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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2019

Negril
Aerodrome
rehab finally
under way

The hard-
resolve
issue of sub-
regional air
transport

After the
crowning, I
danced

Caribbean
tourism is
robust and
resilient



Coffee industry WOOLING TOURISTS

Coffee industry wooing tourists

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

The Jamaica Coffee Exporters Association is embarking on a robust marketing strategy geared at the island's tourism industry to ensure an uptick in the purchase of coffee by the millions of cruise and stop-over visitors to the island.

According to president of the association, Senator Norman Grant, the initiative includes a combination of islandwide signage as well as product sampling at the island's ports of entry, which has already commenced.

"In terms of the market, we want to market Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee to the 4.3 million tourists, so we are putting in J\$10 million in billboards. This is in partnership with JACRA (Jamaica Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority). We are talking to the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB)," Grant, who is also managing director and CEO of the St Andrew-based Mavis Bank Coffee Factory.

"JAMPRO is helping us to build a five-year marketing strategy for the Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee under my cap as president of the Jamaica Coffee Exporters Association, and it is the first time in 30 years that we are sitting down to do a brand strategy for the Jamaica Blue Mountain and Jamaican Coffee," he added.

Grant said the billboards are expected to be mounted at various sites within all the island's six resort areas as well as at the Sangster and Norman Manley International airports.

"So when you come in Montego Bay, you will hear, 'Welcome to Jamaica', the home of the finest coffee in the world," he said.

He said that the promotional strategy to offer samples of Blue Mountain Coffee at the island's cruise-shipping piers has been well-received.

"The response has been very good. We have it brewed. We are also looking to offer it cold as well, depending on the time of the day and really taking this wonderful coffee experience because coffee is great. We are saying, if you taste it, you will buy it. The proof of the

"We are also saying to the Jamaica Tourist Board, 'Whenever you are making an ad, you are in the marketplace already, you are advertising sand, sea, and everything, so say also 'Coffee; the land of the finest coffee in the world, Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee.'"

coffee is in the drinking experience, so we are doing all of that," Grant, who is also a former president of the Jamaica Agricultural Society, (JAS) said.

But one of the boldest moves, so far, according to Grant, is the lobbying of the Jamaica Tourist Board to immerse coffee consumption in its global advertisements.

"We are also saying to the Jamaica Tourist Board, 'Whenever you are making an ad, you are in the marketplace already, you are advertising sand, sea, and everything, so say also 'Coffee; the land of the finest coffee in the world, Jamaica Blue Mountain coffee,'" he said.

"Our strategy is to sell green coffee to Japan, the USA, and the rest of the world. Seventy per cent of the coffee is exported as green. We need that market, but we also want to expand the value-added. And we are saying that when the tourist comes to Jamaica, they must leave with a pack of Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee," the senator said.

Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee has the distinction of being labelled the world's finest and is one



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN
A Jablum Coffee representative serving coffee at the recent Jamaica International Exhibition.

of the most expensive. Only coffee beans that are grown between 3,000 and 5,500 feet in the Blue Mountains range can take on the designation.

Over the past few years, there has been a contraction in the demand for Jamaican coffee in overseas markets due to, among other things, trademark infringements. Production was also affected by diseases. Coffee exports also dropped in the last 25 years from 700,000 boxes to approximately 250,000 while prices also fell from \$12,000 per box to \$3,500.

Last September, Agriculture Minister Audley Shaw noted that although the coffee industry is privatised, the Government of Jamaica still has a responsibility to facilitate and aggressively promote the industry "to the hilt". Also in January this year, the minister noted that long-term solutions were being sought to better position the island's coffee.

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PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GARDNER
Janice Williams parches her coffee beans, which she sells, along with an array of hot teas in Roaring River.



Airlink offices at the Negril Aerodrome.



Waiting area at Negril Aerodrome.

Negril Aerodrome rehab finally under way

Claudia Gardner

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

AS THE long-proposed upgrading and expansion of the Negril Aerodrome progresses, Transport Minister Robert Montague is contending that coupled with new flight offerings, the facility will enable a boon for tourism and a resurgence of interest in general aviation.

The airstrip, which is located at Rutland Point in Hanover, was built in the 1970s, and for many years, served the tourists resorts within Negril and its environs. However, activities were scaled down after several carriers terminated flights to the town, which led to the facility being declassified in 2014.

“About 20 per cent of the runway is under water because the drains have not been cleaned in many years, and it is located in the swamp. So we are proceeding to open up the drains to drain off some of the water, and we are also constructing a fire station and putting in a pilots’ lounge and a manager’s office, and we are expanding the security check station and the waiting areas for the



PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

Offices at the Negril Aerodrome.

public,” Montague said.

The minister said that the rehabilitation works in Negril are part of a comprehensive upgrading plan for airstrips across the island, which is expected to reduce tourist commute times and evoke local interest in intra-island travel, which took a nosedive after numerous carriers exited the industry following the closure of the majority of the

island’s airstrips due to drug-trafficking fears.

“They closed down all the other airstrips, so people dispensed with their airplanes. We have 52 airstrips and we are down to eight, so over time, people just gave up. General aviation has died in the country.”

According to him, it was the ganja industry that helped to destroy general aviation because all the airstrips, all the airfields

were locked down because it was said that people could use them to export ganja.

“So what we are doing is opening up general aviation to create more opportunities for the ordinary Jamaicans,” said the minister.

He is convinced that this new thrust will drive tourism in Negril because the guests who have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to come on vacation want to maximise the return on that investment. “They will spend another two hours at the resort. They don’t have to rush to spend two hours and sit down in Sangster (airport) because what we are doing is that we streamline the process,” the Minister added.

Montague also said that contrary to popular belief, the Negril to Montego Bay route is not only a profitable exercise but is the “only profitable route in the country right now” as many people continue to travel between Montego Bay and Negril via charter flights.

He said that with the new scheduled domestic flights by airlines such as InterCaribbean to come on stream beginning July 9 from all airstrips, including Negril, he is

expecting that there will be positive implications for other sectors, including entertainment, agri-tourism, health, and even ground transport.

“For example, you have Sumfest coming up. People will now have an option to fly down in the afternoon, watch the show, and go back home in the morning and be at their desks Even take health. A person has a critical condition and needs a particular type of medication. It can be flown as opposed to via road as every minute counts. If a person is sick and they have to hit the air ambulance, you can fly from Negril into Montego Bay and take the air ambulance out,” he said.

In terms of agriculture, the minister expects that this will open up Negril and provide more ways of getting produce to market quicker.

The farmer who may get into something exotic, for example, strawberries, he notes, can now get to market in a relatively short time. It will open up opportunities for taximen as more people will be flying in and more Jamaicans will be able to come on day trips to Negril, Montague surmised.



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Exports from international tourism hit US\$1.7 trillion

EXPORTS GENERATED by international tourism reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2018, a four per cent increase in real terms over the previous year, a new report from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows.

For the seventh year in a row, tourism exports grew faster than merchandise exports (+3 per cent), reflecting solid demand for international travel in a generally robust economic environment.

Strong growth in outbound travel from many source markets around the world fuelled revenues from international tourism to reach a total USD 1.7 trillion.

This accounts for 29 per cent of global service exports and seven per cent of overall exports of goods and services. These figures consolidate international tourism among the top five economic sectors in the

world, behind chemical manufacturing and the fuel industry but ahead of the food and automotive industries.

“Rather than growing in volume, we need to grow in value. We are pleased to see that both emerging and advanced economies around the world are benefiting from rising tourism income,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili.

“Revenues from international tourism translate into jobs, entrepreneurship, and a better situation for people and local economies while reducing trade deficits in many countries,” he added.

Total exports from international tourism include USD 1,448 billion in international tourism receipts (visitor spending in destinations) and USD 256 billion in international passenger transport services.

Tourism constitutes a key source of

foreign exchange and a major tool for export diversification for many destinations.

International tourism receipts increased four per cent in real terms (adjusting for exchange rate fluctuations and inflation) to reach USD 1,448 billion in 2018, about USD 100 billion more than the previous year. This is consistent with the six per cent increase in international tourist arrivals in 2018.

GROWTH

By regions, Asia and the Pacific led the way with seven per cent growth in international tourism receipts, followed by Europe with a five per cent increase.

The Middle East saw three per cent growth, while Africa (+1 per cent) and the Americas (0 per cent) recorded more modest results. Central and Eastern Europe and

North-East Asia (both +9 per cent) were the subregions with the strongest growth.

France and Russia lead growth among top spenders

Growth in receipts was fuelled by strong demand for international travel in the context of a robust global economy.

Among the world's top ten source markets, France and the Russian Federation both recorded 11 per cent growth in outbound spending in 2018 while Australia saw a 10 per cent increase.

China, the world's top spender, reported USD 277 billion in international tourism expenditure in 2018, a five per cent increase in real terms from a year earlier while the United States, the second largest, spent seven per cent more, to reach USD 144 billion.

International expenditure from the United Kingdom grew three per cent in 2018, and four per cent from Italy, while Germany and the Republic of Korea both reported rather flat results.

Further down the ranking, Spain enjoyed 12 per cent higher spending on international tourism in 2018.

Caribbean tourism is robust and resilient

CHTA's director general advises investors: greater collaboration from public and private sectors needed to increase tourism growth

FRANK COMITO, CEO and director general of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA), reassured investors that it was a great time to be in the tourism industry, which continues to be the major economic driver for the Caribbean and for the world.

Speaking to the Caribbean Hotel & Resort Investment Summit (CHRIS) at the Loews Miami Beach Hotel last week, Comito reported that tourism is in an unprecedented growth mode, with investments in new hotels and upgrades in existing properties contributing to more than one in every five new jobs being created globally. At today's growth rate, Comito reported that tourism is expected to contribute to the creation of over 500,000 new jobs in the Caribbean alone by 2028, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

According to CHTA's 2019 Industry Performance and Outlook Study, the profitability gap for

Caribbean hotels is improving, with four out of five hotels reporting a net profit in 2018, up from three out of four several years ago. In addition to the global economy, Comito cited the following as drivers that are stimulating new airlift and consumer demand: growing destination investments in airport infrastructure, a steady supply of new-room inventory, and increased investments by existing hotels in capital improvements.

Comito said the region had recovered well from the twin hurricanes that hit some Caribbean destinations, with devastating consequences for the sector in 2017. However, while recovery was quick and strong in many destinations, he lamented that the region has more than 80,000 vacant hotel rooms every night. Stressing the need to boost bookings, he said that filling just 10 per cent of the vacant rooms “would inject nearly US\$2 billion annually into the region.”



Frank Comito (second left), CEO and director general of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association with (from left) Jeff Higley, President of The BHN Group; Emile Gourieux, STR's business development executive; Sanjay Amin, director of BCQS International; and Gary Brough, managing director of KPMG, at CHRIS last week. **CONTRIBUTED**

LAGGED GROWTH

While the vast majority of Caribbean destinations affected by the storms have bounced back, Comito observed that typically, a crisis causes lingering losses as a destination falls back from its previous growth path. “Even after a destination returns to its pre-crisis level, ‘losses’ can continue to mount as it lags behind its previous growth trendline,” he noted.

Year-to-date performance data from six of the region's destinations recovering from the 2017

twin hurricanes points to a faster-than-anticipated turnaround, with most hotels upgraded and reopening and international air arrivals approaching pre-hurricane levels, Comito commented: “This exceeds our expectations and speaks well to the industry's resiliency.”

Overall, the Caribbean has experienced an exceptional 2019 thus far, according to Comito, with air arrivals and hotel performances exceeding the global average. He cautioned that downturns are cyclical and that the industry must be better prepared to mitigate their impact.

He presented charts showing the industry's performance over 20 years, illustrating what has happened to visitor arrivals, hotel occupancies, and hotel rates when faced with recessions, major hurricanes, and a periodic health threat like Zika.

To speed up recovery and to strengthen its resilience, the CHTA head said that all industry stakeholders, public and private, need to work together “to protect and enhance investments through collaboration on public relations and marketing around the Caribbean brand.”



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The hard resolve issue of subregional air transport

David Jessop



THE VIEW FROM EUROPE

ANYONE WHO has been following the twists and turns in the saga of the East Caribbean air carrier, LIAT, will know that it is commercially struggling.

Linking all Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) nations, Trinidad, Guyana and parts of the French and Dutch Caribbean, it provides a service without which inter-island commerce, family ties, tourism and regional coherence would all but be impossible.

LIAT has been on the edge financially for some time. Principally owned by the governments of Barbados, Antigua, St Vincent, and Dominica, it has struggled to reconcile its commercial function with differing opinions as to how it should be financed and operated, with its essential role in subregional integration.

To try to address the problems of who pays and to try to regularise how operating costs, short-term financing needs and longer-term debt are serviced, Barbados, the largest



FILE

Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Mottley, shareholder, and OECS governments have been meeting since April to discuss a way forward.

At the time, most reports suggested that US\$5.4m was required to meet the airlines short-term liquidity issues and that some

governments were prepared to provide support based on the principle that there would be a minimum revenue guarantee (MRG). This is an arrangement involving countries making a contribution tailored not to their shareholding but based on the frequency of flights to their nation. The airline also appears to have been struggling to service its US\$65m debt to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for a fleet upgrade.

However, some OECS governments were not willing to agree about making further contributions without significant changes to the airline's structure, cuts in expenditure and rationalisation of the number of aircraft and routes. In contrast, the Antiguan government said it would "resist" any collapse and had developed a "strategic approach".

After a fruitless search for external investors, the airline's short-term problems appear to be closer to resolution.

After some uncertainty, Barbados has agreed to negotiate the sale of most, but not all of its 49.4 per cent shareholding to Antigua, which currently holds 34 per cent. The arrangement is expected to revolve around Antigua taking on most of Barbados' element of the airline's debt to the CDB, while retaining a shareholding and continuing participation in MRG arrangements.

Speaking about the decision, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley recently said that while her government retained an "absolute commitment to regional air travel," economic constraints caused by the country's International Monetary Fund programme meant that it had decided that "it is time for us to step back" to allow other governments "to continue with their proposals to restructure LIAT in the way which they have determined".

Ms Mottley also made clear her view that LIAT's operating model is dated and unattractive, and that the airline needs a

new financial and operational approach and significant restructuring if it is to be able to be made viable and provide the required services. As a minority shareholder, Barbados, she said, would continue to play a role in ensuring that the routes provided are commercially viable, to avoid further pressure on the overall finances of the airline.

Whether when the negotiations are complete, Antigua will be able to exercise the regional leadership required to turn the carrier into a much leaner operation remains to be seen.

What LIAT's present difficulties highlight is the continuing importance of finding a solution that results in having one or more viable, commercially Caribbean-operated carriers able to operate within the region, or at the very least offer services that seamlessly link the Caribbean's subregions together.

Unfortunately, the likely solutions to LIAT's problems suggest that the current piecemeal approach to regional aviation will continue to be short-term, without any attempt being made to address underlying issues such as the extraordinary range of taxes and charges levied by OECS governments on travellers, whether from the region or overseas.

Speaking recently at his book launch in Barbados, Jamaica's former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson noted that the nations in the region "still suspect each other" and that this has impeded the Caribbean in tackling stubborn problems. In doing so, he cited regional travel and transportation as a central issue to be resolved.

What happens next with LIAT will indicate whether the airline has a long-term future, will continue to stagger from crisis to crisis or find viable solutions, as Prime Minister Mottley hopes, to make the Caribbean a better place to live in.





Playa Hotels and Resorts Wellness 5k run and walk a success

A SEA of people clad in Playa's shades of blue lined the streets of Montego Bay last Saturday morning as associates from Playa Hotels and Resorts participated in the group's inaugural 5k Run/Walk.

It was a festive atmosphere as over 200 staff members came out in their numbers to represent their individual hotels to celebrate Global Wellness Day on Saturday.

The run/walk, which began at 6:00 a.m., lasted for approximately two hours.

At the end of the event, associates from the seven Jamaican Playa-owned resorts clocked various times and were rewarded with medals for participation and trophies for exceptional performance in the run/walk.

Associates from the Jewel Dunn's River copped the most trophies, copping first place in the Female Run Category, Male over 40 years, Top Female, and Male Walkers, and also Top Male Walker in the over-40.

While Jewel Runaway Bay walked home with the trophy for the Top Male Runner, with Hyatt Ziva and Zilaria copping Top Female Runner in the over-40 category. The Hilton Rose Hall had top Female Walker in the over-40 category.

"We are grateful that the first staging of this 5K Run/Walk was a success and that our associates



The 'winningest' team from Jewel Dunn's River pose as the show off their trophies and medals. From left Gary Mitchell, Oshane Cheeke, Kimika Small, Tamara Winkle and Herbert Green, Stopping in front is Camara Brown. Jewel Dunn's River took home the championship trophy for the best resort overall (mist wins – all categories) at the inaugural staging of Playa resorts, Jamaica's 5K Run/Walk held June 8 to coincide with Global wellness day. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS**

made the effort to participate in the activities. Thank you! It is important that we do all that we can to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

It is also our intention to grow this event to its maximum potential and continue to promote health and wellness and build team spirit,"



Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa literally walked away with first, second and third-place wins in the over-40 Female walk category. The winners (back row from left) Opal Anderson, Jerry-Ann Whyte, and Semone Green are flanked by (front from left) Daine Golaube, hotel manager; Everton McNaught, group financial controller; over-40 male winner Carol Bourke, managing director/general manager; and Lorna Smith-Taylor, human resources manager; Jewel Runaway Bay.

said area director of marketing and communications Charmaine Deane.

The hotels represented at Saturdays 5K Run/Walk were Hyatt Zilara & Ziva, Jewel Grande Montego Bay, Hilton Rose Hall

Resort & Spa, and Jewel Resorts (which comprises Jewel Paradise Cove, Jewel Dunn's River, and Jewel Runaway Bay).

The event was managed by Running Events Jamaica.

Roaring River's RastaSafari

one of Jamaica's many wonders

Claudia Gardner
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

BIRDS CHIRPING, a loud thud from falling mangoes and other fruits, and gushing crystal-clear waters are the three main sounds nature lovers will take delight in, during the various stops along the RastaSafari tour, in Westmoreland.

The RastaSafari experience takes place within the pristine Roaring River watershed area, which is regarded as one of the many wonders of Jamaica and a prototype of good watershed management.

The Roaring River lies a short distance away from the town of Savanna-la-Mar and is an easy drive from Negril. The community is a place where beauty meets bounty. Fruits are all around; the majority fall on the ground, to be eaten by birds as well as bees, or go back to the earth as compost.

RastaSafari could be classed as eco, adventure, community and wellness tourism all bound together in one extraordinary experience. Upon arrival, guests are greeted not only by the pleasant faces of their tour guides but by the aroma of shopkeeper Janice Williams' Jessies's Blue Mountain coffee beans, which she roasts and sells to guests and community members who visit her small establishment.

A small foot bridge stretches across a gorgeous tributary to a walking trail that leads to the RastaSafari park, which is the starting point for the adventure via ARVs.

Visitors can drive the ARVs themselves, or in the company of the

trustworthy RastaSafari community tour guides. At RastaSafari everything is authentically Jamaican; there are no pretensions; no censorship. Guests get the true feel of the Jamaican countryside, and interact with Jamaicans and experience real traditional country life, just like citizens of Roaring River do.

THREE-AND-A-HALF-HOUR TOUR

The tour stretches down to the Shrewsbury community, and several other districts along the legendary Georges Plain, known as a bastion for sugar cultivation dating back to the days of old when sugar was king in Jamaica. It spans three to 3 ½ hours and treks through forests, meadows, across rivers and streams, a small ganja field, through once-flourishing cane fields from where spectacular views of Jack, Jill and Bill, three peaks within the mountain range which are used as a land marker for fishermen in Savanna-la-Mar, can be seen.

However, there is no rush, as the tour guides allow you to set the pace, knowing fully well how captivating and picturesque the Roaring River wonderland is.

The tour climaxes with an authentic Rastafarian vegan lunch – rice and beans, breadfruit, avocado, veggie chunks, ackee, coconut bean stew and natural juices and whichever fruits are in season.

"It's a fascinating experience for a lot of the people, because some of the fruits and stuff they only see in the supermarkets; they have never seen them on the tree before. A lot of them thought pineapple grew on trees," tour guide and lifeguard Marvin Clayton told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"We have people from Germany, France, Canada and the US. People from all over come here. We have Jamaicans who come from Kingston, Ocho Rios, Montego Bay, because many of them go on TripAdvisor and read about us, and many people come and bring their kids also," he explained.

According to his counterpart, Terry Findlay, the area is a birdwatcher's paradise, as numerous endemic species, including the streamer-tailed hummingbird, woodpeckers, the West Indian whistling duck, grass-quit and others are there in the hundreds, in addition to other native fauna.

"The slider turtles, which are endemic to Jamaica and are an endangered species, can be found here. Not as plenty as they used to be, but they are still here," she said.

"A lot of people here rely on the natural environment for survival. The community is also close-knit and we rely a lot on each other," she added.

The reviews of RastaSafari on TripAdvisor are quite telling. Already, it is ranked as 4th of 109 activities in Montego Bay, and is rated as excellent by 127 of 130 travellers on that travel site.

Some visitors have branded it "a speechless experience", "a great way to experience authentic Jamaica", "a must do", "breathtaking and amazing", while another described it as a "mind-blowing experience".

For Findlay, the RastaSafari has opened up doors to community tourism in Roaring River for visitors in Negril and the rest of Jamaica who continue to be wowed by the experience.

"This Negril tourism belt that they have here; we are the buckle on that belt," Findlay said.



Tour guide Terry Findlay's welcoming smile greets you at the beginning of the tour.



Roaring River is a prime cattle area. It is not uncommon to see cattle in the vicinity of streams, drinking or strolling around.



River bathing is a common occurrence in Roaring River, and swimming is one of the major activities guests enjoy during the RastaSafari experience.



Bounty meets beauty at the roaring River. Guests are able to eat as many fruits as they like at the RastaSafari property.



Rastafarian tour guide Marvin Clayton leads the RastaSafari community excursion with ARVs like this one.

These three mountain peaks are dubbed Jack, Jill and Bill and are used as landmarks by fishermen in Savanna-la-Mar.

PHOTOS BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

Jamaica Tourist Board host

REGGAE GIRLZ

World Cup parties

Jamaica's Reggae Girlz bowed into World Cup action against Brazil on June 9 at the Stade des Alpes in Grenoble, France. The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) threw its support behind the team by hosting a series of World Cup Watch Parties in four major markets: New York, Fort Lauderdale, Baltimore, and Toronto. The parties also gave the diaspora an opportunity to get in on the action

"We are excited that the Reggae Girlz have qualified to represent Jamaica on the global soccer stage," said Donovan White, Jamaica's director of tourism. "We are so proud of the Reggae Girlz, and the series of World Cup Watch Parties gave Jamaicans, members of the Caribbean Diaspora, and friends of Jamaica the opportunity to come out in their colours and cheer on the team in the opening match in their historic World Cup campaign."

Jamaica's senior national women's soccer team, the Reggae



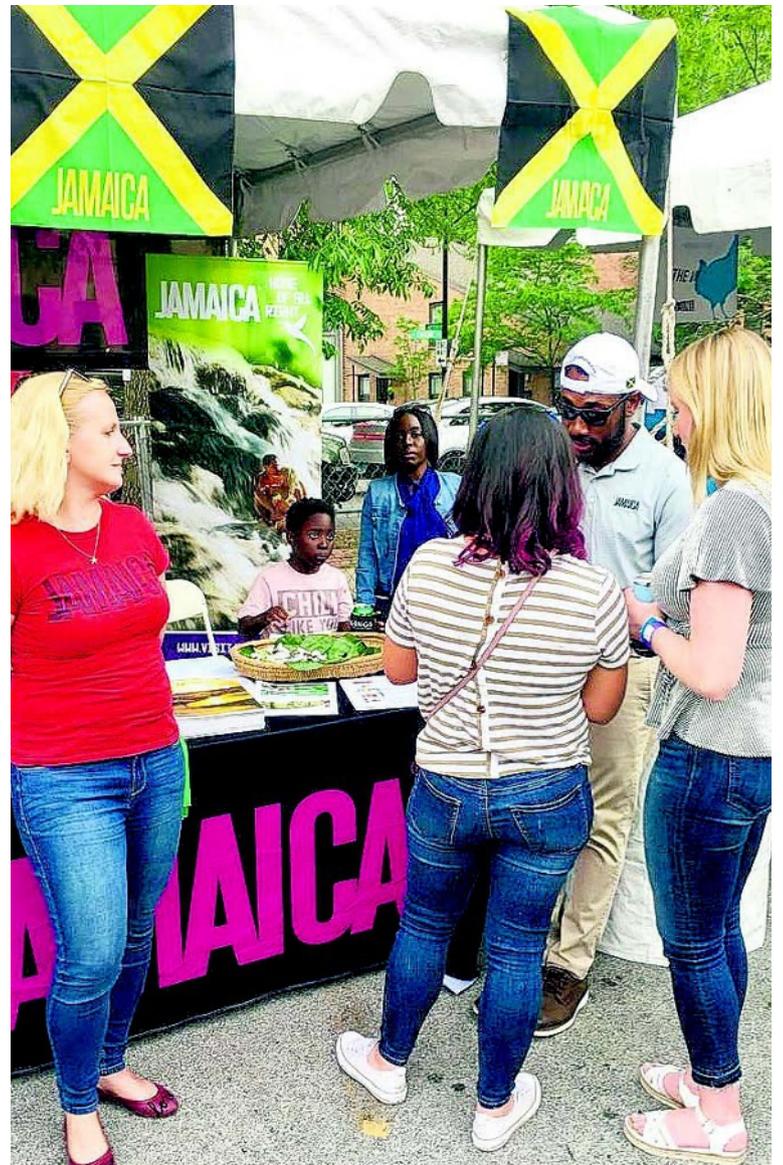
Jamaica Tourist Board at Wingout Festival – Christopher Dobson and Oral Chambers with a patron.

Girlz, qualified for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup on October 17, 2018, defeating Panama 4-2 on penalties, becoming the first Caribbean nation ever to qualify for

the ultimate competition in women's football. The 53rd-ranked Reggae Girlz is one of four debutants at this year's World Cup, joining Chile, Scotland, and South Africa.



The Reggae Girlz



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Oral Chambers of the Jamaica Tourist Board shares information with guests at Wingout Festival.



Patrons enjoying Wingout Festival

AN ARRAY OF TALENT

Scintillating performances rock Negril Regional Festival of the Arts Talent and Model Competition



Glenroy Walker (left) and Owen Brown had the audience in stitches with their dancehall set during the Negril Regionals of the Sandals and Beaches Festival of the Arts Talent and Model Competition.



Winner of the Male Vocalist category, Sejeon Williams, from Sandals South Coast, performs Sam Cooke's 'A Change Is Gonna Come' during the Negril Regionals of the Sandals and Beaches Festival of the Arts Talent and Model Competition.

“What an amazing array of talent,” was all one guest could utter, totally absorbed in the performances at the Negril Regional Sandals and Beaches Resorts Festival of the Arts Talent and Model Competition last Thursday night. Staged at Sandals South Coast, the talents from Sandals Negril, Beaches Negril, Grand Pineapple and Sandals South Coast left the judges and a very receptive audience of visitors, staffers and specially invited guests star-struck and yearning for more as they vied for a spot in nine distinct categories, namely, Male and Female Vocalist and Model, Dance Duo, Solo Dance, DJ Spin-off, Musical Instrumentalist and Spoken Word.

The winners will all compete in the national competition. Vowing to bring their A-game in an especially fierce competition for the female vocalists, Sherion Muir from Sandals South Coast delivered the performance of the night to cop the Best Female Vocalist spot. Jennifer Holliday's 1982 classic **And I Am Telling You** was literally Muir's declaration and amid the screams of a frenzied audience, her outstanding vocal range and gritty showmanship hit the judges' table like a bullet. There were several outstanding performances in the Male Vocalist category as well, but when Sejeon Williams from Sandals South Coast took the stage, a change most definitely came. Williams rendition of Sam Cooke's **Change Is Gonna Come** had patrons eating from the palm of his hands. Yet another outstanding performance was Sakae Brooks of Beaches Negril, who won the Best Spoken Word category. Her gripping piece, titled **I Quit**, was a tall glass of lemonade for thirsty souls and a motivational chant of liberation and self-love. The DJ Clash segment was dominated by Sandals Negril's Nicholas Mairs, who kept the crowd going with an impressive variety of mixes, punctuated with old classics from popular genres as well as a number of current hits. A crowd favourite from the moment he stepped out on stage in his

orange Speedos, Triston Irvin from Sandals South Coast was the Best Male Model and had the ladies swooning with his taut, well-toned body and stage tactics. Aculia Nembhard, also from Sandals South Coast, was a show-stopper, gracefully gliding her way into the Best Female Model spot. The Musical Instrumentalist category belonged to the talented Jemarie Richards from Sandals Negril, who performed uncontested.

Glenroy Walker and Owen Brown from Sandals South Coast emerged Group Dance winners with their hilarious dancehall set, while Javonne Richards from Beaches Negril took the Solo Dance category to a different level with a deeply artistic and intricate modern dance piece that had the judges falling in love with dance all over again. Pleased with the night's presentations, Beaches Negril Entertainment Manager Nicholas Nelson said, “It is obvious that the Negril and South Coast properties have put more effort and time into this year's presentations.” A sentiment shared by the judges.

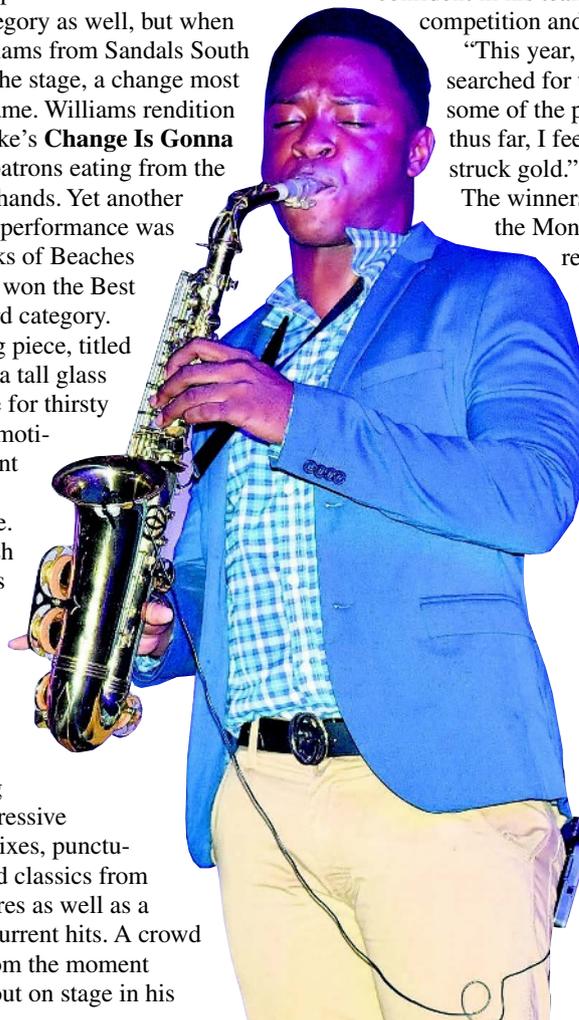
For Sandals South Coast Entertainment Division Manager Garrett Bailey, whose team nabbed five of the nine spots, the excitement has just begun. He noted that he was confident in his team's ability going into the competition and expected nothing less.

“This year, our region went out and searched for that talent and based on some of the performances we've seen thus far, I feel like we've definitely struck gold.”

The winners will face off against the Montego Bay and Ocho Rios regions in the national competition, scheduled for June 15 at Sandals Ochi Beach Resort.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Sandals Negril's Jemarie Richards was calm and collected as he strolled into the nationals as the only musical instrumentalist at the Negril Regional of the Sandals and Beaches Festival of the Arts Talent and Model Competition.



Island Routes celebrates its 10th anniversary as an award-winning Caribbean adventure tour company

THE WORLD'S leading Caribbean attraction company, Island Routes Caribbean Adventures, opened its doors 10 years ago on June 1, 2009. Staying true to its motto #LiveFunner, the company will be celebrating their decade of providing award-winning tours and excursions throughout the entire year.

To kick off its celebrations, Island Routes did a Caribbean-wide beach clean-up across eight islands (Jamaica, St. Lucia, Antigua, Grenada, Barbados, Turks & Caicos, Exuma, Nassau) between June 1 and 8, World Ocean Day.

The beach clean-up initiatives were in collaboration with the Sandals Foundation, which also celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, as well as the Sandals Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) team.

In addition, Island Routes will be launching a month-long social media competition offering customers the chance to win free and discounted tours. Later on in the year, the company will be hosting various events to thank its team, its certified tour and trade partners.

"Time flies when you're having fun, and I truly believe that our success is driven by the team's ability not just to seek out the most exciting adventures, but having a great time doing it. Our journey has been phenomenal and I look forward to the next 10 years,"

exclaimed CEO of Island Routes Adam Stewart.

Island Routes started in Jamaica with one tour desk and has grown steadily into 12 destinations in the Caribbean and Mexico. Each of its 500-plus tours has undergone a thorough screening process, earning the organisation a reputation of not just pioneering excursions that showcase the soul of the Caribbean, but providing experiences that are of the highest standard.

From luxury catamaran cruises to guided, one-of-a-kind Mini-Routes tours, Island Routes' commitment to excellence shines through each of its hand-picked experiences.

In a recent blog posted by Island Routes, titled '10 Years, 10 Reasons to Celebrate', the company mentioned 10 things it was thankful for. Reflecting on the past 10 years, number one on the list is their team.

Island Routes' team of enthusiastic, highly trained, island experts have contributed to the number of returning guests that visit the islands each year. Also on the list of reasons to celebrate are their partners, destinations, tours, Live Funner vibe, authenticity, growth, community involvement, environmental impact and guests.

Join the Island Routes journey by following their social media pages @islandroutes and website, <https://www.islandroutes.com/>.



Island Routes team celebrating on one of their luxury catamaran cruises.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

JCDT hosts first GREEN EXPO in eight years

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WITH THE impact of climate change looming over Earth, the preservation and restoration of the green environment are paramount on the agenda of many organisations the world over.

Here, in Jamaica, the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDT), managers of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park and World Heritage Site, is playing a major role in the said thrust. And last weekend hosted GREEN EXPO 2019 under the theme 'A better Environment, A better life, do the right thing!' at the National Arena in St Andrew.

The showcase, which was last held eight years ago, and as part of National Environmental Awareness Week, opened on Thursday night with a welcome and opening remarks from Robert Stephens, chairman of GREEN EXPO 2019, and master of ceremonies for the evening, which was well attended from the look of things.

Also addressing the gathering were Anthony McKenzie, director of environmental management and conservation at the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA); Barrington Lewis, chief executive officer at the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ); Lehome Johnson, manager, Climate Change Data Management Project; Dr Susan Otuokon, executive director at JCDT; and the keynote speaker, Daryl Vaz, minister without portfolio (land, environment, climate change, and investment) in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation.

Dr Otuokon summarised the highlights of GREEN EXPO 2019 and explained its essence, Lewis outlined the EFJ's funding to JCDT and other entities, while McKenzie said, among other things, "This staging of the expo is particularly important to NEPA as it comes at a time when Jamaicans are now, more than ever, conscious, aware, and concerned about our changing environment and climate, looking to us as leaders in the

conservation and protection of Jamaica's land, wood, air, and water."

MESSAGE

Minister Vaz touched on a range of environmental issues, including that of the controversial proposed bauxite mining in the Cockpit Country. "I would like to take this opportunity on this platform to reiterate ... that there is, in fact, no mining in the area to be protected as the Cockpit Country designated protected area," the minister announced. He further said that the prime minister had charged the relevant agencies to ensure that hydrological, biological, forest, and culture resources within the area are protected.

For the next three days, there were exhibitions about building climate reliance, environmentally products and services, energy and water conservation, alternatives to plastic and Styrofoam, solid-waste management, disaster-risk management and organic agriculture, in addition to various booths where food, art and craft, and other miscellaneous items were sold. There were also a Children's Pavilion and nightly entertainment.

Throughout the event, there were discussions on topics such as technology and other fields in the environment; careers in addressing environmental pollution; teacher training workshop through education; trash to treasure – what's happening to your plastic waste; how we are getting smart and steady and climate-ready; doing a dry run: modelling for disaster risk reduction; and renewable energy and me.



Barrington Lewis, chief executive officer, of the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica.



A section of the audience that turned out for the opening ceremony of GREENEXPO 2019 on Thursday, June 6, at the National Arena.



Olivia Anderson (right) of NEPA talks to Minister Without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation Daryl Vaz about eco-friendly disposable utensils during a tour of the booths after the opening ceremony of GREENEXPO 2019 while Dr Susan Otuokon, executive director at the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, looks on.



Minister Without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation Daryl Vaz makes a purchase from a member of the Ujima Farmers' Market during a tour of the booths after the opening ceremony of GREENEXPO 2019 while Dr Susan Otuokon, executive director at the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, looks on.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

After the CROWNING I danced

I CANNOT help moving to the hypnotic sounds of African drums. Rhythms are in my blood, waist, and feet. I am African. But I dance mainly in my private space, away from the stares and, perhaps, jeers of the crowd.

There were some occasions when I danced a little publicly and people were amazed. They said they didn't know I could move. It was a terrible assumption. For I dance even when I am sitting still. I close my eyes and listen to the sounds of the drums floating on a breeze across the Atlantic, calling me home.

Yet there are several other things, including the one that I rather do than writing and teaching that most people do not know I am capable of. In time it will be revealed.

And a certain revelation came my way recently. I learned that an acquaintance, Robert Pairman, aka Kalaan Nibonri, was to be enstooled as the first Jamaican kaseke (Taino chief) in over 500 years. It was to be an event that I would not miss for the world. Even a trip to Africa could not hold me back. Perhaps. Mi confuse.

ENSTOOLMENT RITUALS

Anyway, Sunday, May 26, came. I was in Portland, the parish in which the enstoolment was to take place, from the day before. So there was no reason why I should have been late. And yet, I was almost. As I arrived at the Asafu Yard in the Charles Town Maroon village, the ceremony was about to begin.

The rituals last for about two hours, and when it was over, Robert Pairman emerged as Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman, chief of the Jamaican Hummingbird Taino Tribe. It was a historic moment, a rebellion against Columbus, his brother, Diego, and all the other genocidal Spaniards.

It was also a debunking of the lies that the Tainos were all dead. Because, in fact, they were not. There are many people walking up and down on this rock with strong Taino blood.

One of the things I do when I go outside of my St Andrew cocoon is to chat with people about



Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman moments after he was enstooled.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS
Colette Garrick and Bibi Ata Mildred 'Karaira' Gandia Ziegelasch fix the cachucha (headdress) as they crown Robert Pairman as Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman, chief of the Jamaican Hummingbird tribe.

PLEASE SEE
CROWNING, 15



Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman speaks for the first time as chief of the Jamaican Hummingbird tribe.



Bibi Vanessa Inarunkia Pastrana hands over the mayana (ceremonial axe) to Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman.

CROWNING

CONTINUED FROM 14

their ancestry. The conversations are revealing and interesting. Many have mentioned their Maroon ancestors who were mixed with the Tainos. Kaseke Kaiman is living along that line, too, but he is not just living. He has reclaimed his Taino ancestry, in an effort to restore the balance.

After the ceremony, which was replete with Taino ritualistic and cultural nuances, it was time for the Charles Town Maroon drummers to tear the goatskin.

Some people joined them on the stage in the Asafu Yard. It was with much passion and deftness that the drummers played, and people danced, from the young to the old. The drums seemed to be rejoicing, for the kaseke was back after over 500 years, and people danced.

I sat on a board bench, and I watched and rocked. The music sweet. And I moved. I could feel the pain of the pinched nerve in my lower back, but I continued to rock. Then I saw the father of the kaseke coming towards us with a sliced melon. I remember seeing the melon on the investiture altar. I got a piece

of it. And the drums played.

I rocked as I ate, and I was not taking pictures as usual. I got up because the intensity of the drumbeats was electrifying. Standing on one spot, I moved a little, then I just felt like joining the celebration onstage. I did not resist. I just wanted to dance.

Then across the Asafu Yard, I marched and danced. To the stage I was heading. Up the few steps, I danced to join the frenzy of moving bodies and arresting rhythms. Some people looked at me and smiled. The pain in my back was gnawing, but then I let go. The kaseke was back at home.

And I danced, danced, danced to the liberating sounds of the drums. The beats went deep, deep, deep into my psyche, and I twirled and rocked, flailed my hands, pivoted and dipped, shuffled backward and sideways. The drums were speaking, telling the narratives of redemption.

I closed my eyes at points and let the music guide me. Sweat oozed down my face, burning my eyes. The pain in my back raged, but my legs could not keep still. The kaseke was back. And then the drums stopped. Balance has been restored.

It was the following day that I realised that the pain in my back was gone. I reflected on it. Yes, the kaseke was back, I danced, and my pain was gone.



Kaseke Nibonrix Kaiman supplicates between Taino elders, Bibi Ata Mildred 'Karaira' Gandia Ziegelasch and Bibi Vanessa Inarunkia Pastrana.



Sybil Watson of Boston, Portland, being 'cleansed' before entering the Asafu Yard in the Charles Maroon village before Robert Pairman was enstooled.



Robert Pairman, his wife, Ronalda Bowes, and daughter just before his enstoolment procession.



Hilton São Paulo Morumbi.



Hilton Rio de Janeiro.

Hilton celebrates 100th anniversary with 'RANDOM ACTS OF HOSPITALITY'

WITH MORE than 5,700 properties around the world – and a new hotel opening every day. Hilton continues to lead with its newly announced foundation and global hospitality initiative.

Hilton, the world's first global hotel company, will celebrate its milestone 100th anniversary tomorrow in the midst of the most dynamic year in the company's storied history.

To mark the occasion, hundreds of hotels around the world, including throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, are extending Hilton hospitality beyond their doors by taking 'Random Acts of Hospitality' to their communities – everywhere from Buenos Aires to Mexico City and Aruba to Rio de Janeiro.

As it looks ahead to its next century, Hilton also announced today the creation of The Hilton Effect Foundation, which will help create a better world to travel by investing in both organisations and people having a positive impact on the communities Hilton serves. The foundation is launching this week with 15 grants to establishments that will support communities around the world, including Latin America. These inaugural grants will support programmes around the globe that are creating opportunities for the youth, aiding in disaster recovery, and supporting water stewardship and sustainability.

The foundation builds on the



Hilton Mexico staff



Hilton Lima. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

impact already driven by Hilton through its Travel with Purpose corporate responsibility strategy, which seeks to double the

company's investment in social impact while cutting Hilton's environmental footprint in half by 2030. Since the inception of

Travel with Purpose in 2011, Hilton's team members have performed more than 1.3 million hours of volunteer service, and the company has invested tens of millions of dollars in the communities it serves. As Hilton's primary international philanthropic arm, the foundation will channel financial and in-kind resources to further amplify the Hilton Effect – the ongoing positive impact of the world's first global hospitality company on guests, team members and communities.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary with hospitality and a global foundation speaks to Hilton's founding vision.

"One hundred years ago, Conrad Hilton had a noble idea that travel can make the world a better place," said Chris Nassetta, president and CEO of Hilton. "That deep-rooted sense of purpose has fuelled our transformative impact all across the globe, as we have welcomed three billion guests, employed 10 million team members and contributed \$1 trillion in economic impact. And in the years to come, we will do even more to positively change the world through our Hilton Effect Foundation."

PAST AND PRESENT

Founded in 1919 in the tiny town of Cisco, Texas, Hilton has pioneered the travel industry for decades, introducing room service, air-conditioned lobbies, in-room televisions, airport

hotels, the mini-bar, the computerised reservation system, and Connected Room – the first hotel room allowing guests to unlock their doors and control their lights, thermostat and TV with a smartphone app. Hilton properties even invented the brownie and the piña colada.

Hilton now offers 17 distinctive brands across 113 countries and territories, with more than 5,700 properties, and continues to grow with a new hotel opening somewhere in the world every day. Hilton first entered the Caribbean and Latin America in 1949 with Caribe Hilton, marking the company's first international hotel and birthplace of the piña colada. Today, the company has a portfolio of nearly 150 hotels and resorts open and welcoming travellers in 24 countries across the region, while having more than doubled its presence in the last five years.

LOOKING AHEAD

With one of the industry's fastest-growing pipelines, Hilton plans to expand to nearly 20 additional countries by 2020. There are already more than 2,400 hotels in Hilton's construction pipeline, and approximately one of every five hotel rooms under construction around the world is a Hilton. In the Caribbean and Latin America, the company has nearly 90 hotels under development across 14 different brands in more than 25 countries.

The company's legacy of driving innovations that change the hospitality industry continues in 2019 and beyond with the ongoing expansion of the first mobile-centric Connected Room.