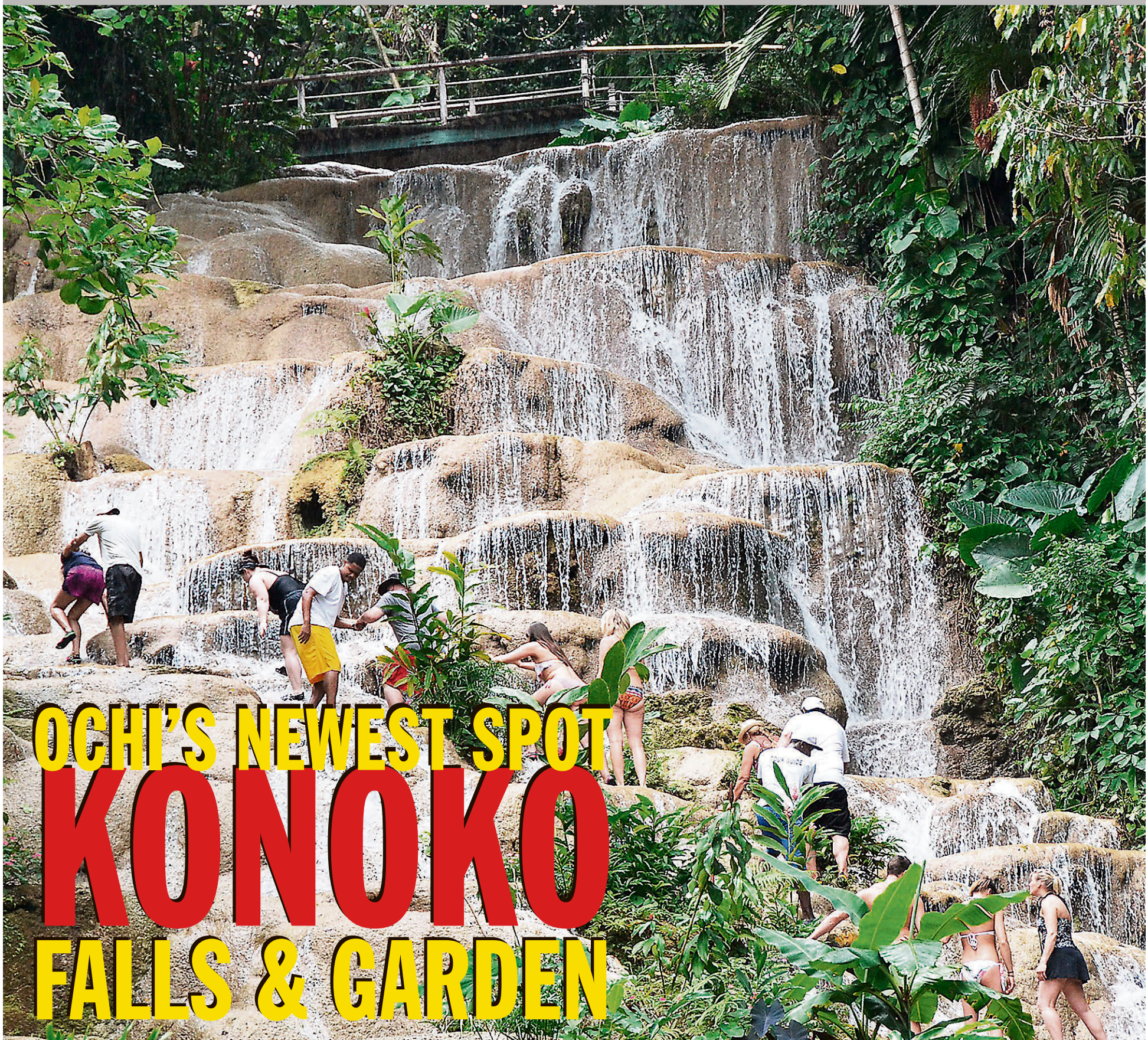


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Hospitality Jamaica

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2015



OCHI'S NEWEST SPOT
KONOKO
FALLS & GARDEN

'Reggae to Party' with Protoje • Fortified Jamaica • Nevis spreads her wings

Konoko Falls & Gardens

Ocho Rios' newest attraction



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Cruise ship visitors climbing the falls.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

BELIEVED TO be a former Taino settlement, Ocho Rios' newest attraction, the Konoko Falls and Gardens, is poised to change the resort town's historic landscape.

The 600-foot cascading waterfalls and gardens located on the property, formerly known as Coyaba Gardens and Museum, reopened officially on Wednesday, April 1 after undergoing significant refurbishing.

"The refurbishing exercise which commenced last August has resulted in the development of additional amenities as well as the re-creation of our tour outlines," said the attraction's general manager, Laura Heron.

Konoko is an Arawak word meaning 'rainforest' or 'wooded area'.

"It has been determined that the indigenous peoples of Jamaica were the Tainos, whose native tongue is said to belong to the Arawakan language family tree," explained Heron, adding that Taino artefacts that have been found on the property leading her to believe that it was once a settlement.

According to her, the current tour has been developed with a host of information on the influence of the Tainos on Jamaica's present day culture.

"This is certainly accentuated in the portion of the tour centred around the Konoko Bar & Grill that features an updated jerk pit offering demonstrations on the method of the jerk cuisine, which has been influenced by the Tainos method of preparing meats and seafood as well as the use of specific seasonings such as pimento, which is an endemic plant," said Heron.

The tour, which can last up to two hours, is called the Rainforest Trek and includes a climb up the Konoko Falls, which cascades down a series of natural limestone rocks which can be climbed, and has three swimming pools along the climb. This climb takes approximately 30 minutes.

After climbing the falls, visitors have the option of visiting

the Yssasi Lookout Point, which offers a spectacular view of the town of Ocho Rios and the former cruise ship capital Bay area. A walk through the Aviary Gardens is next. This offers a selection of exotic birds, and there is also a bird feeding station where you can enter the enclosure and hand-feed the birds.

The tour of the botanical gardens is guided by one of Konoko's knowledgeable guides, whose role it is to introduce the wide variety of tropical flora, while educating guests about the wide range of properties of the trees and flowers (medicinal, culinary, etc.).

"We are currently documenting the large variety of plant species found on the property and will continuously expand on the signage of the varieties, indicating their origin and genus," states Heron, beaming with pride as she walked the 12-acre property.

PLANT VARIETY

Opened to the public 365 days between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., supervisor André Lopez described the overall experience as a tropical rainforest.

"The gardens boast hundreds of various plants, including the torch ginger, the honeycomb ginger, lobster claw heliconias, pimento, bird of paradise," said Lopez, naming just a few, while explaining the garlic rose vine that can be found on the property can be used a substitute for garlic.

"We have the soursop which is an antioxidant, the leaves used to make tea; we have the cocoa plant, and most of the tourists are not accustomed to seeing the bean," he stated.

One of the most exciting aspects of this rainforest trek is the jerk, which allows visitors an insight into the method of jerking.

"They are able to see the process, which is explained to



The perfect place to take a selfie.



Family members enjoy themselves at Konoko.



The lush vegetation at Konoko Falls.



The set-up for a wedding at the Konoko Falls.



A painting depicting a Taino woman and baby.



One of three aviaries at Konoko.



Bird-feeding is only one of several unique offerings at Konoko.

them. Then they are given an opportunity to taste or purchase if they want to,” stated Lopez.

Operated by a group that is bent on preserving the environment, although Konoko has been doing extensive marketing through various media to the cruise and hotel markets, Heron says they are making significant progress in attaining their target daily capacity.

“We also want to increase our local business, and to this end, we offer very attractive discounted rates to Jamaican residents and special-interest groups, such as churches, educational institutions and charitable organisations,” she said.

The attraction’s operators have put in place their daily top capacity that they want to achieve.

“Already we have achieved 50 per cent of that. We are breaking ground quickly”, said Heron, adding that they do not want to overcrowd the property, spoiling the experience for their guests.

“We have set certain numbers. We are huge on protecting the environment,” Heron stated.

HOSTING EVENTS

In addition to the variety of options, the property is ideally suited for events such as weddings, birthday parties, corporate fun days and anniversaries.

All bookings for events are done by reservation only and attract an event fee. There is also a beautiful one-bedroom cottage located in the gardens, which is ideally suited for the bride and her bridal party to relax and prepare for the wedding, but can also be an ideal honeymoon suite.

Already a hit with TripAdvisor contributors, **Hospitality Jamaica**



One of the murals depicting the Taino Indians.



A cottage at Konoko that can be used by bridal parties.

went to the popular site last weekend and these are just some of the comments by guests who have tasted the sweetness called Konoko.

The attraction has been listed on TripAdvisor since September 2014.

“I visited Konoko Falls as part of a shore excursion. Our tour guide, David has great knowledge of the gardens and plants within. He was very patient with our group, answered all our questions and explained very well the different species of flowers – and even showed us some cool plant tricks (I didn’t know any existed prior). Our tour only included the top part of the falls, but there was a great

overview of Ocho Rios,” said one of many testimonials.

“This falls was fun to climb. It wasn’t crowded or touristy. A lovely setting. The garden at the top is lovely with giant flowers! There is a cool little museum with some history of Jamaica. A nice couple of hours,” said another.

Yet another: “The falls are easy to climb. They let you wear sneakers or sturdy sandals. Also, it is not crowded and busy. The climbs are small and personal. The gardens here are gorgeous. The tour was very informative. The birds are fun, especially the budgies who found my sandals irresistible! The jerk chicken was awesome!”

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Caribbean tourism must reflect changing demands

AFTER YEARS of idling in the doldrums, visitor arrivals to some parts of the region are increasing rapidly, travellers are spending more, and the yield for hoteliers is increasing. Moreover, as demand soars in Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and some smaller Caribbean destinations like Aruba, it is getting much harder for visitors to find a quality hotel room at short notice.

Cuba apart, which is a special case following the virtual freeing of US travel restrictions late last year, this rapid increase in demand for a Caribbean vacation largely reflects the fact that disposable income in the main feeder markets in North America and parts of Europe is increasing as economic recovery occurs and travellers begin to feel more financially secure. It is also the case that some Caribbean destinations such as Jamaica have again become hot in the eyes of those who establish on social media and in print the image of an aspirational destination.

But for the most successful Caribbean markets, there are also other factors at work.

The recent surge in visitor demand and indications that even the lower-cost coming summer season is building well reflect better marketing, product improvements, and new airlift that has resulted in improved access, for instance, from the countries of Latin America and from Scandinavia. It also in part, reflects the ability of lower-cost air carriers to pass on to the growing numbers of visitors using their services, the savings they are making as the price of aviation fuel falls.

What this means is that the industry in many Caribbean tourism destinations is not only making a significant contribution to national economic recovery, but again demonstrating its often-ignored significance to the wider Caribbean economy.

At its most basic, this is good news, but it also raises interesting questions as to where

the region's product is headed now that sustainable growth again seems possible.

For some, renewed demand is simply about a return to business as usual, the end to heavy discounting of room rates, and the Caribbean again taking its 'rightful place' as the world's paramount warm-water destination.

COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE

However, for those who are more thoughtful, it is about recognising that during the years of stagnation, the global marketplace for tourism has changed, becoming intensely competitive, and that the future will require adapting the product and the tourism offering so that present success is sustainable.

For those willing to look over the horizon, the issue now is about reorienting and developing the Caribbean tourism offering to reflect changing international demand for the authentic, quality service and cuisine; and even when the price is high, value for

money. It reflects, too, an understanding that a significant part of the higher spending end of the market is looking for much more than just a luxury hotel and a beach in the tropics.

This will mean a sea change in the way that some in the industry and government in the region think. It is about more than the normal default position of rebranding. It requires a new approach involving both the industry and government reconceptualising tourism, hotels and the tourism product in ways that make it globally competitive and ensures that a visitor feels that the region and a destination is special and wants to return.

This will not be easy as it requires properties, restaurants, attractions, and if they are able to become better corporate citizens, the internationally branded chain hotels, to think in a vernacular way and come together to renew and develop the product in a manner that promotes the uniqueness of the Caribbean nations in which they are located.



JESSOP

McNeill challenges Negril stakeholders to embrace new development projects

AS PLANS for the transformation of the resort town of Negril take shape, Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill has challenged stakeholders to actively participate and support the town's transformation.

Outlining an architectural concept of plans for the transformation at a meeting with Negril stakeholders at the Grand Lido last week, McNeill listed a number of new projects for the community. These include a new 150-shop two-storey craft centre; a facility for the monthly Tourism Linkages Hub Farmers' Market; and the upgrading of the Norman Manley Beach Park. A statue of National Hero Norman Washington Manley is to be placed in the courtyard of the new craft centre. Additionally, the community centre will be refurbished and will house offices for the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) and the Green Island-Negril Planning Authority, as well as a proper meeting room.

The town centre is also earmarked to get a facelift, and concurrently, squatters in the vicinity of the urban centre are to be relocated to a property which has been acquired adjacent to Sheffield All-Age School.

Some other projects which are already under way include the repaving of the road by Smithfield, con-

struction of a dual cycling and walking pathway along the Norman Manley Boulevard, drainage control and improvements to the Negril Police Station.

McNeill fielded a range of questions on the proposed upgrading project, including timelines and costs. He advised that funding was already in place for some of the projects, but there were processes, such as getting approval from the relevant government agencies, which had to be dealt with before work would start.

INCORPORATING RECOMMENDATIONS

A technical team from the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) as well as a committee spearheaded by TPDCo will be going over the plans with representatives from the stakeholders' group with a view to incorporating various recommendations.

In addition to the UDC, the stakeholders' meeting was attended by executive director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Clyde Harrison; executive director of TPDCo, Dennis Hickey, and chairman of the Negril Resort Board, Cliff Reynolds.

Prior to meeting with Negril stakeholders, McNeill met with Negril's craft traders and received their nod of approval for the new craft facility, with recommendations for adjustments in the layout of the shops.



CONTRIBUTED

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (standing) challenges stakeholders to actively participate and support Negril's transformation. McNeill met with stakeholders at the Grand Lido last week to outline development plans for the town. Seated (from left, foreground) are executive director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Clyde Harrison, and Minister of State in the Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change and Member of Parliament for Western Hanover Ian Hayles.

Jewel resorts seals booking deal with Hilton Worldwide Curio brand

MINISTER OF Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill has welcomed Curio – A Collection by Hilton to the growing list of top brands that have taken a keen interest in Jamaica as the top tourist destination in the Caribbean.

Sagicor's Jewel Paradise Cove Beach Resort & Spa Runaway Bay, and Jewel Dunn's River Beach Resort & Spa Ocho Rios have become two of the latest Curio properties – and the first in the Caribbean, to join the newest of Hilton's world-class global brand. Signing of the agreement was announced Tuesday (March 31) at a joint press conference by McNeill, Sagicor president and CEO Richard Byles and global head of Curio – A Collection by Hilton, Dianna Vaughan, at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

The deal also received the endorsement of senior vice-president for the Caribbean of Ambridge Hospitality, Rich Cortesse. Ambridge is the management company for the Jewels resorts.

The Jewel brand was started by Sagicor four years ago with one property. With subsequent acquisitions, there are now four properties with a fifth under construction in Kingston's golden triangle.

INVESTING IN JAMAICA

Congratulating the Sagicor team, McNeill said, "Over the last four years, what Sagicor has done is phenomenal. Sagicor Group has not just talked the talk, they have walked the walk; they have put their money where their mouth is; they have invested in Jamaica and in tourism. That investment has paid off for them and they have reinvested."

McNeill added, "These are the things that are going to bring growth to the tourism sector and growth to the economy."

Byles disclosed that since launching out with Jewel Dunn's River four years ago, Sagicor has invested more than US\$140 million in three more properties, growing the brand's room count to 1,300.

"Alongside that growth has come good occupancies, improving rates, and an excellent track record of customer service," he added.

He said the listing of Sagicor X Fund on the stock exchange a few months ago to give Jamaicans the opportunity to invest in the tourism business "has been a big success for us."

According to Byles, "It says a lot for Jamaica and for tourism that the Hilton wants to stay in this country and indeed wants to deepen its relationship with the country through its Curio brand. It must mean that we are doing something good with the country and with tourism in particular. We, too, are very bullish on Jamaica and on tourism, and we will continue to invest."



CONTRIBUTED

Seated from left: Acting governor, Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), Anya Williams; Walter Stipa, president and CEO of Desarrollos Hotel Group; Dr Rufus Ewing, premier, TCI. Back row from left: Walter Gardiner Jr, director and broker, Regency Christies International & Real Estate; Khalila Astwood, TCIG attorney; Guillermo Martis, development consultant for Desarrollos Group; Rochelle Thompson, investment executive, TCIG Investment Unit; and Washington Misick, minister of finance and investment.

TCI gov't signs \$224m Ritz-Carlton agreement

THE TURKS and Caicos Islands (TCI) government has signed a development agreement with the Desarrollos Hotel Group to build a \$224 million Ritz-Carlton hotel, resort, casino and spa in the Grace Bay area of Providenciales on April 2. The proposed development will consist of 124 luxury hotel guest rooms, penthouses, resort residences and associated facilities. The new resort will be managed by the Ritz-Carlton Hotels Company LLC, an international luxury hotel brand operating 84 hotels and resorts in 26 countries.

"This European Plan-style hotel development provides a welcome diversification to the TCI tourism sector as it is more of a traditional hotel, rather than the previously prevalent condominium model in the TCI," said TCI premier, Dr Rufus Ewing.

"At the same time, it further develops the luxury tourism offering in this destination with the addition of such an important luxury brand in Ritz-Carlton."

"This is a welcome boost for the people and businesses of the TCI, especially in

“ This European Plan-style hotel development provides a welcome diversification to the TCI tourism sector as it is more of a traditional hotel, rather than the previously prevalent condominium model in the TCI. ”

our construction sector," added minister of finance, Washington Misick.

"This announcement clearly consolidates our position as one of the fastest growing and strongest economies in the Caribbean. The financial stability of the TCI clearly provides the right environment for international investors to come

here and grow their businesses."

The Desarrollos Hotel Group has already developed and owns four Marriott Hotels, of which one is the Ritz-Carlton Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa. It is anticipated that construction work will begin in November 2015 and last for approximately three years.

Sandals Montego Bay's newest eatery dishes decadent delights



Chef Alicia Baker-Wray

IT'S HARD to believe that there was a time many moons ago when the decadent delights of sugar, sweet desserts and their many manifestations were reserved for the wealthy aristocrats of the time. Today, Sandals Resorts – the home of Discovery Dining – takes *délices infinies* to unrelenting new heights with its French Patisserie – Café de Paris.

Café de Paris is nothing if not an ode to the most delightful

elements of French gastronomy steeped in the finest blend of local flavours and a side order of world-famous Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee.

Right now, guests vacationing at Sandals Montego Bay can partake in this fine tradition with the resort's recent unveiling of its very own Café de Paris.

Boasting the same delectable offerings guests have come to expect from Sandals' famous French patisseries, Sandals Montego Bay's Café de Paris adds to the resort's diverse culinary

options through Discovery Dining and is set to continue a tradition of mouth-watering delights.

Centrally located on the resort, Café de Paris features a cosy atmosphere befitting of the flagship resort's laid-back mood and personality. This quaint little café invites guests in from 6 a.m. each day for light conversation, great company and a plethora of sweet treats from made-to-order crêpes, scones, macarons, and much more created by Sandals Montego Bay pastry chef, Alicia Baker-Wray and her dedicated team.



An assortment of cupcakes from Cafe de Paris.

Health-care tourism on the rise in the Caribbean

HEALTH-CARE TOURISM is listed as an opportunity for the Caribbean region according to an article outlining '13 opportunities for the New Caribbean'.

In Caribbean Journal, an online news source, Curaçao-based development consultants Miguel Goede and Runy Calmera cite opportunities ranging from the film industry, higher education to ecotourism and sports, and note the special advantages of medical tourism.

"Health-care tourism based on niche markets is an opportunity, as the Cayman Islands is currently doing with Health City Cayman Islands," the consultants reported, adding

that "new hospitals could be built with two audiences in mind: locals and health tourists – meaning a better quality of care at home and additional revenue".

Shomari Scott, Health City's marketing director, thanked the writers for spotlighting Health City, as well as other sustainable development opportunities for the region, such as green energy and the blue economy, which among other things promotes generating energy from the ocean.

"These are two areas that we have fully embraced at Health City," said Scott, who asserted Health City Cayman Islands was

built with sustainability and safety in mind. The tertiary-care hospital, for example, was constructed to be highly energy-efficient and include hurricane protection standards.

INCINERATION OPTION

Scott added Health City is working with the Cayman Islands government to allow the installation of an incineration facility for medical waste.

"Given that there is only one incinerator on the island, this will not only provide a second incineration option, but it will also

reduce transport of potentially harmful waste."

The Health City executive also reported that saltwater air conditioning, "an extremely efficient, cutting edge, zero emission technology, will be introduced at Health City and will reduce our power demand by approximately 50 per cent".

Last December, Global News Matters, which produces the fortnightly **Market Dynamics Caribbean** newsletter, listed Health City Cayman Islands as one of the top five Caribbean investment opportunities to watch in 2015.

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Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE SPANIARDS, under Diego Columbus, settled in Jamaica in 1510 and for more than 145 years the Spaniards ruled the land. But on May 10, 1655, Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables entered the island to capture it to appease Oliver Cromwell of Britain after they failed to capture Santo Domingo, the capital of Hispaniola.

Soon after, the British began to set up forts to defend the island from possible invasions. Over time, several forts were built along the coasts of the island to defend the country. Eventually, 20 forts dotted Jamaica's coastline. They were essentially thick-walled structures protected by huge cannons. Many were built on land way above sea level, while some were built on or near the sea.

While the money for building the forts was provided by the Government, for the most part, the actual construction was done by mainly enslaved Africans, using local stones and bricks and those imported from England. Many have since fallen into disrepair, some have no trace, while others are protected and well kept. No two forts were alike; they all have their history and little anecdotes attached to them.

Historic Port Royal had many functional forts over the years: Fort Charles, Fort Carlisle, Fort Morgan, Fort Rupert, Fort Rocky, and Fort Walker. Fort Charles was originally called Fort Cromwell, and was the first to be built on Port Royal. It is now a well-kept showpiece and accepts tours and visits.

PROTECTION FROM GERMANS

The last fort to be built in Port Royal before the great earthquake of 1692 was Fort Walker, while Fort Rocky was built to protect the island from possible German invasions during World War II. It now lies in ruins.

Across from Port Royal, Fort Augusta, named after Augusta, mother of King George III, is situated between Fort Henderson and Passage Fort in St Catherine. It was built on dumped-up swampland, which caused many workers to die of fever and insect bites. There were more deaths, 300 in 1763, when 3,000 barrels of gunpowder were struck by lightning. The structure of the fort is in good condition, and it houses Jamaica's only all-female prison.

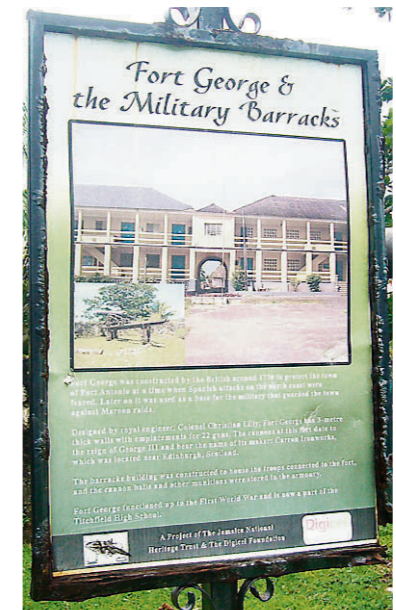
The only fort that didn't get an official name is the one at Savanna-la-Mar, situated at the end of Great George Street. This unfinished structure was funded by landowners in the parish in the mid-18th century. It was partially built in the sea. And still, out west, Montego Bay Fort was regarded



This cannon at Fort Morant, St Thomas was built in 1801, while the port itself was erected about 1758.



One of the cannons at Fort Montego, St James, which was considered to be large, but inefficient.



The storyboard at Fort George on Titchfield Hill, Portland.



Ocho Rios Fort was built in the late 1600s. It was repaired sometime ago by Reynolds Jamaica bauxite company.

FORTIFIED JAMAICA



as one of Jamaica's largest, but some historians believe it was not located strategically. Some of the cannons are still there, as well as a craft market.

Two high schools are located on properties that were former forts. Rusea's High School in Lucea, Hanover, is partially located on Fort Charlotte, named in honour of King George III's consort, Charlotte. In Port Antonio, on Titchfield Hill, Fort George is the home of Titch-

field High School. It was built by a Christian Lilly around 1629. One of the highest forts is Fort Haldane, near Port Maria, St Mary. During the Seven-Year War, from 1756 to 1763, European nations were at odds with



The old armoury at Fort Haldane, near Port Maria, St Mary.

themselves over many issues. There were numerous battles and much antagonism. Among them was the fight among Britain, France and Spain over trade and colonies. Jamaica, then, was seemingly in danger of being attacked by Spain.

To protect the Port Maria harbour, a fort was erected in 1759 on a piece of headland, rising about 1,000 feet above sea level, and from which there is a panoramic view of the bay, the town and the hills beyond. It was named after the then governor of Jamaica, General George Haldane. The place also served as a jail for unruly enslaved people and members of the working class.

Governor Haldane, who was a decorated veteran fighter, actually had expertise in artillery and ballistics and helped to design the fort, whose cannons were positioned facing the sea. He also commissioned his friend, the well-known English scientist, Benjamin Robins, to help with the positioning of the cannons. Fort Haldane is now a Jamaica National Heritage Trust protected site.

Some of the forts that did not survive are Fort William and Fort Lindsay, both near Old Pera in St Thomas. Fort Littleton at Oracabessa in St Mary was built in 1752 by John Allen. The property was eventually subdivided and occupied. At Harbour View, St Andrew, the Martello Tower is the only remnant of Fort Nugent, which was named after Governor George Nugent.

These forts are excellent places to learn about our history and are important for the heritage tourism landscape, but in terms of the country's defence, they are useless as a kitchen knife in a nuclear war.



A section of Fort George, located at Titchfield Hill, Portland.



Port Royal has five forts, of which Fort Charles (above) is the largest. It is open for visits and tours.

JAMAICA

TOURIST BOARD

JTB gets 'Reggae to Party' with Protoje

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) was joined by leading travel agents and media in the United Kingdom (UK), as they prepared to get 'Reggae to Party' with reggae star, Protoje on Friday, March 27. Protoje and his band, The Indignation, arrived in the UK as part of their Europe-wide Ancient Future tour to perform to a sell-out crowd at Electric Brixton in London.

The JTB gained exclusive access to the musician ahead of his show, offering top performing Jamaica travel agents and UK travel media and bloggers an exclusive meet and

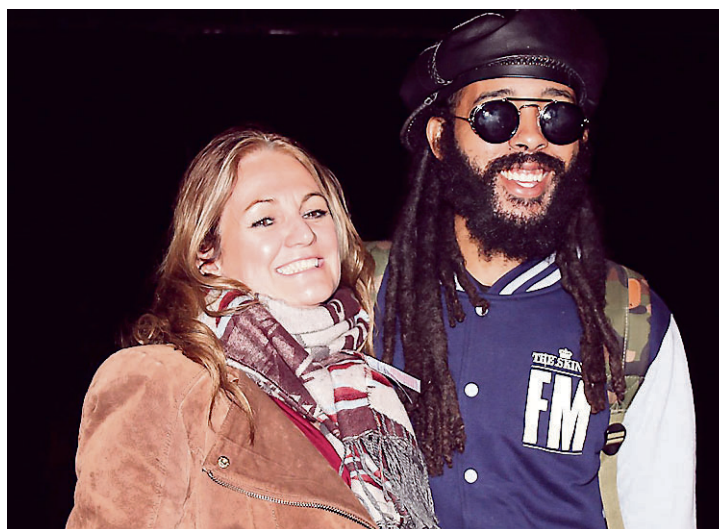
greet with the rising reggae star.

Elizabeth Fox, regional director UK/Northern Europe for the JTB, said: "It is fantastic to see young Jamaican talent such as Protoje gain worldwide recognition for their music. Protoje is a fantastic ambassador for Jamaica's iconic reggae music, and the Jamaica Tourist Board is proud and excited to watch his growth in terms of global airplay and achievements. It was our pleasure to host our top performing Jamaica travel agents and the media, allowing them to sample a little slice of music from Jamaica, the Home of All Right here in London."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From left: Laverne Walker, director at Sackville Travel; Protoje; Elizabeth Fox, regional director, UK/Northern Europe for the Jamaica Tourist Board; and Charlotte Henry, supervisor at Sackville Travel, pose for a photograph ahead of Protoje's concert at The Electric, Brixton, on March 27.



Elizabeth Fox, regional director, UK/Northern Europe for the Jamaica Tourist Board, with Protoje at The Electric, Brixton, London, on March 27.

JTB celebrates its 60th anniversary

APRIL 1, 2015 was a significant milestone for Jamaica's tourist industry. On that day in 1955, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) was established, and the national agency tasked with marketing and promoting destination Jamaica. To commemorate the occasion, the JTB hosted a media reception at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel.

The attendees comprised past directors and chairs of tourism, former ministers of tourism and many others who have helped to shape the success of the industry.

The period April to December 2015 will be used as the time for celebratory activities. These include a church service, staff participation in a volunteer project; awards ceremony for entities and individuals who have helped to build Jamaica's tourism product, an islandwide exhibition carried by the Jamaica Library Service, an academic seminar, and long service awards for JTB staff.



CONTRIBUTED

Past directors of tourism (from right) Paul Pennicook (2003-2006; 2014-present); John Lynch (2008-2014); Basil Smith (2006-2008); Fay Pickersgill (1994-2003); Robert Stephens (1990-1992); and Carrole Guntley (1984-1990).

SANDALS WHITEHOUSE HONOURS TEAM MEMBERS



Looking beautiful in blue, Sandals Whitehouse Yannique Humes poses with her award for Most Improved Team Member of the Year following the resort's Annual Prestige Awards ceremony.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Sandals Whitehouse during its Annual Prestige and 10-year anniversary celebrations also recognised team members who have been with the company since inception. Here, a few of the stalwarts share in a photo op with General Manager Courtney Miller (left).



Nicholas McDonald from Sandals Whitehouse's Engineering Department is pictured after winning the Supervisor of the Year Award.



Jeffrey Burke (left), director of sales at Sandals Whitehouse, receives his Manager of the Year Award from Sandals Whitehouse's general manager, Courtney Miller, during the resort's recently held Annual Prestige Awards.



Director of Guest Services Heidi-Ann Ricketts (right) presents the Most Guest-Nominated Award to Sandals Whitehouse bartender Renaldo Nembhard during the resort's Annual Prestige Awards.



The Sandals Whitehouse Laundry Team was also in high spirits after walking away with two major accolades from the resort's Prestige Awards. Laundry manager Veronica Campbell (centre) received the General Manager's Award, and laundry attendant Asadia Reid (left) received the Sandals Foundation Community Spirit Award. Sharing in the photo op is laundry supervisor Tianna Grant.



Team Dining Room is all smiles on Friday after copping two significant awards at Sandals Whitehouse's Annual Prestige Awards and 10th anniversary celebrations. Here, Resort Team Member of the Year Aleisha Powell (second left), and Smile and Courtesy Awardee Fellicia Smith (right) share in a photo op with Food and Beverage Manager Neil McLeish (left) and Assistant Restaurant Service Manager Keesha Wright.

Governments recognise benefits of visa facilitation

VISA FACILITATION has experienced strong progress in recent years, particularly through the implementation of visa-on-arrival policies according to United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) latest **Visa Openness Report**. This largely reflects an increased awareness among policy-makers of the positive impacts of visa facilitation on tourism and economic growth.

According to the report, 62 per cent of the world's population was required to have a traditional visa prior to departure in 2014, down from 77 per cent in 2008. In the same year, 19 per cent of the world's population was able to enter a destination without a visa, while 16 per cent could receive a visa on arrival, as compared to 17 per cent and six per cent in 2008.

The report also shows that the most prevalent facilitation measure implemented has been visa-on-arrival. Over half of all improvements made in the last four years were from visa required to visa on arrival.

"Visa facilitation is central to stimulating economic growth and job creation through tourism. Although there is much room for improvement, we are pleased to



CONTRIBUTED

Taleb Rifai, secretary general of the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

see that a growing number of governments around the world is taking decisive steps in this regard," said UNWTO secretary-general Taleb Rifai.

ARRIVALS FORECAST

Countries in the Americas and in Asia and the Pacific have been at the forefront of visa facilitation, while Europe and Middle East have more restrictive visa policies. Overall, emerging economies tend to be more open than advanced ones, with South-East Asia, East Africa,

the Caribbean and Oceania among the most open subregions.

"UNWTO forecasts international tourist arrivals to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and easier visa procedures will be crucial to attract these travellers, especially tourists from emerging source markets like China, Russia, India and Brazil," added Rifai.

Research by UNWTO and the World Travel and Tourism Council shows that the G20 economies could boost their international tourist numbers by an additional 122 million, generate an extra US\$206 billion in tourism exports, and create more than five million additional jobs by improving visa processes and entry formalities.

The same research carried out for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries indicates that visa facilitation could generate important gains for both groups, including the creation of 2.6 million jobs in APEC and 650,000 jobs in ASEAN.

Data on visa policies by country has been collected by UNWTO on an annual basis since 2008 and validated through surveys and communication with the organisation's member states.



CONTRIBUTED

Carnival Splendor makes her inaugural visit to Martinique on November 3, 2014.

Martinique to welcome a record 22 new cruise ships in 2015-16

THE MARTINIQUE Tourism Authority is projecting another strong cruise season in 2015-2016, with a record 22 ships slated to make their first-ever port calls in The Isle of Flowers between October 26, 2015 and August 31, 2016.

The 22 ships represent some of the biggest names in the cruise industry, including Carnival, Celebrity, Disney, MSC, Royal Caribbean, Seabourn, and more. The full list of ships visiting Martinique for the first time in 2015-2016 is as follows:

- *Adventure of the Seas*
- *Aidamar*
- *Anthem of the Seas*
- *Azura*
- *Carnival Glory*
- *Carnival Liberty*
- *Carnival Pride*
- *Carnival Sunshine*
- *Costa Favolosa*
- *Costa Pacifica*
- *Celebrity Equinox*
- *Disney Wonder*
- *Eurodam*
- *MSC Orchestra*
- *Oosterdam*
- *Royal Princess*

- *Seabourn Odyssey*
- *Serenade of the Seas*
- *Seven Seas Mariner*
- *Seven Seas Navigators*
- *Silver Wind*
- *The World*

"Martinique continues to capture the imagination of the cruise industry," said Karine Roy-Camille, commissioner of the Martinique Tourism Authority.

"With the wealth of new ships planning stops here in the coming year, passengers will enjoy a greater variety of cruise vacation experiences than ever before. Truly, there's never been a better time to cruise to Martinique."

One of the fastest-growing cruise destinations in the Caribbean, Martinique has experienced a 524 per cent increase in cruise passenger arrivals since 2010. For the 2014-2015 cruise season (November 2014-April 2015), the Martinique Tourism Authority is projecting 220,000 cruise passengers among the 176 scheduled port calls.



CONTRIBUTED

Iberostar Rose Hall's Director of Human Resources Anthony Ferguson (right) and secretary in the department, Sheena Stewart (left), presented Easter buns and 500-gram tins of cheese recently to students and teachers at the New Day Prep School, in Lilliput, St James. The school, which has 50 students, has been adopted as part of a community and social welfare initiative, which falls under the resort's corporate social responsibility portfolio.

Barbados to host Golden Oldies World Cricket Festival

BARBADOS HAS won the bid to host the 2017 Golden Oldies World Cricket Festival, an international tournament for semi-professional and retired players.

Local cricketing legends Sir Garfield Sobers and Joel Garner have joined a delegation led by Alvin Jemmott, chairman of the Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc (BTMI) to promote the tournament in Cape Town, South Africa at this year's edition of the festival.

According to the BTMI chairman, the response to the Barbados delegation has been very positive thus far as they work toward attracting approximately 600 visitors to Barbados for the May 6-13, 2017 edition of the festival.

"What is particularly interesting about having the 2017 Golden Oldies Cricket Festival is that it takes place during the month of May, which allows us to increase arrivals during a traditionally slow month. No less than five hotels are expected to benefit from this event. In addition, our support services – restaurants, attractions, car rentals, nightlife facilities, etc – are expected to gain additional business as the

games are structured as a festival, allowing participants to adequately enjoy the host country.

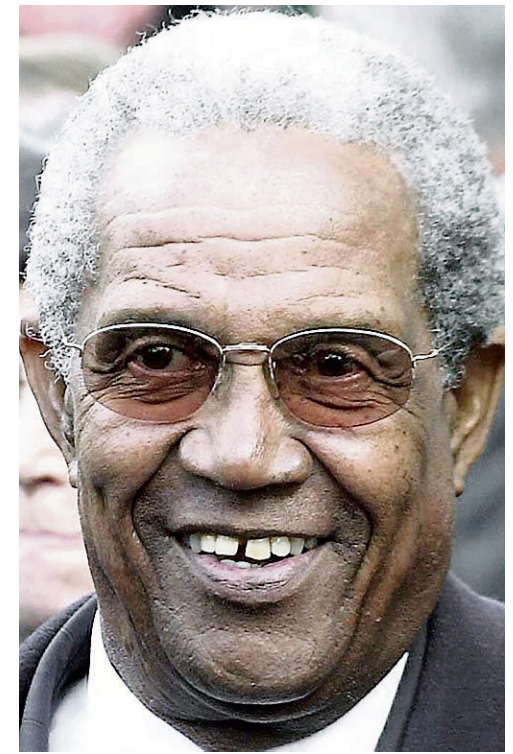
"One of the good elements of trying to generate interest in this particular festival is the level of respect that vintage players in South Africa have for Sir Garfield Sobers and Joel Garner. Another very positive sign is the willingness of the organisers to use local ground operators to handle the logistics of the festival, allowing us to keep additional foreign exchange in Barbados after putting together the 2017 event."

The biannual festival is the brainchild of cricket enthusiast, Peter McDermott, and has previously been held in destinations such as Adelaide, Birmingham, Brisbane, Auckland and Sydney to mention a few.

The Golden Oldies Festival is not limited to cricket, but also has editions catering to those who play rugby, golf, hockey and netball. The BTMI is exploring the opportunities of hosting these editions of the festival as well during their trip to Cape Town.



GARNER



SOBERS

Nevis spreads her wings

IT WAS recently reported that the Nevis Island Administration (NIA) had forged a partnership with Caribbean Helicopters Ltd (CHL). The company is a flight service based in Antigua, and the partnership will bring added airlift to the Vance W. Amory International Airport in Nevis.

Although the international airport is compact, it is armed with all the latest and modern technologies and amenities, which include a brand-new terminal, new control tower, and an extended runway. The agreement, signed on behalf of the administration by permanent secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Colin Dore and director of CHL, Neil Dickinson was a significant stepping-stone in Nevis's grand plan of opening itself up to the world. Dore commented in saying that.

"The island had struggled with the issue of airlift in and out of Nevis via Antigua for far too long. This new partnership will set Nevis on a path that will provide a level of convenience not only for Nevisians, but also for visitors to and from the island."

There seems to be no short supply of ambi-

tion as demonstrated by the accord and this will be a trend that will continue. Dickinson shared, "Our two fixed wing airplanes are going to start to do the airlift between Antigua and Nevis very shortly. The plan is that we increase that fleet by a further two aircrafts in the next six months." With the most recent announcement of the partnership between St Bart's based Tradewind Aviation and Nevis, the NIA and Nevis Tourism Authority (NTA) are letting out all the stops in their continued efforts of bringing Nevis closer to the world stage.

The Tradewind Aviation service operates on Wednesdays between the islands of St Barts and Nevis, with departures in the mornings and afternoons to facilitate a day-trip in both directions. The Honorable Mark Brantley, Nevis' Minister of Tourism stated, "We hope to make Nevis' grandeur readily available to the whole world and these are a few steps in the right direction to making that possible."

These air services opens a flurry of new and exciting possibilities for travelers to either island. Day trips from St Barts and from

Antigua to Nevis will now be available to Nevisians and visitors alike. Whether you're visiting St Barts and taking in the Caribbean through its French culture or enjoying the same water through British lenses in Nevis, you're a mere 15-minute flight to experiencing a completely different culture while basking in the same radiant waters. Antigua, on the other hand, is a similar English-influenced island with its origins being of Amerindian (Carib and Arawak) and West African and with a range of attractions unique to Antigua.

AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN

The rich cultural potential of both Nevis and Antigua are now within a brief 15-minute airlift away for travellers. With expectations high and Nevis on a very aggressive and effective campaign, the vision of bringing Nevis to the traveler seeking an authentic Caribbean experience is becoming a reality sooner than later. Bookings from and to Antigua/Nevis can be made via the CHL website www.caribbean-helicopters.com.

Pricing to and from Nevis/St Barts is US\$150

plus tax each way. Booking is available with local travel agencies or through Tradewind at: 1-800-376-7922, 1-203-267-3305, or by email at charter@flytradewind.com

ABOUT NEVIS

Nevis is part of the Federation of St Kitts & Nevis and is located in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies. Conical in shape with a volcanic peak at its center known as Nevis Peak, the island is the birthplace of the founding father of the United States, Alexander Hamilton. The weather is typical of most of the year with temperatures in the low to mid-80s°F / mid 20-30°C, cool breezes and low chances of precipitation. Air transportation is easily available with connections from Puerto Rico, and St Kitts.

For more information about Nevis, travel packages and accommodations, please contact the Nevis Tourism Authority from the USA at Tel 1-407-287-5204, Canada 1-403-770-6697, or visit the website www.nevisisland.com and like Nevis Naturally on Facebook.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

Morant Bay, Lyssons, Bowden, Old Pera and Buckra Massa

An old sugar estate watch tower at Old Pera, St Thomas.



TO GATHER information and pictures for a project on St Thomas I journeyed, once again, to Jamaica's most easterly parish, on Thursday, April 2. It was a tour I looked forward to, because some of the places on the itinerary I have never been to. What was I to discover?

The first thing worthy of contemplation along the way was Roselle Falls, or the lack thereof. There was only a little bit of water trickling from the rock. This was in stark contrast to the tons of water that it used to gush, even on to the main road. And the little springs near it seemed to have vanished. Is it dying or going through drought? I heard it has been like that for a while.

Talking about death and drought, Morant Bay, the parish capital, which has been going through water shortage itself, is also moribund. It, too, is also like that for quite a while. What a place boring! Yes, Morant Bay. But based on what I know, plans are in place to enliven it. I am waiting with bated breath.

Right outside of Morant Bay is Lyssons, a former sugar plantation. Much of the former estate lands are occupied by the descendants of those who had toiled and died on it. Also occupying a little piece of Lyssons are remains of Simon Taylor and his brother, John. That spot was my second stop. I wanted some pictures of the headstone of Simon, who once owned more than 2,000 of my ancestors.

While Simon's headstone is still in one piece, John's is broken into about four, and were scattered. Billington Napier, a resident, and who claimed to have worked with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust in his youth, offered to put the huge pieces back together. He lifted the first piece, only to expose a young toad with a very rough back.

"That's John Taylor," I uttered jokingly, and 'John' responded by releasing about a tablespoon of liquid excrement. I 'back, back', lest any of that stuff made contact with me. But Napier was not fazed. He continued to rearrange the broken pieces.

After that, he took me to an old house on a hill overlooking the sea. It seems to be a part of the original estate.

DISAPPOINTING

From Lyssons, we travelled to Bowden, on the eastern edge of Port Morant. It was the most disappointing leg of the tour. I had never been there, but I knew it to be one of the busiest wharves on the island when sugar and banana were king. It was full of social life and commerce, a place where people from all over eastern Jamaica would converge for various purposes, and for many reasons, all the social and commercial activities at Bowden ceased.

I was expecting to find a quaint seaside village with elders who have anecdotes of Bowden heyday, but that was not to be. I didn't see any village or remnants of one. The first sign of anything going on was a compound of blue and white buildings.

I heard it's an oyster farm owned by the government. Near the building rising from the sea are remnants of vertical wood columns that once supported platforms.

After that we came to chain-link fences with a wide open gate. When we entered the place, I was surprised to find myself on Jamaica Coastguard property. There was a lone coastguard sitting under a tree in his new digital print uniform. His name is Sterling, and he was very courteous and helpful.

Sterling tried to get permission for me to take pictures of the remnants of the wharf buildings, including the shell of a huge warehouse. He made some calls, but unfortunately, the last person I spoke with said I would have to get permission from JDF headquarters.

Old Pera was next on the list, and when it was mentioned, Sterling said incidentally, the groundsman for the property, called Mickey, was from Old Pera. He was not at work because of a recent injury. Contact was made with him, and we made off hoping that Old Pera had much more to offer.

It wasn't hard to find Mickey, for Old Pera, a traditional Kumina district is a close-knit, hilltop community. When he heard **Hospitality Jamaica** was at his gate, he came hopping, assisted by a piece of stick. I delved into aspects of his life story and his recollection of when Bowden was busy as a bee. He's very knowledgeable, and offered to show us around the community despite his injury.

The community consists of Bowden Hill where Mickey lives, acres of cane fields, said to be owned by a very popular politician. The major sources of income are fishing, farming, and a little gambling. It's a laidback life that the people lead.

At the scenic coast, I was delighted to see a little cay that the residents call Treasure Island. It can be accessed by walking across the sea. I recalled crossing the sea from Folly to Monkey Island in Portland, last year, on foot. It was a nerve-wracking experience, so this time around, I was not going to be Moses.

MAJORIE'S SONG

To show how easy and shallow it was, a young woman named Kimisha Ellis walked across. I told her I would go across some other time, and I will. Can't wait. But I hope I don't spend the entire morning over there upon my return and catch only one fish. That's what happened to a slender woman called Marjorie.

As **Hospitality Jamaica** was leaving the spot, her two slender dogs swam across. She followed with her knapsack and machete. She waved to me. I told her she was on camera. She smiled. A conversation ensued. When she took out the one little fish she caught, we laughed. That was going to be dinner. Only the bones the dogs would get.

I heard Marjorie could sing, so I begged for a tune. She acquiesced by breaking out into **I'm Lonely, I'm Miss Lonely**. I enjoyed it and thanked her for the opportunity, and the laugh. But her hunt wasn't over. As the dogs waited for her, she walked on jagged rocks way into the sea. One little fish was not enough, the looks on the dogs' faces might have told her.

The moments with Marjorie were the happiest on the tour, but those spent with Agatha 'Mum' Peyton were the most poignant. At 104, Mum has a razor-sharp memory, and she, too, can recall the glory days at the wharf at Bowden. The sad and unhappy moments in her life are also deeply etched in her mind, and as she



Agatha 'Mum' Peyton's family plot at Bowden Hill, Old Pera, St Thomas.



Michael 'Mickey' McKoy of Old Pera, St Thomas, shows Hospitality Jamaica a piece of Irish Moss, which grows in abundance in the area.



One-hundred-and-four-year-old Agatha 'Mum' Peyton of Bowden Hill, Old Pera, still misses her four boy children who died.

spoke about the deaths of her four boy children when they were mere babies, tears welled up in her eyes.

Yet, the surprise of the day, my discovery when I found myself on the sugar cane property of the well-known politician. He is actually a black 'bakra massa', owning acres and acres of sugar cane.



Kimisha 'Janizie' Ellis returning from 'Treasure Island' after showing Hospitality Jamaica writer Paul H. Williams how easy it is to walk to the cay across the sea from the mainland.



This fisherwoman who goes by the name Marjorie shows Hospitality Jamaica the only fish she caught after a long spell on Treasure Island, a cay off the coast of Old Pera, St Thomas.



Irish moss growing on a shell, found off the coast of Old Pera, St Thomas.



Treasure Island, a cay off the coast of Old Pera in St Thomas.

Antigua celebrates new BA route

V.C. BIRD International Airport will serve as an important hub for UK-based carrier British Airways (BA), as the airline on Sunday launched its inaugural flight service from Antigua to the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The route is historic as it will be the first direct-flight connection between the Eastern Caribbean and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Minister of Tourism Asot Michael at a reception to launch the service said to a gathering of tourism officials from the Turks and Caicos Islands and Antigua and Barbuda: "The rise in popularity of Antigua and Barbuda and Turks & Caicos is demonstrated by British Airways agreeing to add a direct link between our two destinations."

He also said, "This added service means new opportunities, and choices available to us for increased business activities and closer collaboration. The end result will be greater economic growth



while simultaneously building the spirit of regional integration between our two countries."

The weekly flight from

Gatwick to Antigua on a Boeing 777 then onwards to Providenciales will operate every Sunday from March 29.

Michael said the new route allows for visa-free travel and will encourage more business and leisure travellers to island hop from

Antigua to Turks and Caicos and vice versa.

Welcoming the airline as they prepared to board the inaugural flight were Porsha Stubbs-Smith, minister of tourism, Turks & Caicos; Dr Kingsley Been, chairman of Turks & Caicos Tourism Board; Ralph Higgs, director of tourism, Turks & Caicos; and Lavern Skipplings-Reynolds, airport manager, Providenciales International Airport.

An invitation was extended to the government and the people of the Turks and Caicos to travel to Antigua for the country's Summer Carnival – July 25-August 4.

With a new terminal to be opened in June, Antigua's V.C. Bird International's airport expansion will increase capacity, allowing the destination to develop new routes. The terminal, which will be the most modern in the Eastern Caribbean, will feature the latest technology, first-class duty-free shopping and VIP lounges, creating a more efficient and enhanced passenger experience.

BVI Summer Freedom Programme offers affordable getaway to paradise

THIS SUMMER, the British Virgin Islands (BVI) Tourist Board invites travellers to come to the BVI to celebrate a Summer of FREEdom by taking advantage of incredible offers throughout the 60 beautiful islands. Value-added offers from a variety of properties – private islands to luxury villas to yachts and more – include free nights, resort credits, free transportation and free excursions.

The BVI is the ultimate summer destination as it offers experiences for every traveller. Adventure-seekers can enjoy snorkelling at the stunning coral reef at Rosewood Little Dix Bay. For couples on a romantic getaway, Guana Island offers the perfect package, including complimentary champagne, massages and a private beach picnic. Those who prefer a bit of luxury and relaxation can explore the BVI's crystal-clear blue waters aboard chartered yachts, like Necker Belle.

"The BVI Summer FREEdom Programme allows travellers to get the most out of their experience in the BVI," said Sharon Flax-Mars, director of the BVI Tourist Board.

"The variety of amazing offers from our

industry partners gives guests the freedom to explore the BVI in whatever suits them best, whether that's a chartered yacht for island-hopping or the comfortable luxury of a private villa to accommodate larger groups."

Travelling to the BVI will be easier than ever with a new Cruise Pier Expansion Project that will expand the existing Cruise Pier in Tortola. Another exciting aspect of this project is the development of Tortola Pier Park, a five-acre commercial and entertainment centre.

For booking and travel dates and details on how to book the following deals, visit www.summer.bvitourism.com.

PRIVATE ISLANDS & LUXURY RESORTS

Whether a romantic getaway or a group trip with friends is in store, the BVI plays host to travellers interested in a secluded experience on a private island or luxury resort.

■ Bitter End Yacht Club: The Super Saver Family Package is perfect for families and offers 55 per cent off a connecting room for children.

■ Guana Island: Guests staying seven nights in a Sea View Cottage will receive a

bottle of champagne upon arrival, a private castaway beach picnic, two 50-minute massages, a private tour of the organic orchard and round-trip taxi and boat transport from Beef Island airport.

■ Peter Island Resort & Spa: Stay four nights, pay for three or stay five nights, pay for four. Whether celebrating a honeymoon or a special getaway, 'romance-centric' activities like couples treatment at the world-class spa or a private dinner on the beach, Peter Island is the backdrop to once-in-a-lifetime FREEdom memories.

■ Rosewood Little Dix Bay: Guests can get a complimentary night to have more time and more value in paradise. This means more time snorkelling the gorgeous coral reef, more time enjoying delicious cuisine at three beachfront restaurants and more time to enjoy seven secluded beaches.

RESORTS, HOTELS AND INNS

A resort, hotel or inn experience may be best suited for families looking for a full-service, low-key vacation or an opportunity

to live like a local.

■ Anegada Reef Hotel: Stay four nights and get the fifth free in an ocean view room.

■ Sea View Hotel: Stay for seven nights and receive the seventh free.

VILLAS

Multigenerational travellers or large groups will enjoy the ease and space that a private villa offers.

■ Scrub Island Resort & Spa: Buy five nights and get seven with \$500 resort credit on villas.

CHARTER YACHTS

The adventure seeking traveller can stay aboard a chartered yacht, enjoying the sounds of the sea.

■ Horizon Yacht Charters: Horizon BVI is offering 10 nights for the price of seven or a 10 per cent discount on seven-night charters.

■ Necker Belle: Charter Necker Belle for seven nights and pay for just six.

■ On Deck Charters: One guest will sail free on any week-long all inclusive charter vacation.