

The Gleaner

Hospitality Jamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

Morgan's Group registers

SUCCESS IN SLEEP

RIU Hotels receives prestigious awards from Apple Vacations

CPJ honours outstanding dedication and performance at awards ceremony

JAPEX ends on high note



An aerial view of the Morgan's Group plant at 68 Lady Musgrave Road, Kingston.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Morgan's Group registers **SUCCESS IN SLEEP**

Hotel sector supports local manufacturer

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

IN 1999 when the RIU hotel chain first ventured into Jamaica, Morgan's Group was the top pick to manufacture all their beds for Tropical Bay in Negril, the brand's first hotel on the island.

Twenty years later, the company, which is licensed to manufacture the Therapedic brand of beds, supplies not only the RIU chain, but as much as 70 per cent of other new and remodelled all-inclusive resorts and EP luxury hotels across the island, testament to the impact of the tourism dollar extending far beyond the island's resort areas.

In fact, Morgan's can be regarded as a 'success in sleep'.

JAMPRO'S LINK

That contract emerged out of a linkages programme staged by JAMPRO to link the suppliers to the hoteliers and RIU, according to Group Marketing Manager

Aswad Morgan.

"It caused a real buzz around town and certainly, us as a manufacturer and a local supplier that considered ourselves very ambitious, felt very confident that if we stepped to the plate with the right product and the right price, we'd have no problem in supplying," Morgan told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"We showed them the product; did about four trips back and forth to Negril, and it paid off. We won the contract. It was 396 rooms and we supplied everything within the timelines ... it was like six weeks from the receipt of the order, procuring of our own raw materials, production and final delivery," he explained.

The number of long-standing clients of the company speaks volumes. Among the hotels Morgan's has outfitted, in addition to RIU, are Bahia Principe, Sandals, the Altamont Group of Hotels, Secrets, Zoetry, Hilton Rose Hall and Jewel Resorts, Half Moon, Goldeneye, and Melia Braco. The



Trelawny-based Melia was equipped throughout with the ultra-premium Eurotop memory foam bed, complete with a high-technology spring support system, regarded among the world's finest.

"At the end of the day, the guests do the talking, and if you go to these travel sites and look at the comments that they make on these beds, you would be very impressed," Morgan said.

The comfort of a Therapedic bed is incomparable.

Among Morgans Group's greatest feats yet have been the outfitting of 550 rooms at the Bahia

Principe Hotel in St Ann in six weeks, and one contract to outfit the Hilton Rose Hall and Jewel Resorts.

"The Hilton quality-control team sent out a request for a proposal to supply their hotels and asked us to produce a product to a particular specification. They did a full audit of our entire operations, like they did with the competition, and we were awarded the



A number of Therapeutic mattresses. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



An upholsterer sewing the padding on a Morgan's bed.

contract to supply all five properties, which was a little over 2,000 rooms," Morgan said.

"We changed all the beds in the hotels, did everything in the timeframe requested and worked seamlessly, and today the beds are still standing there and they get rave reviews from the guests," he added.

BIG COMPETITION

But it is not necessarily all smooth sailing as according to Morgan, one of the biggest barriers manufacturers in Jamaica have had to contend with has been the fact that many of the foreign hotel chains already have other properties in other

countries and already-established supply chain relationships.

Nevertheless, he says his company never fails to rise to the occasion, matching in quality and price and surpassing expectations.

"We are not competing with the man downtown or the man round the corner anymore, we are competing with the rest of the world. So we beat them on price, we match them on quality, and even extending beyond the quality that they expected ... because of that service that they've gotten, they keep coming over and over, a lot of repeat business," he explained.



A workman at the manufacturing plant constructing the base of a bed at Morgan's Group.

The company has now extended its wings and created a one-stop shop for almost everything to do with sleep, providing, in addition to mattresses and bases, mattress protectors, ultra-luxury memory foam toppers; contoured memory foam pillows, and an entire suite of pillows. It has also ventured into polyethylene foam, which is manufactured at its extrusion plant in Cross Roads in St Andrew, the only facility of its kind in the Western Hemisphere.

Morgan attributed much of the company's success to his staff, which numbers just over 120 employees from Kingston and even as far as St Catherine and St Thomas.

"We have never laid off anybody in the 40 years we have been in business ... We have the staff on incentive programmes, so when things get slow they come pressuring us, asking where is the business? Because the more business we get, it's the better for them," he explained.

"We still want to encourage the



Aswad Morgan, marketing director, Morgan Group shows general manager of Frenchman's Cove Resort, Angella Bolton-Trowers, one of his company's luxury foam pillows during the recent Jamaica Product Exchange trade show at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

companies to buy locally, but not buy locally from the standpoint of just because I am Jamaican. Buy locally because we have the quality

product that can stand the test of anybody in the world that wants to come in and test us."

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JAPEX 2019 fruitful for first-timers

THE 2019 STAGING of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JAPEX) tourism trade show was a fruitful one for many of the suppliers, which spanned entities from the ground transportation, air lift and accommodations sectors.

One overly elated and satisfied first-timer to the show was the team from Montego Bay-based bus company Real Mystic Transportation and Tours, according to the company's Director of Sales and marketing Rodcliffe Robertson.

"This is our first year at JAPEX. We learnt about JAPEX on Friday and by Monday we had our display up. It was extremely meaningful; extremely good for us. We had a lot of contacts, a lot of business. Even persons who we did not book meetings with came by and were able to book a number of businesses," he told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

"Some business starts as close as October. We booked some transfers; we have weddings in November; we have business for next year and we got invitation to other trade shows in the US and elsewhere, so it has really set a great platform for the rebranding that we have done of our company," he added.

SURPASSED EXPECTATIONS

Robertson, who has decades of experience in hotel and tourism management, could barely contain his excitement, as he explained how the event came to surpass his expectations.

"I have had previous experience with JAPEX with other companies, but coming here for the first time, I would shot it a 10 out of 10 because we got more business than we had expected," he stated, with evident laughter in his voice.

"We were busy all day yesterday. Even today when some persons had no meetings and so on, we were getting people coming by, saying that they want to meet with us. At the last moments people were coming in," he added.

General Manager of Frenchman's Cove Resort Angella

Bolton-Trowers said she, too, was satisfied with the business generated during the event, which augurs well for the Portland-based hotel over the upcoming winter tourist season.

"It has been very interesting being here at JAPEX. I have met quite a number of contacts, locally and overseas. In terms of the travel agents (in attendance), that was a good component to it. We got to see the faces and names of the other hotel players and person in the industry, so we made contact within our own community which, I believe, we will see some fruitful rewards from," she explained.

"We made a few contacts in terms of accommodating persons, plus contacts in terms of if I have guests to be transferred and for Frenchman's Cove as a place of interest. There was a good combination of all areas in tourism that were covered," she said.

For chief executive officer of local air operator Jam Air, Howard Levy, this year's showing was satisfactory.

"We got quite a few showings of interest and I think it will do us well in the near future. But there is always room for improvement," he said.



CEO of Jam Air Howard Levy interacts with Western Hospitality Institute student Jordine Brown at his company's booth at JAPEX.



PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA
General Manager of Frenchman's Cove Resort in Portland, Angella Bolton-Trowers (left), interacts with visitors to her booth.



A Real Mystic bus on show at the JAPEX 2019 trade show.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Nordic Tour Operators taking in all the information they could get on Jamaica from Jamaica Tourist Board UK sales manager Torrance Lewis (second right).

Overly exaggerated

... misleading concept of Jamaica say Nordic Tour Operators

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

“OVERLY EXAGGERATED” was how a number of Scandinavian tour operators viewed reports of Jamaica being unsafe for visitors.

Having visited the island during the just-concluded Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) 2019 Tradeshow, they say that they will be selling the island as never before.

The operators – from Sweden, Denmark, and Norway – told **Hospitality Jamaica** during the three-day event at the Montego Bay Convention Centre, that their visit to the island was eye-opening and revealing, adding that it was way “beyond expectations”.

“I find Jamaica surprisingly positive,” remarked Emilia Olson,

travel consultant from Norway, explaining that she and her colleagues heard about the crime situation in Jamaica, but coming here, where we went to Negril to the Rick’s Café, to river rafting, and climbing Dunn’s River Falls in Ocho Rios ... it’s a totally different picture than the stories told.”

Olson was also very impressed by the quality of the local hotels and “the beautiful white-sand beaches,” noting that she would definitely push for more business for Jamaica once she got back home.

She, however, noted that the main challenge as it related to Norway and other Scandinavian countries was having the option of consistent connections into Jamaica, something she said might be able to happen through multi-destination marketing.

“That’s the main challenge, but it’s worth the push and effort,” she added. “Jamaica is so beautiful, and people are definitely interested in coming here.”

Cecelia Larsson, a tour operator who works for Big Travel, a travel agency out of Sweden, said she, too, was pleasantly surprised to the point where she made a link with a few local Destination Management Companies (DMC) at JAPEX to which to send her clients.

AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL

“My first time to Jamaica and I have been here for five days now,” she said, beaming. “We have been sending people into Kingston, but now I know that this side is amazingly beautiful and will attract a lot of interest.”

The Ministry of Tourism has pledged to increase airlift to the

island, acknowledging that it would greatly improve visitor arrivals, especially out of non-traditional markets such as Eastern Europe.

For Hanna Schwensen, a tour operator out of Copenhagen, Denmark, once the airlift issues have been sorted out, Jamaica will be an easy sell. “I don’t know what I was expecting, but my expectations have been exceeded,” she noted.

“There are so many things to do, and I can’t wait to get back to start selling. We have mostly done the small islands, but Jamaica is really something else ... the quality is real.”

In the meantime, Jamaica Tourist Board’s Regional Director in the United Kingdom Elizabeth Fox is reporting an uptick in one of Jamaica’s biggest traditional markets.

“The July month was the biggest month of visitor arrivals from the United Kingdom ... ever,” she declared in an interview with **Hospitality Jamaica**. “For the first time in eight years ... since we have had television adverts ... consistently in the market and close relationships with major tour operators ... we are seeing this type of growth. Jamaica Travel Market, which started four years ago, is also reaping real benefits.”

JAPEX is the premier trade event for the travel industry locally and is a collaborative initiative between the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association and the Jamaica Tourist Board.

Staged annually, the three-day tradeshow, which ran from September 9-11, provides the ideal forum for leading suppliers in Jamaica’s tourism industry to negotiate, network, and meet with tour operators, travel wholesalers, and other tourism partners from across the globe.

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A bedroom at 138 Student Living. CONTRIBUTED

138 Student Living strides into urban tourism

THE UNIVERSITY of the West Indies (UWI) Mona campus-based 138 Student Living apartments have been making strides into the tourism accommodations sector, and according to its management, has undertaken a slew of activities geared at ramping up bookings.

According to the company's business development manager, Floyd Brown, the entity, which is listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, is aiming to increase its short-term bookings by both tourists and Jamaicans alike at its Gerald Lalor Flats and the George Alleyne Hall.

"The business is twofold. A good part of the business is long-term rental, which is the original public-private partnership agreement with the UWI to provide long-term accommodation for students ... due to a lack of hall residency accommodation on campus," he explained.

"The second part of the product offering at 138 is short-term rental which offers 128 rooms all year round, except for the summer months June, July and half of August, prior to when the students return. But within those 10 weeks, the students aren't there, the availability of rooms move up

from 128 to approximately 1,500 rooms," Brown said.

The executive said the focus for summer months has been on bringing in groups to the campus, whether for sporting camps, educational camps or other types of holiday camps, to utilise the additional spaces which become available when university students go off for the summer.

OPEN FOR BUSINESSES

He noted that there are several other groups which are being targeted, including members of the Jamaica diaspora and small and medium-sized enterprises, who may be interested in affordable, high-quality accommodation with 24-hour security.

"A lot of these businesses, because of their restricted resources, are always going to look out for somewhere affordable to have their in-house training or workshops, or, when they have people come in from overseas to do maintenance work, or offer training, they want somewhere affordable for them to stay. This is our market for that because we do have conference room facility that we rent, which includes audiovisual equipment," he said.

The company has also established partnerships with



Halls of residences at 138 Student Living. CONTRIBUTED



Proprietor of Caribbean World Destination Management Company, Robert Hendricks (left), in discussion with Business Development Manager of 138 Student Living Floyd Brown (centre) and digital marketing specialist Troy Campbell. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

tour companies to offer one-day tours for guests, whether around Kingston city or on the north coast, an arrangement which, according to Brown, guests take comfort in as it gives them a feeling of security and safety.

An airport transfer system which has been implemented, facilitates incoming international guests who may be travelling to Kingston for the first time via the Norman Manley International Airport.

"The short-term rental is what we are developing right now, because there is so much potential in this particular area, and what we have to offer is kind of niche," he said.



The interior of a room at 138 Student Living. CONTRIBUTED



Frank Sondern (centre), general manager, RIU Jamaica Palace Resort, flanked by executive of Apple Vacations as he accepts the Crystal Apple Award.

RIU Hotels receives PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS from Apple Vacations

ONCE AGAIN, RIU Hotels & Resorts shone at the 2019 Golden Apple Awards ceremony. This year, the hotel chain recognised 23 awards from the US tour operator Apple Vacations. The most important of them is the Crystal Apple Award for Best Staff & Service, granted to two RIU Hotels: the RIU Palace Jamaica and the RIU Palace Costa Rica (winner for the second consecutive year).

Furthermore, 21 other RIU hotels in Mexico, Aruba, Jamaica, Bahamas and the Dominican Republic have received a Golden Apple Award.

The event was attended by Hugo Aguilera, manager of partner marketing & business development, RIU; Wim Bracke, general manager at the Hotel RIU Palace Costa Rica; Joachim Schoenfeldt, senior vice-president, sales & contracting; Armin Kaestner, vice president, sales, contracting & business development for USA &

Canada, Caribbean, Mexico, Costa Rica & Panama; and Frank Sondern, general manager for the RIU Palace Jamaica and RIU Reggae hotels.

COVETED AWARD

The Golden Apple Award and the Crystal Apple Award are two of the most sought-after distinctions in the tourism industry, since they are awarded based on an Apple satisfaction questionnaire filled in by hundreds of thousands of travellers every year. In this questionnaire, guests rate the staff, service, food quality, facilities, beaches and entertainment. The highest rated hotels are distinguished with a Golden Apple Award, while the hotel considered to be top in its category receives the Crystal Apple Award, the most prestigious Apple Vacations recognition. According to Apple Vacations, these awards are taken into account by prospective guests when making a decision to choose a hotel and a destination.

These awards recognise RIU's commitment

to quality and the great effort that every member of the staff makes every day to offer an excellent service to all guests.

The RIU Palace Jamaica has 288 rooms specially designed to offer the maximum comfort in style. Located on a beautiful stretch of white, sandy beach, the hotel is one of the best in Montego Bay. It is the ideal place to enjoy a vacation with your partner or with friends, thanks to RIU Hotels & Resorts' all-inclusive adults-only programme.

Amenities include free Wi-Fi, room service 24 hours a day, infinity pools, and an endless array of sports and activities.

The elegant RIU Palace Costa Rica hotel is situated in the beautiful region of Guanacaste, which is famous for its natural beauty. Located right next to the hotel Riu Guanacaste, the hotel opened in November 2012. It offers 538 rooms, the recognised RIU all-inclusive 24-hour service and a wide variety of quality food and drink at its five restaurants and six bars.

Furthermore, it provides four pools, one of which has a swim-up bar and a children's pool, free Wi-Fi Internet and 24-hour room service, among many other services.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Frank Sondern, general manager, RIU Jamaica Palace Resort in Montego Bay, pictured with the coveted Crystal Apple Award.





Top performer for the Human Resources Department Renae Spence collects her award from co-chairmen Mark Hart (left) and Tom Tyler.



Twenty-year awardee Junior Wallace marching up to collect his award. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Mother and sister (centre), family members of late Caribbean Producers Jamaica employee Gregory Davis, who would have celebrated his 10th year with CPJ in 2019, collect an award in his honour. Sharing in the occasion are CPJ officials and members of the human resources team.



Spirit Awards winner Anthony Phillips (left) collects his prize from Vice-president of CPJ Sales Hugh Logan.

CPJ honours outstanding **DEDICATION AND PERFORMANCE** at awards ceremony

HELD AT the historic Good Hope Estate, over 500 team members and specially invited guests were treated to the same high-caliber hospitality food, service and ambiance that their customers provide at Jamaica's best hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

CPJ is one of Jamaica's most important entrepreneurial success stories. Founders, Mark Hart and Tom Tyler started the logistics and distribution business with one container of toilet paper in 1994. Now, CPJ is the largest institutional distributor in Jamaica, specialising in supplying essential goods to the hospitality industry, Jamaica's key income driver. From dry goods, food and beverage products to wines, spirits, and more, CPJ plays a key role in supporting the island's tourism product.

"Watching the company grow over the last 25 years has been a dream come true," said.

CPJ's founder and co-chairman, Tom Tyler. "We dreamt it then created



Ten-year awardee, top performer for his department and Employee of the Year Kevin Sewell (left) collects one of three awards from CPJ co-chairman Tom Tyler. CONTRIBUTED

the opportunities to achieve it, and with a dedicated staff behind us, we made it happen. It was important to share this milestone with our team and make it something we would look back on fondly when we celebrate our 50th anniversary."

CPJ aimed to inspire employees and give them something that would

make them feel proud and passionate about the service they provide. By far, the staff awards were the biggest highlight of the evening. Outstanding team members received awards for top performance over the past year, and the company recognised the dedicated service of those who reached 10, 15, and



Purchasing Supervisor Kevin Sewell (second left) collects his award for Top Performer of the year 2018. From left are vice-president Hugh Logan, and co-chairmen Tom Tyler, and Mark Hart.



Ainsley Powell (centre) collects his award for Top Performer in his department. With him are Chief Executive Officer Dr David Lowe (left) and Hugh Logan, vice-president of hospitality sales. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

20-year milestones. "Twenty-five years is a very significant milestone for the organisation. We wanted to honour our standout team members and set the stage for greater things

to come," stated founder and executive chairman Mark Hart. "We're proud to have so many long-standing employees. It's a testament to the sense of family in the



Manager of the Year Terry-Ann Johnson poses with her award and her bosses (from left) Vivek Gambhir, chief financial officer; Dr David Lowe, chief executive officer; and Mark Hart, co-chairman.

company and the strong foundation we've built over the years."

If CPJ's Annual Awards and celebrations are any hint of what is to come for the organisation, then its team can expect many more years of business successes to celebrate. Recently recognised by the Jamaica Hotel and Tourism

Association for "Invaluable Service to the Hotel Industry," CPJ's commitment to supporting Jamaica's tourism product shows no sign of stopping.

The future, according to its founders, is not just in Jamaica, but also the region. The company began operations in St Lucia four years

ago, which they say is a stepping stone for other markets. No doubt, the track record of many long-tenured staff members combined with fresh, incoming talent demonstrates that the company has the knowledge and expertise to carry it forward and meet its ambitions.



Top performer for the Human Resources Department Renae Spence collects her award from co-chairmen Mark Hart (left) and Tom Tyler.



Twenty-year awardee Junior Wallace marching up to collect his award. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



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Angella Bennett (second left), from the Jamaica Tourist Board, Canada and Joy Roberts, JAMVAC, (second right) meet with tour operators at JAPEX 2019.

Destination Jamaica on show at JAPEX 2019

THE 29TH staging of Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) was the preferred place for local tourism partners and stakeholders to be from September 9-11. The engagements on and off the trade floor gave birth to numerous business deals, while re-establishing existing ones. In attendance were 81 buyer companies with 117 delegates, and 91 supplier companies with 220 delegates.

The Jamaica Tourist Board invited 20 international media from the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, USA and Canada to bring global visibility to Destination

Jamaica. Their itinerary had them engaging tourism stakeholders and linkages partners, as well as glean meaningful insights from the island's tourism leaders.

As the largest tourism trade-show in the Caribbean, JAPEX exposes the depth, uniqueness and authenticity of Destination Jamaica. This augments the Jamaica Tourist Board's marketing initiatives by bringing awareness to the diverse offerings of the destination.

JAPEX is a partnership between the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association.



Jamaica Tourist Board hosts hundreds of travel agents for JAPEX 2019. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Omar Robinson (centre), JHTA president, gets ready to row the raft with tourism stakeholders, including Director of Tourism Donovan White at the Chukka booth. CONTRIBUTED



Camile Glenister (right), deputy director of tourism marketing, checks out the offerings in the Artisan Village at the recent Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) 2019 at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.



Director of Tourism Donovan White (left) and President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, Omar Robinson, visit the Cliff Hotel booth at JAPEX 2019.



Miss Lou Square a tourist attraction

A wide-angled shot of Gordon Town Square in St Andrew, soon to be renamed Miss Lou Square.

Paul H. Williams
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

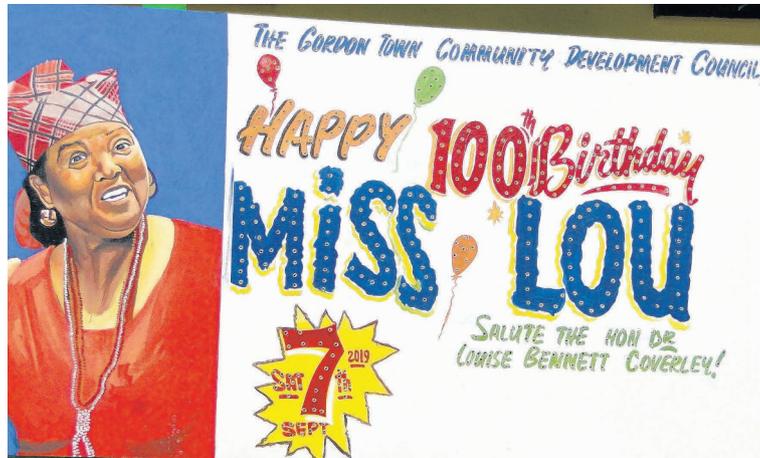
IN HIS address at the unveiling of Miss Lou's statue in Gordon Town Square last September, Prime Minister Andrew Holness told the gathering that the Government would be making Kingston a port of call for cruise ships.

"Returning cruise ships to Port Royal, and Victoria Pier (down-town Kingston)," he stated then, pointing out that tourists will not just want to see the Bob Marley statue, and the Institute of Jamaica, and all the other places.

"They are going to come right here in Gordon Town." He also said the Kingston and St Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC) would be "making the appropriate changes to uplift the built environment in the area", and that the mayor of Kingston and St Andrew already had the funds for the upgrade.

One year later, on Sunday, September 8, at a civic ceremony in the said square to commemorate the cultural icon's centenary, the prime minister declared that the name of the square would be legally changed to Louise Bennett-Coverley Square. The following Tuesday, the KSAMC approved a resolution for the name change.

But even before the resolution was passed, the historic town had gotten a facelift, and there are some infrastructural changes, including the placement of protective columns around the statue, the



The square was upgraded in collaboration with the Gordon Town Community Development Council. **PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS**

paving of the road around it with stones, the painting of the building fronts with black, gold and green, and the establishment of murals. A plaque outlining the name change will be mounted eventually.

That Sunday, the prime minister implored the Ministry of Culture and the KSAMC to collaborate with property owners in the square to develop the area as an attraction for locals and overseas visitors. Miss Lou lived in the Gordon Town area for many years and had contributed to its development.

Long regarded as Jamaica's most prolific cultural icon, the Miss Lou migrated to Canada in her later years. She died there in 2006 but was brought home to be buried in National Heroes Park. Now, she has her own square in which her larger-than-life status is represented by her own likeness.



The statue of Miss Lou is the centrepiece of Gordon Town Square.



A boonoonoonoos of a mural in the upgraded Gordon Town Square.



Brother and sister team, Robin Russell and Shari Edwards of Deja Resort, in a playful mood at JAPEX 2019.

JAPEX ends on HIGH NOTE

Outlook positive for Jamaica

THE JAMAICA hospitality and tourism industry is energised by high interest in the destination, evidenced by participation in the Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) 2019.

According to Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association (JHTA) President Omar Robinson, “This year, we had over 300 overseas tour operators, travel agents, and international media delegates and 220 supplier delegates.”

“This is particularly encouraging

given the number and scale of tourism markets around the world. But our partners tell us that in the Caribbean, we are the premier destination based not just on our natural attributes, but the variety and high standards of our accommodations and attractions that are on par with the best internationally.”

JAPEX, at the Montego Bay Conference & Convention Centre on September 9-11, 2019,

PLEASE SEE **JAPEX**, 16



PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

This Western Hospitality Institute chef was a hit at JAPEX 2019.



Reggae Sumfest’s Joe Bagdonovich (centre back) is all smiles as he poses with a group of travel agents.



From left: Allistair Nelson and Giovanni Davis of Secrets Resorts share lens time with André Hudson of Blue Diamond Resorts.



Opposition Spokesman on Tourism Dr Wykeham McNeill (centre) converses with Jamaica Tours’ Noel Sloley Jr (left) and Sixt Rent A Car’s Orville Spence.

International tourism up four per cent in first half of 2019, World Tourism Organization reports

INTERNATIONAL TOURIST arrivals grew four per cent from January to June 2019, compared to the same period last year, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer published ahead of the 23rd World Tourism Organization General Assembly. Growth was led by the Middle East (+8 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific (+6 per cent).

International arrivals in Europe grew four per cent, while Africa (+3 per cent) and the Americas (+2 per cent) enjoyed more moderate growth.

Destinations worldwide received 671 million international tourist arrivals between January and June 2019, almost 30 million more than in the same period of 2018 and a continuation of the growth recorded last year.

Growth in arrivals is returning to its historic trend and is in line with UNWTO's

forecast of three to four per cent growth in international tourist arrivals for the full year 2019, as reported in the January Barometer.

So far, the drivers of these results have been a strong economy, affordable air travel, increased air connectivity and enhanced visa facilitation. However, weaker economic indicators, prolonged uncertainty about Brexit, trade and technological tensions and rising geopolitical challenges have started to take a toll on business and consumer confidence, as reflected in a more cautious UNWTO Confidence Index.

REGIONAL PERFORMANCE

Europe grew four per cent in the first six months of 2019, with a positive first quarter followed by an above-average second quarter (April: +8 per cent and June: +6 per cent), reflecting a busy Easter and the start of the summer season in the world's most visited

region. Intraregional demand furlled much of this growth, though performance among major European source markets was uneven, amid weakening economies. Demand from overseas markets such as the USA, China, Japan and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also contributed to these positive results.

In the Americas (+2 per cent), results improved in the second quarter after a weak start of the year. The Caribbean (+11%) benefited from strong US demand and continued to rebound strongly from the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria in late 2017, a challenge which the region unfortunately faces once again. North America recorded 2% growth, while Central America (+1%) showed mixed results. In South America, arrivals were down 5 per cent, partly due to a decline

in outbound travel from Argentina which affected neighbouring destinations.

SOURCE MARKETS – MIXED RESULTS AMID TRADE TENSIONS AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

Performance has been uneven across major tourism outbound markets.

Chinese outbound tourism (+14 per cent) in trips abroad) continued to drive arrivals in many destinations in the region during the first half of the year, though spending on international travel was four per cent lower in real terms in the first quarter. Trade tensions with the USA as well as the slight depreciation of the yuan may influence destination choice by Chinese travellers in the short term.

Outbound travel from the USA, the world's second-largest spender, remained solid (+7 per cent), supported by a strong dollar. In Europe, spending on international tourism by France (+8 per cent) and Italy (+7 per cent) was robust, though the United Kingdom (+3 per cent) and Germany (+2 per cent) reported more moderate figures.



Deep sea diving from Sandals Montego Bay. CONTRIBUTED

Sandals & Beaches Resorts cop six wins at Scuba Diving's Readers Choice Awards

SCUBA DIVING magazine has honoured Sandals and Beaches Resorts in its 27th Annual 2020 Readers Choice Awards. The company received a total of six awards, including Sandals Ochi Beach Resort being named 'One of the Best Quality Resorts in the Caribbean'.

The **Scuba Diving's** Readers' Choice Awards allows **Scuba**

Diving magazine readers to recognise their favourite dive destinations, operators, resorts, sites and more, and Sandals Resorts International has once again been recognised as a "favourite" among consumers across four different categories.

Sandals and Beaches Resorts proudly took home the following list of accolades, including Beaches

Turks and Caicos being named the No. 1 Family Friendly Resort in the Caribbean:

- One of the Best Quality Resorts in the Caribbean – Sandals Ochi Beach Resort.
- One of the Best Quality Resorts in the Caribbean – Sandals Grande St Lucian.
- One of the Best in Quality of Rooms in the Caribbean

– Sandals Grande St Lucian.

- No. 3 in Quality of Rooms in the Caribbean – Sandals Royal Bahamian.
- One of the Best in Quality of Resort in the Caribbean – Sandals Royal Bahamian. Dubbed the 'No.1 Family Friendly Resort in the Caribbean', Beaches Turks & Caicos offers something for everyone, from

five-star Global Gourmet dining at up to 21 different restaurants, to accommodations in the most luxurious suites for groups of all sizes, to an ocean of water sports and endless land activities. Sandals Ochi Beach Resort, Sandals Grande St Lucian and Sandals Royal Bahamian were all honoured for the exceptional quality of the resorts and rooms.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H.

On a clear day, the Caribbean Sea can be seen from Constitution Hill in east rural St Andrew.

Different perspectives from Constitution Hill



JAMAICA HAS some of the most breathtaking mountain sceneries in all of the Caribbean. From east to west, north to south, there are clusters of mountain ranges from which are fantastic views of the seas and the valleys below.

The Cockpit Country in the west is fascinating, but there is something special about the clusters in the east, the Blue and John Crow mountain ranges, and all the other clusters in northeast rural St Andrew and parts of St Thomas and Portland.

Recently, I had reasons to be visiting the Dallas Mountains clusters, especially the Constitution Hill community, and despite my vertigo, which took me on a hillside at Chatsworth, I discovered a nice, little spot that has now become one of my favourites.

The road to Constitution Hill is no different from the roads to the other hilly and mountainous districts in the east. They are long, narrow, rough, and winding, hugging the hillsides from which huge, yawning valleys invite you to soar to join the John crows. Your constitution has to be strong to walk over them.

The place is a series of hills, mountains even, connected by narrow ridges. The hills consist of steep spurs, sometimes divided

by a river or stream, meandering around interlocking spurs from different hills. Houses are mostly erected on slopes.

On the way to Constitution Hill, there is a turn-off to Dallas Castle in the Dallas Mountains. Dallas Castle was a plantation owned by Dr Robert Dallas. I heard from a woman living in the area that the foundations of the 'castle' are still there.

And prior to my frequenting the place, I knew that the city of Dallas in Texas was named after George Mifflin Dallas, United States vice-president and grandson of Dr Dallas. It is my intention to visit Dallas Castle soon.

Until then, I will continue to enjoy the views from my little spot, 'way up in the air'. That is what it feels like, for I am looking way down and over across a valley at the bottom of which nestles the village of Chatsworth, where there are the ruins of a



The raindrops are not visible, but it is raining heavily on these trees. **PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS**

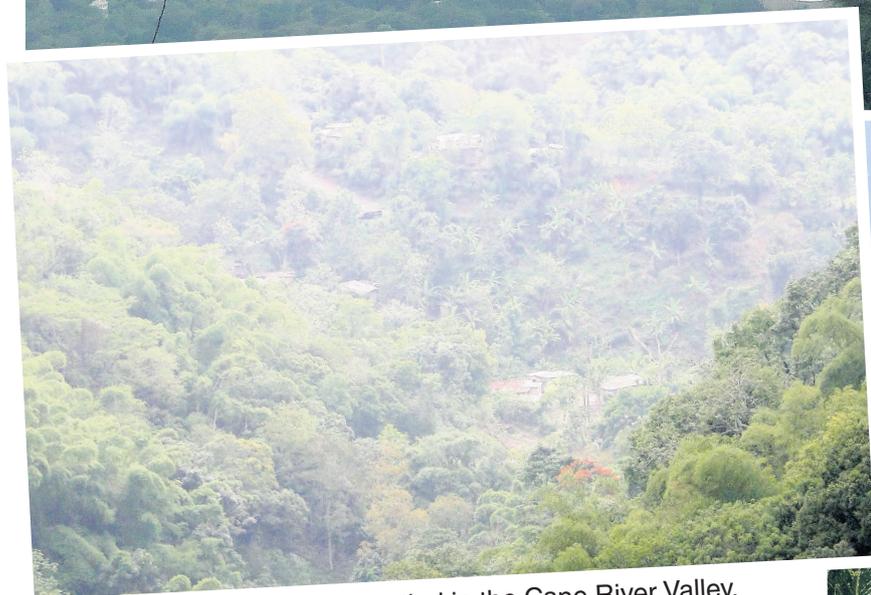
'great house'. It is the same valley through which the Cane River and its tributaries flow.

Pine trees and other evergreens line the crests and sides of the spurs. Clouds regularly form on top of the mountains, or the entire range is covered by fog or mists, or both at the same time.

Recently, while I was there, the rain

came. I saw it falling on to the trees below me, and I got the feeling I could look through it and count the raindrops. Then, it got heavy, obliterating the views of the mountains. Everywhere was grey, like a huge sheet had descended upon and covered the majestic landforms. In the night the range

A hazy view of the Corporate Area, Kingston Harbour, the Hellshire hills and beyond.



The village of Chatsworth is nestled in the Cane River Valley.

was a black silhouette against the sky.

And if the mountain views are captivating, so near, yet so far, the words for the vistas of the sea are erratic, but alluring. The view of the sea appears to be framed by two escarpments, creating a basin effect, only that the bottom of the 'basin' is punctuated by two peaks that seem to be close to each other spoiling the basin effect.

Yes, on a clear the day the sea at

Bull Bay is visible, seemingly going up into the sky. Cargo ships snail to and from Kingston Port, but on a cloudy or overcast day the line between the sea and the sky is blurred. No horizon can be seen. The illusion is gone.

From the western side of the ridge, from which I perched, the hill is on the other side of St Andrew look well populated with buildings. The views stretch from those hills to downtown Kingston,



A cargo ship moving away from the port of Kingston.

Kingston Harbour, the Hellshire hills and beyond.

All the way from the flat to Constitution Hill there are different

views of the Corporate Area. It's like peeping through a window from different angles. So, if you want to see Kingston city and

the mountains in the east from a different perspective, garner some courage and head to Constitution Hill.



These ladies brightened up the VIP Attractions booth.



From left: The Jamaica Tourist Board team of Michelle Montaque, Ricardo Henry, and Sharon Williams.



Top-shelf chefs in the hospitality sector flocked to the Joy Spence Appleton Estate Rum Experience booth at JAPEX.

JAPEX

CONTINUED FROM 12

welcomed delegates from traditional markets like the USA, Canada, and the UK, including England and Germany, but Robinson noted: “Contributing

to our optimism about the buoyancy of destination Jamaica is the participation and interest shown by buyers from new markets like India, Luxembourg, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Spain. We are looking forward to Latin American flights, which are scheduled to begin in December three times weekly and are bound to be a boon

for our local hotels.”

Robinson, in his welcome at the JAPEX opening reception on September 9, 2019, said that “Jamaica has been able to maintain its place among the top tier of world destinations over several decades is as much a tribute to our overseas partners, who believe in us and keep

sending their customers to us, as it is to Jamaica’s hoteliers and tourism service providers who are continually investing in their businesses for the benefit of local and foreign guests.” He

mentioned new hotels, including the R Hotel and the AC Hotel in Kingston, the newly renovated and expanded RIU, Ocho Rios; Rondel Village, Negril; and Half Moon, Montego Bay.



Enjoying every minute of JAPEX 2019, these Western Hospitality Institute students took some time to have fun. PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN



From left: President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association Omar Robinson greets deputy-chairman of Sandals Resorts International, Adam Stewart and managing director of the Hendrickson Group, Kevin Hebdrickson.