more inclined to quietly reimburse rather than allow their public image to be damaged.

However, in contrast, awareness of the danger of Internet fraud is having an effect on smaller Caribbean properties or those offering specialist services.

This is causing them to have to reassure potential customers that they are logged on to a legitimate site, can proceed to purchase in safety using their credit card, and informing them what should be done if they are in any doubt.

Over the past decade, the Caribbean tourism sector has, become reliant on digital communications for everything from sales, their day-to-day in-house operations, stock control, the link to the financial services centres they use, and for their daily communications.

Despite this, not many Caribbean hoteliers have considered their financial or logistical vulnerability, let alone undertaken a full professional audit in this area.

Moreover, few Caribbean jurisdictions have the necessary legislation, regulations or infrastructure to address cybercrimes, making it punishable to violate a network. It is also far from clear whether regional law enforcement agencies have the legal cover or capacity to co-operate with external law enforcement agencies in this area, given that most cybercrimes are extraterritorial in their effect.

Borderless Internet fraud and cybercrime have become the fastest growing form of criminality.

Despite this, Caribbean governments, companies and police forces have yet to fully understand the threat this poses to tourism, an industry which professionals agree is now dominated by the need for constant connectivity, and which has become dependent for its survival on being able to market and sell online.



JESSOP



JUTA transports guests from Island Routes' clients such as Sandals Resorts, Beaches Resorts, Grand Pineapple Resorts, the Hyatt Group, Bookit, and Air Canada Vacations to several local attractions.

HIGH FIVES!

Island Routes, JUTA celebrate milestone

THE CARIBBEAN'S award-winning tour company, Island Routes Caribbean Adventures, is set to celebrate its five-year partnership with JUTA with the launch of an exciting programme of activities designed to strengthen their relationship and heighten standards throughout the country.

The programme, scheduled to commence next year, will incorporate a new awards scheme, enhanced customer service training, tour visits, as well as an inter-regional domino tournament.

In 2009, following the launch of Island Routes, JUTA landed the lucrative deal to transport guests to the company's extensive range of local excursions and airport transfers which includes clients such as Sandals Resorts, Beaches Resorts, Grand Pineapple Resorts, the Hyatt Group, Bookit and Air Canada Vacations.

Don Smith, Island Routes' VP of Airport and Transportation, commented, "Our group's strategic alliance with JUTA has been a fruitful one and continues to grow and strengthen with time. From an operational standpoint, it is imperative that our guests are transported efficiently, reliably and safely, and with JUTA beside us, we can be confident. We believe this new programme of activity will further heighten the experience of those that visit these shores and keep them coming back time and time again."

ISLAND ROUTES GROWTH

Since its launch, Island Routes has grown from strength to strength and with it, its partners such as JUTA. It is estimated that JUTA currently moves 99 per cent of Sandals' guests from the airport using almost 60 buses per day, as well as 90 per cent of all other clients who use Island Routes.

"The more business we get, the more business we put their way, it's that simple. As a Jamaican company, it is extremely important to us that the tourism dollar doesn't just trickle down to the man on the street, it flows. We believe that this partnership continues to deliver on that promise. JUTA drivers are a crucial part of tourism in Jamaica; they're often the first person visitors

remember when they arrive, and the last when they depart."

A fully licensed tour operator since inception in 2009, Island Routes now boasts over 200 experiences, providing over 200,000 last year throughout Jamaica, including the recently launched River Bumpkin Farm in Trelawny. Next month, scores of JUTA, MAXI and JCAL drivers will attend a day retreat courtesy of Island Routes.

Adam Stewart, chief executive officer of Sandals Resorts International, commented, "Our partnership with JUTA is one based on mutual respect, and I would like to publicly thank them for their efforts this past year. 2015 is set to be our biggest year yet, and we couldn't ask for better partners to approach it with. Their professionalism and willingness to invest in their equipment and in the development of their people is much the same as our own and ensures that standards are consistently surpassed."

"Last year at Sandals, we spent over \$720 million on transfers and tours and I'm proud that this level of investment continues to not only build their supply chain, but through the JUTA association, creates hundreds, if not thousands, of Jamaican business owners and entrepreneurs."

Established in 1974 when tourism in Jamaica had started to gain momentum, JUTA has grown to boast over 3,000 members across the country supported by an expert team made up of mechanics, body shop technicians and administrative personnel, ensuring the best service possible.

Charles Myrie, president of JUTA's Ocho Rios Chapter, added, "This has a huge impact on our members and the positive spin-offs are immeasurable. Thanks to our nationwide network built up over the last 40 years, no one can move as many passengers the way we do at JUTA, but it's not about volume for us. It's about the high level of quality, personal care and attention to detail that we possess within our fleet. This relationship started many years ago when Sandals Chairman Gordon 'Butch' Stewart gave us a chance with one of his hotels in Negril, and almost 30 years later, we handle 99 per cent of all Sandals' transportation needs."

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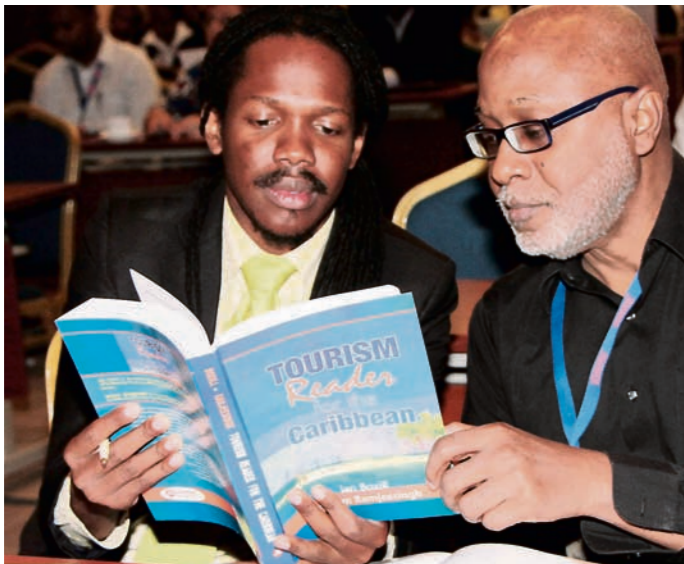
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State minister in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment Damian Crawford (left) and Pulse Entertainment CEO Kingsley Cooper peruse a section of the 'Tourism Reader for the Caribbean'.



Deputy director of tourism Sandra Scott presents a gift package to Washington-based tourism expert Dr Donald Hawkins after he made his presentation at the opening of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar.



Director of Tourism Paul Pennicook (left) and Clive Forbes, general manager at Caribbean Airlines (Jamaica), in a brief discussion during the opening of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar.

LEFT: Presenters at the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar, held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre between November 20 and 21, Johnson Johnrose (left), communications specialist at the Caribbean Tourism Organization, and Dr Donald Hawkins, tourism specialist, unwind at the close of the seminar.



Communications specialist, Marline Stephenson-Dalley (left), accepts a pictorial book of Jamaica from Sandra Scott, deputy director of tourism at the Jamaica Tourist Board. Stephenson-Dalley was the emcee at the closing session of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar, held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre between November 20 and 21. This was the sixth convening of the event in Jamaica. It is geared towards positioning the region's tourism product to take better advantages of opportunities in the marketplace.



Jason Hall, deputy director at the Jamaica Tourist Board, with responsibilities for cruise shipping, and Carole Beckford, film commissioner at JAMPRO, in discussion during the closing session of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar.

Tourism Outlook Seminar hailed as huge success

AFTER SEVERAL riveting presentations by an impressive cadre of local, regional and international experts, the sixth staging of the Tourism Outlook Seminar (TOS 2014) has been hailed by participants as a tremendous success.

The seminar was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Tourism Enhancement Fund in association with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

The seminar seeks to enable tourism partners to share ideas, examine best practices and discuss strategies for advancing tourism. Staged from November 20 to 21 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre the seminar was held under the theme, Tourism: Enhancing Social and Economic Impact. It attracted more than 250 delegates, including a wide cross section of tourism stakeholders including hoteliers, owners of attractions, government officials and university students.

Veteran hotelier and general manager of Sunset Beach Resort & Spa, Evatt Bloomfield, considered the seminar a success, citing that it was "quite instructive and informative". He got from it "information that I think was very enlightening, which certainly will help me as a hotel manager in looking at various aspects of my operations, such as access to market channels".

He noted that a critical consideration was the session on disaster risk management. That session titled The Management of Natural and Manmade Crises had a panel of experts that included the executive director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management

Agency, Jamaica's Ronald Jackson; assistant US attorney from the Department of Justice, Jared Strauss, who focussed on cybercrime; emergency and crisis management expert, Miguel Rico Diener and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation's communication specialist, Johnson JohnRose.

While commending the panellists, Bloomfield said, "While many of us have been treating with these issues over the decades and have it ingrained, it's always good to have a fresh perspective as we become more aware of and in tune with not only the challenges, but the channels that are best used in mitigation."

Independent consultant, tourism educator and adjunct lecturer at the University of the West Indies, UWI, Western Jamaica Campus, Margaret Lawrence said, "As someone who has been in tourism for so long, I think this has been a very interesting seminar with lots of information, lots to take home, I am really very happy that I came."

For UWI Mona student, Rochelle Gordon, "it was really informative" and fellow student, Kay Williams, agreed, adding, "It was a good seminar; it was informative."

She was particularly interested in the presentation by UNWTO regional director for the Americas, Carlos Vogeler on Enhancing Competitiveness through Travel Facilitation.

"I learnt a lot about the aspects of data being collected by them, how it relates to the Caribbean, and how the ministry here can use that data to better inform their marketing strategy," she said.



Sustainable tourism expert Dr Donald Hawkins (left) engages Caribbean Tourism Organisation senior specialists Winfield Griffith (centre) and Johnson Johnrose in a conversation during the opening of the 2014 staging of the Tourism Outlook Seminar, held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre between November 20 and 21.



Grammy award-winning producer Winston Harriott (left) with tourism experts Robert Singerman (centre) and Carlos Vogeler. They were at a welcome dinner last Wednesday at the Montego Bay Yacht Club to mark the start of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar, which was held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre on November 20 and 21.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association Nicola Madden-Greig holds the attention of Alvaro Valeriani (left), regional vice-president, sales and marketing at Hyatt Hotels Corporation; and Carlos Vogeler, a director at the United Nations World Tourism Organisation. They were attending the opening of the 2014 staging of the Tourism Outlook Seminar, held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre between November 20 and 21.



Carlos Vogeler, a director at the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, addresses attendees at the opening of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar.



Tourism expert, Dr Donald Hawkins, reasons with the audience during a question and answer session at the opening of the 2014 Tourism Outlook Seminar.

Tourism minister hosts industry partners at Tourism Outlook Seminar

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (left) was the consummate host for a special welcome dinner for speakers of the recently convened Tourism Outlook Seminar (TOS) 2014. His guests included Carlos Vogeler (second left), director executive secretary of Member Relations and regional director for the Americas, United Nations World Tourism Organization; and Professor Don Hawkins (right), chairman and principal, Solimar International; and Mrs Hawkins (second right). They represent the slate of eminent academics and tourist industry professionals who addressed attendees at the two-day TOS event. TOS is coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment and the Jamaica Tourist Board, with funding from the Tourism Enhancement Fund.



Creating opportunities to boost our creative industries

Carole Beckford (left), film commissioner/manager, Creative Industries, JAMPRO, engages the audience as she responds to questions during Tourism Outlook Seminar 2014. Beckford was a panelist who presented on the topic, Opportunities for Partnership with the Entertainment and Creative Industries.

A number of participants, including director of tourism, Paul Pennicook (front), seized the opportunity to ask pertinent questions of the presenters. TOS was held at the Montego Bay Convention Centre from November 20-21.



JTB, British Airways showcase Ja to UK's top agents

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB), in partnership with British Airways, treated some of the United Kingdom's (UK) top-selling travel agents to an all-inclusive familiarisation (FAM) trip to Jamaica from September 10-15. The trip highlighted the best of the island's tourism product. It also showcased the new North-South Highway, which takes visitors who land in Kingston to Ocho Rios in around 90 minutes.

The FAM trip allowed the group of seven Jamaica travel specialists to be updated on all the latest developments as the group participated in site inspections at several properties, including Couples Tower Isle, Sandals Grand Riviera and Half Moon, A RockResort.

The new section of the highway has created a shorter journey time for travellers arriving in Kingston on a British Airways flight while simultaneously making it easier for travellers in Montego Bay and Ocho Rios to experience all the arts and culture that the capital has to offer. This expansion of the road network is great news for visitors looking to explore Ocho Rios and experience some of Jamaica's must-visit tourist spots such as Mystic Mountain, Dunn's River Falls and Dolphin Cove, whether they are staying nearby or to the south of the island.

This group of travel agents were the first from the UK to experience the new North-South Highway. Floyd Walcott, from Sackville Travel said, "I have travelled to Jamaica many times before, but this was my first time on the new highway. I was impressed that the new route made our trip from Kingston to Ocho Rios much faster, and the panoramic views from the highway added additional enjoyment to the journey. This route is quicker and more comfortable, but my travel clients who like to stop at the roadside stalls can still enjoy the original route if they choose to."

Since May 2014, the JTB has hosted four FAM trips to the island for the UK and has further trips planned for 2015.

To register on the Jamaica travel specialist online training programme, visit www.jamaicatravelspecialist.co.uk. For more information on Jamaica, visit www.VisitJamaica.com.



Awardees at the recently held Round Hill Hotel & Villas 2014 Long Service Awards. It was a celebration of a collective 555 years of outstanding and impeccable service to the vision, mission and policies of the resort coupled with extremely hard work. It was a modish mixture of housekeepers, front office agents, stewards, tennis pros the kids club co-ordinator, and the fitness instructor, who have proudly earned their awards to augment to the rich history of the hotel. Posing with the awardees are Josef Forstmayr (front row, right), managing director; Omar Robinson (front row, left), general manager; and Nathalie Saunders (back row, right), director, human resources and training.



From left: Tracy Christie-Smith, chief financial officer; Josef Forstmayr, managing director, who was awarded for 25 years of service to the Round Hill Hotel and Villas; Hillary Stewart, director, food & beverage; Nathalie Saunders, director, human resources and training; and Omar Robinson, general manager. The occasion was the Round Hill Hotel Long Service Awards ceremony held recently at the Resort where Josef received his award from Nathalie Saunders for 25 years of committed and transformational leadership service to the development of Round Hill Hotel & Villas. Members of his executive team shared the achievement.



WHYTE

JESSICA WHYTE:

From cool office to fiery kitchen

Karrie Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

SINCE CHILDHOOD, Jessica Whyte has always had a passion for being in the kitchen. So it was only natural that after studying for a degree in international relations at the University of the West Indies, Mona, she headed straight back to her first love.

"As far back as I can remember, I have always loved being in the kitchen, a trait which I can definitely say I inherited from my mother and my grandmother ... reading cookbooks was a must, of course, as also experimenting in the kitchen where I developed a special penchant for baking," Whyte told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Serious about taking her love of cooking to the next level, in 2013, Whyte enrolled at the HEART College of Hospitality Services in Runaway Bay, St Ann, to pursue an associate degree in food preparation. Now on the final leg of her studies, Whyte is currently serving as a food and beverage intern at the Hanover-based Round Hill Hotel, which is where **Hospitality Jamaica** got the opportunity to observe her at her craft.

Living by the mantra, "food is my

paint, the frying pan my brush, and the plate my canvas, and with these I make edible masterpieces," Whyte has for many years carried on her own baking business, which even saw her earning the nickname 'Betty Crocker', after the famous American cook, during her tenure at university. Her products, comprising chocolate chip cookies, oatmeal cookies, mini Oreo cheesecakes and spiced plantain tarts, were favourites of both her lecturers and fellow students.

EAGER TO LEARN

Whyte has earned the admiration of countless persons who have become acquainted with her culinary skills, the latest being Hilary Stewart, Round Hill's director of food and beverage.

"Jessica is very enthusiastic and she's eager to learn. She's doing quite well, we've actually had her on functions where we have flambé stations, so she's learning how to interact with the guests while preparing items ... she's a very good candidate, and if this is what she wants to do, she's going to go very far," said Stewart.

Whyte, who said she was greatly inspired by her mother, Karen Weir,

sees the culinary arts as one of the most sustainable industries, and as such, suitable for a happy and profitable career.

"Food is dynamic, ever evolving, sexy, fluid, and interchangeable. It can represent so many things for so many people, it can be culture, it can be anything! The best part is that people will always need to eat, so it's sustainable. Who could ask for a better career? I'm grateful that God has blessed me with a passion that can be profitable," she said.

The budding chef hopes to achieve the distinction of being named World Master Chef, following in the footsteps of her culinary idols, chefs Gordon Ramsey and Oji Jaja.

"Professionally, I am inspired by chefs Gordon Ramsey and Oji Jaja. Both of these amazing chefs, though different, focus on taking food in its simplest, most natural forms and serving it with no fuss or superfluous additions.

"Round Hill embodies this mentality, sophisticated simplicity, and I consider myself incredibly fortunate to be granted the opportunity to do my work experience at such a world-class hotel," she said.

Holistic living at St Thomas' eco-village

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ON 63 acres at John's Town, St Thomas, there is The Source Farm Foundation and Learning Village, a place where the preservation of the environment and the holistic development of its residents are the essence of life.

"This multicultural, intergenerational, self-sufficient village is committed to natural living, holistic health and spirituality, ecological and social stewardship, educational sharing (learning and teaching)," is how The Source Farm textualises what happens there.

One of its main features is a terraced farm on which only nourishing, organic substances are used.

The property's vegetation is lush

and is the habitat for many species of birds.

There is also a stream and a small waterfall. Coconut trees and lemon grass are in abundance. From various points, cloud-covered mountains and sections of the St Thomas coastline can be seen. And the weather is cool and relaxing.

"The Source Farm provides a healing retreat for residents and guests, and a spiritual sanctuary for them to experience serenity and tranquility," Nicola Shirley-Phillips, one of the partners at Source Farm, told **Hospitality Jamaica** sometime ago.

In this place of great tranquility, the destruction and pollution of the environment is strongly prohibited. Everything is done in consideration of the environment. The intention is that it is "an innovative model community that is dedicated to



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

Volunteer Shireen Noort of Holland wiping sweat from her brow while harvesting fever grass on the Source Farm in John's Town, St Thomas.

TOP: A breathtaking view of a section of the St Thomas coastline from the Source Farm Ecovillage.

respecting and restoring Mother Earth”, Shirley-Phillips said.

Even some of the structures, such as earth-bag houses, are built with the environment in mind. The earth-bag houses are made of soil-filled bags, which are encased by mesh wire and a layer of concrete. Some rooms are lit up in the days by ceiling-embedded light tubes which reflect the sun’s rays.

There are also beams made of coconut trunks and bamboo, and other wood fixtures. All of this fits into the whole notion of environmental preservation, and the building of eco-friendly, cost-effective structures. Rainwater is stored and purified for domestic use, while electricity is partially generated by wind turbines.

While there are facilities to accommodate visitors and guests, the Farm is essentially a residential community in which lots can be leased for 99 years.

“At the core of the Source Farm Foundation and eco-village ... is family, and The Source Farm is currently seeking some new members to join our family. We are seeking responsible adults who share the vision of stewarding the Earth, being ‘solutionaries’, assisting to guide our next generation to a full understanding of who they are ... ,” The Source Farm said.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

These new members ought to know that The Source Farm is an intentional community, which means it’s about living in harmony with the members of the community and the environment. Everything is done with a purpose and after consultation with community members. Decisions concerning the treatment of the environment, the disposal of solid and human waste, and other matters that impact the environment are based on consensus. There is a protocol for communicating with one another, and how meetings are conducted. Decisions are made at these meetings.

There are also conflict resolution protocols Shirley-Phillips said. “We have created processes by which we can live through in good times and bad times. We will foster personal growth and development and empower our community to be ambassadors of natural and progressive living.”

“The Source Farm Foundation and eco-village learning community has, since its inception in 2005, evolved into a dynamic, creative and innovative model community that is pursuing sustainable living. This outcome is grounded in organic and natural farming, community development initiatives and a variety of approaches directed at improving personal, intra and inter-personal and community relationships,” the Source Farm said.

Some 12 adults and children live on The Source Farm.



PHOTO BY PAUL WILLIAMS

A ‘bubble’ house under construction at the Source Farm Ecovillage.

BELOW: An eco-friendly house at the Source Farm Ecovillage at John’s Town, St Thomas.



“ The Source Farm Foundation and eco-village learning community has, since its inception in 2005, evolved into a dynamic, creative and innovative model community that is pursuing sustainable living. ”



The Source Farm eco-village in John’s Town, St Thomas, is an intentional community. It’s about living in harmony with the members of the community and the environment. Everything is done with a purpose and after consultation with community members.

LEFT:The school at Source Farm Ecovillage in John’s Town, St Thomas.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

What a year it has been!

Paul H. Williams
Gleaner Writer

OF ALL the years I've been travelling around the island, I think this one has been the most exciting yet challenging, so far. Exciting because I finally got the opportunity to go to places I had always dreamt of visiting, and I was challenged by some rugged terrains. Most of it unfolded in the parish of Portland.

There were poignant as well as exhilarating moments, ones that I will never forget, so today, I am reflecting on the abandoned wild hog hunt; my crossing the sea on foot from Folly Ruins to Monkey

After 10 hours of walking, I refused to go any further, and slept at a riverside in despair, utter misery, with my big toes burning.

Island; hiking to Sambo Hill; canoeing on the Blue Lagoon and around Princess Nina Island; the brutal trek to Old Nanny Town; the tour of Stewart Town, Trelawny; and the ancestral wail at Sligoville, St Catherine.

The year started out excitingly with the prospect of catching wild hogs in the hills of Bangor Ridge, Portland. My colleagues and I



PHOTO BY PAUL WILLIAMS

The road to Old Nanny Town in the Blue and John Crow Mountains is rugged and brutal to the uninitiated trekker.



This man, called 'Cricket', guided Hospitality Jamaica writer Paul H. Williams one dark Friday night in June down the rugged terrains of Sambo Hill, Portland.



One of the many old buildings in Stewart Town, Trelawny.



This is the type of landscape Hospitality Jamaica writer Paul H. Williams and some colleagues who went to hunt wild hogs in January were privileged to view. After descending a dangerous ridge for two hours, they turned back.



Returning from Monkey Island, off the Port Antonio coast, on foot earlier this year.

The Blue Lagoon in Portland is one of the most mesmerizing spots in all Jamaica.



On his way to see this old slave house in Sligoville, St Catherine, earlier this year, Hospitality Jamaica's Paul H. Williams had a very strange moment under a mahoe tree.

We waited until five when it was still pitch black, but the young hunters with whom we were going were eager, and like sure-footed mountain goats, led us down narrow, rugged ledges in the dark. When daylight revealed what I was walking atop, I was scared out of my wits.

But the most psychologically daring thing I have accomplished in my entire life was crossing the waist-high sea from Folly Ruins to Monkey Island ...

arrived at the point of departure at 4 a.m. when it was pitch black. We waited until five when it was still pitch black, but the young hunters with whom we were going were eager, and like sure-footed mountain goats, led us down narrow, rugged ledges in the dark. When daylight revealed what I was walking atop, I was scared out of my wits.

After all the trepidation, when we reached a dry riverbed in a very narrow valley. Our excitement was shattered as we were told we had a hillside to climb up and another to descend. That was it! We chose not to go farther. The real hunters continued on their quest. Then the rains came, making our return on

the ledges more dangerous. I clawed, scrambled and rolled back to the top, where we waited for hours for the hunters to return. When they did, they actually had a hog, portions of which I devoured eventually for all the trouble it caused me. Never again.

Never again also was what I said after returning from Sambo Hill near Charles Town in Portland. A film crew and I had gone there to get footage. The paths for the most parts were rocky and rough. It was a steep climb through the disgusting scent of rotting mangoes. At the top, the views were to die for; the Portland northern coast to the left, and the valley with

interlocking spurs and a meandering river to the right.

But on the way back, night caught me, and had it not been for a man called 'Cricket', I would perhaps have had a different story to tell. Cricket, who lives on the hill, joined the crew when he heard us calling some people who took a work path. When I saw him, I felt like I had known him for years, even embracing him. It turned out he was the one to guide me through the dense, dark night when everyone else had long gone.

Never on another rugged trip I would venture, I had told Cricket.

Yet, only a week after, I was to undertake the most brutal trek in my life. It was to Old Nanny Town, in the Blue and John Crow Mountains. Nothing seriously prepared me for this super-mountainous landscape on which I huffed, puffed, cussed, collapsed, hyperventilated, swore, slid on my backside down stony paths, scaled down a rope, walked on ledges, trembled on precipices, and struggled up steep inclines.

SLEPT AT A RIVERSIDE

After 10 hours of walking, I refused to go any further and slept at a riverside in despair, utter misery with my big toes burning. Yet, the trek and those idyllic days at base camp near a refreshing river are one of the things I will always treasure. The big toenails, which fell out a week after the perilous quest, I will keep for posterity.

Speaking of posterity, I will also tell my grandchildren of how pleasantly surprised I was, when I came upon Stewart Town in Trelawny. I was on my way to Alps,

another Trelawny district, when I stumbled upon this place that looks like it was in a time warp. It has more old buildings than modern ones: ancient graves and ruins and historical points of reference. That is a place I must revisit.

I am not sure I will revisit the old slave house in Sligoville, St Catherine. In this the first free village in Jamaica, I had a strange experience on my way to visit the house. Being led by a resident, I couldn't pass a certain tree. As I approached it, a wail welled up in my gut. As much as I tried to keep the scream in, I couldn't, and it was when I released it under the tree, I was able to move on. What was that? Goose pimples!

But the most psychologically daring thing I have accomplished in my entire life was crossing the waist-high sea from Folly Ruins to Monkey Island, once owned by the family that built the Folly mansion. Even now I believe I am dreaming. For a non-swimmer who has a morbid fear of deep seas, it was insane.

The SJF supports National Parent Awards

ON WEDNESDAY, November 19, The Spanish-Jamaican Foundation (SJF) again joined forces with the Ministry of Education to recognise parents of children from early childhood through to the secondary levels, who, through their actions, have clearly demonstrated their full commitment to the holistic development of their children.

Each year, 24 parents who have shown outstanding parenting skills are selected from the Ministry of Education regions across the island. These parents, along with their families, are hosted at a luncheon by one of the SJF member hotels. The ceremony has become a highlight of National Parent Month activities.

COMPLIMENTARY HOTEL PASSES

The awardees are not only feted, but they also receive passes for complimentary visits to four world-class Spanish Hotels and SJF member companies: Gran Bahia Principe Clubs and Resorts, Iberostar Hotels and Resorts, RIU Hotels and Resorts, and Grand Palladium Resort and Spa, hosts for this year's ceremony.



Group awardees with Ambassador Aníbal Jiménez Abascal and Spanish-Jamaican Foundation general manager, Dr Rebecca Tortello.

SJF general manager Dr Rebecca Tortello explained that, "At the SJF, we believe that positive parenting should be commended whenever possible. As a result, we are pleased to once again show support and recognition for these parents who put their children first and work

to create strong links between home and school."

SJF president, Ambassador Aníbal Jiménez in one of his first official duties representing the foundation, acknowledged in congratulating the parent awardees that "thoughtful and responsible parenting is extremely difficult and

should be commended whenever possible. This is why the foundation is happy to host this event every year, and we again congratulate the Ministry of Education on working to elevate recognition of parenting as an important factor in national development".

The SJF was established in 2006 to foster partnerships between Spain and Jamaica through educational, cultural, environmental and community development initiatives. To learn more about the SJF, please visit www.spanishjamaicanfoundation.org.

Anse Chastanet named Best Value in Caribbean Luxury

ST LUCIA'S storied Anse Chastanet resort has been recognised as the best-value experience in the Caribbean for the New Year.

Recognition of St Lucia's iconic resort is embedded in the 2015 Conde Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence, created to acknowledge, reward and celebrate outstanding hotels in the high-end sector.

"We know we have something really special for discerning travellers, and we are pleased that both travellers and sellers of travel have given us the thumbs up," said Karolin Troubetzkoy, executive director of Anse Chastanet.

She also reported that sister resort, Jade Mountain, received top honors in the Best for Romance category.

The annual Conde Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence are a trusted mark of quality, recognised by luxury consumers and travel professionals alike.

The winners and finalists were determined by the combined results of online voting, guest feedback and local expert reports.

According to its website, "The colourful Anse Chastanet on St Lucia oozes romance throughout its airy open-plan spaces. Perched at different heights on the hillside



The colourful Anse Chastanet in St Lucia.

down to beach level, Anse Chastanet is the creation of architect owner, *bon viveur* and eco-warrior Nick Troubetzkoy who came to St Lucia in the 1970s and never looked back."

The Conde Nast Johansens website continues, "Vibrant interiors are dressed with jolly Matisse-inspired paintings and Nick's beautiful designs pay homage to the island's curvaceous volcanic landscape such as the

blossom festooned balconies that lean into the stunning scenery."

Also recommended were the resort's PADI five-star scuba centre, miles of hiking and mountain biking trails to explore within the 18th Century plantation which is part of the resort's 600-acre estate. Invigorating couples massages, yoga, bird-watching, non-motorised water sports, walking, hiking and tennis are all available at Anse Chastanet, while guests benefit from a variety of restaurants offering Caribbean fine dining, vegetarian, East Indian-Lucian fusion and a relaxed beachside grill. The resort also has a private helipad.

From the publishers of **Vogue**, **GQ**, **Traveller** and **Glamour**, Conde Nast Johansens is a leading reference guide for independent travellers. Whether searching for a luxury hotel, spa, country house, boutique retreat, celebratory venue or somewhere by the beach, Conde Nast Johansens provides inspiration and assistance in finding the perfect place for every occasion.

For bookings at Anse Chastanet, call 1-800-223-1108, email ansechastanet@ansechastanet.com, or visit www.ansechastanet.com.