

The Gleaner

Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2019

Sandals team members receive training from acclaimed Master of Wine

MBJ inaugurates ticketing concourse at Sangster International Airport

Jamaica serves up local flavours at Harlem Eat-Up!



EU figures down, as
US, UK SOAR



Jamaica Tourist Board UK staff pose with one of the wrapped taxis. CONTRIBUTED

EVEN AS the number of tourists to Jamaica from the United States and the United Kingdom continues to surge, the number of visitors from the European Union was hit with a 54 per cent decline, trending downwards from 30,232 to 14,127

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett attributes the decline to issues with airlift on the continent, which he said is of concern to him, so much so that he will be travelling there next month to consult with industry players.

“What has happened is that we’ve struggled with one or two flights, particularly, with Eurowing and some other flights that we have on a seasonal basis, so I am hoping to go into Europe in June and to go to France, in particular, to have some discussions with partners and airlines with regard to strengthening the airlift arrangements from

EU figures down, as *US, UK soar*

that side of Europe, Continental Europe and Southern Europe,” Bartlett explained.

“People want to come to Jamaica. There is no question about that, but you also have to make sure there is the reliability of load factor because the airline is not going to fly unless there are somewhere in the region of 70 to 75 per cent load factor,” the Minister added.

Nevertheless, Bartlett said that

the arrivals for this year remain on a strong growth trajectory, with robust figures coming out of the United States and the United Kingdom due in part to vigorous airlift from those regions, a result of relatively shorter flight times.

A total of 37,323 tourists travelled from the United Kingdom to the island-up from 31,653 in February, marking a 15 per cent increase in arrivals. Canada was

Jamaica’s second-largest market, with 84,608 visitors arriving in February, but that country registered a six per cent decrease to 79,859 in April.

In February, visitor arrivals from the US stood at 254,126, and in April, arrivals from that country made an 11 per cent leap to 285,366.

“There is a seasonal pattern for Europe. For that reason, they

tend to come more in the winter, and they have many more options during summer than they have in winter. But the issue of airlift remains the strongest contributing factor to the level of growth that we are experiencing from places like the US, and so on,” he explained.

“You can appreciate why the US growth is so strong. We have over 1.2 million seats, I believe, for the summer, and of that, we have an additional 100,000 out of the US. So this summer, we have 8.4 per cent more seats than last year summer, and out of that increase, 100,000 of it is from the US alone, and you can understand why: they use smaller equipment, so they can make more flights,” Bartlett said.

He said that the South American market has been doing relatively

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Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett welcomes visitors on a Eurowings flight in 2017. PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

SOAR

CONTINUED FROM 2

well, with 11 flights per week out of Panama via Copa, which provides a connection to Jamaica from most of the South American cities. He said that this would be

bolstered by Latham out of Lima, Peru, whose flight itinerary starts sometime in either October or November.

With respect to efforts aimed at targeting the Chinese market, Bartlett said that Jamaica still has a long way to go as the distance is a factor.

“It requires bigger equipment to fly to Jamaica while in the US, we

can use some of the smaller-sized equipment like the 727, and so on. For China, you have to use the ‘big boys’ – the Dreamliners and the 767s and the big Airbuses – and that requires large volume and capacity. China is only flying to one Caribbean island, and that is Cuba, and that is struggling,” he said.

In February this year, the total number of internationally arriving

passengers to Jamaica was 404,478 while in April, it increased to 422,962, a five per cent increase when compared to that month. Bartlett remains upbeat that the overall numbers will continue to grow throughout the rest of the year.

“It is the first year that Jamaica is having double-digit growth every month from the start of the year. We are trending double-digit for May

also,” he said.

“We are up 12.9 per cent for the year so far, and we are closing in on two million visitors by another two weeks. Up to the end of April, we were 1.7 million, and that would be a record too, because that would be the first time we are making two million visitors in just about the middle of the year,” he added.

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THE PLACE TO STAY IN MONTEGO BAY




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Visitors showed Anguilla the love this winter

Island Enjoys Record-Breaking Winter Season

ANGUILLA WELCOMED guests from around the world this winter, resulting in the island's best winter season in over 27 years.

Guests flocked to Anguilla in record numbers to bask on the island's 33 pristine beaches, surrounded by sapphire seas; sample the extraordinary variety of delectable culinary experiences; and enjoy the warm and generous

hospitality for which the island is so well known.

Anguilla logged yet another record-breaking month in March, with 11,940 tourist stayover arrivals. This marks not only the highest March in history, but also the highest monthly total in the history of Anguilla's tourism industry. The figure represents a 29.16 per cent increase over the same period in 2017, and a 22.55 per cent

increase over March 2016, the month that until now, held the record for the most tourist arrivals.

April continued this winning streak as the 9,790 arrivals recorded is the largest number of tourist arrivals for any month of April dating back as far as 1993. The first-quarter tourist arrivals, (January to March 2019), at 30,135, was the highest recorded since the Anguilla Tourist

Board began tracking arrivals.

During the first four months of the year, just under 40 thousand guests spent one or more nights on Anguilla. The island has, to date, attracted almost 50 per cent of the total tourist arrivals for 2016, the island's best year to date for tourist arrivals.

"Let us celebrate but not become complacent," said Donna Banks,

chairperson of the Anguilla Tourist Board.

"There is still much work to be done. Our goal remains a 20 per cent increase in tourist arrivals over 2016. We appreciate and value the continued support and cooperation of all our stakeholders, and the people of Anguilla, in helping us to achieve these significant milestones for our industry."

MBJ inaugurates ticketing concourse at Sangster International Airport

WITH PLANS to spend US\$29 million in 2019 to improve infrastructure at the Sangster International Airport, MBJ Airports Limited has unveiled a newly renovated ticketing concourse in the tourism capital.

The operators of the country's leading gateway to the world held the official opening ceremony while hosting a forum at the same time two Fridays ago.

"We are at a very interesting point in the airport's ongoing development, and we're making great progress as we transform the infrastructure, systems, and service to that of a world-class facility, while simultaneously creating a uniquely Jamaican "Irie Airport Experience," commented MBJ Airports CEO Rafael Echevarne.

"The refurbishment of the ticketing hall is a very visible part of MBJ's tireless commitment to making Sangster International Airport as safe, user-friendly, and efficient as humanly possible," Echevarne added.

Over the next five years, the group plans to spend US\$112 in the drive towards lifting the standards at the Montego Bay gateway.

In attendance at the event were Minister of Transport and Mining, Robert Montague; Councillor Homer Davis, mayor of Montego Bay; Custos of St James Bishop Conrad Pitkin; Airports Authority of Jamaica (AAJ) Chairman William Shagoury; and AAJ President and CEO Audley Deidrick.



Directors on the Board of the AAJ: Rafael Echevarne (CEO MBJ) William Shagoury, Custos of Clarendon & Chairman AAJ; Honourable Minister of Transport and Mining Robert Montague; His Worship Councillor Homer Davis, Mayor of Montego Bay; Councillor Heroy Clarke; Fay Hutchinson. Audley Deidrick (president & CEO, AAJ) is pictured in the background. CONTRIBUTED

Playa Hotels and Resorts launches first Wellness 5k Run/Walk

ON SATURDAY, June 8, 2019, Playa Hotels and Resorts, Jamaica, in partnership with Running Events Jamaica, will be holding its first 5K Run/Walk, where it is expected that some 200 participants will be celebrating Global Wellness Day in keeping with its own thrust towards health and wellness.

The 5k Run/Walk is a unique opportunity for staff members from the seven Playa owned hotels in Jamaica to have a chance to mingle, build team spirit and promote health and wellness throughout the resorts.

The run, which is to begin at the Hilton Rose Hall in Montego Bay, at 6 a.m., will see associates from all newly owned Playa resorts. These include Hyatt Zilara, Hyatt Ziva, Jewel Grande Montego Bay, Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa, Jewel Resorts, St. Ann (which comprises of Jewel Paradise Cove, Jewel Dunn's River and Jewel Runaway Bay).

"We are excited about this initiative as we aim to ensure that all associates work to create memorable moments, work together to make Playa the best place to work while valuing diversity, passion, and contributing to a fun and healthy workplace. These are important aspects of Playa's 10 service initiatives said Managing Director/General Manager of Jewel Resorts/Hilton Rose Hall, Carol Bourke, who initiated the event.

This promises to be a day filled with celebration and accomplishment as some of the resorts mark one year under PLAYA ownership/management. Participants can take advantage of the opportunity to meet associates from all other resorts, get insight into the operations of each property, network and build lasting friendships.

All this while celebrating World Global Wellness day.



Playa Resorts JAMAICA team members from left Betty-Ann Brown, Dedra Brown, Stacie-Ann Earle, and Karlene Ritchie smile as they celebrate their finish at the recently held MoBay City Run. The Resorts have since 2019 increased their participation in health and wellness activities across the island. CONTRIBUTED

International tourism numbers and confidence on the rise ... UNWTO

THE LATEST issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer from the World Tourism Organization shows that international tourism continued to grow over the first quarter of 2019.

Though at a slower rate when compared with the last two years, the four per cent increase registered in early 2019 is a very positive sign. The Middle East (+8 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific (+6 per cent) experienced the highest increase in international arrivals.

Numbers in both Europe and Africa were up by four per cent, and in the Americas, growth was recorded at three per cent.

"International tourism continues to perform strongly worldwide fuelled by a positive economy, increased air capacity, and visa facilitation," says UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

"Growth in arrivals is easing slightly after two years of exceptional results, but the sector continues to outpace the global rate of economic growth."

Europe, the world's largest tourism region, reported solid growth (+4 per cent), led by destinations in Southern and Mediterranean Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (both +5

per cent). Growth in Africa was driven by the ongoing recovery in North Africa (+11 per cent). In the Americas, the Caribbean (+17 per cent) rebounded strongly after weak results in 2018, following the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria in late 2017.

In Asia and the Pacific, results for the first three months showed a six per cent increase led by North-East Asia (+9 per cent) and a very solid performance from the Chinese market.

"With this growth comes greater responsibility for translating it into better jobs and better lives", Pololikashvili stresses. "We need

to continue investing in innovation, digital transformation, and education so that we can harness the many benefits tourism can bring while at the same time mitigating its impact on the environment and society with better management of tourism flows."

UNWTO CONFIDENCE INDEX PANEL OPTIMISTIC OVER FUTURE GROWTH

Confidence in global tourism has started to pick up again after slowing down at the end of 2018, according to the latest UNWTO Confidence Index survey. The outlook for the May-August

2019 period, the peak season for many destinations in the Northern Hemisphere, is more optimistic than in the recent periods and more than half of respondents are expecting a better performance in the coming four months.

Experts' evaluation of tourism performance in the first four months of 2019 was also rather positive and in line with the expectations expressed at the beginning of that period.

UNWTO forecasts growth of three per cent to four per cent in international tourist arrivals in 2019.

Sandals team members receive training from acclaimed Master of Wine



These team members from Sandals Montego Bay's Food and Beverage Department are fully engaged as Constellation Brands' Master of Wine, Mark de Vere, talks them through a number of wine essentials. The team members were among more than 300 Sandals and Beaches team members who were selected to benefit from an intimate and thorough training session conducted by de Vere, one of less than 400 Masters of Wine in the world. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS**

OVER 300 team members from Sandals and Beaches Resorts in Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos Islands recently benefited from a special wine training conducted by Constellation Brands' Master of Wine, Mark de Vere.

de Vere is one of less than 400 Masters of Wine in the world and boasts almost 30 years experience in the wine industry.

Constellation Brands is the parent company of Robert Mondavi Wines and Sandals enjoys a partnership with Mondavi's Twin Oaks which sees six varietals of the brand included in the company's Five Star Global Gourmet offerings across the region.

In keeping with the company's long-standing commitment to training and development, select team members from the company's food and beverage departments at all resorts in Jamaica, and Beaches Resort in the Turk and the Caicos Islands, participated in intimate and thorough training sessions and wine tastings with de Vere who not only shared useful information on wine but also introduced the group to the newest wines set to join the company's expansive wine list. He told team members, "I want you to leave here being comfortable with wine. If you're not comfortable with wine it may seem intimidating, but at the end of my presentation, I want you to feel knowledgeable about what wine is and how to present it to your guests.

"My aim is to make you comfortable, gracious and confident so you enjoy talking about and selling wine. We want to take away the mystery and keep the



Team members from Sandals Montego Bay pay keen attention as Constellation Brands' Master of Wine, Mark de Vere, briefs them on the objectives of the training session. One of less than 400 Masters of Wine in the world, de Vere walked the team members through the history of wine, types of wine and various selling points and stories for each varietal, before taking them on a tasting journey of a few new and existing wines on the company's wine list.

magic," he explained.

Commenting on the significance of the training, Sandals Resorts International's group manager Bar and Beverage Operations, Troy King, said, "Our team members can always benefit from continuous training and this is something our company is passionate about. We want our team members to be very comfortable talking about wines, and having the chance to learn from someone with Mark's expertise will certainly enhance their

exposure and knowledge."

King added that with the hotel chain's new wines set to come on stream, it was important that the team is able to speak confidently about the various products.

"I am positive this training will assist in that regard," he noted.

de Vere's detailed training, which was conducted in the south coast, Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios regions in Jamaica, educated team members on the history and science of winemaking, wine

varietals and types of grapes, grape growing and maturation, wine regions across the world, and the art of discerning notes and flavours. He also provided tips on how to present, recommend and sell wine to guests.

During the exciting wine-tasting segment of the training sessions, team members were brought through a range of wines which will soon be added to the resorts' manager's wine list. The team was fortunate to be among the first in the Caribbean to taste two new special varietals that are aged in spirit barrels – a Robert Mondavi Private Selection Bourbon Barrel Aged Cabernet Sauvignon and a Robert Mondavi Private Selection Rum Barrel Aged Merlot. Additionally, two new rosés - Band of Roses and Kim Crawford Rosé – were also tasted. The training also highlighted the Ruffino Sparkling Rosé, a Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Fumé Blanc and The Prisoner wines, which are among the standouts on the resorts' wine list.

Romaro Watson, a waiter at Sandals Montego Bay, thoroughly enjoyed the training and was happy to get a preview of the new wines. He remarked, "To be honest, it was phenomenal. I enjoyed learning about the new wines that we'll be having, especially the one aged in Jamaican rum barrels. As a Jamaican, that was definitely interesting for me." Watson, who often serves guests at private candlelight dinners, said he was excited to share the new information with his guests.

All team members who completed the training will receive certificates from the Constellation Academy of Wine.



AC Kingston Hotel staff share lens time during their Labour Day project in Rae Town. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

AC Hotel Kingston labours in Rae Town

THE ALL-NEW AC Hotel Kingston has led its first community-enhancement project prior to its opening, which is scheduled for June 2019.

Team members of AC Hotel Kingston, along with community members, gathered on Labour Day to improve the children's park located in Rae Town, downtown Kingston, enhancing the lives of over 3,000 community members.

Over 100 volunteers, including members of the Kiwanis Club

of Downtown Kingston and the Sandals Foundation, joined the initiative to help make the project a success. The project featured a vibrant and playful mural by students of the Edna Manley School of the Visual and Performing Arts. The mural, which is 850 square feet, was designed to encourage a sense of family and community to anyone passing by.

Other project activities included repairs to playground equipment, installation of benches, clean-up



Children in Rae Town, Kingston, celebrate the new mural courtesy of AC Hotel Kingston.

and bushing of the park.

"This project will be the first

of many for AC Hotel Kingston.

We take great pride in being the

first AC Hotel by Marriott® to be launched in the Caribbean region, and one of our top priorities is to do our part in developing the communities we call home," stated general manager Koen Hietbrink.

The outreach efforts of AC Hotel Kingston go beyond giving back to the local communities. The hotel is concerned with the environment on a whole, said a media release from the property.

Accordingly, energy-efficient windows to the solar panels that power the building, the hotel says, are purposefully designed in dedication to minimising its carbon footprint. The hotel has also installed a rainwater catchment system as part of its water-conservation efforts.

AC Hotel Kingston is part of the Marriott brand, which, through its Serve 360 Sustainability and Social Impact Program, is committed to doing good in every direction. "We look forward to developing our Serve 360 Program in order to promote sustainability and community growth on both a micro and macro level, from the locally made artwork and furniture that stylishly grace the hotel to our community outreach programme," continued Hietbrink.



Centurion Boris Anderson surrounded by Royalton staff who spent Labour Day labouring at his home in Falmouth. A Royalton staff member paints a bus stop in Coopers Pen.



The finished product. Boris Anderson's home as good as new. PHOTO BY JANET DILVERA



Members of the Royalton team and Boris Anderson (second left). From left – Malachi Anderson, Angeline Anderson, and Debbie Bailey. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

LABOUR OF *Love*

TO SAY that you care and to do that which is caring are two different things, but on Labour Day, Royalton White Sands and Blue Waters walked the talk. The company with its army of staff,

executed not one, but two projects in the parish of Trelawny.

One of the projects was repairing the home of centurion Boris Anderson, a resident of the Martha Brae community. Anderson's home

had been in grave disrepair for several years, infested with mold, termites, and other harmful vermin.

Anderson, who after 100 years maintains his popularity in the parish, was assisted by several members of the community.

The brainchild of Debbie Bailey, senior staff in the quality department, she was able to convince the resort that this was among the most critical projects to embark on.

This was reinforced by the human resources director, Angeline Anderson, and the general manager, Daniel Cazarin, who wasted no time in agreeing that it was a worthwhile project to undertake.

On the day, scores of Royalton staff, with big hearts and strong arms ready to put their shoulders to the wheel, aided in the transformation of the home of Johnson, who



From left: Shawn Moses, Junior general manager, Royalton Blue Waters; Felecia Falconer, quality manager; and Kaleisha Wiggan, guest relations director.



Anything that needed fixing was fixed at Mr Boris Anderson's home in Falmouth.



From left: Sergeant Wayne Wallace, Shawn Moses (junior general manager – Royalton), Superintendent Kirk Ricketts, Angeline Anderson (HR director – Royalton), DSP Winston Milton, Daniel Cazarin (general manager). CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Royalton staff members paint Boris Anderson's home.



Debushing and cleaning the roadway in Coopers Pen. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

was occupying a hazardous building.

The floor in sections of the house was falling in. The yard was heavily bushed and the roof needed repairs. The house now resembled an abode fit to be occupied.

It was a proud moment for all involved.

“We must applaud the Falmouth Police, led by Sergeant Wayne Wallace, who was instrumental to this project. They were not only present for moral support; they were entrenched in the hands-on work,” stated

Royalton's human resources director.

Contractors Philbrie McFarlane and Raymond Stewart, as well as Dwight Facey, contributed to the project.

The community of Cooper's Pen, where the resort is located, also received a facelift. Approximately 400 metres of roadway was cleaned and debushed. This project was spearheaded by Felecia Falconer and Michael Napier, quality manager, and environmental coordinator, respectively.



Chef Wenford P. Simpson (centre) poses with his assistant chefs at Harlem EatUp! in New York. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

JAMAICA SERVES UP LOCAL FLAVOURS AT HARLEM EAT-UP!

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) showcased the destination's bold and diverse flavours at the fifth annual Harlem EatUp! event in New York City. The Ultimate Grand Tasting at the Harlem Stroll in the historic Morningside Park brought together cuisine from the city's leading chefs to celebrate the vibrant village of Harlem with live music, dancing, art, and culture.

Harlem EatUp! offered sights, sounds, and flavours during the week-long festival, with signature events including the "Dine in Harlem" series, "WarmUp! To EatUp!," the "Harlem Stroll", and many more. Jamaican chef Wenford P. Simpson partnered with Walkerswood Caribbean Foods to serve Curried Chicken Chickpea Tacos. Patrons raved about the menu item and were excited to sign up to win a complimentary three-night stay for two at Half Moon in Montego Bay.

During the Harlem Stroll, television and radio personality Bevy Smith hosted the outdoor food festival with chef demonstrations taking place on the main stage with Iron chefs Masaharu Morimoto, Mashama Bailey, and Wolfgang Puck.

The Jamaica Tourist Board participated as a first-time sponsor at the annual event, interacting with consumers during the



Philip Rose (left), regional director of Northeast USA, Jamaica Tourist Board, shares information with guests on how to win a complimentary three-night stay for two at Half Moon in Montego Bay, Jamaica.



Chef Wenford P. Simpson prepared Curried Chicken Chickpea Tacos for guests at Harlem EatUp! with Walkerswood Caribbean Foods marinades and seasonings.



Philip Rose, Jamaica Tourist Board's regional director, Northeast USA, with Lashawn Anderson, assistant to Chef Wenford Simpson, and Christopher Dobson, Jamaica Tourist Board's district sales manager, Midwest USA, at Harlem EatUp! New York.

two-day festival at Harlem Stroll.

Chef Simpson showcased Jamaican cuisine

for up to 4,000 attendees, who flocked Morningside Park.



Entertainment Coordinator Garth Williams presents a Holiday Inn Frisbee to Spot Valley student Naomi Alcock.

Holiday Inn Resort brings CHEER to the children at Spot Valley

FORTY-FOUR STUDENTS were fêted with food and entertainment by the Holiday Inn Resort, Montego Bay, team at Spot Valley Basic School last Monday.

The event was staged in

celebration of Child Month.

According to Holiday Inn Resort employee relations manager Marcia Black, as a family friendly hotel, their aim was to make children happy, and what better way to do so than in Child Month.



Spot Valley Basic School Principal, Kayann Gooden-Smith ensuring that all her kids were fed.

Black explained that the team comprised members from various departments.

“Our chefs went all out in providing a lovely, celebratory

cake, hot dogs, chicken, and chips. Everything we knew the children would enjoy.”

It was a fun-filled morning, with games led by the entertainment team.

Assistant Entertainment Manager Davia Grant, who enjoyed the time spent with the children said, “We really love impacting the lives of children. It was fulfilling to know we came and they were just bursting with happiness.”

Spot Valley Basic School Principal, Kayann Gooden-Smith was elated that the hotel team visited.

She was heartened by the expressions of kindness, stating, “We really like how involved the kids were despite not being used to the team. They were excited and really touched.”

Gooden-Smith said it was the first time that the school’s children had experienced such an interactive treat.

General Manager Clark Lobban said that the hotel would continue to make a difference: “We believe in investing in our children, who are our greatest asset”.



The Holiday Inn team (from left) Kids Club Team Leader Irene Bryce, Entertainment Coordinator Garth Williams, Assistant Entertainment Manager Davia Grant, Human Resources Assistant Rusheida Lyn-Sue, Disc Jockey Theron Codner, and Employee Relations Manager Marcia Black were happy to present a celebratory cake to the principal, Kayann Gooden-Smith. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Assistant Entertainment Manager Davia Grant and Employee Relations Manager Marcia Black were hard at work packaging lunches for the students.



Kevan Stewart at the controls. CONTRIBUTED

KEVAN STEWART

Serious about creating *memorable* wedding experiences

HAVING A destination wedding a decade ago was usually seen as a major fête for some couples, especially if it is in a country that they've never been to before.

These days, the Internet has taken out a lot of the guesswork for brides, and couples in general, and destination weddings are becoming more and more popular. For one wedding purveyor, consistently creating a memorable experience for his clients is his only aim.

Kevan Stewart, Suits or DJ Vaun, as he is called in the hospitality and entertainment industry, is quickly

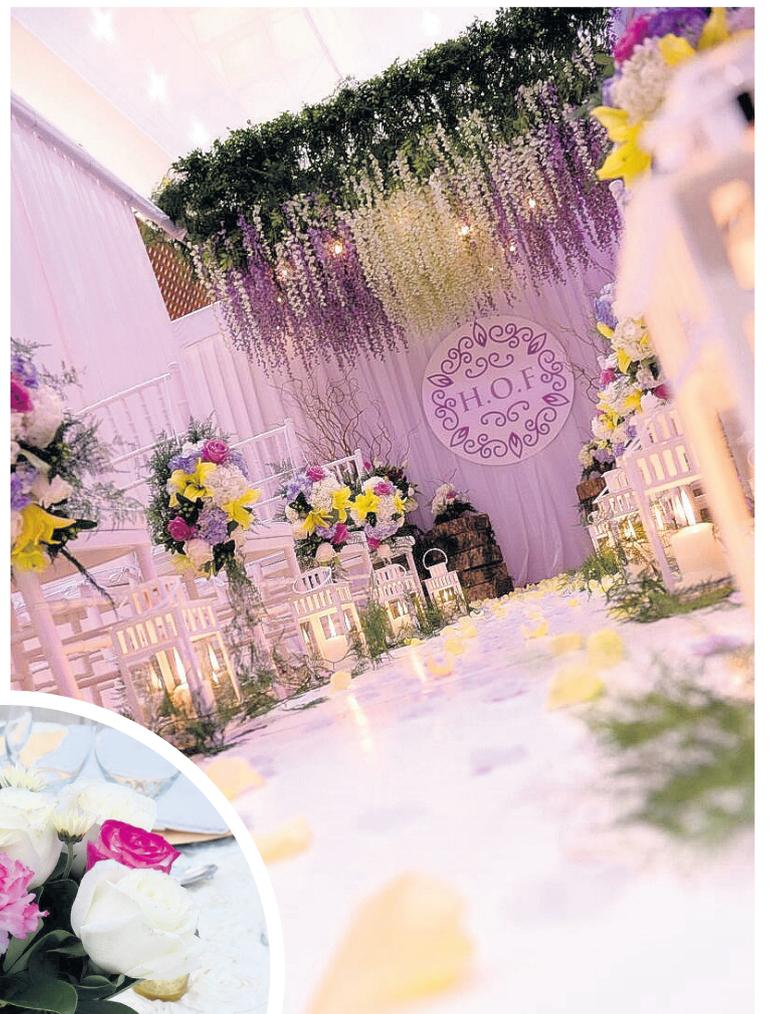
becoming a household name. He earned the nickname Suits from the team at Sandals Resorts which describes him as a “consummate professional, knowledgeable about the business, and easily accessible”.

Taniff Turner, wedding manager, Sandals Royal Caribbean, came to know Stewart at a wedding over a decade ago where the guests would not stop raving about their DJ.

“I met him while working at Super Clubs. Kevan came in to do a wedding for one of our guests who had found him online, and he just blew us away. This was about 10 years ago, and I’ve used his services ever

since, there [at Super Clubs], and now at Sandals,” she said.

“What stood out most for us then was that he was dressed in a suit, and to this day, he and all his DJs are always well dressed in suits. I think that really spoke to



A wedding set up by HOF
LEFT: A centrepiece by HOF Decor



his level of service, very professional,” she also added. Suits began his career in the industry first

as a part-time disk jock playing at various events for his mother Patricia Berton, who taught him how to mix tracks. Berton was a

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WEDDING

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bartender and disc jockey at Cornwall Beach on the famed Hip Strip (now Jimmy Cliff Boulevard).

“I used to spend time with my mother in Montego Bay, and she would set up a sound system at the house where she would teach me how to play. I would also accompany her on a few gigs, where I saw how she handled the crowd, and from there, I found myself learning more and more, and eventually, she would have me play her dates when she left to go overseas to work,” Stewart admitted.

Stewart, who was born and raised in Manchester, soon found a love for music and the energy of the city and moved to Montego Bay to work full time at a call Centre in Freeport. There, he started to play gigs at night while he worked in the day.

Fast-forward 10 years later. Stewart is the managing director of jamaicaweddingdj.com and House of Flowers (HOF) Décor which is primarily marketed overseas to wedding planners and couples that are planning destination weddings. He is also the CEO of Reggae Tech, a full-service events and production company specialising in stage, lighting, and audio-visual productions.



A backdrop by HOF Décor. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

“I started Reggae Tech as a way to earn additional income while employed at the call centre close to 10 years ago. While working

at different events, I saw a need where we could offer more as it related to event production and execution,” he said.

From there, Stewart said, “one business idea became another”, and now, he leads three companies in western Jamaica that have a staff complement of 32 of which 15 are employed full time.

Stewart is driven to creating memorable experiences.

“I love to see people smiling because of a job well done. I love to see them excited. With music, I love to see the reaction of how music influences their behaviour when they’re at a party or any event. It’s like a drug for me.”



Kevan Stewart in the meat of a wedding party.



Another wedding set-up overlooking the Caribbean Sea, executed by HOF Décor.



Eleven bamboo stalks measuring 34 feet are needed. PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H
HATS OFF

TO RIO GRANDE RAFT CAPTAINS

Paul Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

RECENTLY, ON my way to rafting down the Rio Grande in Portland, one of the things on my must-do list, I chanced upon an Indian man arranging some bamboo along the road at Grants Level, not far from the start of the journey down the river at Berrydale.

I could not resist stopping by to find out what he was doing. He turned out to be Norman ‘Supa’ Cataroo, a raft captain (raft operator) who was born and bred in the area. He was building his own raft.

Cataroo said that after he left school, his parents could not afford higher education for him, so he ended up propelling the rafts against the flow of the river from St



This joint must go.

Margaret’s Bay several miles back to the starting point at Berrydale. After doing that for five to six years, he became a licensed raft captain, and his number is 32.

It has been 20 years now for Cataroo in the rafting industry, and

he is still going strong. Not only is he a skilled navigator, but his knowledge of raft building is spot on, and his only tool is a machete to measure and cut the bamboo with great precision.

Generally, each raft is made of



Rafts resting at Berrydale, the start of the journey down the Rio Grande.



Norman Cataroo is measuring the bamboo to a certain specification with his machete.

11 vertical bamboo, measuring 34 feet. After they are fastened together, their horizontal bases are affixed. The seat is firmly attached at one end. Balance is essential to the prevention of accidents. And as I travelled down the Rio Grande, I remembered Cataroo, and reflected on the importance of these captains in the tourist and

the hospitality industries.

It really is a leisure job, if I may, smoothly sailing down the river, but there are challenges in the rafting sector. Cataroo and his colleagues are integral to the tourism experience in Portland, and I hope that somebody will do something to make them believe they are.

JAMAICA OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

Paul H Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

MUSEUMS ARE a major part of the repository of a nation's history and culture. And according to the International Council of Museums, they "acquire, conserve, research, communicate, and exhibit" humanity's tangible and intangible heritage.

They are storehouses to which people go to acquire knowledge about people, places, events, and things from the past. They are major stops on the world's heritage tourism landscapes, and it is said that more tourists than locals visit museums all over the world.

On Saturday, May 18, 2019, the world observed International Museum Day (IMD), an initiative coordinated since May 1977 by the International Council of Museums, which says that IMD "gives the chance for

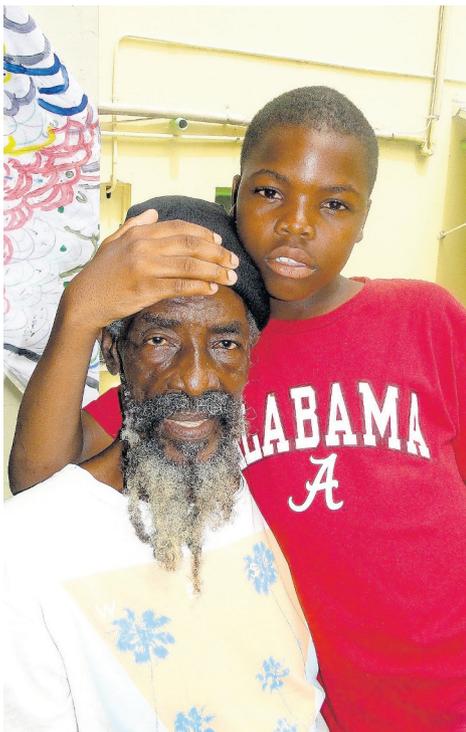


Children participating in the drumming session.

professionals of museums to meet the people and inform them about the challenges museums face". Also, IMD serves as a platform for raising public awareness on the part museums play today in the improvement of society on a national level.

Here in Jamaica, the day was coordinated and hosted by National Museum Jamaica (NMJ), a division of the Institute of Jamaica, in collaboration with The Jamaica Military Museum and Library, located at the Jamaica Defence Force's (JDF) headquarters at Up Park Camp in St Andrew.

At NMJ, there were interactive tours, and



Grandfather and grandson, the 'museum' and the 'student'.



Art class for the young and young-at-art.

in keeping with the 2019 international theme of 'Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Traditions', two outdoor sections were transformed into a hive of cultural activities including games, drumming and dancing, jewellery making, painting, and art and craft sales.

A mento band, which some patrons were seeing for the first time, livened up the atmosphere with some timeless traditional and non-traditional songs. And, of course, the day would not have been complete

without some traditional Jamaican food and beverages.

Over by the JDF, activities under the theme 'Technology and Museums Reaching the Unreachable Through Social Media' included exhibition tours and demonstrations. Visitors were expected to interact through an online virtual museum and touch-screen technology.

The current exhibitions at NMJ include those on Ubuntu; Treasures, Mysteries and Stories; Dolls of Japan; and the Tainos.



Valentine 'Koda' McLean teaching some youngsters to make jewellery.

St Lucia's Karolin Troubetzkoy awarded Germany's **HIGHEST HONOUR**

KAROLIN TROUBETZKOY of St Lucia has been awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the highest tribute the republic can pay to individuals for services to the nation.

Instituted in 1951 by president Theodor Heuss, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany bestows the Order of Merit on people for achievements in the political, economic, social or intellectual realm, and for rendering outstanding services to the nation in the field of social, charitable or philanthropic work.

Troubetzkoy, who arrived in St Lucia from Germany in 1984, accepted the honour at a ceremony in Castries last Friday attended by St Lucian leaders and diplomatic officials, including St Lucia Prime Minister Allen Chastanet; St Lucia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Guy Mayers; and Dr Didacus Jules, director general of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

The honour was conferred upon Troubetzkoy by outgoing German diplomat, His Excellency Holger Michael, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the

Caribbean.

In her acceptance speech, Troubetzkoy said she was surprised to receive the recognition "because, in my voluntary work, I never focused on my own person, but simply on what I could do for others".

Reflecting on 2008 when she was appointed the honorary consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in St Lucia, Troubetzkoy, who is executive director of the Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain resorts, mused: "I feel it should be me thanking and bestowing recognition on Germany and the German president for opening my eyes to what was happening outside my personal comfort bubble ... (which was) my life in Soufrière ... (and) my work at our resorts.

"It would have been very easy to just keep focused on family, on marketing and operating our resorts, and to continue bringing benefits to the surrounding community of Soufrière," said Troubetzkoy. Instead, she opted to volunteer for wider-reaching charitable, conservation and community benefit activities in addition to heading the Saint Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association (SLHTA), the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism

Association (CHTA), the CHTA Education Foundation, and setting up initiatives such as SLHTA's Tourism Enhancement Fund.

As the honorary consul, she reconnected with her native homeland and was proud to see the work Germany and its affiliated organisations were undertaking in the region. "It also gave me a much broader understanding of the social, economic and environmental challenges which we face here in St Lucia and in the Caribbean region."

Troubetzkoy, who serves as envoy of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative, has also been promoting the strengthening of the Caribbean's resilience to mitigate climate change and recover from natural disasters, while helping the region protect natural resources and commit to the principles of sustainable development.

She paid special tribute to her husband, the visionary Nick Troubetzkoy, owner/architect of Anse Chastanet and Jade Mountain, "for allowing me so much time away from our business and family to fulfil these voluntary roles which mean a lot to me."

Investor excitement for USVI tourism

THE GOVERNOR of the US Virgin Islands (USVI), Albert Bryan Jr, is extremely encouraged by the response of investors to the tourism opportunities and incentives offered by the territory.

He noted that the potential of the US Virgin Islands excited a lot of interest at last week's Caribbean Hotel and Resort Investment Summit (CHRIS), especially as he and the territory's team broadcast a strong message "that we're open for business".

Federal resources being invested into the territory's infrastructure, the governor reported, were powering his administration's plans for presenting St Thomas as a top-tier tourism product, and developing distinct identities for St John and St Croix.

Also fueling the excitement, he added, was the high number of arrivals at airports and strong cruise ship numbers returning after the 2017 storms.

The governor, who addressed a plenary conference session featuring heads of government from the British Virgin Islands and French St Martin, said some investors were awed at the scale of incentives the USVI government offered businesses. "To have a destination in the United States where you can get a 100 per cent exemption from your state taxes and 90 per cent exemption from your federal income taxes is just incredible."

Describing the importance of the industry, Governor Bryan asserted that tourism is an export business. "The hotel product is sold to people from foreign places. Getting them to our islands and getting them in the hotel is the battle, but we don't actually make a lot of money directly off our hotels. It's the ability to house people who shop, eat, want to play, want to have different experiences in the Virgin Islands ... and that's where we derive great economic benefit as a government and a community," which was why, he said, his administration was focused on securing new developments.

In the cruise sector, the governor wanted to see passengers extend their time on shore and convert one-day excursions to longer forays around the territory. Such extensions, he added, would benefit the



Governor Albert Bryan Jr addresses CHRIS delegates in Miami. CONTRIBUTED

community economically.

Lamenting that no new hotel has been built for decades, he pledged his personal attention to the streamlining of official procedures so that hotel developers could get new hotels operational quickly.

The governor said his priority tourism goals included the completion of the Long Bay Landing cruise pier project on St Thomas, finishing the waterfront apron, revitalizing the Main Street area, adding new attractions, and renovating the territory's two airports. On St Croix, in addition to breaking ground on a new hotel, he was looking forward to completing harbour dredging so that smaller cruise ships can berth in Christiansted. Attracting more calls into Frederiksted was also critical.

Kamal Latham, CEO of the US Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority, joined David Bornn, chief legal counsel in the Office of the Governor; Lisa Hamilton, president of the USVI Hotel and Tourism Association; and tax and business attorney Erika Kellerhals to address delegates on the opportunities available across the Virgin Islands; while Tourism Commissioner designate Joseph Boschulte spoke on a panel on "The cultural and experiential value proposition for hotels/resorts".

"This conference has put the US Virgin Islands firmly in the minds of the investment community," said Commissioner Designate Boschulte, who said the government delegation had been busy meeting with developers, financiers, and brands, who were very optimistic about doing business in the territory.



Karolin Troubetzkoy receives the Order of Merit from His Excellency Holger Michael, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Caribbean. CONTRIBUTED