

The Gleaner

Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2017

THE ISLAND
ROUTES
EXPERIENCE

SEE
TOUCH
TASTE
DRIVE





**See ... Touch ...
Taste ... Drive ...**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Out for lunch! Island Routes Mini Coopers parked at Margaritaville Negril.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

YOU HAVE permission to take these four words literally, as Island Routes delivers on its promise of a truly authentic Jamaican experience behind the wheels of a Mini Cooper.

Two weeks ago, I was privy to this authenticity as I joined a few ‘real visitors’ from Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States – Jamaica’s three largest source markets – and a contingent of journalists on what was tagged ‘Mini-Routes Negril Tour’.

The invitation was bold, commandeering us to “grab the wheel of your very own Mini Cooper and journey with us as we head out on an adventure to Jamaica’s beautiful west coast”.

Not only is Island Routes showcasing the impact of tourism on local communities and families, while providing guests with opportunities to meet and engage with locals, but it is allowing that important linkages that the country’s Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett speaks about every opportunity he gets.

“It is giving locals the opportunities to not only earn foreign exchange, but to become actively involved in tourism and the guest experience,” said Island Routes’ vice-president of sales, David Shields.

Sustainable tourism development is exactly what Island Routes has embarked on and this is evidenced by the trickle-down effects on individuals, families and communities.

“The linkages effect is tremendous and cannot be denied, and nowhere is this better highlighted than on the Mini-Routes tour,” added Shields.



From left: Andrew Cavanaugh, Amy Cavanaugh, Nancy Wong, Mark Wong and Michael Wong.

TAKING ADVENTURE INTO OUR OWN HANDS

Following the lead of our expert guide, our first stop was at a local coconut vendor, Adrian Hemmings, at ‘Cold Beer Joint’ in Point, Hanover.

This rustic stop is about 40 minutes from Montego Bay, and 10 minutes from the capital, Lucea. Hemmings has had her joint for the last 21 years. She specialises in art and craft and, of course, cold beers.

A drive through the historic town of Lucea, before arriving Negril, Jamaica's 'capital of casual', for a delicious lunch at Margaritaville, located on the famous Seven Mile Beach.

After lunch and some beach time, of course, the next stop was the iconic Negril Light House at Jamaica's westernmost point for a breathtaking view and scenic photo-opportunity as well as meet and greet with the Lighthouse keeper.

And if you think the Light House is iconic, be prepared for a one-of-a-kind tour, which sees you savouring the legendary Ricks Café, voted one of the world's best beach bars and known for the thrill-seeking cliff divers.

On the return trip to Montego Bay, the final stop allows the taste buds to rejoice at an authentic jerk shack for a quick but interactive cooking demonstration with Chef Clifton Gordon at Mosquito Cove in Hanover.

The non-Jamaicans on the tour were in awe and the look of pride was evident on the faces of those born on the island.

"It's better than a bus tour," declared Amy Cavanaugh of Delaware, USA. She and her husband are planning on taking a road trip to Canada soon and feels Mini-Routes has set them

in motion.

Although not accustomed to driving on the left, she described the tour as a one-of-a-kind trip that compares to nothing else in the years that she has been travelling.

"The authenticity of the experience is what I will remember for years to come," she noted.

Like Cavanaugh, Mark and Nancy Wong, visiting from the UK, were simply smitten by the comfort of the Mini Cooper.

"We wanted to get out of the hotel and see more of Jamaica, while getting a better understanding of the culture," said the couple.

They both like the self-driving and felt that Rick's Café was among the best attraction they have visited on the island.

"We would have wanted to stay there longer, stopped by a local market or in one of the villages and see more of the local life," they expressed.

The start

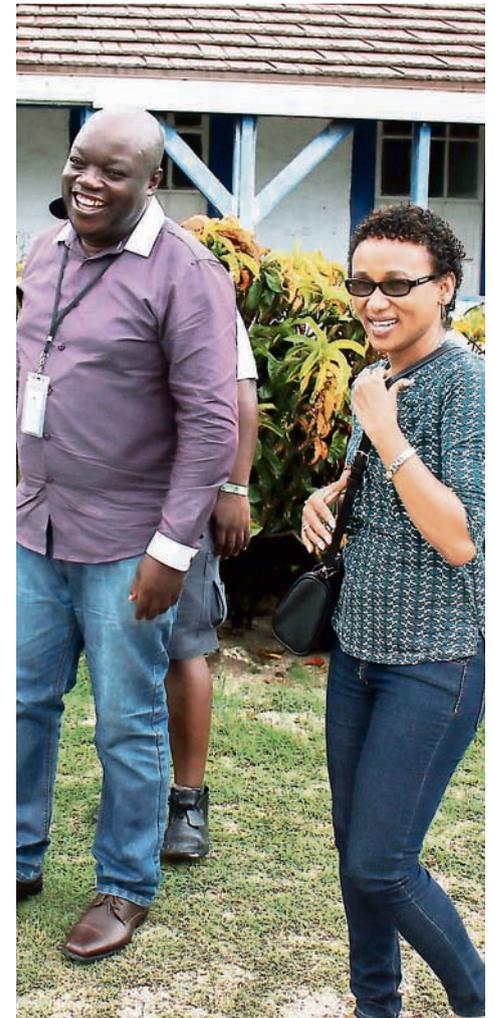
Mini-Routes were introduced to Jamaica in March and is said to be the first of its kind in the island.

The routes take visitors from Montego Bay to Ocho Rios, and

PLEASE SEE **TOUCH**, 4



Adrian Hemmings expertly chops a jelly coconut for visitors to her rustic 'Cold Beer Joint' in Point, Hanover.



Group public relations manager at Sandals, Sheryl McGaw-Douse, in a playful mood with Jamaica Information Services' Garwin Davis.



Fun and games on the Margaritaville Negril beach area.



A visit to the Negril Lighthouse.



The touring team having lunch at Margaritaville Negril.

TOUCH

CONTINUED FROM 3

from Montego Bay to Negril.

Island Routes has also confirmed in a media release that it will be creating a whole series of Revolving Routes that criss-cross Jamaica, ensuring that whether you're a seasoned islander or a first timer, there will be a new path to discover.

The fleet of Minis feature a range of models ensuring there is something to suit every group; this will include convertibles for the sun-lovers, two-door models, for couples, and four-door vehicles for

families.

The company's chief executive officer, Adam Stewart, gave his version of living on an island.

"I've had the distinct privilege of living the 'island life', and it's something I truly value, so it's very satisfying for my team and I to be able to share our island and home region with the world," he commented.

He added that while everyone knows that millennials are big on experience, Island Routes has not forgotten about the boomers, "so we're constantly looking for ways to engage all ages and offer experiences that everyone will love and want to shout about. I'm confident

that in 2017 we will continue to deliver on the experience and continue to outperform in our segment through our superior technology, our exceptional team and the quality of our product offering."

On the Ocho Rios route, guests can expect to drive through important towns, visit local food spots for some real Jamaican cuisine, see beautiful waterfalls and get to grips with some of the island's incredible history.

It is not every day that you get to see, touch, taste and drive ... in a Mini Cooper.

Janet.silvera@gleanerjm.com



Aneisha Christie poses next to a Mini Cooper.



Clifton Gordon demonstrating the jerking of chicken.



Escoveitched fish.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

A section of the audience at the symposium.

Culture ministry hosts world heritage and climate change symposium

Paul H. Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WORLD HERITAGE Sites are so designated because of their special cultural and physical significance. They have outstanding universal value, and to such sites tourists go to embrace and learn about the cultures and geographies of the world. Jamaica's Blue and John Crow Mountains are two of such sites.

However, the integrity, security and value of these sites seem to be under threat by world climate change. Mindful of this, Jamaica's Ministry of Culture, in conjunction with UNESCO Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean, Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO and the Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation is hosting a world heritage and climate change symposium at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel in St Andrew from May 29-31.

In bringing greetings to the audience at the opening ceremony on Monday, Laleta Davis-Mattis, chairman of the Culture Advisory Committee, Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, said, *inter alia*, "It is self-evident that climate change poses a threat to the outstanding universal values of some World Heritage Site and therefore has implications for the implementations of



Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Olivia Grange addressing the opening ceremony of the world heritage and climate change symposium at The Jamaica Pegasus hotel on Monday, May 29.

the Convention, including nominations, periodic reporting and reactive monitoring. The submission of nominations, therefore, will also include the design of appropriate measures for monitoring the impacts of climate change and adapting to the adverse consequences".

The gathering was also addressed by

two Jamaican government ministers, Olivia Grange and Daryl Vaz, minister without portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, with responsibility for land, environment, climate change and investment.

"Climate change strikes at the very foundation of our lives and livelihood, including our culture and heritage ... The tourism sector on which we largely depend is vulnerable to loss and damages to assets and attractions, as well as an increase in insurance cost," said Vaz.

In her presentation to delegates from eight Caribbean countries, Grange noted that small island developing states are particular vulnerable to the impacts of climate change on their economic welfare, and that is why they had gathered "to deliberate and come to a consensus on how to battle the vicious impacts of climate change on the integrity of our culture and heritage".

The three-day symposium, Grange said, "symbolises the urgency for our collective fight to protect our identity as a region, both with respect to preserving and safeguarding our tangible and intangible heritage".

In closing, Grange said, "The work at hand is great, but is not beyond us to tackle the issues and find solutions that will ensure the proactive protection of our heritage assets in the Caribbean."

Bartlett urges CDB to invest more in tourism

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS including the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) are being urged by Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett to better establish a window of opportunity for small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs) and to invest more in tourism in the region.

Bartlett argued that a more significant contribution to national economies and its citizens can only come through improving the capacity of people to provide an enhanced visitor experience.

Bartlett's analysis came out during his participation in a high-level panel discussion last Thursday at the 47th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the CDB in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

"Even though one in 11 workers in the world work with the tourism industry and some US\$7.6 trillion of tourism expenditure happened last year globally, only a very meagre 0.15 per cent of multilateral and donor agency funds go into tourism globally, that is less than a quarter of one per cent," said the tourism minister.

NEED FOR CHANGE

This means that less than US\$250 million of all the loans provided went to the sector, he revealed, adding that there has to be a change in attitude towards the industry so that more can be provided for the people who can contribute to the development of the region.

He noted that the banking system in the Caribbean is yet to come to grips with the demand for tourism and the development of the kind of portfolio that will allow SMTEs to have access to the requisite funds. This in light of the fact that the Caribbean is the most tourism-dependent region on earth, with over 50 per cent of GDP and one in five workers being tourism-related for at least 16 of 28 nations in the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, Bartlett highlighted that a 2014 report conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme showed that the Caribbean, though being the most tourism-dependent region on earth, had the highest level of leakage of tourism expenditure.

"It is at 80 per cent, that is 80 cents of every dollar being leaked; meaning it goes back to pay for the cost of tourism, the visitor and the inputs of the industry that are required. In the case of Jamaica, the report said that we were 70 per cent, with 30 cents of the dollar staying here and 70 cents leaving the country," he said.

"We therefore have to own the consumption side of tourism and build the capacity of our people to deliver on the experience and, by so doing, increase the level of retention of the tourism dollar in the economy," Bartlett noted.

He went on to say that by providing well-needed financial support to SMTEs and those companies which play a vital part in the tourism value chain, we can build out our visitor experiences – in gastronomy, entertainment, sports, health and other areas that appeal to their passion points. This, he said, will encourage visitors to spend more; thus we will retain more of the tourism dollars and stop leakage.



BARTLETT



Drones, vacations & Caribbean regulations

Expedia opens Cuban market

THE EXPEDIA group, the world's largest online travel agency, have announced expansion plans into the Cuban market, which will allow Cuban hoteliers to sell inventory through global Expedia group sites as well as allow travellers to book hotels in the island destination.

The addition of Cuba's hotel inventory in Expedia's Caribbean portfolio will open new possibilities for inter-Caribbean and multi-destination travel that may boost growth throughout the region. The Expedia group works closely with partners throughout the Caribbean to ensure that they thrive as the region evolves, using tailored strategies and regional data to take advantage of the fast-changing market.

According to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation's 2016 Industry Performance Report, travel within the region increased for the second straight year, a clear sign of interest by Caribbean travellers in exploring their neighbouring countries. According to the Cuban Ministry of Tourism, over four million tourists visited Cuba in 2016, up 13 per cent from the previous year. Among those visitors were over 614,000 Americans, up 34 per cent from the year before. Because of the high interest in the island nation, destinations are already seeing the potential in multi-destination travel promotion, specifically when the tourism minister of Jamaica signed an agreement with his counterpart in Cuba to facilitate multi-destination marketing between the countries, during the 2016 Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX).

Per *The New York Times*, international companies are already looking to Cuba to take advantage of the destination's rising popularity with US consumers. A new International Monetary Fund study states that if US travel restrictions are lifted, it could result in 3-5.6 million US arrivals in Cuba with most of the boost coming from visitors who have never travelled to the Caribbean

PLEASE SEE **EXPEDIA**, 11

David Jessop

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

Some time ago, I wrote a column about flying drones in the Caribbean – the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) loved by hobbyists, but which also have important everyday commercial applications.

I did so not because I have a drone, but because I am fascinated by all technological developments and their effect on society; and because in a Caribbean context, UAVs present unusual challenges in relation to safety, security, and personal privacy, while bringing multiple benefits to the tourism industry.

At the time, I observed that drones are another form of disruptive technology and that governments and the tourism industry will have to find ways to determine how best to relate such issues to the individual freedom that taking a UAV on a vacation implies for those who fly them.

Writing then, I quoted an online hobbyist publication *Dronelife.com*, which suggested to its readers that travelling with a drone has become an 'epic way to catalogue ... summer exploits', had become much cooler than taking selfies, and was the best way of capturing a visit to the beaches of the Caribbean.

The quite unintended consequence was that since writing, I



David Jessop

have come to be seen as someone who flies drones, and is an expert on the Caribbean regulations governing their use and importation.

While this makes me smile, the extraordinary number of messages I receive on the subject, mainly from young people, but also from commercial enterprises, makes an important point. There is an absence of current practical information not just on bringing a drone into the region, but on other technological and social issues of relevance to travellers, especially millennials.

When it comes to drones, there is no regional consistency. Approaches range from a complete ban to wildly different customs interpretations on temporary imports. There are safety and security regulations in some countries in relation to airports and

restricted facilities, confusion about licensing for commercial use, uncertainty about who is responsible for answering questions, and an almost near-total inability in-country to police any restrictions that may have been created.

LACK OF INFORMATION

Since writing last on the subject, there have been sporadic statements by governments on what is forbidden, usually related to safety and security, anecdotal reports on hobbyist websites of problems with customs, but an almost complete lack of information online on a national or regional basis.

I normally share what I know, as I have, by default, become a follower of the issue. I try to point flyers who I hear from – they are without exception responsible and want to operate within national regulations – to what little information is available, suggesting they contact tourist boards, but which, it transpires, are mostly unable to respond with the certainty the visitor needs.

This is of some significance as many of the emails I receive come from those who are in the process of deciding whether to vacation in the Caribbean, and where. It begs the question as to what generic sites such as caribbeantravel.com or others developed by the hospitality industry are for, if a visitor

cannot either be advised or directed to where they can obtain the detail they need to be able to travel with certainty.

If the region is interested in attracting tomorrow's generation, their repeat business and eventually their families, more attention needs to be paid to providing practical information about issues that have become significant to travellers from the region's source markets. These include practical matters such as flying drones, high-speed broadband, and public connectivity outside of hotels, to social issues relating to the tolerance of various forms of sexuality, or, for example, what is permissible to wear on the beach.

As with much else in a fragmented region, there may be no easy answers, not least because the issues, in part, are also matters for the industry to consider.

Although issues surrounding tourism and flying drones may seem marginal, their technological advance and new commercial applications will soon require every nation in the region to respond. While any country can choose to make a tourism virtue out of retaining the past – a quite legitimate aspiration, but hard to deliver as a national product – having a modern tourism-based economy makes inescapable the social and technological change taking place in source markets.

before. If restrictions are lifted, the Cuban government will have a higher chance to achieve their goal of 10 million visitors by 2030, per **The New York Times**. Leaders like St Lucian Prime Minister Allen M. Chastanet is excited about the potential that Cuba will have in opening up tourists' appetites for the Caribbean region as a whole, according to **The Miami Herald**.

"We've been working around the clock with Cuban hoteliers to offer this iconic, culture-rich destination to our global consumers, with the added convenience of online booking through a trusted travel partner," said Demetrius Canton, director of market management for the Caribbean. "We are excited to finally announce our expansion into Cuba, which will hopefully allow us to dive deeper into the Caribbean region and help our partners thrive. By further strengthening the value proposition that we offer, our local teams will continue to help hotel partners set their distribution strategy and take advantage of trends to reach and surpass their bottom line."

"We are excited to make Barcel properties in Cuba accessible to travellers on Expedia platforms around the world," said Josep Brichs, corporate commercial director for Barcel— Hotel Group, Latin America.

"We are very proud Barcelo Solymar and Barcel— Arenas Blancas in Varadero, have been one of the first bookings made on Expedia upon the opening of the destination. Expedia is a key partner and our priority is to develop new opportunities on the international travel industry together."



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Newly appointed Ambassador of Spain to Jamaica, Josep María Bosch Bessa (centre), and his wife, María Teresa González (second right), receive Paul A. Muschett, custos of Trelawney (left) and his wife, Sheona Muchett (second left), at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel on Sunday, May 21. Sharing in the moment is deputy head of mission, Embassy of Spain, Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador.



The Embassy of Spain presents *Caminos Flamencos*



Newly appointed Ambassador of Spain to Jamaica, Josep María Bosch Bessa (left), marks his introduction to Chairman of Rose Hall Developments Ltd Michelle Rollins (centre) with a quick photo at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel. Sharing in the moment is deputy head of mission, Embassy of Spain, Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador.



Deputy Head of Mission for the Embassy of Spain, Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador (right) welcomes Maureen James from Hyatt Ziva/Zilara at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel.



Baby Maria Rodríguez Pérez stands out in the crowd at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel on Sunday, May 21. The free concert in Montego Bay was made possible by the Embassy of Spain, The Spanish-Jamaican Foundation, TSK Grupo and Iberostar Hotels & Resorts.

Philipp Hofer, director of operations, at Iberostar Rose Hall Hotel welcomes María Teresa González (centre), wife of the Ambassador of Spain to Jamaica, and deputy head of mission for the Embassy of Spain, Carmen Rives Ruiz-Tapiador, at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel.



From left: Shelly-Ann Fung, Allison Kallam and Whitney O'Conner steal the spotlight at the Caminos Flamencos concert at the Black River Theatre in Iberostar Rose Hall All Suites Hotel. The free concert in Montego Bay was made possible by the Embassy of Spain, The Spanish-Jamaican Foundation, TSK Grupo and Iberostar Hotels & Resorts.

Bartlett lauds positive impact of Reggae Sumfest on Destination Jamaica

RED STRIPE presents Reggae Sumfest on July 16-22 and will mark 25 years of stellar Jamaican entertainment in Montego Bay when the event opens. Having contributed significantly to the brand affinity and the economy, Jamaica's tourism minister, Edmund Bartlett, has lauded the festival organisers, charging them to stage another phenomenal event.

Speaking at the Montego Bay launch of the week-long festival on Thursday, May 18, at the Iberostar Rose Hall Beach & Spa Hotel, Bartlett said that market research shows that the three words associated with Destination Jamaica are food, music and love. He outlined that the festival encapsulated these attributes and lauded its continued economic contribution.

"Reggae Sumfest has been great for Jamaica over the years; it has brought thousands of visitors to this country; millions of dollars into the economy of Montego Bay and Jamaica; and this year we are expecting you to do greater exploits. I



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From left: Lorna Deers, Howard Deers, Edmund Bartlett, (minister of tourism), and Mickey Morris at the Red Stripe Reggae Sumfest launch recently.



Oliver Townsend (left) of Knutsford Express greets Joe Bogdanovich of Downsound Entertainment during the Red Stripe Reggae Sumfest launch.

expect that the results of this year will be phenomenal," he said.

Josef Bogdanovich, CEO of Downsound Entertainment, organisers of Reggae Sumfest, reiterated his company's commitment to expanding the reach of Jamaican music globally. In his presentation, he acknowledged the value of the event and promised an outstanding festival of which all Jamaicans can be proud.

EXCEPTIONAL EVENT

"We moved the festival to one week to extend the access to the culture for visitors and encourage Jamaicans to vacation at home. We are advanced in our plans and are aiming for an exceptional event for the 25th staging," Bogdanovich revealed.

Last year, capitalising on the global affinity for the Reggae Sumfest brand, the 2016 Hi-Definition Broadcast and 360 live streams showcased the festival free for over 500,000 live individual views. A further two million-plus views on YouTube one week after the festival signalled increased global demand for the event. Following the 2016 festival, there are some 90,000 videos taken from the Live Stream being actively watched on YouTube.

Bartlett acknowledged the robust social media engagement reported by the organisers of 50 million impressions on social media currently and made a demand of his own.

"Reggae Sumfest 25 is going to take off to a new dimension. Joe told me that he is looking at 50 million impressions already and I said to him if you have that many impressions in the social media, I only want one million visitors to Jamaica. My business is about heads to beds, more feet on the street, and to convert the lookers into bookers," Bartlett proclaimed.

Reggae Sumfest begins on Sunday, July 16, with



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett poses with Kristopher Dwyer of Teen Vybe Magazine.

the Beach Party. The staple All-White Party at Pier One happens on Tuesday, July 18. Sumfest Blitz is on Wednesday, July 19, and the exciting Sumfest Heavyweight Clash takes place on Thursday, July 20 at Pier-One. The festival climaxes at the historic Catherine Hall on Friday, July 21, and Saturday, July 22, with live music, featuring Mavado, Tory Lanez, Queen Ifrica, Jah Cure, Sizzla and Christopher Martin, among many others.

Early-bird tickets and travel packages are on sale exclusively on www.eventbrite.com. Patrons can look forward to more updates on the line-up and events for Reggae Sumfest 2017.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Emancipation Park, an oasis in the city.

Canadian travel agents experience Kingston

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) recently hosted a group of 14 Canadian travel agents to the island on a five-night familiarisation tour. The trip introduced agents to Kingston as they flew into the Norman Manley International Airport, stayed at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, enjoyed lunch at Gloria's Seafood Restaurant, Port Royal, had ice cream at the iconic Devon House, toured downtown Kingston and New Kingston, and even enjoyed a leisurely jog in Emancipation Park.

Interest in Kingston continues to grow, as the city features impressive options for the history buff, sports aficionado, nature lover, gastronome, lovers of the creative and performing arts, and so much more.

The agents were impressed and pleasantly surprised during their time in Kingston, especially by the city's cosmopolitan flair. They were absorbed by the distinct features of downtown Kingston and New Kingston, with agents expressing thanks for the unique opportunity to experience another facet of Jamaica's diverse tourism product.

"We were thrilled to introduce Kingston to this esteemed group of Canadian travel agents," said Marcia McLaughlin, deputy director of tourism, marketing. "Kingston continues to grow as an important destination among travellers looking for a cosmopolitan city experience complete with culture and culinary highlights to round out their trip. We are continually pursuing ways to add to the product as we strengthen the



Fourteen Canadian travel agents and a representative from Travelweek magazine pose with Dan Hamilton (back left in orange), the Jamaica Tourist Board's district sales manager for Canada.

appeal of Kingston, the cultural capital of Jamaica."

These positive sentiments of the travel agents help to form a rich soundtrack to the rhythms of Kingston and the world is taking notice. Earlier this year, *The New York Times* designated Kingston among the top 52 Best Places to Go in 2017, listing the capital at No. 24. This *New York Times* recognition is a great complement to Kingston being named a UNESCO Creative City of Music. It is

an acknowledgement that celebrates the many cultural and creative industries at the heart of the city.

Kingston's inviting menu of must-dos include activities from sporting events (international and community), to local plays; from eclectic eateries, to live performances and music tours; and from art shows to meeting facilities. And the solid menu of accommodations for diverse tastes means Kingston is definitely a hotspot.



CONTRIBUTED

John Woolcock

JTB appoints John Woolcock manager of groups and conventions

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) has announced the appointment of John

JAMAICA
TOURIST BOARD

Woolcock as manager, groups and conventions, in the JTB's Regional Office, USA (Miami).

"I am eager to take on the responsibilities of this new role and look forward to helping the destination grow its market share in groups and conventions," said Woolcock. "With our award-winning Montego Bay Convention Centre in Montego Bay, combined with our wide array of accommodations and attractions, I believe Jamaica provides a great option for meeting and incentive planners looking for an ideal Caribbean venue."

Prior to this appointment, Woolcock held the post of district sales manager with responsibility for the west and the southeast USA for more than four years. This included Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. He is a seasoned sales and marketing professional with more than 31 years of intimate experience in promoting Destination Jamaica through the Jamaica Tourist Board.

Woolcock also served the JTB as business development officer (formerly titled marketing representative) for the northeast USA, based in Boston; and sales representative and senior sales representative, based in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

To learn more about the destination or to book your next meeting, go to www.visitjamaica.com.

Come back to Miami

Convention and Visitors Bureau issues invitation

AFFECTIONATELY REFERRED to as 'Kingston 21' due to the proximity to Kingston, Jamaica, and the strong cultural and business ties over several decades, Miami, Florida, was 'reintroduced' to Jamaican travel agents recently.

The event, a breakfast presentation, was hosted by the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) and American Airlines at the Courtyard by Marriott, Kingston.

In town from GMCVB to deliver an invitation to visit Miami and the beaches were Joe Docal, GMCVB director of travel industry sales, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Petra Brennan, the bureau's senior manager, programme development, multicultural tourism and development.

ENTICING JAMAICANS

GMCVB and American Airlines, represented by Lorraine D'Aguilar, channel/passenger sales, Jamaica, hosted local travel agents, giving an update on happenings in their home town. Noting that Jamaicans visit relatives in Miami often and shop there frequently, Docal said this visit was all about enticing them to do more.

He spoke of Miami as "a global tourism, meetings, convention and cruise destination" hosting more than 5.1 million cruises in 2016. With 54,700 hotel rooms and another 5,445 by 2019, a new convention centre and the Miami World Center being completed in 2018, Docal said visitors could easily "combine business and leisure" in one visit.

He pointed to shopping centres like Aventura, Bal Harbour, Coconut Grove and Downtown Miami and the new Miami Design District which boasts top-tier storefronts like Hermes, Valentino, Dior, Givenchy, Tom Ford and others.

Historical, cultural and natural attractions are popular too, like the ancient Spanish Monastery, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, the Fruit & Spice Park, Schnilby Winery and the Beach and Botanical Garden. And when it comes to events, Docal said, all roads lead to Miami Spa Month (July), Miami Carnival



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jamaica travel industry guests at the Breakfast Destination Presentation hosted in Kingston by the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) with GMCVB executives, Joe Docal (second left, seated), director, travel sales, Latin America and the Caribbean and Petra Brennan (second right, seated), senior manager of multicultural tourism and development; and Lorraine D'Aguilar (seated, centre), channel/passenger sales, Jamaica, for American Airlines.

(October) and Miami Live Month (November), which boasts the Miami Book Fair International, Nascar Road Championship Weekend and the Sunny Isles Beach Jazz Festival.

The GMCVB recently launched its **Multicultural Guide**, which invites visitors to "discover our heritage and find a Miami you never knew existed, but is worth exploring".

Brennan (a Jamaican living in Miami) spoke of the diversity in Miami – a melting pot of Caribbean people, including Jamaicans, Cubans and Haitians. Heritage neighbourhoods like Little Haiti, Little Havana, Historic Overtown and West Coconut Grove, pay homage to these roots, she said.

The guide promises "the sun and fun will bring you to Miami, but its rich multicultural essence will keep you coming back again and again".



From left: Joe Docal, director, travel industry sales, Latin America and the Caribbean, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB); Lorraine D'Aguilar, channel/passenger sales, Jamaica, for American Airlines; and Petra Brennan, senior manager of multicultural tourism and development, GMCVB, at the bureau's Breakfast Destination Presentation Seminar at the Courtyard by Marriott in Kingston on May 2. The GMCVB and American Airlines partnered to present to local travel agents an update on events and accommodations in Miami, and to share their new 'Multicultural Guide'.

EXPEDIA

CONTINUED FROM 6

before. If restrictions are lifted, the Cuban government will have a higher chance to achieve their goal of 10 million visitors by 2030, per **The New York Times**. Leaders like St Lucian Prime Minister

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Staff at Couples Negril and Swept Away recognised



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Junior Manager of the Year at Couples Swept Away, Odain Johnson (right), accepting his award from food and beverage manager Jonathon Allen.

STAFF MEMBERS at Couples Resorts' two properties in the west, Couples Negril and Couples Swept Away, were recently recognised by their employers for their sterling contributions during 2016.

Here is a pictorial highlight of the awards function:



Couples Negril Manager of the Year, Dwight McInnis, accepts his award from financial controller Sharon Wallace.



Luciano, as he entertains at Couples Swept Away Staff Awards.



Manager of the Year at Couples Swept Away, Executive Sous Chef Simone Houghton-Campbell (right), accepts her awards and gets a congratulatory hug from General Manager Karen Lanigan.



Junior Manager of the Year at Couples Negril, Omar Taylor (left), system administrator, accepts his award from Executive Chef Andre Campbell.



Most Active Environment Department, Human Resources, accepting their award from Couples Swept Away operations manager, Konrad Malcolm.



Members of the Department of the Year at Couples Negril, Bar, accepting their award from General Manager Wayne Williams.



Team Leader of the Year at Couples Negril, Delecia Dixon (left) from Kitchen, accepts her award from food and beverage manager Delroy Maye.



Chedion Campbell (right) from Housekeeping accept the General Manager's Award from Karen Lanigan of Couples Swept Away.



The human resource team at Couples Swept Away. Front row (from left): Kemneisha McIntosh-Barrett, Delrose Griffiths, Shanna-Gay Richards and Melonie Jackson. Back row (from left): Taneisha Kerr, Nola Shakes and Norma Dobson, human resource manager.



Members of the Department of the Year at Couples Swept Away, Kitchen, celebrate their victory.



Most Active Environment Warden at Couples Negril, Shantal Daley (left), accepts her award from Nelka Jean Clarke, environment/duty manager.



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

The artist Ambokele among his pieces.



Livingston Lewin's 'Dancing in the Wind', guango relief.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL. H

The art of an island

Paul H. Williams

TOURISTS COME to Jamaica, they say, mainly for the sun, sand, sea, and the 'others'. And we have an abundance of such. But there are people who come here for the stories, the history, the heritage, community ethos, social sensibilities, and the warmth and hospitality of the Jamaican people.

And the Jamaican people are very creative, capturing and telling our stories, achievements, challenges, frailties, and triumphs through paintings, drawings, sculptures, monuments, etc. The island is replete with artists and artisans, some intuitive, some formally trained and schooled.

With their canvases and brushes, wood and chisels, clay and metals, they have been representing our emotions, sceneries,

sacred symbols and objects, our performing arts. Their pieces are works of art that are of a very high quality.

Yet, far too many times, I have been to art shows and exhibitions and have not seen people who seem to be visitors looking to take back a piece, or two, of artistic representations of Jamaica, life on the island, and the Jamaican people. So, who is coming here then for the art of the island? Why are our galleries not overflowing with tourists? They have some excellent pieces that can rival the work of artists the world over.

These are questions that I will attempt to find answers for in short order. The questions popped up again when I attended the opening of The Gathering, an art exhibition hosted by Art Gallery Ambokele at The Pantry, along Dumfries Road in St



Marcia Henry's calabash pieces.

Andrew, on Friday, May 27.

The evening was all that the hosts, Portland-based artists-artisans Philip Ambokele Henry and his wife, Marcia, intended it to be: a coming-together of like-minded people, artists and patrons, viewing art, eating, drinking, and making themselves merry, enjoying life to the fullest.

My only 'concern' was that the finger food should have been of a Jamaican essence. It was an evening of Jamaica art, 152 pieces on show, so there should have been real Jamaican gastronomic delights to complete the picture, pun intended. Imagine savouring ackee and saltfish atop a piece of fritters while viewing Livingston Lewin's sculpted relief 'Dancing in the Wind', etched in guango wood.

And it was a beautiful picture of Ambokele, surrounded by his wife, four daughters, and three of his grandchildren as he spoke about his artistic endeavours and the journey through them. The son of a preacher man and a school principal says that art chose him, and not the other way around. And it appears to be a good choice that art made as Ambokele has done some fantastic pieces proudly rep-

resenting art.

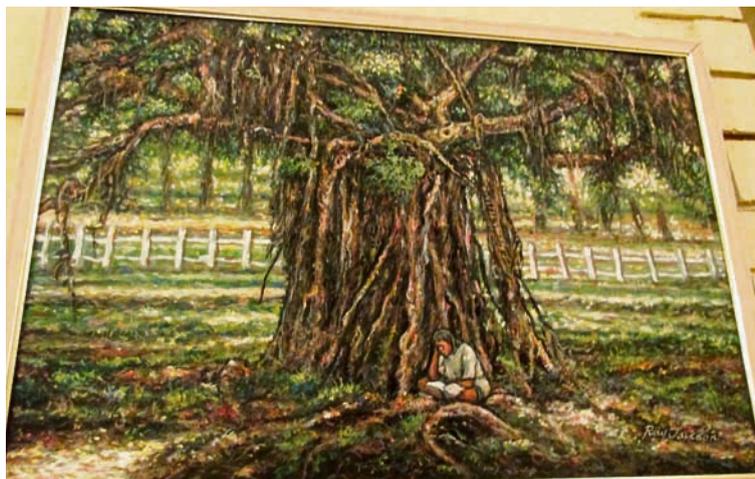
Yet, it was not a family affair. Also on show were many pieces done by artists from the Portland Art Gallery and others such as Lennox Coke, Keith Reese, Fitz Mitchell, Alexander Cooper, Hope Spencer, Joevan, Lisa Hendricks, Everard Powell, and Novlet Gonzales Barnes. Raymond Watson's sculpture, 'The Gruimi Player', done with bronze resin on mahogany, I would love to have on my bedside table, but I don't have the \$260,000 for it.

It was a different context and setting from the hills and valleys, ridges, rivers, and bushes that I frequent, but I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. The atmosphere was laid-back, with nobody going around with airs of importance. The electrifying drumming prior to the start of the formalities got me making some turns. The live band, led by Benji Myers, wasn't bad either. Super-talented Makeda Solomon mesmerises, wows, and drew tears from the MC.

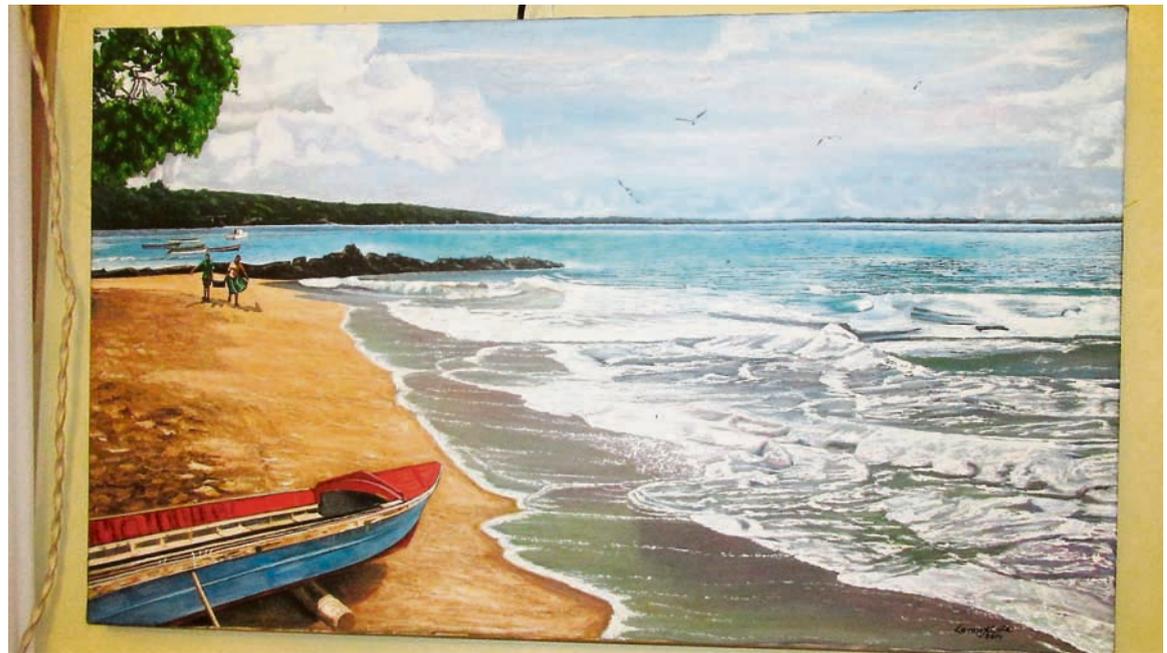
And it was to draw close to my bed when I left minutes after nine. I didn't want the little bit of white wine to spoil the night of the fine arts of our island.



Fitz Mitchell's lignum vitae pieces.



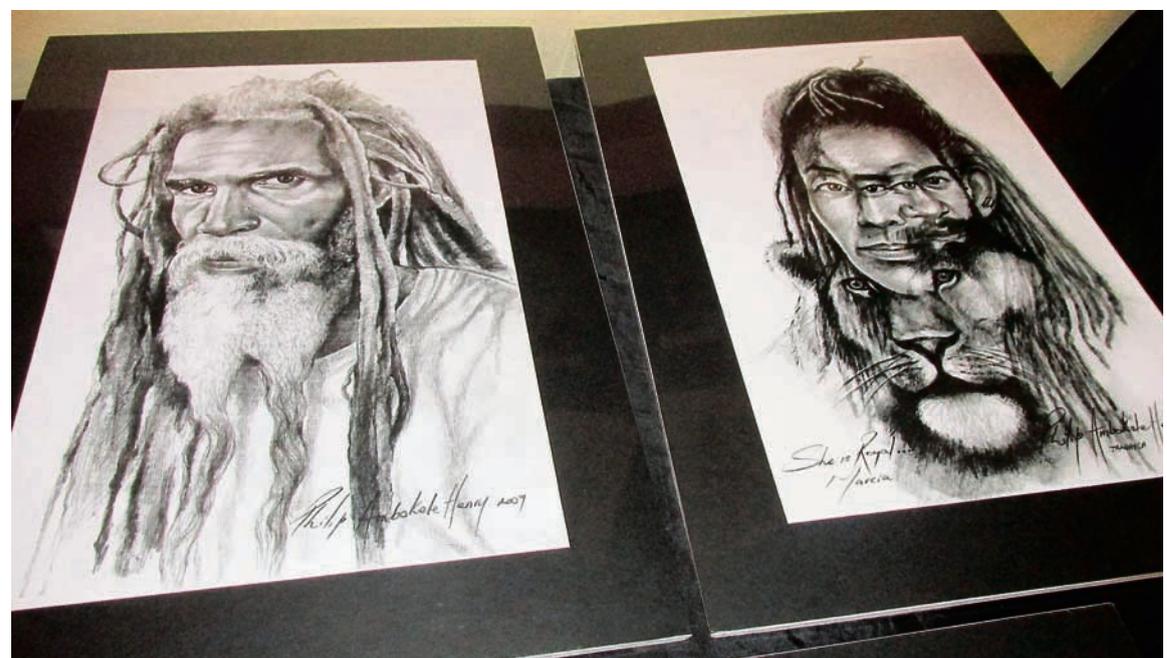
Raymond Jackson's 'Learning Tree' done in acrylic on canvas.



Lennox Coke's 'Treasure Beach', acrylic on canvas.



Ambokele's masks.



'Generations', in pencil, by Ambokele.

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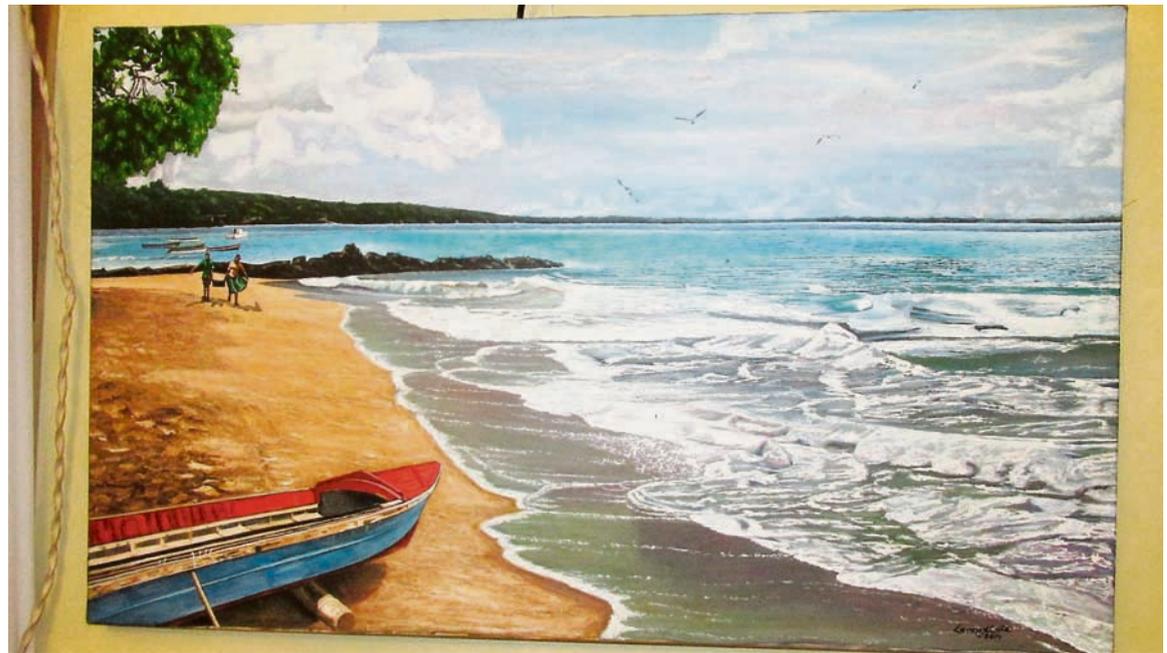
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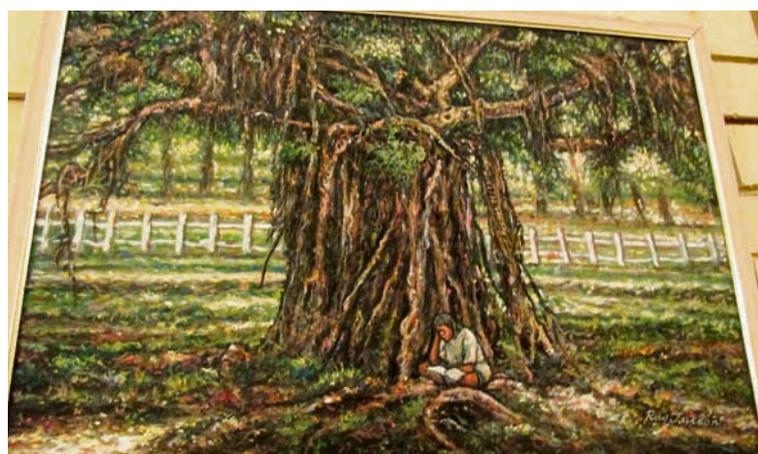
Lennox Coke's 'Treasure Beach', acrylic on canvas.



Ambokele's masks.



Fitz Mitchel's lignum vitae pieces.



Raymond Jackson's 'Learning Tree' done in acrylic on canvas.



'Generations', in pencil, by Ambokele.

Summit Police Station gets facelift for Labour Day

HOSPITALITY WORKERS and valued guests from Sandals Resorts in the Montego Bay region brought life to the Summit Police Station as they joined citizens across the island in demonstrating their passion for development and protection of resources, in recognition of the recently celebrated Labour Day.

More than 50 volunteers from Sandals Montego Bay, Sandals Royal Caribbean and Sandals Inn participated in the enhancement project to do general upgrades, cleaning and painting the station's exterior and offices. Members of the resorts' maintenance and landscaping team led the initiative and fine-tuned the efforts of the volunteers, leaving the grounds and building manicured and polished.

"Many corporate groups will be focusing on schools and infirmaries on Labour Day," says



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Sandals Resorts' multi-repeat guest, Cake Stanley (left), and Sandals Foundation's scholarship recipient, Vanessa Barnaby, do their part by painting the poles during the Labour Day beautification project.



Volunteers from Sandals Royal Caribbean and Sandals Montego Bay, (from left) Yone Gayle, Noesia Simms, Rajiv Johnson and Sigourney Smith take a break during the Labour Day activities.

regional public relations manager, Khadine Daley.

She added that the focus was placed on these areas throughout the year.

"As such, we wanted to take time out to reach out to the Summit Police Station, which is located near the Hip Strip and is visible to locals and more so, the tourists. We are very excited about this year's

project and welcome the partnership with the police, who continue to play a major role in protecting and serving our people."

The Labour Day activity represents only one of several community development and renovation projects that the Sandals chain has initiated throughout the year, with major projects being located in the rural areas of Jamaica.

US Virgin Islands gets sports tourism boost

THE UNITED States Virgin Islands (USVI) is now an approved destination to host National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I teams and, in addition to hosting basketball, volleyball and swimming events, the territory can facilitate the participation of soccer, lacrosse and other NCAA-sponsored sports during the summer months.

Governor Kenneth E. Mapp said the new designation represented a huge boost for sports tourism opportunities in the territory.

He made the announcement last Friday at a news conference at Government House on St Thomas, where he was accompanied by Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty; Commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation Pedro Cruz; Assistant Commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation Calvert White; and Nels J. Hawkinson, executive director of Basketball Travelers, Inc, which runs the USVI's annual Paradise Jam basket-



CONTRIBUTED

From left: Assistant Commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation Calvert White; Commissioner of Sports, Parks and Recreation Pedro Cruz; Governor Kenneth E. Mapp; Tourism Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty; and Basketball Travelers Executive Director Nels J. Hawkinson at Friday morning's news conference at Government House on St Thomas.

ball tournament in November.

"With all 24 NCAA Division I sports teams now able to travel to the US Virgin Islands for summer tours, we look forward to being part of the growth of the Paradise Jam competitions and to the possibility of hosting other NCAA sporting events," the governor said, recognising the potential for a significant positive impact on the territory's economy.

"This is an amazing opportunity to expand our sports tourism portfolio and our facilities."

The USVI and Basketball Travelers have partnered to bring five men's college basketball teams to the territory as early as this August now that the USVI has been approved as an international or foreign tour destination for Division I colleges across the United States.

Hawkinson, whose Basketball Travelers organises both domestic and international basketball

competitions for college and high-school teams, said there are 340 Division I universities in the United States, each with approximately 25 sports with 50 potential teams (men and women combined) that can now visit the islands.

"We're very excited to build on the success we've had for the last 18 years with Paradise Jam and to bring additional teams here. We're looking forward to this new initiative and continuing our great partnership with the US Virgin Islands and its people," he said.

Currently visiting the US Virgin Islands for the 50th time, Hawkinson said his love affair with the territory is still as strong as it was 20 years ago when he first visited on a cruise ship. "That's what makes your islands. Everywhere I go, (people) are friendly ... and it's so wonderful to know that when we bring groups here, people are friendly and they understand basketball and sports."