CTO calls for open-skies policy

Pennicook lauds travel agents at Sandals Golf Tournament

Tourism chief urges industry to refresh, ramp up offerings

Beaches Resorts bring planetarium to Jamaica, Turks and Caicos
Paul Penicook, Jamaica’s director of tourism, recently announced 60,000 additional airline seats destined to the island this winter, predicting that the country’s tourism figures for 2015 could reach lofty levels, emulating the friendly scores recorded at the Travel Weekly US Travel Agents Golf Tournament at Sandals Golf and Country Club in Ocho Rios.

Addressing more than 120 participants at the awards ceremony at Sandals Ocho Rios, Penicook lauded the American travel agents, thanking them for their business, which helped Jamaica log tourist stop-over arrivals of 2,080,181 last year, a 3.6 per cent increase over 2013.

Before presenting winners Junior Rodney, Karen Scantlebury, Albertha Brown and Jacqueline Bass, Team 23, with an imposing trophy and gifts, Penicook pointed out that the bulk of new seats, 50,000, originated from the United States, a testament to the travel agents’ commitment to Jamaica.

“I want to thank you for your business. We believe in travel agents. With all the talk about the Internet taking over and travel agents on the wane, not in our neck of the woods,” he said, evoking rousing applause.

“It’s always a distinct pleasure to share some time with our travel partners, who have not only demonstrated a commitment to the industry, but to destination Jamaica,” he added.

Penicook pointed to American Airlines adding weekend non-stop flights from Los Angeles, California to Montego Bay. Additional seats unveiled by the tourism director included South Western Airlines flying from Houston, Texas, and Frontier/Delta, also into Montego Bay.

“We are also welcoming flights from Oslo, Norway; Gothenburg, Sweden; and Dublin, Ireland,” Penicook said, pointing out how the Jamaica Tourist Board had moved from being “TV-centric” to advertising on mobile and digital platforms.

The participating teams at the two-day tournament carded “PGA-like scores”, joked Garth Laird, director, travel-industry programmes, Sandals.

Team 23 carded 59 on day one and 59 on day two on the 18-hole, par-72 course. Runners-up, Team Four, made up of Larry Field Sr, Larry Field Jr, Dennis Field and Nick Middaugh, carded 62 on day one and came storming on day two with 59.

In its 13th year, the tournament is used to familiarise travel agents with the local resorts in the Sandals chain and highlights Sandals Golf and Country Club as a top Caribbean golfing destination.

Last weekend, Sandals hosted travel agents from Latin America in a similar tournament, which attracted 72 participants.

They reacted with glee to news that the Government of Jamaica had recently waived visa requirements for vacationers, up to 30 days, from El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia and Guatemala.

The select waivers represent a continuation of Jamaica’s efforts to attract more visitors from Latin American and Eastern Europe.

Laird said the waivers will open up Jamaica to vacationers from those countries.

“Sandals has representatives across Central and Latin America, 10 persons, covering Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Argentina, plus a call centre in Honduras, so that is definitely good news,” he said.

Team Nine, comprising Rodrigo Yanez Sala, and Roman Valdivia Acevedo of Turismo Rays SPA, as well as Alejandra Madrid and Renato Garcia of Travel Home, won the tournament by a huge margin, having carded 63, for a nine-stroke lead at the half-way stage.

Gary Saddler, senior vice-president, sales, worldwide, Sandals, implored the travel agents to keep selling Jamaica.

“Go back home, sell this hotel and sell golfing. Share with your customers your experience of Jamaica,” he said.

Pennicook lauds travel agents at Sandals Golf Tournament

Announces 60,000 new airline seats to Ja

Pennicook with the local resorts in the Sandals chain and highlights Sandals Golf and Country Club as a top Caribbean golfing destination.

Winners in all categories at the Sandals Latin American Golf tournament, over the weekend, pose with Sandals officials at the awards ceremony at Sandals Ochi Beach Resort.

Junior Rodney of Team 23 with the winners’ trophy at the presentation ceremony for the Travel Weekly US Travel Agents Golf Tournament at Sandals Golf and Country Club in Ocho Rios, September 18-19. From left are Gary Saddler, senior vice-president, sales, worldwide, Sandals; Rodney’s team members Jacqueline Bass, Albertha Brown and Karen Scantlebury; Paul Penicook, director of tourism, Jamaica Tourist Board (right); and Jay Nelson, associate publisher, new-business development, Travel Weekly, sponsor of the tournament. Looking on in the background is Garth Laird, director, travel-industry programmes, Sandals.

VISA WAIVER

with the local resorts in the Sandals chain and highlights Sandals Golf and Country Club as a top Caribbean golfing destination.
SECRETARY GENERAL of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) Hugh Riley has urged regional authorities to institute an open-skies policy and wherever possible to eliminate secondary screening at Caribbean airports.

Riley argues that while an open-skies policy would allow regional carriers to take unlimited flights to all Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states and encourage the growth of competition among carriers, elimination of secondary screening would encourage greater demand for intra-regional travel.

He has also called for improved interline arrangements for a “vastly enhanced” baggage transfer and improved passenger experience.

In an address at the recent airline route development forum, World Routes 2015 in Durban, South Africa, Riley also made a plea for collaboration in a number of areas, including intelligence sharing with the use of the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), and security processing.

“Cooperation in these areas will encourage and facilitate greater investment by airlines into and across the Caribbean region. Better connectivity means greater economic benefits,” the secretary general said.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Citing the post-September 11 television campaign in the United States, Life Needs the Caribbean, and the 2007 Cricket Work Cup as examples, Riley said the Caribbean has shown its ability to put effective regional strategies in place and can do the same to grow travel into and throughout the region.

“This type of cooperation and collaboration needs to be the standard practice in serving the region’s various tourism needs,” he said.

The secretary general added that it was important to finalise and implement the amended Multilateral Air Services Agreement; facilitate unlimited third, fourth, and fifth freedom of traffic rights for scheduled passenger services from and between international airports and sub-regions within CARICOM, and establish a CARICOM Single Domestic Airspace to help generate additional international traveller demand, which in turn, will encourage airlines to establish routes to the region.

“Unnecessarily lengthy policy development and slow implementation processes hinder progress,” he stressed.

The World Route Development Forum attracts senior representatives from airlines, airports and tourism authorities who meet to plan and discuss new and existing global air services. It is organised by the aviation route development company, Routes.

CTO member countries Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Puerto Rico and the Turks and Caicos Islands attended this year’s event, with the CTO supporting its members that were there, as well as those that were not.

Riley’s attendance at the event was aimed at elevating the Caribbean brand; exploring opportunities for the Caribbean; presenting the prospects for expansion and improvement of connectivity within the Caribbean; and discussing challenges facing regional and global aviation and offering solutions. He also highlighted the work of the CTO Aviation Task Force as a facilitator within the Caribbean and beyond.

TAPPING INTO OTHER MARKETS

“I was pleased with the extremely high quality of the interactions we made in Durban and the level of interest there is in the Caribbean: interest in exploring the tourism potential between the Caribbean and Africa, as well as expanding into other non-traditional markets. I fully expect that contacts we made here will redound to the benefit of Caribbean tourism in general and CTO’s member-countries in particular,” the secretary general said.

The CTO, with headquarters in Barbados and offices in New York and London, is the Caribbean’s tourism development agency comprising membership of the region’s finest countries and territories including Dutch, English, French and Spanish, as well as a myriad of private sector allied members. The CTO’s vision is to position the Caribbean as the most desirable, year-round warm-weather destination, and its purpose is Leading Sustainable Tourism – One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean.

Among the benefits to its members the organisation provides specialised support and technical assistance in sustainable tourism development, marketing, communications, advocacy, human resource development, event planning and execution and research and information technology.

In addition the CTO, in partnership with the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association, jointly and equally owns the Caribbean Tourism Development Company, a marketing and business development entity dedicated to promoting the Caribbean brand worldwide.

CTO secretary general calls for open-skies policy
Tourism chief urges industry to refresh, ramp up offerings

A CARIBBEAN tourism leader has said that the region has to keep refreshing its product to ensure that its people can continue to benefit from the revenue generated by the industry. “Tourism is by far the biggest sector of our economies in the Caribbean, and we ought to ensure our hotels and other visitor facilities continue to improve because our people rely on revenue from the sector for education, health, culture and environmental conservation,” asserted Karolin Troubetzkoy, first vice-president and president-elect of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association.

“We cannot rest on our laurels because the global tourism market is growing rapidly and many countries are actively competing with us for the new business,” said the St Lucia hotelier who observed that the Caribbean is likely to face some challenges as a result of the easing of travel restrictions for Americans to visit Cuba. For many Caribbean destinations, the United States is the largest market for tourists.

Troubetzkoy, who along with her husband, Nick, owns and operates the award-winning Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain, two of St Lucia’s most admired hotels, lauded this weekend’s first Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF) for pointing the way to effective refreshing of the industry. “CHIEF has astutely identified three areas we should be focusing on: operations, sales and marketing, and the need to go green,” she said.

Troubetzkoy, who addressed the October 2-4 conference in Puerto Rico, urged the industry to use data collection to dive into new markets. “The Caribbean is a maturing market, so it is important to refurbish and renovate hotels and resorts,” she added. “As we do so, we must use the occasion to go more green and see the return on investment increase,” she said.

Negril hotel honoured as Ja’s Top Boutique Hotel

TRAVELLERS BEACH Resort, located in the resort town of Negril, was recently named by Expedia as Jamaica’s Top Boutique Hotel, for 2015. On Monday, September 21 at an awards ceremony staged by Expedia. Several hotels were honoured for their achievements in their areas of excellence.

As the only boutique hotel to receive this award for 2015 from Expedia, Travellers Beach Resort was selected based on room night production among boutique hotels in Jamaica. This increased production comes as a result of improvements in key areas of the property, including rooms, grounds, service and overall guest satisfaction.

Winthrope Wellington, an owner of the resort, responded to receiving the honour in saying: “We are honoured and humbled to receive this award. It is a great source of pride and validation for the hard work we’ve been carrying out. This award will serve as additional motivation to continue to work hard to improve our product and provide the highest level of service for our valued guests.”

Travellers Beach Resort is a 60-room family-owned resort on the seven mile beach of Negril. It offers a variety of room types, amenities and services. Some of the amenities and services include complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the property, a swimming pool with a swim-up bar, gym, spa, scuba centre, restaurant and bar. Karaoke brings out the talent and excitement on Fridays and Sundays. At Travellers Beach Resort, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

“We are honoured and humbled to receive this award. It is a great source of pride and validation for the hard work we’ve been carrying out.”
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Tourism Awareness Week Highlights

While to some extent, what now happened mixes the requirements of US Homeland Security with domestic requirements, it is clear that the elimination of secondary screening on inter-regional flights would encourage travel and a greater demand for inter-island tourism.

Riley, who was speaking at an airline route development forum, *World Routes 2015* in Durban, South Africa, also made a plea for collaboration in a number of other travel-related security areas, including intelligence sharing making use of the Advance Passenger Information System which is used internationally, and pre-flight security processing.

### BETTER COOPERATION

“Cooperation in (all) these areas will encourage and facilitate greater investment by airlines into and across the Caribbean region. Better connectivity means greater economic benefits,” he said.

Riley might also have mentioned, as he has on other occasions, the need to standardise embarkation/disembarkation forms and for consideration to be given to a flexible variant on the short-lived experiment that established a Caribbean Single Domestic Airspace and Common Visa Arrangement during the period of Cricket World Cup in 2007.

Then, the eight countries involved – Barbados, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad, Guyana, Antigua, Grenada and St Kitts plus Dominica – created a common customs and migratory zone with a common Cricket World Cup visitor visa issued by CARICOM.

At the very least, it is hard to see why the introduction of such an approach within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and Barbados cannot be agreed, even on a one-year trial basis. Not only would it revolutionise inter-island travel and help enable multi-destination tourism, but it could become a test bed for its extension across the whole CARIFORUM region.

Unfortunately, what may seem common sense and a measure likely to stimulate growth requires Caribbean heads of government and their immigration, home affairs and security ministers and officials to overcome the present self-protective, bureaucratic approach and accept that if tourism is to flourish, decisive action to ease inter-regional travel and unnecessary security and requirements is now required.

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Make regional air travel easier

**David Jessop**

### THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

A WHILE ago, I took a flight from the British Virgin Islands to Trinidad on LIAT, the Eastern Caribbean inter-regional carrier. What was remarkable – apart from the time involved – was that having gone through one security check at Tortola’s Terrance B Lettsome International Airport and then another random check, some of my fellow travellers and I then found, when transiting Antigua onto another LIAT flight, but not entering the country, we had to undergo additional full security checks to be able to proceed to a different gate.

Whether this practice has now ended with the opening of Antigua’s new terminal building, I do not know, but for me, it made the point that inter-regional travel, especially where it involves changing flights in a third country, is not only costly as a result of the range of taxes and airport fees, but is likely to test the patience of even the most laid-back visitor.

For this reason, many travellers will welcome the recent intervention by Hugh Riley, the secretary general of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), who has urged regional authorities to institute an Open-Skies Policy and wherever possible eliminate secondary screening at Caribbean airports. Riley also called for improved interline arrangements so that visitors transferring between different airlines in the region have a vastly enhanced baggage transfer and passenger experience.

By Open Skies, CTO’s secretary general meant the abolition of the complex web of regulations that stand in the way of regional air carriers offering unlimited flights to all CARICOM member states; a move that would encourage competition, the development of new routes, and one would hope, a reduction in air fares.

But just as important, Riley recognised that the mystifying range and variation in security procedures across the region, especially when traversing multiple Caribbean destinations, has come to try the patience of regional travellers and visitors alike.

While to some extent, what now
GREY GOOSE APPLE MARTINI

INGREDIENTS
Ice cubes
2 ounces vodka
1-1/2 ounces sour apple liqueur
1-1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
GARNISH: Green Apple Slices

DIRECTIONS
Fill a shaker three-fourths full with ice. Add the vodka, apple liqueur and lemon juice. Cover and shake for 10-15 seconds or until condensation forms on outside of shaker. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish as desired

DEWAR'S WHISKY SOUR

INGREDIENTS
2 parts Dewar’s White Label Scotch Whisky
1 part lemon juice
½ part clear syrup
Cubed ice
To garnish: 1 cherry and an orange slice

DIRECTIONS
Put ice and all of the ingredients into a shaker and shake hard for about 20 seconds to chill the liquid really well
Strain the mix into a glass filled with ice and garnish with the cherry and orange slice.

18 AND OLDER TO DRINK, ENJOY RESPONSIBLY
The transformation of cleaning

PALATIAL WALLS offer a distinct border between reality and the ultimate escape from the mundane. At the resort, meticulously kept lawns, pristine hallways and immaculate rooms provide an impeccable backdrop to the perfect holiday retreat. Though this seemingly effortless appearance is oftentimes taken for granted by guests, hospitality professionals are well aware that the slightest misstep in their building aesthetics can spell disaster for their visitors’ experience and their hotel’s hard-earned reputation.

“They say cleanliness is next to godliness,” shares Darron Griffiths, executive housekeeper at the Grand Palladium. “For an industry where almost 2.5 million people travel every year, it is very important to build an excellent relationship with tourists by ensuring their expectations are always met,” he explains.

Meeting those high standards does not happen in a haphazard way; hotels and restaurants must invest in cleanliness and develop a comprehensive plan for cleaning. Companies spend millions developing guest accommodations and dining facilities, and protecting these investments is paramount to their overall success. Establishing a detailed maintenance programme, spanning kitchen and outdoor cleaning, as well as carpet, upholstery and floor care, will help to better preserve buildings and lengthen their lifespan. When routinely performed, such activities also have the knock-on effect of creating a visually appealing setting and a healthy and safe environment for employees and visitors.

**BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY**

Once regarded as monotonous, back-breaking work, today, cleaning has been transformed by technology. Basic tools, including brooms, mops and buckets are being replaced by highly efficient equipment, and difficult cleaning jobs are now taking significantly less time to complete. In commercial kitchen cleaning, hot-water power washers, developed by the German brand Karcher, quickly cut through grease and kill germs by breaking up and flushing dirt particles. Working at an accelerated pace, these machines also reduce the volume of cleaning chemicals needed for each job, which translates into big savings over the long term.

With jobs taking less time, cleaning activities require less labour; projects that traditionally needed multiple workers now demand just one employee working with a piece of equipment. Previously, cleaning a hard floor surface typically involved three individuals: one to wet the floor, another cleansing the space, and the last drying the area. Today’s vacuum scrubbers complete all three actions in a single pass, enabling one person to achieve full cleaning, allowing housekeeping to assign employees to more projects. Additionally, with the advent of quiet-class vacuums, attendants can go about their jobs without disturbing the tranquillity of the hotel or restaurant setting.

Since this existing technology reduces work fatigue and operates at a lower noise level, staff members are able to take on more duties and larger tasks at any time.

Facing drought-like conditions and Jamaica’s energy-sensitive economy, local hospitality executives have a vested interest in conservation. Manufacturers of cleaning equipment have addressed these concerns by developing eco-friendly machines. Compared to a running hose, pressure washers utilise 80 per cent less water and are equipped with pre-filters, allowing machine operators to use catchment water in place of fresh water from NWC lines. Electric pressure washers also boast an auto-pump shut-off feature, triggered by the release of the gun, which immediately halts the flow of water and electricity through the machine, helping to prevent unnecessary wastage. Some Karcher models even sport an eco-mode setting, which allows the equipment to efficiently perform on the lowest possible power level.

**DELTA SUPPLY**

“We consider ourselves the best friend of industry,” says Jonathan Swire, general manager at Delta Supply Company Limited. “Cleaning is an ongoing activity, and hospitality professionals may find it overwhelming to locate the best equipment to fit their needs. We get into the field, participating in events, such as the upcoming Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce Expo, taking place October 9-11 at the MoBay Convention Centre, to educate the marketplace about available cleaning technologies, sourcing the right equipment, and offering insight into best practices,” he reveals.

For the hospitality sector, first impressions undoubtedly count. Long before guests sample tasty cuisines or enjoy the live band’s music, a hotel or restaurant’s appearance can have a lasting impact on their perceptions of a property. Get it wrong and endure the wrath of negative feedback, or make the right investment, and enjoy the bliss of repeat visitors.
The Culinary Federation of Jamaica (CFJ) launched the Best Dressed Chicken Taste of Jamaica Culinary Competition and Expo recently, a key event that is part of the federation’s quest to raise the standards of culinary excellence.

Dennis McIntosh, president of the CFJ, said the federation has been focused on elevating the professional image of chefs. “The Taste of Jamaica has seen tremendous growth over the years and it continues to be an important platform for young chefs to refine their skills through the dynamic transfer of culinary knowledge from accomplished chefs,” McIntosh said.

The president noted, “We are happy to once again welcome the Best Dressed Chicken as title sponsor. They understand our drive to discover culinary artists in Jamaica, and the importance of maintaining our standards to keep pace with our global counterparts.”

Avadaugn Sinclair, marketing manager of the Best Dressed Chicken, also pointed out the importance of the annual culinary competition and expo. “The culinary industry is a critical aspect of our tourism product, and we are committed to its development through this integral and highly anticipated event,” she said.

An Opportunity for Many

“The CFJ has been unearthing and developing the culinary talents and abilities of Jamaicans for years, and we are thrilled to be a part of that journey to give our food stars the opportunity to shine.”

The Best Dressed Chicken Taste of Jamaica Culinary Competition and Expo is set for October 10 and 11 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre, and opens from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Patrons can expect two days of vibrant competition, showcasing the skills of chefs from across Jamaica, with live culinary demonstrations, a fusion of traditional and contemporary Jamaican cuisine, educational seminars, and exciting activities for the entire family.

The event will see top Jamaican chefs and their juniors compete in a range of categories, including: Senior Team; Tertiary/Vocational Team; Bartender of the Year; Pastry Chef of the Year; Junior Pastry Chef of the Year; Senior Chef of the Year and Junior Chef of the Year. Other competitions will be held in chocolate and sugar craft; fruit and vegetable carving; ice carving; wedding and celebration cakes. Expected highlights will be the chicken, beef, seafood and pork competitions.

Some of the successful young chefs who participated in last year’s Taste of Jamaica were a part of the federation’s team that recently participated in the Taste of the Caribbean Culinary Competition in Miami. The team won 10 medals.
Chevaughn Channer is Ja’s ‘Youth Minister of Tourism’ for 2015 Tourism Youth Congress

CHEVAUGHN CHANNER of Kingston College will represent Jamaica at the upcoming 2015 Tourism Youth Congress, which will be held in Curacao between October 21-23. He will go up against competitors from other Caribbean territories in the annual event hosted by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) as part of the State of the Industry Conference.

The Tourism Youth Congress is a public-speaking competition which targets students between the ages of 14 and 17 years in CTO member countries. Member countries each send a representative to the competition with the title Youth Minister of Tourism to speak on topical issues as selected by the CTO. Jamaican students are able to participate through the Jamaica Tourist Board’s Tourism Action Club (TAC), an initiative designed primarily to expose students to the business of tourism.

Prior to this, Chevaughn had to compete against several other Jamaican high-school TAC members as they each presented on topics such as ‘Greening Tourism Events’, ‘Film-Induced Tourism’, as well as a mystery topic section. Chevaughn staunchly defended his position on ‘Greening Tourism Events’ with clarity and much personal conviction. He discussed issues about, and provided solutions, to concerns regarding events which leave carbon footprints due to inadequacies in proper waste management.

Sandra Scott, deputy director of tourism, marketing at the Jamaica Tourist Board, had this to say, “I am very impressed with the wealth of knowledge that was displayed by all the students. They were very familiar with the information presented, which speaks volumes about their level of preparation. Given the talent on display, Chevaughn’s victory is that much more significant. I am proud of all the participants, and I know that Chevaughn will do Jamaica very proud at the Tourism Youth Congress.”

Jamaica has had a remarkable history at the Tourism Youth Congress, as students have performed excellently, even winning the competition. Should he win, Chevaughn will serve as Caribbean Junior Minister of Tourism for one year.

EXCITED TO ATTEND

Chevaughn is excited about his prospects at the Congress and anticipates doing his best with the hope of winning. He is equally enthusiastic about the opportunities that he has been afforded as a member of the TAC.

According to him, “The TAC helps to develop the individual and makes you aware of the tourist industry. It provides opportunities for us as club members to experience the tourism product, and allows us to see that Jamaica is more than a beach.” In speaking about his preparation for the competition, Chevaughn asserted, “the competition assists in developing our public-speaking skills, skills that we will use, especially when we enter the world of work.”

Reflecting on his progress, Chevaughn praised his teacher, Tamica Telphia. “She provides unwavering support which has contributed significantly to my success in winning the local competition,” he said. Telphia heaped praises on Chevaughn, saying he is not only a brilliant student, but he is easy to work with as “he is attentive and takes instructions very well”. She is grateful to God for His blessings and for allowing Chevaughn to do well.

When Chevaughn arrives at the Tourism Youth Congress in Curacao later this month, he will again make his presentation on ‘Greening Tourism Events’, but this time to a regional panel of judges. He will also answer a mystery question. He and his colleague youth ministers will have the opportunity to interact with regional tourism ministers and industry experts who often inspire them to become industry leaders themselves.

He affirms that whatever the outcome, he will represent Jamaica to the best of his ability, being true to the TAC motto, ‘Small Jamaicans Making a Big Difference’.

To learn about the Tourism Action Club, please visit the following website: http://www.tacjamaica.com/page/how-to-join-tac.
Beaches Resorts bring planetarium to Jamaica, Turks and Caicos

GUESTS AT Beaches Resorts, as well as students in the Caribbean, are set to receive a unique science-based experience, as Beaches Negril Resort and Spa in Jamaica, along with its sister property, Beaches Turks and Caicos, recently debuted the region's first resort-based portable planetarium.

The Discovery Dome, as it is called, is an air-conditioned, full dome theatre that surrounds persons with a panoramic, interactive, state-of-the-art visual learning experience. Within the dome, children and families will view One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure, a show that was launched this September and will remain year-round as part of The Caribbean Adventure with Sesame Street, which is now celebrating its 11th year at Beaches Resorts. The short film features Big Bird, Elmo and their friend from China, Hu Hui Zhu, as they take a journey of discovery to learn about the Big Dipper, the North Star, the sun and the moon.

Sandals Resorts International CEO, Adam Stewart, said students in Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos will benefit from the exploratory journey through a two-country tour sponsored by the Sandals Foundation in early 2016.

"While we are thrilled to offer the first portable resort-based planetarium to our guests and build on Beaches' reputation as the Caribbean's ultimate getaway, the ability to share this experience with the region's children who simply don't have access to the world's planetariums is just awesome," said Stewart. "We are grateful to our partners at Sesame Workshop, whose mission is to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder; for their incredible ability to make learning so much fun; and for bringing the wonders of the Universe to our guests and to our kids in the Caribbean."

One World, One Sky: Big Bird's Adventure was created as part of a global partnership between the Adler; Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organisation behind Sesame Street; the Beijing Planetarium; and the Liberty Science Center. Major funding for the programme is provided by the National Science Foundation and the PNC Foundation, with additional support from the W.L.S. Spencer Foundation.

Additionally, exclusive signature offerings this fall at Beaches Negril, Turks and Caicos and Ocho Rios will include Exploring the Moon with Elmo. A complement to the Discovery Dome, this programme introduces children to basic astronomy concepts, the phases of the moon and its surface, and it allows kids to create their own clay moon model as a takeaway of their edutainment experience.

Above Photos: Inside the Discovery Dome.
Just gimmie a look nuh?

It appears that craft markets no longer hold a special place in the hearts of the Jamaican people. When last did you buy a piece of art or craft from your nearest craft market? When was the last time you even ventured inside these cultural parks just to take a look, or better yet, to support the artisans with words of encouragement, expressions of appreciation for their hard work and purchases? The National Craft Council of Jamaica would like to re-introduce you to our very own home-grown Jamaican handmade, unique art and craft. Just take a look, build Jamaica by supporting those artisans who create beauty and satisfy functional needs, using their hands to transform dreams into reality.

What is really meant by craft? At a UNESCO symposium on craft held in 1997, craft products, also known as handicrafts and artisanal products, were deemed as those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant.

WHO ARE ARTISANS?

Producers or artisans may be defined as people who make products manually; they usually work individually, but can often be helped by family and friends. They are persons skilled in their trade. Jamaican craft items can usually be grouped as follows: ceramics, pottery; wood carved products and furniture; textiles/garments, knits and crochet; jewellery/beadwork, metalwork; leatherwork; paintings and wall-hangings.

Craft workers are usually self-employed small-business people. Skills are passed down from generation to generation, primarily by women who ‘tun dem han and mek fashion’. There are almost 8,000 documented artisans across the island working in all kinds of genres. Only a few are formally trained – certainly an area for opportunity and growth when one considers Jamaica’s natural talent and creativity. Most are intuitive artisans, self-taught and working with very basic tools to create beautiful and unique designs.

Jamaica has at least one place in each town/city (more in the resort areas) where craft is on constant show and that is the Craft Market. In fact, there are 15 official craft market sites across the island, with almost 3,000 traders/vendors some of whom are also artisans of exceptional worth. Such is our talent and proliferation of small business persons.

The craft markets are full to capacity. This gives rise to the attitude and behaviour exemplifying ‘just gimmie a look nuh!’ Art should be such that it draws the onlooker and attracts one in because it resonates with an inner need or appreciation. The artist and craftsman should never have to ask/beg one to look, when the work is properly displayed and visible.

Artisans place their creations in the care of the Traders who will then price them and either sell directly as is, or redesign, embellishing products by sanding, adding colour, raffia work or frames. The producer and the trader work in a symbiotic partnership to price, package, position and deliver the end product with mutually beneficial outcomes.

WOMEN LEADING THE WAY

Trading requires different skills to producing; these people manage the business. This job has traditionally belonged to women, who use dynamism, strength and courage as they assess and appraise each item, keeping abreast of buying trends, marketing and customer service. On the inside of the market, business is done, children are grown and trained, information is shared and life supported through the good times and bad. The National Craft Council of Jamaica invites you to visit your local craft market, see if something catches your eye and heart – ‘just tek a look’. Send your observations and comments to info@tpdco.org so that together we can become strong. The intention is to be positive, to stimulate business, to ask you to: – ‘Buy Jamaican, Build Jamaica – from within’.

This is the first in a series contributed by The National Craft Council of Jamaica/Tourism Product Development Company Ltd TPDCo, focusing on our craft markets, the artisans and master craftsmen therein, and those working from their studios to create and represent brand Jamaica with the finest quality workmanship, often times overlooked.
In an interesting and most informative presentation, historian Arnold Bertram chronicled the history of tourism in Jamaica at the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Library last Thursday, October 1.

The lecture was the first in a series to mark the Jamaica Tourist Board’s (JTB) 60th anniversary and took place during Tourism Awareness Week.

In his much-anticipated lecture, Bertram went from the days when Jamaica was regarded as a graveyard for the first English colonials who died of communicable diseases to a place where people who suffered with ill health came to recover and be healed. His presentation covered the building of the first major hotels, to being a destination for royalties and the rich and famous, to the contribution and pioneering work of Lorenzo Dow Baker and Abe Issa, to the development of the all-inclusive concept.

After the exposé on how tourism evolved in Jamaica, Bertram looked to the future, and noted that "as much as we have achieved ... in the present paradigm ... there isn’t much more we can do" in attracting tourists to our shores. "We have maxed out," he said. Yet, he suggested that stakeholders could turn to the Jamaica diaspora from which over a billion dollars could be earned.

Bed and Breakfast

The bed-and-breakfast sector, Bertram said, is developing rapidly, with people opening up their homes and small accommodations to visitors more than ever, thanks to the Internet. Attention, he intimated, should be given to this sector as it holds the biggest opportunities to expand the tourist industry and to "broaden the base of ownership". Yet, he also noted the proliferation of unflattering informal settlements in rural areas.

Also addressing the large gathering, including students from Tourism Action clubs, was Paul Pennicook, director of tourism, and Trevor Munroe, executive director, National Integrity Action Committee, at the Jamaica Tourist Board 60 Years Tourism Lecture Series and Exhibition held at the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Library on Thursday, October 1.

From left: Arnold Bertram, consultant and historian; Paul Pennicook, director of tourism; and Trevor Munroe, executive director, National Integrity Action Committee, at the Jamaica Tourist Board 60 Years Tourism Lecture Series and Exhibition held at the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Library on Thursday, October 1.
ON SATURDAY, March 15, 2008, two colleagues and I journeyed to Middle Pedro Cay on the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) Coast Guard’s HMJS Surrey, captained by then Lieutenant Commander Antonette Wehms-Gorman. It was my first extended boat ride and I was filled with caution and anticipation. I love adventures but the sea is not my favourite adventure locale.

I wanted to see what this much-talked-about place was like, but I was not prepared mentally for this 80-mile, four-hour journey. We left Port Royal at about 4:30 a.m. It was still dark, and so we didn’t get a chance to see around. The soldiers and recruits moved around seemingly oblivious to the rocking motion of the vessel.

We went to sleep while the boat rocked. When I woke, it was blue skies. We went on deck to behold only water, and I felt as if we were going down a hill. I went back below because the boat was tumultuous, and I felt very nauseous. My colleagues, too. For most of the journey, we lay down. We felt better that way. One of us vomited, however, and it wasn’t a pretty sight.

The experience was great, but I didn’t enjoy the ride. It was like I was being shaken up in a bottle. Eventually, the boat became less bouncy, and that was when I sat up, anticipating the arrival at Middle Cay. It looked really idyllic from afar, but as we neared it, disappointment took me over. It looked like a shanty town of zinc-and-board shacks.

HORRIFIC SIGHT

In an article published on April 6, 2008, I wrote, inter alia, “We roamed the cay until minutes after three, and I saw things that I would really want to see again, like masked booby birds nesting in the grass. But there are things unspeakable that I never, NEVER want to behold again, as if the boat ride weren’t stomach turning enough. So, when the HMJS Surrey returned for us, my heart sang with glee.”

So, what was the “unspeakable” I mentioned? Some people wanted to know. It was the many spots that
had become open-air toilets. I had to be dodging this and that, criss-crossing to see the birds nesting on the ground. There was a place where the sand was sparkling, but it was as strewn with brownish, sun-baked human waste. Birds were scattered about too, and I wondered whether they munched on the bits and pieces of manure. I even witnessed people answering the call of nature.

When it was time to leave, there was no melancholy, though I wished I could see the birds again. The journey back to the JDF vessel was rougher this time around. The sea was in turmoil, which made it difficult for me to get from the canoe on to the rope ladder and up into the boat. The canoe was bouncing like crazy. I eventually struggled up the ladder, but that wasn’t the end.

“I was now dangling, all 185 pounds of ‘muscles’, and holding on to the ship for dear life. The raft behind me bounced. I could not get back into it. I told myself that I was not going to be sinfully delicious shark food.”

RESCUE STORY

“My biceps hurt, but I am not letting go. Some crew members held me by my lifejacket collar and pulled me. With the crews’ assistance, I hauled myself on to the deck. The ordeal was over. I have conquered the rough seas. And Daraine Luton (a colleague) was in stitches,” I wrote.

We pulled out at about 5 p.m., so most of the journey back was in the dark. It was bumpier than the morning ride, and felt like it was the longest four hours ever. Silently, I swore never to return to Middle Cay, and I meant it. The littered space was not worth the trip. The booby birds are fascinating, but the scant regard that the fisher-folk had for the environment was vexing.

Years after the trip, the issue of the disgusting state of the cays was back in the headlines, and all sorts of solutions were proffered. I didn’t join the discussion despite my personal experience. What was I to say? Yet, a story, headlined ‘Pedro Cays disappearing’, in The Gleaner of Wednesday, September 30 motived this article.

The news was that, according to Professor Dale Webber, University of the West Indies coastal ecologist, the land space on Middle Cay, which we visited, was being reduced. Climate change, it appears, is submerging the cay.

“One cay already disappeared some years ago. There are three cays, and the middle one, where people actually live ... we are seeing that we will begin to lose land rapidly over the next five years and beyond,” Webber is quoted as saying.

“Really!” was my reaction. For, I had recalled my vow never to return. And now it seems like I will really never return. But while Middle Cay is dwindling, my mixed feelings and memories will not fade anytime soon.

If land space on Pedro Cays is actually dwindling as scientists are saying, then the scene above, captured in March 2008 will be a reminder of what life was like.
Tourism students to benefit from Sandals’ LEAP initiative

As THE world recently observed World Tourism Day under the theme, One Billion Tourists, One Billion Opportunities, and as Jamaica celebrates Tourism Awareness Week, Sandals Resorts International (SRI) has demonstrated its commitment to developing young talent in the hospitality industry through the official roll out of its LEAP (Leadership, Excellence and Purpose) initiative.

Aiming to provide leadership, guidance, motivation, and most important, resources to foster true development and opportunities among the student population, SRI, through its recently created LEAP initiative, will adopt and seek to re-energise student-led tourism organisations at the University of Technology, The University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Northern Caribbean University.

Supported by the Sandals Corporate University, SRI will embark on a series of activities and programmes to strengthen the operations of the universities’ tourism clubs and societies in order to safeguard the future of tourism through investment in young talent and the promotion of the hospitality sector.

Adam Stewart, chief executive officer at SRI, said LEAP was another manifestation of the company’s commitment to youth leadership.

“We have long recognised that the future of tourism and indeed the future of Jamaica lies in the hands of our young leaders. Sandals has always been committed to stimulating and nurturing young talent and we believe that through LEAP, we’ll be in an even better position to facilitate the development of young leaders and subsequently the tourism industry.”

Mark Pike, programme manager at SRI, himself a UWI Tourism Society founder and past president, conceptualised the LEAP initiative and spoke highly of its intention and potential.

He said, “LEAP will provide a golden opportunity for us at Sandals to mobilise our strengths and resources to be pillars of support to the student-led tourism groups at these universities. There is an abundance of talent within our student population and we intend to harness this by being mentors and guides and by providing assistance every step of the way. The future of tourism lies in the hands of our young people and LEAP is here to ensure that that future is very bright.”

Executive members of all three student organisations recently convened at Sandals Ochi Beach Resort for LEAP’s inaugural Student Executive Retreat. The two-day retreat featured presentations and panel discussions with the students, Sandals executives and youth leaders, including Aubrey Stewart, founder and CEO of Youth Organisation for Upliftment. This provided opportunities for the sharing of concerns, solutions and visions both for the respective clubs and societies and for tourism at large.

MANY CAREERS

Among the students’ foremost concerns was the few number of men who were involved in their clubs. The students also took issue with the commonly held perception that careers in the industry are limited only to housekeeping and food and beverage staff, and vowed to promote the diversity of careers in the field among their entire student body.

Tekiel Richards, acting president of UTech’s Tourism Action Club, said, “There are careers in this field for every major that we offer at UTech. The hotels need architects, landscapers are needed, finance majors have a part to play. The Tourism Action Club is not just for Tourism students and this is what we want our fellow students to know.” With assistance from executives in the Sandals chain, the students crafted an action plan to engage and attract more males and to promote hospitality as a viable career path to their fellow students.

The Student Executive Retreat is but one of the activities scheduled under the LEAP project. Over the next academic year, SRI has committed to a scholarship fund to benefit one student from each university, collaborative research and publications, mentorship from respected hospitality professionals, six coveted customised internships at Sandals Resorts, community outreach projects, fundraising activities, essay and research competitions and a membership and participation programme to highlight and reward the work of devoted club members.

Neko Kelly, public relations officer at UWI’s Tourism Society, expressed gratitude for the LEAP initiative on behalf of his colleagues. He said “My experience at Sandals for the LEAP retreat has been amazing! It has really opened my eyes to the art and business of tourism.”

People are key to promotions, says PR exec

UNIVERSITIES-based Caribbean communicator Bevan Springer believes Caribbean marketers ought to share more stories of the Caribbean people, their talents and accomplishments when promoting the region in the marketplace.

Speaking at the first Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum in Puerto Rico on Strategic Storytelling, Springer, president and chief executive of the Marketplace Excellence public relations practice, encouraged delegates to keep the creative talent that is abundant within the Caribbean at the forefront of promotional campaigns.

He said using the full spectrum of communications tools from traditional print to multimedia, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association members have tremendous opportunities to share the region’s “creative intellect and genius” with the global community as Caribbean people are largely responsible for contributing to positive experiences for the millions of visitors who travel to the region.

In a presentation titled Getting the Story WRITE, Springer, a weekly newspaper columnist and former New York City-based radio host, also urged members of the audience to establish a clear brand identity for their businesses and tell the brand’s story in everything that they do. Springer went on to champion the full embrace of social media in telling the Caribbean story. “Hotels and other enterprises should leave no stone unturned in the social media arena, and empower their staff to also share stories that bring brands to life,” he commented. “This adds value, validation and personality to your brand.”

Also participating in the panel discussion were Karolin Troubetzkoy of St Lucia’s Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain resorts; Richard Kahn, president of Kahn Travel Communications; Sylvia Scholey of Elegant Hotels of Barbados; Uncommon Caribbean’s Patrick Bennett; and Laura Walker, group publisher of Bonnier Corporation.

A former United Nations correspondent, Springer is an architect of the Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism, designed to improve the quality of media coverage of sustainable tourism in the Caribbean.

Marketplace Excellence Corporation is a full-service, integrated marketing agency committed to excellence in the fields of public relations, marketing and media coaching. The company represents clients in areas ranging from travel to healthcare to food exports and small business.

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