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Chinese and other tourists visiting a historical site.



World Travel Market 2017, ExCeL London – Excel West entrance, Chinese performers.

China continues to outpace the world in international tourism

Janet Silvera
Senior Gleaner Writer

WESTERN BUREAU:

A NEW United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) report shows that China continued its lead as global outbound travellers in international tourism in 2017.

China also outspent the rest of the world, with a whopping US\$258 million, one-fifth of the world's total tourism spend for 2017, which stood at US\$1.3 trillion, some \$94 billion more than 2016.

The news comes as UNWTO announced that international tourist arrivals grew seven per cent in 2017, the highest increase since 2010. Growth in arrivals was echoed by a strong increase in exports generated by tourism, which reached \$1.6 trillion in 2017, making tourism the world's third-largest export sector.

Showcasing the industry, which is the engine of growth for many societies, the UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2018 Edition shows that international tourist arrivals reached a total of 1,323 million in 2017, some 84 million more than the previous year, securing a new record.

"The sector has now seen uninterrupted

growth in arrivals for eight straight years. The growth in 2017 was the highest since 2010, led by the increases by the regions of Europe and Africa, which saw a jump in arrivals of eight per cent and nine per cent, respectively," said the UNWTO in a statement.

International tourism receipts increased by five per cent in 2017, the organisation pointed out, noting that in addition to the US\$1.3 trillion in receipts that destinations earned, international tourism generated another US\$240 billion from international passenger transport taken by non-residents.

"This raised total tourism exports to US\$1.6 trillion, or US\$4 billion a day, which corresponds to seven per cent of the world's exports."

These strong 2017 results were driven by sustained travel demand for destinations across all world regions, including a firm recovery by those that have suffered from security challenges in recent years, said the report.

Strong outbound demand from virtually all source markets, including rebounds from major emerging economies Brazil and the Russian Federation, benefited both advanced and emerging destinations.

"The new report also illustrates that China continues to lead global outbound travel,

having spent US\$258 billion on international tourism in 2017.”

Among the top markets and destinations in the world in 2017, Spain rose to become the world’s second most-visited destination in terms of international arrivals, after France. Japan entered the top 10 in tourism earnings in 10th place after six straight years of double-digit growth. The Russian Federation re-entered the top 10 of world spenders at eighth place.

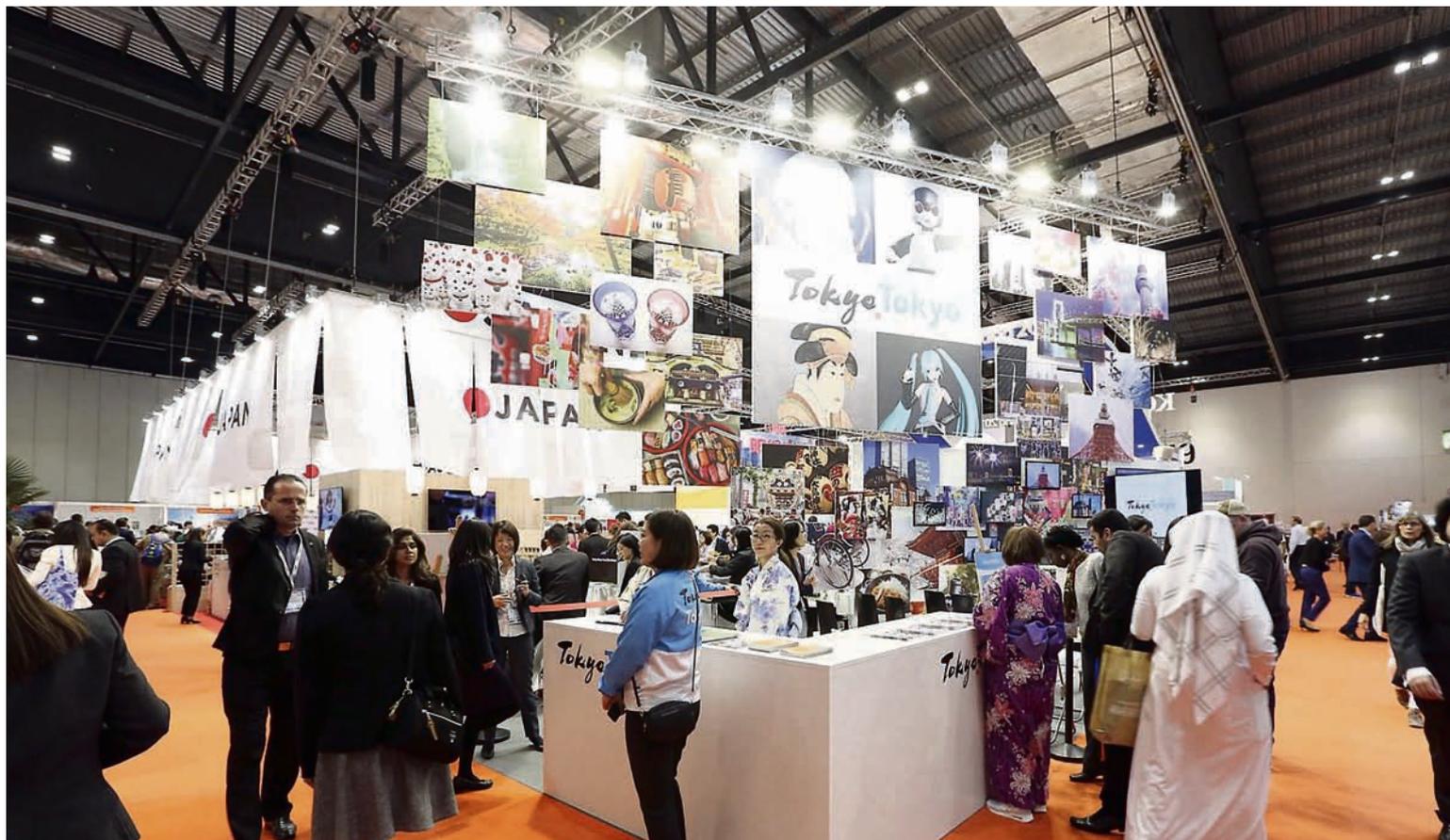
Available data for early 2018 have since confirmed international tourism’s continued strong growth, with a year-on-year increase of six per cent in arrivals between January and April.

Results reflect a continuation of the strong trend seen in 2017 and, so far, exceed UNWTO’s forecast of four per cent to five per cent for the year 2018.

Growth in the first four months was led by Asia and the Pacific, followed by Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas also recording sound results.

The May to August period also looks good, and according to the latest UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts survey, the current outlook is one of the most optimistic in a decade.

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WTM PHOTO

The Asia Pacific area at the 2017 World Travel Market was a hit. Many deals were brokered as the region continues to experience growth in arrivals.

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FARMING: A LOVE AFFAIR FOR ZSIFKOVICS

JHTA top purveyor for 2018 and two-time national champion farmer Martin Zsifkovics (left) explains the process of planting and reaping the best fruit. RJR 94 FM broadcaster Gerry McDaniel takes it all in during a tour of the 80-acre Austrojam Farm in south St Elizabeth. Reaping of sun-ripened cantaloupes is now under way.

Passion drives JHTA top purveyor for 2018

IT HAS been said that, “The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of passion,” and it was Martin Zsifkovics’ passion that determined his destiny.

Zsifkovics recently landed the industry accolade of Top Purveyor –Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) 2018.

“We are now 10 years in business and we won the purveyor most

Martin Zsifkovics, champion farmer.



likely because the hotels are happy with what we are doing so, therefore, they probably voted for us.”

Farming was never at the top of Zsifkovics’ list, as he initially dreamt of becoming a hotel general manager. As such, he has worked in various departments in several hotels. He has also worked with the army, as well as being a chef at a two-star restaurant; but his fulfilment came when he took up farming.

For many, farming is classified as dirty work, but not for the Austrian-Jamaican, who calls Jamaica home. In 2008, he started Austrojam Limited, on a modest plot of land in Treasure Beach, St Elizabeth, where he

owns and distributes high-quality fresh produce to the hotel and grocery industries nationwide. This was out of the need to offer consistent quality produce and supplies, as he didn’t see the sector being regularly supplied when



Taste of Jamaica in Waiting: Close up of maturing cantaloupes on the South St Elizabeth Austrojam Farms. They were voted top purveyors to the hospitality industry by the JHTA this year.

he worked there.

“If those folks were not performing that great, maybe I could do it, but way better, so I started to buy the produce, things like watermelon and other items and started supplying little by little; but then I realise there was the same problem, then I started to do farming.”

Zsifkovics explains that the winning formula to remain consistent with supplies is year-long planting with rotating plots. “We also have a refrigerated warehouse, which enables us to respond to variations in orders from a few hotels, apart from our regulars.”

The Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel and Couples Resorts were the first two hotels Austrojam started supplying with produce, and today they maintain a great business relationship.

Kenard Swaby, Terra Nova’s executive chef, who has worked with the two-time national champion for nearly 10 years, spoke of a level of professionalism and dedication to quality service, which, he says, keeps their business relationship growing.

Chef Swaby also singled out Zsifkovics’ work ethic and integrity as a deal-maker in sustaining the relationship. “Whenever there are

natural variations due to weather or other growing conditions, either Martin points it out to us first, or if we raise any concerns, he accepts full responsibility. This has built mutual trust.”

It is Zsifkovics’ consistency that impressed Couples Resorts’ Lee Issa, who lauded him as one of the most passionate farmers he has ever met. “That passion converts into premium quality and reliability. He always delivers the very best and on time. We at Couples feel very blessed to have him as a regular source in our supply chain,” stated Issa.

MORE THAN MONEY

Zsifkovics remains motivated about what he does and believes that it’s more than just the money, as love should always be at the fore of what you do.

“We always say one thing which is very important if you’re going into farming, you have to understand that it’s not primarily about the money, it’s that you have to have a passion, motivated by quality. Money will follow the quality.”

He grew to love farming, even in the tough times. “At first, I didn’t know the beauty about it, but I really fell in love with farming and the whole surrounding, and that struck me.”

Perseverance has caused him to soldier on in this career, which has led him to winning other awards and accolades. He received a Youth Award for Agriculture in 2016 from the Inter-American Institute of Agriculture and now holds Jamaica’s 2017 and 2018 National Champion Farmer title.

Zsifkovics is also a top contender in bringing about change and eyes three priority areas that could revolutionise the agriculture industry; mainstreaming agriculture to make it more attractive to include the youth, tackling praedial larceny on all levels, and greater access to financial assistance.

“The most important thing is that everybody needs to understand that the linkages council, which lobbies for the hoteliers, supermarkets as well as for the farmers, has to be a mutually beneficial partnership. It cannot be a one-way stream.”

Chef Swaby agrees wholeheartedly with this view, indicating that there is room for many more Zsifkovics as reliable purveyors to the hospitality sector. “With Martin, his passion opened the door, his persistence produced significant personal and professional growth over the past decade.”

British Airways ensures a better night's sleep

BRITISH AIRWAYS has partnered with The White Company for new bedding and amenity kits, offering Club World business class customers a better night's sleep.

The new bedding was recently launched on the airline's network, including Caribbean flights to London. The White Company luxurious business class bedding includes a luxuriously soft, large pillow and white, cotton pillowcase to enhance customers' comfort. Customers will also receive an elegant day cushion, which will double as a lumbar support when working or relaxing on board a supersoft woven blanket with satin trim; a bespoke luxury duvet; and a padded mattress cover to give them an extra layer of comfort and improve their quality of sleep.

The new Club World amenity kits come in a bespoke bag from The White Company and contain products from the retailer's



'Restore & Relax Spa Collection'. The products include a Spa Relax Pulse Point Oil, with soothing treatment oil to help you unwind during the flight; Spa Restore Gentle

Moisturizer, a skin-conditioning cream with Vitamin E and jojoba oil to leave skin feeling soft and rejuvenated; and a Spa Lip Balm to keep your lips soft and hydrated on

board. They have been specially selected to help counteract the effects of long-haul air travel. Each item is designed to provide a relaxing boost whenever customers

need it during their flight.

The White Company, headquartered in the UK, has been making designer-quality products, principally in white, for over 23 years.





Crowds of visitors at Pariser Platz, Brandenburg Gate, Berlin.

YOU WILL not find the word 'overtourism' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Despite this, it is being used increasingly by tourism professionals around the world. It describes the experience of residents in locations where large numbers of visitors are seriously disrupting local lives, causing environmental damage, placing an unacceptable burden on local infrastructure, or making housing unaffordable.

Although scarcely mentioned publicly until recently, the implications of overtourism have begun to be debated in cities from Barcelona to Venice, and Edinburgh, and in relatively remote destinations such as Iceland and the Isle of Skye. In each location increasingly, angry residents have been protesting about the damage being done by tourism to their quality of life and its hollowing out of local communities.

Historically, tourism has been considered a largely benign, peaceful activity that, as the Caribbean knows, can generate significant levels of employment, rapid economic growth, and new sources of taxation. Consequently, the industry and its growing footprint has largely been led by demand, is visitor-centred, and, to a significant degree, has become subject to the requirements of investors, the air-

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Overtourism: an issue requiring thought now



DAVID JESSOP

lines, cruise companies, and tour operators.

However, this is changing as residents in some of the most affected locations worldwide are encouraging local authorities and governments to engage in a debate about how the negative impact of the industry might be lessened and the numbers of visitors controlled.

The issue so far has not been much discussed in the Caribbean,

where the natural environment and promoting to visitors the dream of 'paradise found' often hides the gritty reality of everyday life. Despite this, overtourism exists in several forms in the region.

At its most obvious, it is in the shape of multiple cruise ship arrivals disgorging large numbers of visitors for short periods on to designated beaches or into small towns and tourist sites, particularly in some of the smaller islands and capitals of the region. Less obviously, it relates to a trend towards investors trying to restrict public access to beaches, once-local cultural events being 'tourised' and made inauthentic, and long-term onshore and off-shore environmental damage. It can also be seen in some Caribbean coastal and urban locations in increasing property prices as short-term Internet-led rentals in residential areas surge, creating investor demand for residential

accommodation.

For the most part, the situation is presently manageable. Cruise ships apart, arrival numbers tend to be limited by the relatively high-cost nature of a stayover Caribbean vacation, and paradoxically, the desire of the all-inclusives and the newly minted mega resorts to do everything possible to keep their visitors on property.

Despite this, the concept of overtourism in a Caribbean context requires serious thought.

In Jamaica and some other regional destinations, the industry and government have begun to recognise the importance of sustainability, the need to do more to protect the environment, the growing demand among visitors for authenticity, and the need to spread more widely the economic benefit that tourism brings.

What this and the growing debate about overtourism suggests is that the time has come to ask a broader

question of Caribbean tourism professionals, tour operators, environmentalists, the cruise lines and others: are there limits to Caribbean tourism-led growth in relation to beaches, popular sites and cities?

Put more practically, this means considering the nature of future constraints on accommodating greater numbers of short-stay or long-stay visitors. These range from achieving a better understanding of the limits to the built environment, the implications, for example, for food supply, environmental and ecological damage, and, most important, whether residents feel that their lives are being dislocated. It means knowing when smallness or social concerns might mean that tourism has become 'too much', and how it is best managed to ensure sustainable economic growth.

In some parts of the Caribbean, there is a growing but largely unspoken tension between the local and foreign investors and businesses that profit, governments wanting taxes and employment, and workers and citizens who want to benefit but retain their quality of life.

This suggests that there is a case to be made for an early small industry event that looks over the horizon to identify the implications of overtourism and possible responses.

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JTB bids farewell to Margaret Jones

AFTER TWO DECADES OF SERVICE

It was a bittersweet soirée for Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) staff and well-wishers who gathered at the Sea Gardens Beach Resort, Montego Bay, recently to bid farewell to one of Jamaica's finest tourism professionals, Margaret Eleanor Jones.

Jones, who served the JTB in the capacity of visitor relations manager for 20 years, is heading into retirement after making a yeoman's contribution to Jamaica's tourism sector.

The two-hour event, in which the affable Jones was lauded for her work, was filled with laughter and warm conversations intertwined with gifts, hugs, smiles, and kisses from everyone, including her co-workers, who shared the view that their outgoing boss has a personality that brightens up any room and was a trendsetter in fashion, dancing, industry knowledge, and how to get things done with efficiency.

Those who paid tribute to Jones spoke of her attention to detail and her capacity to turn ugly situations around. They also highlighted her astuteness in managing her staff, visitors, and Jamaicans alike with the underlining theme, "we are the standard by which all other entities are judged".

A citation from the JTB, read by western regional director Odette Dyer, detailed Jones' contribution to the sector in ensuring the comfort and satisfaction of all visitors to the island since she joined the agency on April 20, 1998.

The citation in part read: "Margaret Jones' strong organisational skills are undoubtedly the fruits of her training as a secondary school teacher. During her tenure at the JTB, she gained a reputation for her professionalism and competence in the execution of her duties. Her response to challenging and potentially explosive complaints from individuals and groups, whether locally or internationally, has helped to place the Jamaica Tourist Board at the forefront of all other tourist boards. The JTB has



Former western regional director of the Jamaica Tourist Board J. Rosie Johnson shares her experience of working with Margaret Jones.

garnered many international accolades as the preferred institution to contact where there is a tourist-related crisis."

Tourism Director Donovan Whyte, in his tribute to Jones, assured her that if she ever felt the need to return, he would be the first person to endorse that move. "You have certainly left large shoes, which will be difficult to fill and we thank you wholeheartedly for your 20 years of great contribution to Jamaica, the tourism industry, and the JTB," he told her.

In her usual high-spirited, fun, and people-friendly manner, Jones thanked the JTB, Jamaica, and her team members from various arms of government for the opportunity to serve and for the support that she received over the two decades.

Recounting a number of incidents that occurred during her stint at the JTB, Jones pointed out that she cried for herself only once during her 20



Director of Tourism Donovan Whyte and Western Regional Director at the Jamaica Tourist Board Odette Dyer share a photo opportunity during the appreciation function staged in honour of Margaret Jones.



Canadian Consul to Jamaica Lillian Crichton (left) was on hand to share lens time with Margaret Jones and wish her a fond farewell.

years at the JTB when she found herself chasing a guest in the swamp on the compound of the former MoBay Hope.

This brought howls of laughter from the attendees, who, despite commiserating, all wore a look of appreciation for Jones, who earned a



Members of staff of the Jamaica Tourist Board who came out at the bon voyage function for their outgoing boss, Margaret Jones, who retires from the agency after 20 years of service. Pictured from left to right are Candesa Cassanova, Carlene Moore, Jerron Briton, Sharon Williams, Marsha Roberts, Afiya Henry, and Kacia Whilby, who served on the team led by Margaret Jones.



General Manager of the Round Hill Hotel Omar Robinson makes a presentation to Margaret Jones as she demits office as Visitor Relations Manager at the Jamaica Tourist Board, JTB.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Director of Tourism Donovan Whyte (left) gives Margaret Jones a warm embrace as he expresses thanks to her for 20 years of sterling service to the Jamaica Tourist Board. Jones, who was visitor relations manager at the JTB, demits office shortly on retirement.



Shernette Crichton (left) of the Half Moon presents a token to Margaret Jones during an appreciation function at Sea Gardens Beach Resort in Montego Bay on Saturday August 25.



Chef Wenford P. Simpson (second from the right) poses with bloggers and influencers at Citi Taste of Tennis New York.

JTB & Palace Resorts serve up a taste of Jamaica

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) showcased the island's decadent flavors at the 19th annual Citi Taste of Tennis event in New York City. A precursor to the US Tennis Open, the evening brought together the world's best tennis players and featured signature cuisine from the city's leading chefs.

The JTB partnered with Palace Resorts, Red Stripe, Appleton Estate Rum, and Walkerswood for the exclusive celebration. All guests had the chance of winning a five-day/four-night trip for two to Moon Palace Resort in Ocho Rios.

Jamaican chef Wenford P. Simpson served an array of specialties that included an open-faced jerked chicken slider with pickled red cabbage and mango chutney, bringing a taste of the island to New York City. Patrons enjoyed the savory treats with Red Stripe Beer and Appleton Estate's Rum Punch.

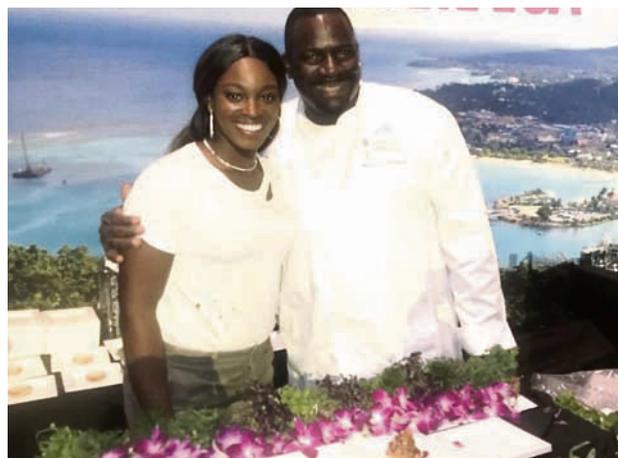
During the event, tennis players, including Serena and Venus Williams, participated in chef demos with Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto as guests looked on from the Jamaica station, sipping signature Red Stripe Beer.



Guests enjoying jerked chicken sliders with pickled red cabbage and mango chutney served by Chef Wenford P. Simpson.



From left: Cessie Cerrato, senior director for Palace Resorts, Yasmeen Gumbs-Breakenridge, 2018 New York; and Kristopher DaCosta, digital marketing manager, Jamaica Tourist Board.



Sloane Stephens, US Open Tennis Champion (left), with Chef Wenford Simpson.



From left: Diana McIntyre-Pike, president-founder, Countrystyle Villages, poses with Dr Toni Wheatle Peart, CEO of the Wheatle Peart Global Branding Organization.

McIntyre-Pike receives Global Tourism Award

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board (JTB) congratulates Diana McIntyre-Pike on being honored with the Global Tourism Award by the Wheatle Peart Global Branding Organization. The awards ceremony took place in Chicago in August at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. McIntyre-Pike serves as the president-founder of the Countrystyle Villages as Businesses Programme and president of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIP) Caribbean.

In her remarks, McIntyre-Pike stressed the importance of education, the training of communities in entrepreneurship, and personal development to prepare the next generation for the world of business. As a global speaker on tourism matters, McIntyre-Pike provides training, business development, and marketing support on an international platform.

"Jamaica Tourist Board is proud to congratulate McIntyre-Pike on this prestigious award," said Donovan White, Jamaica's director of tourism. "We laud her exemplary work in promoting Jamaica's community tourism efforts."

A pioneer in community tourism with over 40 years of experience, McIntyre-Pike has created a dynamic programme helping to revive communities by facilitating funding support and implementing diverse businesses.

Her work with the Countrystyle Community Tourism Village programme, is to empower communities by exposing their natural culture, talents, passions, and potential to the world. Her vision lies in three key principles: think globally – act locally, establish independence, and develop human resources. Through the International Institute for Peace through Tourism Caribbean, she works to facilitate tourism initiatives and the belief that every traveller can be an 'Ambassador for Peace.'

■ For more information on Jamaica, go to www.visitjamaica.com.

100 MoBay to boost Jamaica's tourism product

LOCALLY OWNED gaming and entertainment franchise 100 officially opened the doors to their Montego Bay location recently.

This first-ever expansion of the brand by the Sizzling Slots group, according to CEO Gassan Azan, “not only represents an investment in Jamaica’s tourism product, but also an investment in Jamaican people through employment”.

“The expansion, for us, was a unanimous decision. Montego Bay is the entertainment mecca of the west, and we knew that investing in a new location right here would not only bring economic gains through the employment of individuals, but that it would also add value to our evolving and growing tourism product,” Azan explained in his address to guests at the launch event.

He highlighted in his address that while the new venue is to be enjoyed by all, it is vital that all visitors know that the city has a lot



Officially opened – Sizzling Slots CEO Gassan Azan (second right) is joined inside the casino at 100 MoBay by (from left) Director of Tourism Donovan White, Councillor of the Spring Gardens Division Dwight Crawford, Mayor of Montego Bay Homer Davis, and Sizzling Slots Director of Operations Robin Perkins.

to offer in terms of is nightlife. He shared that the facility will introduce themed nights, similar to its Kingston counterpart – a tactic that both he and his team hope will not only bring out Montegonians, but will be introduced to visitors by key

players in the hotel industry.

“We need to get our tourists out of the hotels and have them know that Montego Bay is safe and that we have a wealth of cultural experiences to be enjoyed. We at 100 look forward to working with the Min-

istry of tourism and the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) to ensure that this is done,” Azan added.

The importance of businesses in the entertainment industry focusing on inclusivity was also highlighted by Jamaica’s director of

tourism, Donovan White. In his address, he shared that there needs to be more movement towards getting visitors to Montego Bay exploring what the city truly has to offer in the near future. He expressed the need for there to be a higher level of service offering that will ensure that entities like 100 capitalise on the boom in the tourism industry.

“Establishments like 100 will have the great opportunity to tap into the fact that this year, the international tourism sector and the entire Caribbean and world tourism market will travel to the city for three days. They will then come back for Caribbean Marketplace later in the year. I hope that 100 will [take] the opportunity to ensure that when these global travel-industry heavy hitters come, we ensure they come, enjoy, and take back the experience for more to come back,” White shared.

Island Routes gives back to local communities

Tour company upgrades the St Ann Infirmary

ISLAND ROUTES Caribbean Adventures is not only dedicated to providing the most authentic, sought-after tours and excursions, but is also committed to the enhancement of local communities. Island Routes’ newest innovation, MINI-Routes, offers guests the chance to see Jamaica in all its authenticity, and the company contributes a portion of the proceeds from each tour to the local communities that are visited.

Having marked the first full year of MINI-Routes operations, Island Routes recently organised and funded the renovation of the nurses’ station at the St Ann Infirmary. The project was fully funded with the proceeds collected from MINI-Routes. The aim of MINI-Routes is to allow visitors to “see, touch, taste, drive the real Jamaican experience” as each route takes guests to authentic spots on an exploration of culture and adventure in destina-



The refurbished nurses’ station at the St Ann Infirmary. Standing (from left) are Island Routes representatives Tiffany Forstmayr; Ryan Terrier, vice-president of operations; Matron Sharmain Davidson and Caldine Bowman. Sitting (from left) are nurses Rosebelle Clarke, Sheirka McCook Clarke, and Yoniqe Duckett.

tions such as Ocho Rios, Negril and the less-frequented Portland.

Island Routes felt it would be beneficial to the parish of St Ann to provide the nurses of the

infirmary with a clean, comfortable space in which to carry out their duty of providing the best care to the residents of the area. The scope of the renovations included the installa-

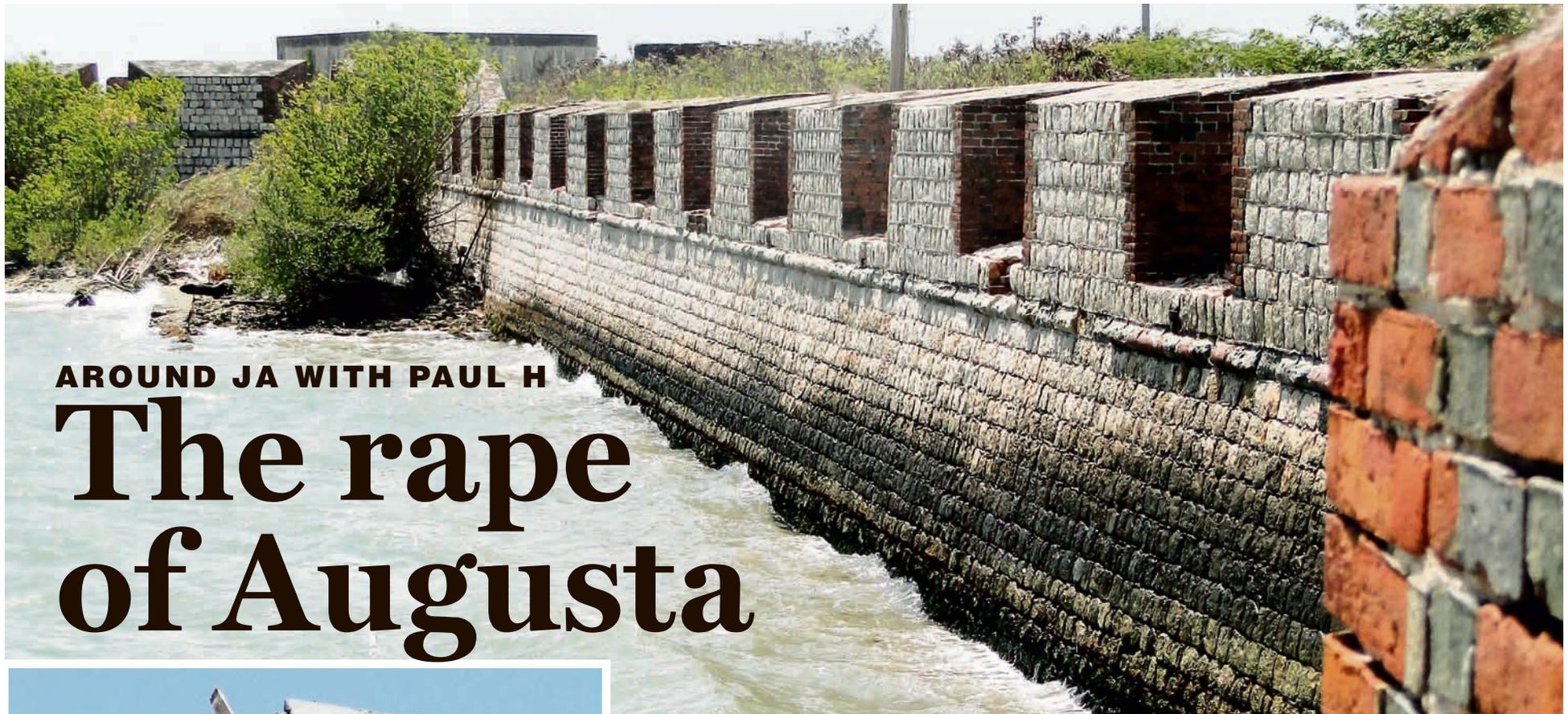
tion of partition walls; tiling of the bathroom, fitting of a new face basin, windows and doors; painting; and donation of new furniture.

“We are very appreciative of the renovations to the nurses’ station at the St Ann Infirmary, and we thank Island Routes for the time and effort that they put into making this happen. The staff here at the infirmary can now perform their work in a much better environment. Now, every time we see the cute, green Island Routes MINIs drive through the community, we will think of you. Giving is not just about making a donation, it’s about making a difference,” commented Matron Davidson.

The tour company offers a number of other tours that are aimed at community development. The Reading Road Trip in Jamaica, St Lucia, Antigua, Grenada, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Barbados and Exuma in The Bahamas gives

guests the opportunity to give back to the little ones by spending the morning at a local school working with the children on developing their reading and comprehension skills. The Oistins Express Friday Night Fish Fry in Barbados gives guests the opportunity to become immersed in the culture, knowing that the proceeds are being used for development of the community. The Turtle Watching Tour in Jamaica is about protecting the marine life and educating guests and locals about preserving the environment. More information on these tours can be found on the Island Impact page of the Island Tours website.

Island Routes is honoured to play a part in building the Caribbean through its award-winning adventures and will continue to make a positive impact within its various destinations.



AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

The rape of Augusta



Not even the sentry box was spared the wrath of 'Hurricane Vandal'.

Where have all the inmates and the beds gone?

BUILT ON a swamp between the 1740s and '50s, Fort Augusta's objective was to protect the western section of Kingston Harbour. Yet, Fort Augusta, located in St Catherine, and built of bricks and stones, is still waiting for an invasion, or is it?

During its construction, many people died from fevers and insect bites. Many more lives were lost there when in 1763, the magazine containing 3,000 barrels of gun powder was struck by a bolt of lightning. It is said that over 300 people were killed and the explosion caused damages to home 17 miles away. By 1765 the fort got a new magazine, and by 1770 it was capable of holding 1,400 barrels of gun powder.

The research did not reveal when it was transformed into a prison for women, but its use for such came to an end in March last year. The inmates were removed to the South Camp Road Rehabilitation Centre. And the facility was abandoned, it seems.

I chanced upon it recently on one of my treks. The entrance gate appeared to be closed, but when I reached it, I realised that a smaller gate within that entrance was open. I let myself in. Not a soul was in sight, so I pressed on. And then I stopped with arms akimbo, wondering when 'Hurricane Vandal' had blown over Fort Augusta. Signs



The corridor between two former dormitory looks like a hurricane has passed through it.

of vandalism were everywhere.

Not one of the modern structures was spared. Door jambs are yearning for the return of their doors. Window spaces need no blinds or curtains. To block out what? The roofs seem to have flown away with the winds. The former dorms and cells are now shells, echoing the cry of anguish and pain of those who dwelled there. All the metal bed frames

have been sawn from the walls covered with graffiti that reveal the names and other peculiarities of the former inmates. I also saw a book full of their names and when they were released.

Many pieces of rejected scrap metals are strewn all over. Nobody should walk in that place in the dark. Cables have been dug from the ground, leaving gaping trench-like openings. The copper was



The shell of the former administrative block.



The front gate of Fort Augusta in St Catherine.

removed and the useless metals left behind. Razor-sharp security metal coils are on the ground keeping company with the grass. They have no one to restrain and intimidate, so they have gone to eternal rest.

The old chapel, also made of thick brick and stone walls, seems to be the best preserved of the ancient structures. The 'tunnels' at the back and side of it were wet and replete with garbage. Inside the arched-ceiling room there is only one bench of invisible worshippers, perhaps annoyed at my intrusion. On the walls are a few plaques bearing interesting inscriptions.

Back outside, it was time to 'tour' the brick-and-stone fortress itself. Its thick walls seem sturdy

and strong, though sections of it, ravaged by time and lashed by the sea, are crumbling. From it, the vistas of Kingston Harbour, Port Royal and the Hellshire Hills are picturesque, yet the sight of the polluted sea pounding the base of the fort is not so flattering.

Not one of the 80 cannon placed strategically around the fort by 1768 was ever fired in war. The paranoia of the English was in vain. I saw four of them, which the salt-laden air has turned into rusting, flaking, redundant and impotent dogs without a bite. While they faced the sea looking out for ships to blast apart, an invasion of sort took place behind their back, and the invaders are long gone with



A section of Fort Augusta still in an excellent state of preservation despite being battered by angry waves for decades.

their 'treasures'.

Fort Augusta is a part of the story of the fortification of Jamaica, and its ancient stone and brick walls hold the secrets and narratives of the men who were stationed there, and women who were imprisoned within. It used to be their home. Why, then, was this prime heritage site left for all and sundry to plunder and rape?

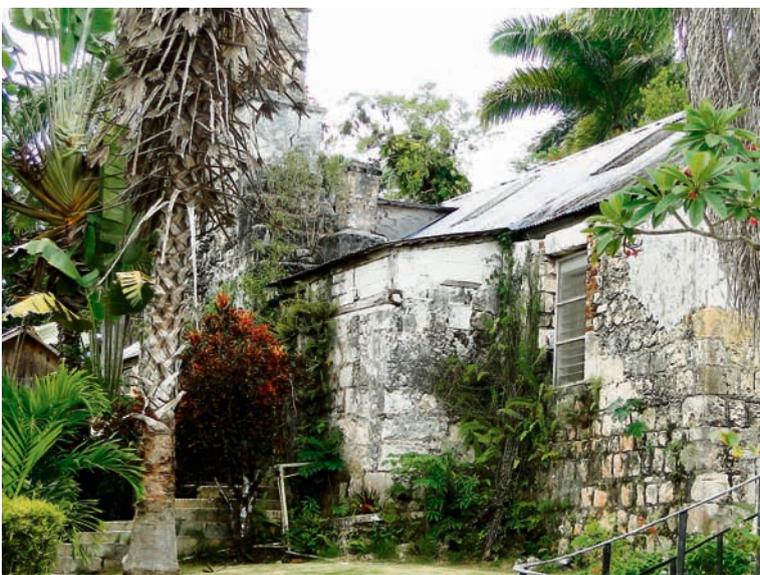
Augusta, the mother of King George III, for whom it was named, might just be cursing in her grave, shouting, "Remove my name from it, I do not deserve this! It is an insult to my honour!" Poor Augusta.



Two of the remaining cannon at Fort Augusta.



A sculpture outside the Good Hope Great House.



An older section of the Good Hope Great House.



The entrance of the Good Hope Estate in Trelawny.

Good Hope Great House: **LONG STORY OF HOSPITALITY**

ON WEDNESDAY, July 25, we featured Trelawny's Good Hope Estate, looking briefly at some of the points of interest. Today, we are focusing on the great house, which is one of the centerpieces of the tourist attraction, along with Chukka's Adventure Park and Falls at Good Hope.

Its story started in 1742 when Colonel Thomas Williams, for services to the King of England, was given several acres of land not far from the Martha Brae River. He established a sugar estate on this land in 1744. The area was then a part of the parish of St James. In 1755 Colonel Williams built the great house in honour of his young bride, Elizabeth Baker. At age 24, Baker died of malaria. She was buried in the basement of the great house.

The history of ownership succession of the estate is a bit obscured. A storyboard at the back of the structure says, "In 1767, John Tharp, at the age of 25, purchased the home from Colonel Williams' son. Tharp died in 1804."

Yet, in an online article by Daniel L. Ogilvie called 'The



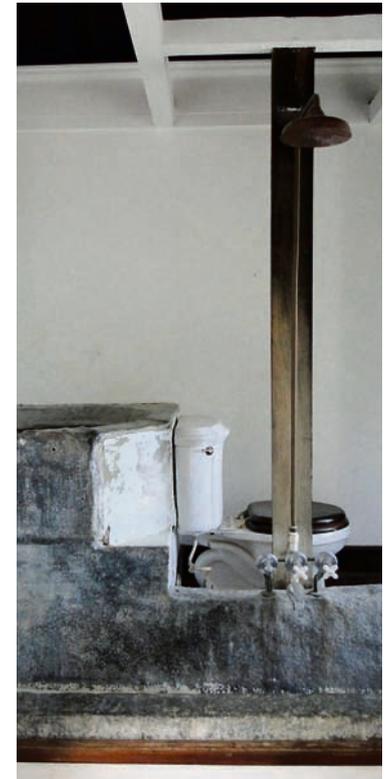
Visitors to the Good Hope Great House looking earnestly at a point of interest.

History of the Parish of Trelawny', Ogilvie says that in a tablet on the estate is the following inscription: "Colonel Thomas Williams Jnr, from the parish of Westmoreland, began to settle this estate April 7th, 1774, and named it Good Hope." That was seven years after John Tharp bought it.

The same article also says that the property passed from Colonel Williams to his son, Obediah, for whom John Tharp worked as an overseer. Williams departed Jamaica to reside in England, after which "the finances of the estates were reduced to a low ebb, and in disgust, the estates were passed over to



An exquisite dining table inside the great house.



John Tharpe's lead-coated bath in which he soaked himself in hot water to ease the pain of rheumatism.

to Mr John Tharp". So, when exactly did Tharp acquire the property, and by what means? Was it handed down to him, or did he buy it?

In any case, the great house remained in the Tharp family until 1867. It changed ownership a few more times and was once operated by American banker John F. Thomas as a small hotel where "distinguished visitors", such as Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig-Holstein, the duke and duchess of Kent, and governors of Jamaica stayed. It operated as a hotel until 1989.

It was undoubtedly a social hotspot in the parish, especially because of Tharp's repute. Lady Nugent wrote in her diary that Tharp was second to Simon Taylor of St Thomas in terms of social respectability. She and her husband, Governor George Nugent, also stayed at the great house in 1802 as guests of John Tharp.

The mostly cut-stone building is still going strong and is in an excellent state of preservation. Apart from the regular furniture, a bedroom had a commode chair and chamber pot, a basin, a pewter, and a drinking



One of the bedrooms inside the Good Hope Great House in Trelawny.

glass. There were no adjoining bathrooms in the 18th century. Up to 1804, there were nine bedrooms. Now, there are only three.

Yet, John Tharp installed a lead-coated bath when he got sickly and suffered from rheumatism. The hot water for the bath came from a boiler that was fed with water stored on the roof. The water in

the boiler, located outside of Tharp's room, was heated by wood-fire. It is said that Tharp might have unknowingly hastened his own death as he could have been poisoned by the lead used to coat his bath.

There are many pieces of exquisite furniture throughout the one-level house. Of note are two

lounge chairs in a sitting area. Called planters' or Spanish chairs, they were made of a combination of mule-skin leather and mahogany wood. They were uniquely designed and were made to accommodate people of different heights.

The great house is open to members of the public as part of a tour package.



Planters' chairs made of mahogany and mule-skin leather.

Hanover school gets positive start to new school year

Organisations partner to assist school with back-to-school supplies

THE CHUKKA Foundation, Lets Limited, and Hanover Charities recently partnered in assisting the children of the Pumpkin Bottom community in Hanover with back-to-school supplies for the new school year.

The three organisations wanted to help to enable the children of Pumpkin Bottom to start the year on a positive note and support their academic success.

“We believe that supporting children through education is the key to reducing poverty,” stated Chukka Foundation manager, Sheona Muschette.

Supplies were provided to 100 children in the Pumpkin Bottom community ranging from the early-childhood up to the secondary level. Neveast Supplies Ltd also assisted with this special event.

According to Muschette, the initiative to assist the children and families in the Hanover community was undertaken specifically to help ease financial expenses. “The cost of pencils, crayons, books, and other supplies easily adds up at the beginning of each academic year. Families are focusing on their daily needs, and the extra pressure to fund school supplies is one more challenge and stress,” she added.

Chukka Sandy Bay is located



The Lets Ltd and Chukka team giving blessings before the presentation.



From left: Latanya Dawes and Dorothy Marzouca (Lets Ltd), Katrin Casserty (Hanover Charities), Sheona Muschett (Chukka Foundation), and Kadeisha Moodie (Hanover Charities), share lens time during a recent back-to-school treat at Pumpkin Bottom in Hanover.

across from the Pumpkin Bottom community, and Chukka, Lets Ltd, and Hanover Charities were keen on showing their support by

helping the children. It was a fun and relaxed afternoon. The children played at the community playground, then there was the presentation of gifts, followed by refreshments. Parents and grandparents attended and offered their support to the sponsors.

In addition to supplying the Pumpkin Bottom community, the Chukka Foundation is also providing assistance to 10 community schools around all the Chukka locations across the island with back-to-school supplies.

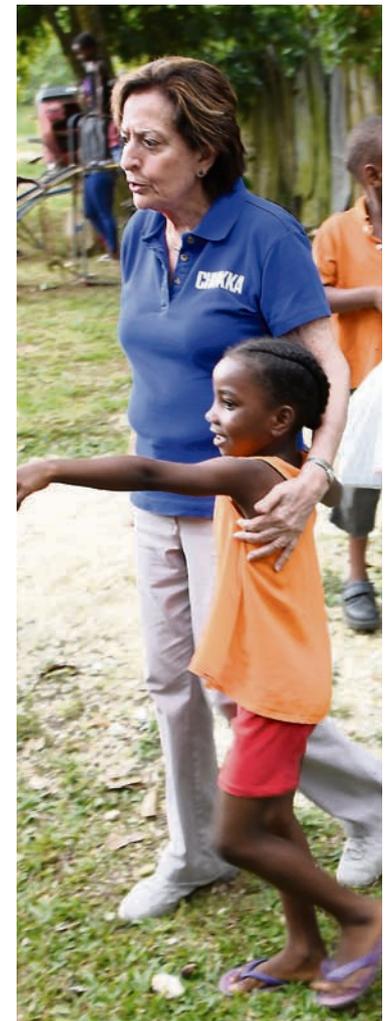
Chukka offers a variety of tours throughout Jamaica, from White River Valley in St Mary across to Sandy Bay, Hanover and Mayfield in Westmoreland.

The Chukka Foundation feels strongly about developing relationships and partnering closely with rural and local schools offering their support where possible.

In addition to Neveast Supplies Ltd, which provided the school supplies, other partners included Falmouth Jamaica Land Company, the local affiliate for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

They provided small cabin fridges that will be useful within the schools, Muschette said, noting that each sector brings in useful resources and assistance, all with a common vision to help communities.

“The partnership has been beneficial and rewarding for everyone concerned,” stated the Chukka Foundation chairman.



Dorothy Marzouca and a young Pumpkin Bottom resident deep in conversation.



A little boy looking through his school supplies during the Chukka Foundation-Lets Limited back-to-school treat at Pumpkin Bottom in Hanover.



The early-childhood and primary students of Pumpkin Bottom awaiting their supplies.