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**Hospitality Jamaica**

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2018

**500%**  
**MORE FISH IN  
FIVE YEARS!**

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# 500% in five years

PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN  
A workman cleans the beach.



Belinda Collier-Morrow (White River Marine Association).



Inilek Wilmot of the Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary.

## *White River Fish Sanctuary preserving Jamaica's marine life*

### Janet Silvera

*Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator*

**D**ETERMINED TO increase the fish biomass in their community by 500 per cent in five years, concerned stakeholders in Ocho Rios have established the resort town's first fish sanctuary in White River.

Special fishery conservation areas (fish sanctuaries) are fishing zones reserved for the reproduction of fish populations.

Stretched between Hermosa Cove in St Ann and Prospect in St Mary, the 1.5 kilometre-long sanctuary is projected to, among other things, help to reverse the destructive tendencies that have plagued the coast of St Ann and help revitalise the reefs and protect sea life, said Lieutenant Commander Paul Wright, who heads the fisheries division in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAFA).

"For some time now, the Fisheries Division has recognised that there is a widening gap in the protection of our fisheries on the northern section of our island. With this new opportunity, Ocho Rios will finally get the kind of attention



Kyle Mais, general manager, Jamaica Inn Hotel.

it needs to protect its living marine sources," said Lieutenant Commander Wright.

His audience comprised hoteliers, members of the White River Marine Association (WRMA); the White River Fishermen Association (WRFS), and the Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary.

The group has been receiving support from entities such as the Jamaican Inn Foundation, Sandals Foundation, Couples Sans Souci and Hermosa Cove.

Excited about the prospects, Belinda Morrow, representing the WRMA, said having spent most of her life in the area, today she is

lucky if she sees a conch in the ocean. "Ocho Rios has always been a fishing village; fishermen made their living out of fishing; the corals were great, but this has changed drastically," she lamented.

She said the aim is to restore the natural environment by closing off the area and having it manned by wardens.

"We are protecting the young fish, helping them to get to maturity where they can produce millions of eggs," she explained, adding that the buy-in from the community took years, but it was well worth it.

In addition to getting back the fish into a demarcation zone, Morrow announced that a coral-planting project had been started by the team and that this was reaping success.

With the restoration of the biodiversity to the area, other activities such as snorkelling and diving can occur.

The depletion of the fish life in Ocho Rios started years ago, and Ronnie Bennett of the White River Fishermen Association, said he witnessed it first-hand.

"There was a time when we catch a pound-size snapper at the



Commander Paul Wright, of the MICAFA.



Lieutenant Commander Paul Wright (centre), CEO of Local Fisheries in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, ties the rope, with members of the White River Fisherman Association; White River Marine Association and hoteliers in the area, to mark the opening of the new White River Fish Sanctuary in St Ann.

front of the shoreline, now, when you go deeper, there is hardly any life visible.”

He said in the last three months since the

sanctuary was established, they have seen tuna jumping in the water.

He is convinced that reaching 500 per cent biomass in five years will be easy.

“Because we can do it. The fishermen understand the importance of the sanctuary,” he stated.

Bringing back the reefs, he said, was also extremely important to him and his team.

#### **BIG DAY FOR JAMAICA**

Lauding the transformation being made by the group, the man responsible for the success of the Oracabessa Bay Fish Sanctuary, and who held the hands of the 35 fishers who founded the White River Fishermen’s Association, Inilek Wilmot, described the occasion as a “big day for Jamaica”.

He noted that this was the first time that the Oracabessa Bay model and approach had been taken outside of the St Mary township.

Acknowledging that it has become their moral responsibility to look wider, Wilmot expressed his wish of witnessing the over 300 fishing beaches in Jamaica transformed into sanctuaries.

Currently, there are 18 fish sanctuaries in the country. It is illegal and punishable by law to engage in any unauthorised fishing activities in the demarcated zones.

Creating and legislating a sanctuary is the easy part, argues Lieutenant Commander Wright; patrolling and getting



Dr Dayne Buddo (CEO Alligator Head Foundation)

the fishers buy in is really the challenge.

“I encourage the fishers to do their part as at the end of the day, all of this is really about their livelihood and our

nation’s food security,” urged Lieutenant Commander Wright.

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Rorie Bennett (White River Fishermen Association)

# 100th visit to Jamaica

## – 93rd stay at Couples Resorts

**V**ALENTINE'S DAY 2018 will mark Fred and Cynthia Pennekamp's 100th visit to Jamaica and their 93rd at Couples Resorts.

No other guests have stayed at Couples Tower Isle as many times. The couple has spent more than 1,000 room nights at the Ocho Rios resort.

This love story began with a romantic vacation at the grand opening of Couples Resorts Tower Isle in 1982, and that fire has burnt brightly ever since.

Married for 49 years, the Pennekamps, who are now 70 years old, said they celebrated almost every anniversary at Couples; as well as multiple birthday celebrations and major holidays – especially Valentine's Day.

They have stayed at all four Couples Resorts Jamaica, but their favourite is Couples Tower Isle.

"We have never had a better vacation than Jamaica. We have never had a better resort than Couples Tower Isle. The island of Jamaica is picturesque, the people are wonderful, and the location is gorgeous," Fred Pennekamp told **Hospitality Jamaica** on Monday.

He is expected to arrive on the island today (Wednesday), or later this week, owing to a minor medical issue.

"We travel a lot; we have hardly been able to find a hotel view that compares with Couples Tower Isle. It is one of our happy places," he revealed, explaining that Jamaica's competition is Wyoming, where he spends as much time.

The Pennekamps, who live in North Carolina in the USA, said they started coming to Jamaica once per year, then twice per year. After retirement as a banker, it became five or six times each year.

Fred skis, a sport his wife Cynthia does not do, "So I promised my wife for every week I spend skiing, my 'punishment' is to take her to Jamaica for two weeks".

### HOME AWAY FROM HOME

That formula worked exceptionally well for the couple, and between the trips all over Europe, China, Russia, Egypt and Jordan, including cruising on the Mediterranean, Jamaica becomes their home away from home.

"It's mainly the staff at the Couples Tower Isle that causes us to return. They are among the best in the hospitality sector."

On Wednesday when the Pennekamps arrive, they are expected to be met on arrival by the Jamaica Tourist Board at the Sangster International Airport.

Ready to board his flight to Jamaica, Fred

Pennekamp said there a hundred reasons why they always stay at Couples Resorts Tower Isle, but first and foremost, it's the opportunity to have time for each other.

"Back home, we have busy lives with business, family and civic obligations. Couples Resorts Tower Isle lets us reconnect with each other in a magical location where the focus is entirely on relaxation and satisfying our needs and desires."

CONTRIBUTED  
Fred and  
Cynthia  
Pennekamp.



Fred and Cynthia Pennekamp, who have stayed at Couples Resorts Jamaica 93 times.

# Caribbean Marketplace 2018

## HIGHLIGHTS

**H**OSPITALITY JAMAICA brings you highlights of Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2018, which was produced by the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association in collaboration with the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, Meet Puerto Rico, and the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association.

See Pages 8 and 9 for more pictorial highlights.



A pannist plays beautiful music during the opening ceremony of Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2018.



Commissioner of Tourism, US Virgin Islands, Beverly Nicholson-Doty and Marketplace Excellence's Bevan Springer in a jovial mood at the recent Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2018 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (third right) is flanked by (from left), Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association executives, Matt Cooper, Vanessa Ledesma, Karen Whitt, incoming CHTA president, Patricia Affonso-Dass, president of the CHTA, Karolin Troubetzkoy and chief executive officer, Frank Comito.



From left : Christine Noel, Grenada Tourism Authority Director of Sales (US Market); Francine Stewart Grenada Tourism Marketing Manager; Kimberly Saren Expedia Associate Market Manager Grenada; Patricia Maher, CEO Grenada Tourism Authority, accepting the Destination of the Year from Expedia.



Performing creating waves on stage during the opening ceremony of the Caribbean Travel Marketplace 2018.

## BUSINESS OF TOURISM

# Is multi-destination tourism about to become a reality?

**David Jessop**

*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

TRADITIONALLY, STAY-OVER tourism has been based on a single-destination model. For most of the Caribbean, this will likely remain the principal approach for the foreseeable future, albeit with a new emphasis on diversification away from the beach and improving the visitor experience.

There are, however, signs that a product which has been talked about for many years is at last emerging: the multi-destination Caribbean vacation.

The basic concept is straightforward. It revolves around the idea that the visitor who wants to see and understand more of the Caribbean can, if the right arrangements exist, visit seamlessly two, three or more geographically proximate nations.

Unlike cruise tourism, multi-destination travel involves stay-overs in each nation. It is potentially of great appeal to visitors coming from non-traditional distant source markets like China or Russia, who want to see and experience more and stay longer.

In the last few months, at the initiative of Jamaica's Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, multi-destination agreements have been signed by Jamaica with Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico,



A tourist relaxes on the beach at the Wyndham Reef Resort in Grand Cayman.

while Cayman has indicated that in the coming months it expects to do the same.

### BEYOND MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Importantly, multi-destination tourism goes beyond marketing and promotion. For it to happen, it requires several factors to work together. A 2015 study by the UN World Tourism Organization set these out as being ease of crossing borders; transport connectivity; branding in major tourist markets; the involvement of tour operators,

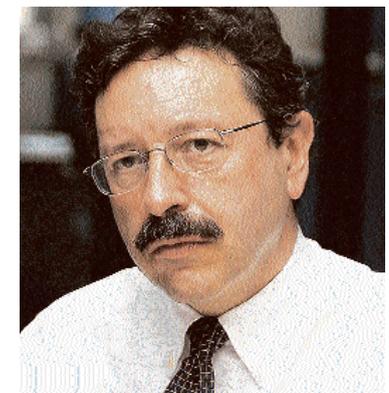
hotel chains and travel suppliers in developing innovative products; and, of course, regional cooperation.

Placed in a Caribbean context, this means that for the initiatives agreed to work, there will have to be efficient air and maritime connectivity between participating countries; an aggressive review of existing immigration and border-control mechanisms; additional incentives offered to tour operators, hoteliers and other service providers to develop multi-destination marketing programmes; and fresh resources put into joint marketing campaigns.

More specifically, for multi-destination tourism to be seamless, a single travel document will be



Cancun, Mexico



**DAVID JESSOP**

China, Aeroflot and other long-haul same-plane services not seen elsewhere in the region.

In this context, reports in the Cayman media suggest that the inter-regional connectivity option being explored is for Cayman Airways to operate a spoke-and-hub service carrying visitors between multi-destination partner countries.

### NOT INSURMOUNTABLE

While the detail is challenging, it is not insurmountable. Rather, it will require the political will of those in the governments concerned to follow through to unlock the likely bureaucratic impediments that such a mould-breaking initiative suggests.

To this end, a joint summit has been scheduled to take place by March involving high-level representatives from Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, who reportedly will also discuss the marketing arrangements in greater detail.

Multi-destination tourism has broader implications. It reflects a view held in the northern Caribbean that future growth may lie in economic convergence between the region's generally larger economies. The suggestion is that with much-improved transport infrastructure, tourism could become a significant driver in developing a new model of economic integration.



Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.



Panama City, Panama.



FRONTERA

SIMPLY DELICIOUS  
WINES



FOR ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE AND TASTY MOMENTS





From left: Chukka Caribbean Adventure's Jodian Brown, international groups manager, and Rallana Davis, senior sales and marketing manager, serving one of their clients, Lara Noack, media and sales promotions manager of Trip Central.



The Jamaica Tourist Board's UK and European reps, Elizabeth Fox and Gregory Shervington, at the Caribbean Travel Marketplace last week in San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Coco La Palm's William Vassell and Kimesha Brackett.



Jamaica Inn's Kyle Mais and Mystic Mountain's Marsha Mattos.



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA

From left: Rodrigo Lecona, Caribbean HotelBeds, meets with SuperClubs' Martin Grass, director sales, Europe; Zein Nakash, vice-president, marketing, and Gwenn Feliciano, director of sales, North America.

# Jamaica to host 2019 Caribbean Travel Marketplace



Deja Resort's Robin Russell (left) and sister Shari Edwards converse with Jamaica Tours Limited's Noel Sloyer Jr.



The Aimbridge team (from left) of Bonnie Nicotra, Olivia Prendergast and Sara Fried doing business with Dee Jones of Mark Travel.

**T**HE CARIBBEAN'S largest tourism marketing event will be held in Jamaica next year. The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) officially announced that the 37th edition of Caribbean Travel Marketplace will be held at the Montego Bay



From left: Spanish Court's Michele Oliver and Andres Cope interacting with Francine Carter Henry, manager, tour operations and airlines, Jamaica Tourist Board, at the Caribbean Travel Marketplace last week in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Convention Centre from January 29 to 31, 2019.

The event will be held in collaboration with Jamaica's Ministry of Tourism, the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association and the Jamaica Tourist Board.

Produced by CHTA, Caribbean

Travel Marketplace brings together hotel and destination representatives; wholesalers and tour operators; online travel agencies; meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) planners; and members of the media for several days of business meetings,



Tricia-Ann Bicarie, director of sales and marketing, Sea Garden Beach Resort, conducts business with Jose Negrete, contracting manager, Caribbean Restel Hotels.

including a busy programme of thousands of pre-scheduled appointments.

Chief Executive Officer and Director General of CHTA Frank Comito announced that after an incredibly successful 36th convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, last week, the trade association is delighted to return the event to Jamaica next winter. "Jamaica is synonymous with exceptional hospitality, world-renown culture and incredible beauty. We look forward to continuing to offer our participants a high-quality programme to engage with industry peers and promote travel to our region," he said.

## INCREDIBLE ACHIEVEMENT

"I am very pleased to announce that Jamaica will once again play host to an important tourism event," said Jamaica's Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett. "It is an incredible achievement for our country and I am certain we will reap significant benefits."

This year's Caribbean Travel Marketplace, which was produced by CHTA, in collaboration with the Puerto Rico Convention Center District Authority, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, Meet Puerto Rico, and the Puerto Rico Hotel and Tourism Association, exceeded organisers' expectations.

The meeting received an exceptional billing and showcased the resilience of the people of Puerto Rico



From left: Half Moon's Sharon Logan, director of sales and marketing, and Rachel Hardy, director of revenue management, meet with Expedia's Adrian Harrison.

and other parts of the Caribbean, in particular those destinations which are rebounding from the impact of two Category 5 hurricanes.

CHTA President Karolin Troubetzkoy remarked at the opening of the convention: "It is indeed a very special Marketplace, because it is a recognition of the courage and determination of the Puerto Rican people, and our brothers and sisters from the other affected islands, to overcome and rise above the many obstacles and challenges thrown at them." She described local Puerto Rican tourism officials as "formidable partners" of whom CHTA could not have asked more.



The Jamaica Tourist Board's deputy director, Donnie Dawson (right), and his manager of tour operations and airlines, Francine Carter Henry (left) conducting business with Bookit.com's Moya Johnson.

THE SIXTH staging of the annual Kingston City Run is just weeks away and the call is out for 'Heroes to Run the City'. The 2018 Kingston City Run launch was refreshingly different, as it took place at Open Arms Development Centre, an organisation that seeks to eliminate homelessness.

The organisation is a beneficiary of the run. The decision to host the launch at the centre gave the sponsors, runners, ambassadors and well-wishers the opportunity to interact with the residents and see the changes facilitated by the donations.

Those in attendance were not disappointed.

If ever a reason was needed to participate or contribute to the run, slated for March 16-18, then the story of resident Brian 'Math Wiz' Lynch will be the only motivation necessary. A Jamaican who spent his formative years overseas, Lynch became homeless after he returned to the island in 2008. Attendees were overcome with emotion as they listened intently to his story of how Open Arms Development Centre changed the trajectory of his life. "No one chooses to become homeless, events beyond one's control are sometimes determining factors or one's uncalculated decisions result in homelessness," he said during his presentation.

"I have been at Open Arms Development Centre since October of 2010, where I have

# Kingston City Run: For the sake of the cause



CONTRIBUTED

Lorna Robinson engages Brian 'Math Wiz' Lynch during the launch of Kingston City Run.

made tremendous progress in improving my education. I now have a Level II certification from HEART and five CXC subjects."

Notwithstanding, he laments that at times he feels hopeless as he is constantly denied employment

even though he has improved his education, and had it not been for the centre, he doesn't know where he would be. "I am so grateful for having somewhere to sleep, having food," he said.

Speaking at the launch, Lorna

Robinson, promotions and events manager at the Jamaica Tourist Board, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to Kingston City Run. "The Jamaica Tourist Board has been a partner and supporter of Kingston City Run from its

**JAMAICA**  
TOURIST BOARD

inception, because we believe in the vision and we see the transformed lives," she stated. "Tourism must support those who are part of our daily lives, particularly those who may not be able to make it on their own. Each year we come re-energised to do it all over again, because of the cause ... because of the people ... and because of the positive changes it brings about in the human condition."

Addressing the audience, co-chair and founder of the run, Nicola Madden-Greig, said the event was about ordinary people making extraordinary contribution to the lives of the homeless.

"By joining in the half-marathon, 10K and 5K, each participant in the run is personally reducing homelessness one person at a time," she stated.

Lynch is also using his gift as a math whiz to assist children in the Windward Road community. This he is accomplishing with a very high success rate.

You, too, can change the life of a homeless person by participating in Kingston City Run or by donating online at: [www.kingstoncityrun.com/charities](http://www.kingstoncityrun.com/charities). Proceeds also benefit Food for the Poor, the Marie Atkins Night Shelter and Alpha Institute.

## JTB at NYT Travel Show

CONTRIBUTED

Consumers at the Jamaica Tourist Board booth at the New York Times Travel Show.



**SILVERA'S PICKS**

# The Jamaican magic

**L**AST WEEK I spent five days in Puerto Rico, a country that was ravished by two hurricanes that the Caribbean will never forget for centuries – Irma and Maria.

I was attending the most important tourism marketing event in the region, Caribbean Travel Marketplace, which is hosted annually by the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association. Over 1,000 delegates gathered at the Puerto Rico Convention Centre in San Juan, among them, buyers (tour operator companies and travel agencies) from various parts of the world.

On Thursday, February 1, I randomly selected a few partners of the Jamaican tourism product, questioning them on how difficult it was to sell travel to Jamaica and why they continued to sell our island to their clients, even now, while the tourism capital, Montego Bay, was under a state of public emergency, or as Josef Fortsmayr would say, 'enhanced security measures'.

**MOYA JOHNSON, MARKETING MANAGER, BOOKIT.COM:**

"Jamaica is not only a destination, it is an experience, and everybody wants to be in the now and the know. Nobody wants to experience Jamaica vicariously; they want to go", said Johnson, pointing out that bookings to Jamaica were still pacing at double digits, compared to the same time last year. In 2017, **Bookit.com** sold 120,000 room nights to Jamaica.

In fact, the country's deputy director of tourism, who has responsibilities for the USA market, Donnie Dawson, said last year that Bookit numbers were on steroids, and, so far, this year those numbers have been amazing.



**JANET SILVERA**

There is no denying it, prospective visitors hear the words 'state of emergency', and immediately they cancel plans of visiting Jamaica, not just Montego Bay.

However, many are still selling vacations to the land they have come to love as paradise, a country they swear by.

Here is what some of our most important partners said about Jamaica:



Jamaica Inn's Kyle Mais has the attention of American Airlines Vacation's Karen Shute.

**KAREN SHUTE, AMERICAN AIRLINES VACATIONS:**

"Jamaica continues to be an excellent value. There is great air-lift; a good range of properties; and the spirit of the people cannot be beat."



**AMY TERADA, PLEASANT HOLIDAYS**

"We continue to sell Jamaica because of Donnie Dawson and his team at the Jamaica Tourist Board. We started selling Jamaica 10 years ago and the JTB (Jamaica Tourist Board) has been helping us, because we are known for our Hawaii-based business, a destination we have specialised in for 60 years. Today, the Caribbean is our number two destination, and Jamaica our number one country in the region. It's the Jamaican people. Our clients love Jamaica."



**BETTY ESTRADA, EXPEDIA MEDIA SOLUTIONS**

"The Jamaican product is one of our highest returns on investment for the entire Caribbean. The partnership we have established with Donnie Dawson and the JTB is a true collaboration. The synergy that exists between the two is like a romance. Our audience is hot for Jamaica; the country is beautiful, fun and easy. Even with a state of emergency, our audience is booking more to MoBay."

As it relates to what will happen in the summer, I can't say if our forward bookings will take a beating, but I know Jamaica remains hot, even with the rainy days.

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**JEFFREY LEE, PLEASANT HOLIDAYS:**

"I honeymooned in Jamaica, and I continue to go back to the country because of Scotchie's chicken, Boston jerk pork and Red Stripe beer. Jamaica has a diverse product between Morant Bay and Negril."





PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

'Kingston 2', one of the recently commissioned Port Authority of Jamaica pilot boats.

# Port Authority gets two new pilot boats

**Paul H. Williams**  
*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

ON WEDNESDAY, January 24, Juliet Holness, wife of Prime Minister Andrew Holness, named and commissioned into service two newly acquired Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ) pilot boats for the port of Kingston.

*Kingston 1* and *Kingston 2* were christened with Champagne released by Mrs Holness after they were officially named. This was after a brief ceremony where Dr Horace Chang, minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, was the keynote speaker.

"This acquisition by the Port Authority of Jamaica represents, clearly, the intention of



Port Authority of Jamaica marine pilots standing on one of the recently christened pilot boats.



Saxophonist Verlando Small entertaining the gathering.



Caribbean Maritime University cadets saluting the gathering.

this stellar agency of the state to pursue meaningful improvements to maritime operations at the Kingston Port ... which will indeed become the premier shipping centre in this region,” Chang told the gathering.

He also said, *inter alia*, “Today is an excellent indication of the forward-thinking attitude of this agency and it bodes well for the plans of this administration to move Jamaica toward developed-country status ... I am confident the Port Authority will continue to play their role.”

And though the port of Kingston is principally a shipping terminal, a cargo port, minister Chang said cruise shipping will be coming to Kingston soon, as there are enough attractions in the Corporate Area to pull passengers. Last December, two mega cruise ships – *Monarch of the Seas* and *Mein Schiff* – docked at Kingston Wharves due to inclement weather in Montego Bay. It was *Monarch’s* second arrival at Kingston Port.

Also addressing the gathering were Captain Hopeton Delisser, harbour master and vice-president for harbours and port services at the PAJ; and Professor Gordon Shirley, president and CEO of the PAJ, who announced that *Jamaica 2*, a long-serving buoy tender, which maintains buoy and beacons in rough waters, was to be replaced.

“This old lady (about 40 years old), will soon be replaced by a much sleeker, trimmer, and more sophisticated young lady, and, of course, you will treat her with the dignity she deserves,” Professor Shirley said.

Entertainment was provided by the dynamic saxophonist Verlando Small, while



Mayor of Kingston and St Andrew Councillor Delroy Williams, East Rural St Andrew Member of Parliament Juliet Holness, and Professor Gordon Shirley (left), president and CEO of the Port Authority of Jamaica, exchanging pleasantries.

some cadets of the Caribbean Maritime University, dazzling in white, showed off some of their parading skills. After the christening, there was a parade of the new boats, and some older ones that put on water-squirting demonstrations.

A pilot boat is used to transport marine pilots from land to vessels going into and leaving ports. The marine/maritime/harbour pilot is a sailor who manoeuvres vessels through channels, especially dangerous and congested ones. He has knowledge of the waterway, direction and strength of the wind,

current and tide movements, and other important factors.

In essence, he is a navigational expert who takes over from the vessel’s captain after he has embarked. He controls everybody involved in the process, through a radio. The vessel’s captain ensures that his crew carries out the pilot’s orders, and if the captain doubts the pilot’s ability he may request another.

The Jamaica marine pilots work in all the ports on the island. They are not stationed at any one port, but travel to various locations.



A pilot boat making a water-squirting demonstration.



Dr Horace Chang, minister without portfolio (water, works and housing) in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, giving the keynote address.

They are very important for the smoothing sailing of the shipping industry.

Representing his colleagues at the christening, Jomo King, president of the Jamaica Marine Pilots Association, said, “We are your safety officers ... We make sure that these vessels come into our ports as safely as possible, and leave out as safely as possible.”

Describing their job as an essential service, King also said, “We are the knights of the sea, who attack the sea dragons.” Now, they have two new ‘steeds’ to aid them in their fight.



CONTRIBUTED

HFTP's new Board of Directors (from left): Deveret Malcolm, Novelet Smith, Karen Sangster-Grant, Fitzroy Walker, Novlette Maxwell, Blaine Grubb and Terry Ann Johnson.

## HFTP Jamaica Chapter announces new board of directors

**T**HE JAMAICA Chapter of Hospitality Financial & Technology Professionals (HFTP) announces the newly elected board of directors for the 2018 term.

The new board was sworn in at a ceremony held in November 2017, with a follow-up joint cocktail with the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association at the Round Hill Resort in Hopewell, Hanover, on December 18, 2017.

The newly elected officers of the board are:

- President – Fitzroy Walker, Sandals Resorts International;
- Immediate past president – Karen Sangster-Grant, retired (formerly of Round Hill Hotel & Villas)
- Vice-president (general affairs) – Blaine Grubb, Round Hill Hotel & Villas
- Vice-president (finance) – Deveret Malcolm, Sandals Resorts International
- Secretary – Novlette Maxwell, Round Hill Hotel & Villas
- Director (general affairs) – Novelet Smith, Tai Flora
- Director (member relations) – Terry Ann Johnson, Caribbean Producers Jamaica

HFTP, an international body established in 1952, is a nonprofit association headquartered in Austin, Texas, USA, with offices in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. HFTP is recognised as the spokes group for the finance and technology segments of the hospitality industry, with members and stakeholders spanning across the globe.

The primary objective of HFTP is to provide a forum for the collaboration and dissemination of up-to-date knowledge of the latest developments within

the finance and technology aspect of the hospitality industry.

The Jamaica Chapter has been in existence since 1969, with the first president being Lionel Reid, former general manager of Shaw Park Beach Hotel. Other past presidents include Joe Hylton, former director of finance for Wyndham/Hilton Rosehall Resort. Hylton served for 10 years in the position; Isaac Gordon, former group financial controller of Montego Freeport, and Winston Tomlinson, former financial controller of the Trelawny Beach Hotel (now Royalton). Several hotel general managers, financial controllers and other tourism officials, including Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, are past members of the association. The chapter hosts several fundraising activities during the year as well as four membership meetings, sponsored by local resorts.

During the presentation at Round Hill, the newly elected, president Fitzroy Walker, outlined the plans for the chapter for 2018, immediate focus is on membership growth and strengthening the partnership with the tourism sector and corporate Jamaica. In addition, the chapter will seek to engage participation from the major tertiary institutions offering hospitality education in Jamaica, such as the University of the West Indies, University of Technology and Northern Caribbean University, with a planned one-day seminar to be held in May 2018.

Proceeds from all fundraising activity will be channelled towards assisting needy students attending these institutions. Persons interested in joining the local chapter may apply at [https://www.hftp.org/i/downloads/membership\\_application.pdf](https://www.hftp.org/i/downloads/membership_application.pdf)

## GCC to welcome 2.5 million Chinese visitors by 2021

THE GULF Cooperation Council (GCC), a political and economic alliance of six countries in the Arabian Peninsula – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – are to welcome 2.5 million Chinese visitors by 2021.

Chinese arrivals to the GCC will increase 21 per cent by 2021, rising to 2.5 million visitors annually, according to data released ahead of Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2018, which takes place at Dubai World Trade Centre from April 22-25.

Published by Colliers International, the data predicts Saudi Arabia will experience the highest proportionate increase in arrivals from China, up 35 per cent on 2016 figures. The UAE will follow at 20 per cent, with Oman at 12 per cent, and Bahrain and Kuwait at seven per cent.

GCC countries currently attract 1.9 per cent of China's total outbound market, up from 1.3 per cent in 2012. However, positive trends are expected to continue as 154 million Chinese tourists prepare to go abroad in 2018 and a predicted 244 million to follow in 2022.

Keen to capitalise on the potential, figures from ATM 2017 show the number of delegates, exhibitors and attendees interested in doing business with China had increased 63 per cent on the previous year, with the number of delegates

arriving from China, up 28 per cent.

Simon Press, senior exhibition director, ATM, said: "The outbound Chinese market represents a vast, untapped pool of affluent and adventurous travellers, and the GCC has been a destination of choice for years. Owing to its many business opportunities and a new generation of leisure attractions, figures show the GCC is poised to further capitalise on these trends over the coming years as millions of Chinese make their first international trip."

### MORE EAGER BUSINESSES

"Over the years, sentiment at ATM has reflected the growth in Chinese tourists to the GCC and today we have seen more businesses than ever before eager to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Chinese market."

The Colliers data follows four years of steady growth in Chinese arrivals to the GCC, spurred by the business, leisure and religious tourism sectors. Chinese travellers today seek unexplored cities and cultures, with GCC governments courting them through roadshows, exhibitions and cultural exchanges. Further supporting this drive, over recent years, regional brands, including airlines, hotels and tourism bodies, have opened representative offices across China.



FILE

Chinese and other tourists visiting a historical site.

## UPDATES ON HURRICANE-RAVISHED ISLANDS

### British Virgin Islands reopens major properties

FOLLOWING THE impact of Hurricane Irma, which affected the British Virgin Islands (BVI) last September, BVI and its tourism sector are excited to announce the new developments including reopenings of major properties, new boat fleets and the resumption of evening flights.

The BVI Tourist Board and government have been fully dedicated to restoring the territory to its natural allure. While the yachting sector began welcoming visitors last November, more charter companies, hotels and resorts are opening their doors for the 2018 winter travel season.

See below for a detailed list on new developments and openings in the BVI:

■ Oil Nut Bay Beach Club and Marina reopened its Beach Club, restaurant, resort amenities, and marina in Virgin Gorda on

December 16.

■ Marella Discovery and Marella Celebration were the first official cruise ships of the season, which docked at Tortola Pier Park on December 6 and 7 bringing over 2,800 passengers to BVI.

■ Dream Yacht Charter, which reopened last November, recently added two new boats to its fleet, the Sunreef 70 'Muse' and 'Lagoon 620 Reve2Mer'.

■ Horizon Yacht Charters added six brand new yachts for the winter season.

■ The Moorings and Sunsail reopened in December with a combined 100 yachts ready to set sail in the BVI.

■ Jost Van Dyke's beloved Soggy Dollar Bar is reopened for business. The Soggy Dollar has also launched plans for rebuilding the adjacent Sandcastle Hotel.

■ The T.B. Lettsome International Airport is now able to receive commercial evening flights. Travellers may reach the territory via connections in San Juan, St Thomas, Antigua and St Maarten.

The BVI ended 2017 on a high note with the annual Anegada Lobster Festival. Over 1,500 visitors attended the weekend event on November 25 and 26.

Iconic dive sites such as the Wreck of the Rhone, which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, were left undamaged by the hurricane. Visitors also may visit the BVI Art Reef, a new reef habitat focused on rehabilitating vulnerable marine life. The territory is also looking forward to welcoming sailing enthusiasts at the BVI Spring Regatta from March 26 to April 1.

# St Maarten steadily recovers after hurricanes

ONLY FOUR Months after Hurricane Irma, St Maarten is steadily recovering and showing visible signs of progress. The Dutch side experience is both delicious and fulfilling. It's very green, safe, the roads are clear, an extraordinary number of restaurants and bars are open, and the beaches are clean and already hosting parties. The people are not disheartened – they are determined.

Updated St Maarten information by product category:

#### AIRLINE

Princess Juliana International Airport reopened for commercial flights on October 10, 2017. Currently, American Airlines and Delta Air Lines operate daily flights to St Maarten through Miami and Atlanta respectively. JetBlue resumed twice-weekly flights through New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on November 2, 2017. Carrying capacity will continue to increase in 2018.

#### CRUISE

December marked the much-anticipated reopening of St Maarten's cruise port. Viking Cruises' Viking Sea ship and Marella Cruises' Marella Discovery sailed into port on December 4 and 5, 2017 respectively. Royal Caribbean's



CONTRIBUTED

A plane flies over the popular Maho beach in St Maarten.

Grandeur of the Seas made its return to the beloved Philipsburg port on December 17. Princess Cruises returned January 11, Carnival Cruise Line January 15, and Disney Cruises January 16, 2018.

#### HOTEL

St Maarten's boutique hotels and guest houses are open for business. Travellers can rest their heads at the following properties: Baker's Suites, Horizon View Beach Hotel, Carl's Unique Inn, The Paradise Inn, Travel Inn Hotel, Princess Heights, Holland House Beach Hotel,

Sea Palace Resort, Atrium Resort & Spa, and several others. Oyster Bay plans to reopen in April and Sonesta Ocean Point and Mahowill announce re-opening dates in about a month. Further booking options and general hotel updates can be found on the St Maarten Tourist Bureau website.

#### F&B

Simpson Bay (just a short drive from the airport) is bustling with restaurant, bar, and entertainment options. Bars and restaurants currently open for

business include Topper's, Pizza & Co (top-notch pizza named after iconic Hollywood movies and actors), Captain D's Roadside Grill (a local favourite for BBQ ribs), Little Jerusalem, Bombay Bites, Lee's Roadside Grill, Avantika (Thai), Marty's (traditional Dutch), Rhythm & Booze, Pizza del Sol, Jungle Steakhouse, Sale & Pepe and more. For fine dining, zip over to the Rockland Estate for island-inspired fare by acclaimed St Maarten chef, Dino Jagtiani – the fondue gouda Johnny cakes are a must try!

## 9 reasons to visit the USVI now

THE US Virgin Islands endured two Category 5 hurricanes last September, but visitors will be amazed to see how the destination is bouncing back.

Now that St Croix, St John, St Thomas and Water Island are all open for business, here are 10 reasons to visit the USVI this season for a memorable Caribbean vacation experience while the islands recover and build back stronger and better than ever.

**1. Businesses are open** – Since early November, the islands have been welcoming both cruise and overnight guests, and many of the destination's popular attractions, restaurants and shops are open for business. In the bustling downtown areas of St Thomas, visitors can dine and shop along historic Main Street, at the portside malls in Havensight and Crown Bay, as well as Yacht Haven Grande, Red Hook and Frenchtown.

**2. Beautiful Beaches** – The US Virgin Islands has some of the world's most beautiful beaches and while the hurricanes caused several popular beaches to be closed temporarily, most of the beaches across the territory have been cleared and are now open.

**3. Stunning National Parks** – The Virgin Islands National Park on St John has announced that all of its beaches, trails and sites have reopened. This includes well-known beaches such as Hawksnest Beach, Cinnamon Bay, Trunk Bay and Francis Bay, among others.

**4. Plenty to Do** – On St Croix, visitors can enjoy The Buccaneer Golf Course, the casino at Hotel Caravelle, Virgin Islands Food Tours, diving, a visit to the Captain Morgan and Cruzan Rum distilleries, and nighttime kayaking at a bioluminescent bay.

**5. Support America's Islands** – The US Virgin Islands has been part of the United States for more than 100 years, since the US purchased the islands from Denmark in 1917

**6. Duty-free shopping and world-class dining**

**7. Great weather** – Temperatures in the USVI are in the low 80s, cooled by steady ocean breezes

**8. Accommodations to fit every lifestyle** – Hotels on St Croix were less impacted by the hurricanes, and visitors to the island will find a range of accommodations from resorts like The Buccaneer to private luxury villas, B&Bs and the brand new boutique hotel, The Fred, located in downtown Frederiksted.

**9. Voluntourism** – The Department of Tourism is offering opportunities for travellers to help with the territory's recovery efforts as part of their US Virgin Islands experience. In conjunction with local nonprofit and nongovernmental organisations, the department is developing an inventory of needs in the territory that will benefit most from volunteer assistance and resources.

# Three airlines to expand service to St Thomas



FILE PHOTOS

## Delta Airline

**T**HREE SCHEDULED carriers will soon increase air service to St Thomas, reported US Virgin Islands Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty.

Commissioner Nicholson-Doty announced that following meetings with airline partners over the past few months, Spirit Airlines will increase its Fort Lauderdale-St Thomas frequency to daily, effective Saturday, March 1.

Due to strong bookings on the Atlanta-St Thomas route, Delta Air Lines will reinstate its daily service from New York to St Thomas, effective May 24.

JetBlue Airways will operate a second daily flight from San Juan to St Thomas as of February 15. The airline will provide daily options for travellers between Boston and St Thomas (between February 15 to May 1) over San Juan.

“We are very encouraged by these new developments,” reported the commissioner, who explained that while hotels and resorts rebuild and prepare to welcome stayover visitors back to the territory, a strong demand for air seats is being generated by guests staying at inns, bed and breakfasts and boutique hotels; villas, apartments, condominiums and other rental properties; time-shares; and yachts, as well as professionals working in the construction industry, and Virgin Islanders travelling to and from the islands. The commissioner assured that efforts are continuing to increase airlift to both airports, on St Croix and St Thomas.

Governor of the US Virgin Islands, Kenneth E. Mapp, thanked the respective airline partners for their commitment to the territory, and explained that his administration was



Beverly Nicholson-Doty



## Spirit Airlines

making every effort to ensure there was adequate air access between the territory’s airports and the US mainland. “It’s really encouraging to see the continued demand in the marketplace for the US Virgin Islands, as we continue making strides in our recovery from September’s back-to-back hurricanes. The resilience of our people and our territory is undeniable, and we’re grateful to our airline partners for making their continued contributions to our recovery.”

With the latest flight additions, the US Virgin Islands is now being served by approximately 13,000 seats each week – 9,000 to St Thomas and 4,000 to St Croix (not including intra-island service).



JetBlue

# International tourist arrivals grew in 2017

INTERNATIONAL TOURIST arrivals grew by a remarkable seven per cent in 2017 to reach a total of 1,322 million, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.

This strong momentum is expected to continue in 2018 at a rate of four to five per cent.

Based on data reported by destinations around the world, it is estimated that international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) worldwide increased seven per cent in 2017. This is well above the sustained and consistent trend of four per cent or higher growth since 2010 and represents the strongest results in seven years.

Led by Mediterranean destinations, Europe recorded extraordinary results for such a large and rather mature region, with eight per cent more international arrivals than in 2016. Africa consolidated its 2016 rebound with an eight per cent increase. Asia and the Pacific recorded six per cent growth, the Middle East five per cent, and the Americas three per cent.

2017 was characterised by sustained growth in many destinations and a firm recovery in those that suffered decreases in previous years. Results were partly shaped by the global economic upswing and the robust outbound demand from many traditional and emerging source markets, particularly a rebound in tourism spending from Brazil and the Russian Federation after a few years of declines.

“International travel continues to grow strongly, consolidating the tourism sector as a key driver in economic development. As the third export sector in the world, tourism is essential for job creation and the prosperity of communities around the world.” said UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili. “Yet, as we continue to grow, we must work closer together to ensure this growth benefits every member of every host community, and is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals”.

## GROWTH EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN 2018

The current strong momentum is expected to continue in 2018, though at a more sustainable pace after eight years of steady expansion following the 2009 economic



CONTRIBUTED

## New UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili.

and financial crisis. Based on current trends, economic prospects and the outlook by the UNWTO Panel of Experts, UNWTO projects international tourist arrivals worldwide to grow at a rate of four to five per cent in 2018. This is somewhat above the 3.8 per cent average increase projected for the period 2010-2020 by UNWTO in its Tourism Towards 2030 long-term forecast. Europe and the Americas are both expected to grow by 3.5 per cent – 4.5 per cent; Asia and the Pacific by five per cent – six per cent; Africa by five per cent – seven per cent; and the Middle East by four per cent – six per cent.

## 2017 RESULTS BY UNWTO REGION

International tourist arrivals in Europe reached 671 million in 2017, a remarkable eight per cent increase following a comparatively weaker 2016. Growth was driven by the extraordinary results in Southern and Mediterranean Europe (13 per cent). Western Europe (seven per cent), Northern Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (both five per cent) also recorded robust growth.

Asia and the Pacific (six per cent) recorded 324 million international tourist arrivals in 2017. Arrivals in South Asia grew 10 per cent, in Southeast Asia eight per cent, and in Oceania seven per cent. Arrivals to Northeast Asia increased by three per cent.