

The Gleaner

# Hospitality Jamaica

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019



# OCHO RIOS

## Rebirth as Jamaica's cruise shipping capital?

TEF hosts inaugural health and wellness tourism conference

Round Hill celebrates staff at long-service awards

Travel agents treated to breakfast by The Courtleigh Hospitality Group

# Ocho Rios – Rebirth as Jamaica’s cruise shipping capital?



The new Ocho Rios Fishing Village.



'Carnival Sensation' docked at the Ocho Rios port. PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

## Janet Silvera

*Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator*

**W**ITH AN expected 756,000 visitors calling at its twin ports for the 2019-2020 season, the resort town of Ocho Rios, St Ann, is once again making a strong case for being the cruise shipping capital of Jamaica.

Also, add to this mix the over 20 ships that have called on the town over the past three weeks and the “heavy spending” a number of stakeholders have been reporting, and one can see why the chairman of the National Cruise Council (NCC) and Mayor of St Ann’s Bay, Michael Belnavis, is bragging about what he sees as a cruise shipping “renaissance” for the resort town.

“Ocho Rios will be having the best cruise shipping year of all the ports of call in Jamaica ... maybe one of its best years ever,” Belnavis told **Hospitality Jamaica**, while hardly able to contain his glee.

“You know there was a time, before Falmouth getting a cruise port, when Ocho Rios was the number one port in the country. Well, as they say, we have got back that pep in our step and are getting ready to reclaim that mantle.”

Belnavis said that it is no coincidence why Ocho Rios is poised to do so well for the new cruise season,



Executive director of JAMVAC Joy Roberts

pointing to the hard work, including the many anti-harassment measures that have been put in place, “to prepare us for this moment”.

He is also giving credit to a number of government agencies, including the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) and its subsidiary body, the St Ann Development Company (SADCo), for “the great job of positioning the town as a first-call cruise destination”.

“We can also add the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo), as well as the Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ) and Jamaica Vacations (JAMVAC) and its hard-working executive director, Joy Roberts,” Belnavis added.

The NCC chairman said that while the bulk of the business will be coming from the number two cruise company in the world – Carnival Cruise Lines – Norwegian, MSC, Princess and others will also be well represented.

“These are really exciting times for Ocho Rios,” he added. “It would be remiss of me not to point out the attractions which have been playing their part in making Ocho Rios what it is today.”

“In Dunn’s River Falls, Ocho Rios has one of the most popular and most visited attractions on the planet,” Belnavis further added.

For her part, JAMVAC’s Roberts said Ocho Rios’ turnaround is very significant and speaks volume to the kind of work that has been done in recent times to improve “the aesthetic appeal” and “look and feel” of the town.

According to Roberts, the resort town alone will be seeing over 756,000 visitors for the 2019-2020 cruise shipping season, “Between November 2019 to April 2020, the



Mayor of St Ann’s Bay Michael Belnavis.

town should be seeing at least one and sometimes multiple ships per day.”

Roberts further noted that from January to October 2019, Ocho Rios has seen an 11.9 per cent increase in calls and 2.6 per cent in visitor arrivals, representing a passenger count of 450,000.

She added that the *MSC Meraviglia*, with a maximum capacity of 6,900, inclusive of passengers and crew, will be making an inaugural visit in December 2019.

“The town will also be seeing a number of ships from Carnival Cruise Lines, inclusive of the *Carnival Vista*, *Carnival Horizon*, *Carnival Sunrise* and the *Carnival Sensation*,” Roberts further noted.

“Let’s not forget that cruise shipping is a major boost for stopover arrivals. The cruise passenger that comes for that one-day visit will be the one coming back next month with his family to stay at a hotel. Treat them nice and they will be back,” Roberts further added.

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett has been courting the cruise sector heavily since appointing the NCC in 2016. The council, which reflects a partnership between private- and public-sector interests, has been mandated to guide and grow the local cruise economy in a steady and sustainable manner.

For his part, Garfield Dussard, owner of Garfield Diving, a water-sport operator with cruise-related businesses in Ocho Rios, Falmouth and Montego Bay, said his Ocho Rios operation “has been doing great” since the start of the season.

“We have been seeing numbers we have not seen for a long time,” he noted. “From all indications, we have some very exciting times ahead.”

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Garfield Dussard of Garfield Diving.



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett greets cruise ship passengers who disembarked in Ocho Rios.

# Skylark, Negril's newest eco-friendly hotel



A section of the beachfront at Skylark. PHOTOS BY JANET SILVERA



A massage cabana at Skylark.



Skylark has some amazing vistas.

**I**T WAS Horace Andy's reggae song **Skylarking**, from his Studio One album of the same name, which influenced the name of Negril's newest ecologically friendly hotel, Skylark, and fittingly so.

Nestled on the Capital of Casuals' legendary white sand beach, Skylark, which is sister property to the award-winning Rockhouse hotel on Negril's West End, is, without question, a reggae hotel, where the musical sounds and feel of Jamaican music reign supreme.

Skylark, like Rockhouse, is the picture of perfection. Its rooms, grounds and accompanying restaurant, Miss Lily's, are replete with reggae influences, with authentic Jamaican music of all genres providing background sounds throughout the day and into the night. Jamaica's sound system culture is celebrated in the artwork and murals at the restaurant.

The property had a soft opening in May last year and officially opened last Christmas

with 90 per cent occupancy.

Reggae stars, including Grammy-nominated Koffee and Protoje, as well as Lila Ike and Kranium, are among the stars who have graced the property and even



A vegan breakfast dish from the kitchen of Miss Lily's restaurant at Skylark.

given short performances, which owner Paul Salmon, an ardent reggae lover, describes as "a small thing on the microphone; informal off-the-moment".

"We just loved the word Skylark in a Jamaican context – lazing about, tomfoolery, which seems right for a resort hotel like this. It's the kind of thing you want to do when you're on vacation, like laze about and do all the stuff that you do when you take some time off," Salmon told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

It is said that the three keys to happiness are good music, good food and good friends, and in its one year of operation Skylark has provided all that, attracting younger guests, groups of friends and families to its location, where its amiable staff ensures they have had a grand time. Likewise, Miss Lily's restaurant takes Jamaican cuisine several



Dancehall scene artwork painted on the roof at Miss Lily's at the Skylark hotel.

notches upwards, serving up Jamaican delights ranging from ackee and salt fish, to callaloo, plantain, jerked chicken and banana bread, among others. Vegans are highly catered to, as wellness is the essence of the property.

The raving reviews about Skylark on TripAdvisor is testament to its awesomeness, with 108 of 109 visitors on the travel site rating it as either excellent or good. Some guests have referred to the property as an "amazing place to take Instagram photos".

The 28-room property was redesigned with a modern-retro feel, with decorative blocks, and some ceilings accentuated with bamboo. It will see another 17 rooms being added in the fall of 2020 to make a third floor. Spanning two acres, Skylark offers 210 feet of beach frontage and an expansive length spanning

150 feet, as well as a spa and a boutique.

For Salmon, one of the focuses of the resort is to promote social interaction between the guests and the Jamaican community to further engender the authentic Jamaican experience Skylark offers, as well as to boost wellness programmes. As a consequence, guests are encouraged to go off property as well as make purchases from local vendors who sell within the area.

"For this season, we are working on this passport which provides a bunch of different activities you can do that can link you beyond just sitting on the beach ... it might be yoga, a tour of the Rockhouse organic garden, visit to one of the schools, cooking class every week with the chef to learn about the cooking; local remedies, herbal and natural foods ... ." he explained.

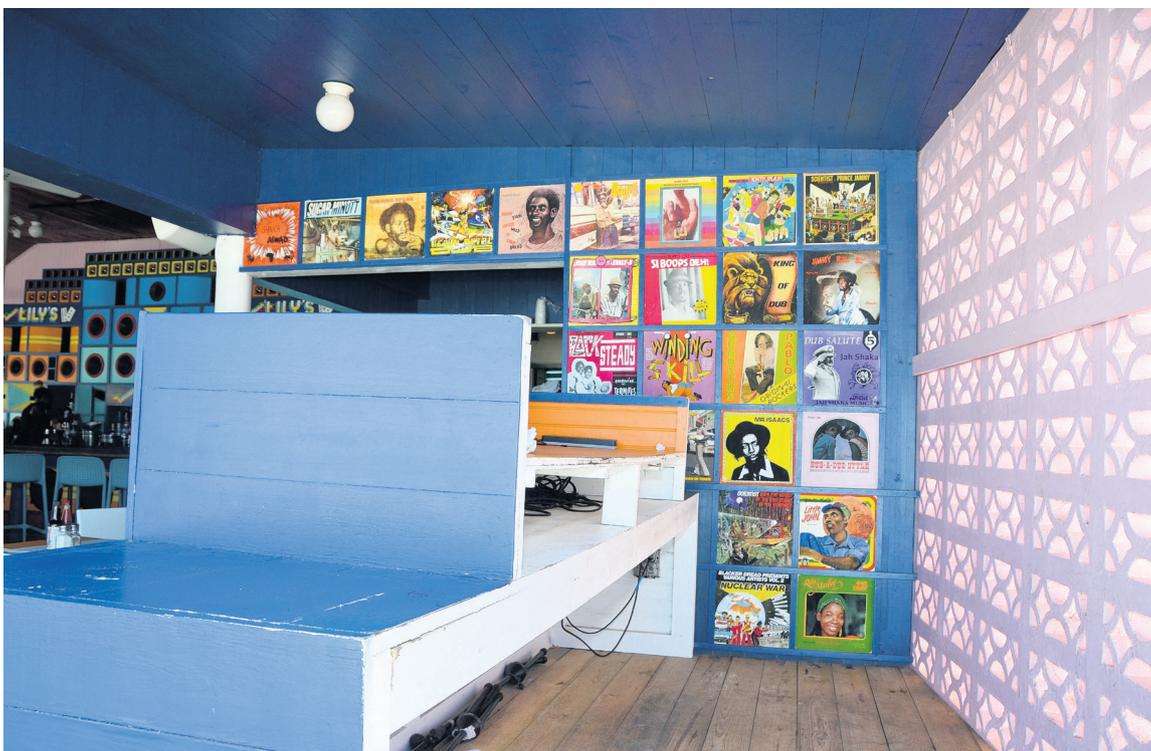
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Daineo Henry (left) prepares a drink for guests at Skylark.



Guest relations ambassador Talia Williams.



Reggae album covers adorn a section of a wall inside Miss Lily's.



Paul Salmon, owner of Skylark.

# Caribbean's tourism growth rate more than double global average

**T**OURIST ARRIVALS to the Caribbean increased by a solid 9.7 per cent during the first half of 2019 when compared to the same period last year, the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) revealed recently.

Addressing the media at a news conference at World Travel Market earlier this month, CTO Chairman Dominic Fedee said this performance was more than double the global average of 4.4 per cent.

Between January and June this year, there were 17.1 million tourist trips to the Caribbean, 1.5 million more than the corresponding period in 2018. The foundation of this performance was a strong United States market,

which grew by 20.2 per cent, totalling a first-half record of 8.9 million overnight international tourists. During the same period, some 2.1 million Canadian tourists stayed in the region, a 2.4 per cent rise when compared to the same period last year.

However, the European market was flat, registering a marginal 0.4 per cent increase to 2.9 million trips, with the UK market down by 1.7 per cent, mainly due to significant declines in Cuba, which fell by 22 per cent, and the Dominican Republic, down by 15.3 per cent.

The strong results recorded in the first half reflect the resilience of individual destinations and demonstrate their ability to

skillfully navigate global political and economic concerns, including Brexit and the ongoing trade wars which threaten the stability of the global economy.

Several factors supported the gains made so far, including increased air capacity between the region and major sources, expansions in the accommodation sector, and the positive positioning of the destinations' brands in the various source markets.

As it relates to cruise, the demand for the Caribbean was so strong in the first six months of 2019 that there was a record 16.7 million cruise visits, 1.3 million more than in the same period of 2018. The present rate of growth



**Dominic Fedee**

estimated to be 8.1 per cent eclipsed that for similar periods in the last four years.

Looking forward to the remainder of this year, based on current trends, and considering the

various global issues, including Brexit and trade wars, the CTO forecast an increase of between five and seven per cent in stayover arrivals and four to five per cent rise in cruise passenger visits.

## Cayman Islands celebrates 7,000 room stock

THE CAYMAN Islands tourism industry recently achieved a major milestone in the accommodations sector through the significant growth of over 7,000 rooms licensed and available to visitors. This includes over 1,000 new rooms added within the past three years alone, with the condominiums and villas categories accounting for 73 per cent of this increase.

Now standing at 7,027 rooms available across the three-island nation – Grand Cayman has 6,646 rooms, followed by 220 in Cayman Brac and 161 in Little Cayman – the condos and villas category represents the majority share of accommodation types now available with 4,310 rooms versus 2,717 rooms in the hotel category.

“We have seen continued interest from the community to embrace entrepreneurship opportunities in tourism through homesharing, which accounts for 32.2 per cent of the total rooms now available,” stated Deputy Premier and minister for Tourism, Moses Kirkconnell. “Through the ministry and Department of Tourism’s commitment to facilitating annual training and educational forums led by international partners such as Airbnb, as well as meeting regularly with potential developers to provide business solutions, we are extremely

proud to now offer the largest and most diverse room stock numbers available to our visitors.” In total, as of October 31, 2019, there are currently 799 licensed properties, representing 9,958 beds.

Ongoing aviation strategies led by the ministry and department will continue to provide travellers even greater access to the destination through new key hubs in North America and beyond with their preferred airlines. Maintaining and growing air access remains a top priority to ensure that the accommodations sector will continue to benefit from tourism, a key pillar of the economy.

Looking forward, the minister of tourism shared: “As the Cayman Islands gear up for what is anticipated to be another active winter season around the globe, we encourage our tourism partners – whether new to the industry or long-established – to continue providing our world-renowned warmth through our Cayman kind hospitality and our rich cultural experiences. The efforts we make today will secure friends of Cayman for a lifetime and allow others to share in the essence of ‘Dreaming in Cayman’. We congratulate all tourism partners as we continue to work together to maximise our destination.”

high tide



low tide

Relax responsibly!





Recipients of the 2019 Long Service Staff Awards

# Round Hill celebrates staff at long service awards

**B**UILDING ON the culture of celebrating excellence, Round Hill Hotel and Villas recently hosted their bi-annual long service awards ceremony on Tuesday, November 19.

Hosted by Omar Robinson, general manager, and Menseita Ottey, reservations manager, the well-attended event offered laughter and good cheer. The Hanover Terrace was transformed into an intimate setting with the perfect blend of sophistication and glamour, and the three-course meal prepared by Round Hill's Award-winning culinary team was complimented by the melodious sounds of the Jus Us 2 band and Ashley.

The 78 awardees were treated to inspiring words, courtesy of the evening's guest speaker, Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett. Recognised as the world's leading tourism minister, Bartlett used the occasion to commend the service professionals for their outstanding personalised service. He expressed that their commitment to deliver memorable experiences has helped Round Hill remain one of the leading vacation getaway, and Jamaica one of the most competitive tourism destinations worldwide with record-breaking arrivals



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett during his address.

and revenue.

Daniel McIntyre, who was this year's only recipient of an award for over 45 years of service, received a standing ovation. McIntyre, who was at a loss for words, has been a gardener at Cottage 1 during his tenure.

The awardee's response was delivered by Nelda Kerr of the housekeeping department, who encouraged her fellow colleagues and attendees to continue to excel in all their endeavours. Kerr also received an award for over 40 years of service.



From left: Josef Forstmayr, JP, OD, Patricia Alfonso-Dass, Daniel McIntyre, Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, and Omar Robinson.



JTB's musicians Nueth Lewis, Oscar Rose, and Alexander Amos share lens time with Jennise Hall.

## New non-stop JFK/Mobay flight to boost tourist arrivals

UNITED STATES Ambassador to Jamaica Donald Tapia and Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, along with a raft of officials, welcomed the commencement of daily non-stop American Airlines service between New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport recently.

American Airlines flight No. 1349 arrived at 11:07 a.m. with passengers and crew being treated to a warm welcome by officials complete with a performance by a Jamaican mento band.

Ambassador Tapia noted that "the US and Jamaica have had a long history of diplomatic relations which includes strong airlift arrangements. Today is another representation of the strong ties between both countries, which will positively impact Jamaica's tourism and our flagship carrier."

Meanwhile, Bartlett welcomed the new service, noting: "The Northeast region continues to be a strong performer for us as a destination in terms of arrivals. For the summer period, May to September 2019, the US market region recorded a 9.3 per cent increase in arrivals with 785,055 visitors, compared to the 718,531 visitors during the corresponding period last year. During that period, the Northeast outpaced the overall US market and saw an increase of 13.3 per cent during the same period.



Damion Vanreil bestows a welcoming gift on General Manager of American Airlines Jessica Torres.

While stopover arrivals from the US also recorded an increase of 11.1 per cent for September 2019, the Northeast again outperformed the national average and grew by 18.1 per cent. This reintroduced service augurs well for us as a destination."

Mayor of Montego Bay, Councillor Homer Davis, Donovan White, Director of Tourism, Dr Rafael Echvarne, CEO, MBJ Airports Limited, Omar Robinson, President, Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA), Wellesley Joseph, AA Senior Regional Manager, Western Caribbean were among the

specially invited guests at the flight arrival briefing.

Meanwhile, senior strategist, Delano Seiveright, pointed out that the new American Airlines service comes within the frame of increased flights between the United States and Jamaica, "There is daily non-stop Delta Airlines service between Detroit, Michigan, and Montego Bay, starting December of this year. Jamaica has also been benefiting from several other new flight services, including new non-stop flights between Dallas, Texas, and Montego Bay by Sun Country Airlines; St Louis and Montego Bay by Southwest Airlines; and



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett shares a sweet moment with Kaycee Forbes.



Mayor of Montego Bay Homer Davis welcomes Nashane Marshall.

increased frequency of flights into both Kingston and Montego Bay by Jetblue and Delta Airlines."

He further noted that the increasing buoyancy in the tourism space is attributable to Bartlett's consistent piloting of specific growth-inducing efforts. "This includes further cementing and also opening up new source markets, including in Latin America and Europe; more new rooms; more new flights; closer collaboration with cruise

operators; first-rate relationships with non-traditional players like Airbnb, among other things, that represents the very cornerstone of our aggressive tourism growth strategy."

American Airlines offers its 200 million annual customers 6,800 daily flights to more than 365 destinations in 61 countries from its hubs in Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix and Washington, DC.



Director of Tourism Donovan White (right) participates in the panel discussion as he responds to moderator Archibald Gordon. Other panellists are (from left) Kaymar Jordan, editor-in-chief, The Gleaner; Jaevion Nelson, social activist; and Franklin McKnight, veteran journalist.

# Director of tourism advocates for balance in the news

NOTING THAT he was not advocating to censor or change the way news is reported, Jamaica's Director of Tourism Donovan White says he is making the case that in finding truth, fact and accuracy, the word 'balance' is worth pursuing aggressively.

The tourism director, who presented to the recently held Press Association of Jamaica public forum on the theme 'Is the News Too Negative', used the occasion to shed light on the impact of the news on the island's tourism sector.

Commenting on the Jamaican reality, White highlighted the critical role that tourism plays as Jamaica's leading industry and a major economic earner, contributing nine per cent to the island's gross domestic product, and as the second-largest employer. "Tourism supports the continued development of health, education, infrastructural development, manufacturing sectors, among others; and as much as we understand the importance of news, and delivering news that is factual, true and accurate, there ought to be a case for presenting balanced content."

The tourism director also spoke



Director of Tourism Donovan White addresses the audience at The Jamaica Pegasus during the Press Association of Jamaica public forum, held under the theme 'Is the News Too Negative'.

of the benefits of the news to the destination when he said, "At the Jamaica Tourist Board, we are

happy that our stories are part of the content that is consumed by your audiences – from launches

to broadcasting our growth, to heralding new partnerships, and to our successes in the international

marketplace."

Returning to the impact of negative news on the destination, White referred to the possible adverse repercussions on the image of the island, and, by extension, on arrival figures. This, he said, sometimes dissuade travellers from choosing Jamaica as their vacation destination.

White continued, "With today's technology, a story told in Jamaica will have global impact and will be replicated in the international space and across other platforms as 'validated news from Jamaica'".

As a strategic position, the tourism director maintains that the Jamaica Tourist Board's approach has been a proactive one, to stand up and face the media questions and provide reliable information. Through engaging their publics and communities with more interactions, the Jamaica Tourist Board helps to shape the lens through which the news is interpreted.

Citing that the destination enjoys a 42 per cent return guest rate, White theorises that there are still some really great opportunities to tell truly positive stories. "We are so much more than what is currently in the news," he concluded.

## TEF hosts inaugural health and wellness tourism conference



PHOTOS BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

The pleasure is mine. Chantelle Plummer of Half Moon's Fern Tree Spa beams as she loosens the tension in the JTB's Paula Powell's shoulders.

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

FROM WEDNESDAY, November 20, to Thursday, November 21, the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) hosted the inaugural Jamaica Health and Wellness Tourism Conference inside the Montego Bay Convention Centre under the theme 'The New Futures'.

It was developed and coordinated by the Tourism Linkages Network, a division of the TEF, an agency of the Ministry of Tourism. "The Jamaica Health and Wellness Tourism Conference was created with an aim of bringing together leading academics, scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of health and wellness tourism," the TEF said.

In the programme notes, Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett says, "This conference is a positive step in the right direction as we strive to promote awareness of Jamaica's health and wellness industry and give more Jamaicans an opportunity to earn from the industry using knowledge garnered from the event."

The minister was the keynote speaker, and he said, among other things, "The Health and Wellness Network is tasked with developing the health and wellness offering here in Jamaica and making the link between tourism and that subsector."

Also addressing the gathering in the opening session was Omar Robinson, president of the Jamaica



From all walks of life they have come. From left: Scientist, Professor Henry Lowe of Medicanja, and chairman of the Health and Wellness Network; Christine Benjamin, spa owner of Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Colonel Marcia Douglas of the Charles Town Maroons in Portland; and Cameroonian Dr Ngeh Toyang, CEO of Flavocure Biotech, Maryland, USA.

Hotel and Tourist Association. "We know that the growing international demand for wellness services and treatment has given rise to health and wellness tourism, and thankfully, Jamaica has all the attributes to be well positioned in this market as well," he said.

The conference fell under the health and wellness arm of the network, which is chaired by scientist, Professor Henry Lowe, who welcomed participants during the opening session on Wednesday. Professor Lowe's MEDICANJA products were on display among exhibitors, such as Eden Gardens Nutraceuticals, The Best Dressed Chicken, Natalie Murray, Sharon Feanny, Honeyvera, Rastafari Indigenous Village, SureTime Emergency Medical Services and Biotech R and D Institute.

The conference consisted mainly of a series of panel discussions on:

the importance of public-private partnership in the development of health and wellness tourism in Jamaica; current and emerging perspectives on phytomedicines on health and wellness programme activities in Jamaica; communities and the wellness tourism experience; education and certification in the wellness tourism industry; the role of spas in securing Jamaica's future as a destination for health and wellness; ecotourism and fitness in Jamaica; nutraceuticals; and the potential role of cannabis in health and wellness tourism.

Omar Robinson moderated a session on 'Hotel and new health and wellness practitioners', while Dr Andre McDonald of SureTime Emergency Medical Services spoke about, 'Worry less, live more'. There were also a book launch, food demonstrations, a body-scrub mini workshop, and a yoga/exercise session.

## Dynamic digital learning platform to support students displaced by Hurricane Dorian

APPROXIMATELY 1,000 students who have been displaced by the passage of Hurricane Dorian will now receive unparalleled academic support with the recently launched One-on-One digital learning platform.

The e-learning programme, which was launched in Nassau, Bahamas, on November 21, comprises unlimited access to virtual text books; the establishment of digital schools which will be livestreamed and accessible for future reference; as well as the execution of weekend classes for students from 34 selected schools.

The initiative is made possible through the partnership of BTC Communications, Cable and Wireless Foundation, One-on-One, the Ministry of Education Bahamas, the Bahamas Union of Teachers and the Sandals Foundation and is aimed at helping junior high and high school students stay on track as they prepare for their mandatory school exit exams.

Some 500 tablets were purchased by the Sandals Foundation to aid displaced exam-age students and train some 50 teachers who have lost thousands of lesson plans, content and other teaching aids. Additionally, teachers will be given full access to over 200 curriculums – based content, along with unlimited access to monitor and guide students locally.

Heidi Clarke, executive director at the Sandals Foundation, says the programme will significantly support the resilience of learners.

"These students have experienced unimaginable challenges and changes. It was important for us at the foundation to do what we could to ensure their academic progress was not derailed. These tablets will provide the ideal support that teachers and students need to keep apace and stay on track with their counterparts."

Education, Clarke says, "is the most important tool through which students, young and old, can emerge from trying circumstances and create a strong future. These are the investments that drive the work of the Sandals Foundation as we help Caribbean



CLARKE

nationals achieve their best."

Ricardo Allen, chief executive officer at One-on-One Educational Services Limited, and whose team will be leading the on-the-ground activities, said he was extremely excited about the prospects of the programme.

"In response to the unspeakable disaster, and in collaboration with BTC and our other stakeholders, we have put together a comprehensive series of activities which will no doubt positively impact students and their scholastic performance for this academic year."

The vision, he added, "is to continue our work with the Ministry of Education, Sandals Foundation and the Cable & Wireless Foundation, in whatever way we can, to empower students, parents and teachers through technology".

The One-on-One learning platform will be available to Bahamas, educators and students for a period of three months.

Since March 2018, the online learning platform has aided over 20,000 Caribbean students in 13 countries who would have lost at least a month away from school.

Over 500 on-demand lectures from teachers, virtual science labs, analytics and insight into student's progress, practice test and solutions, and a digital encyclopedia, have been delivered to students, resulting in a 40 per cent performance increase in their mandatory high-school exit exams.

# TRAVEL AGENTS TREATED TO BREAKFAST BY THE COURTLEIGH HOSPITALITY GROUP

The Professional Travel Agents of North America were more than happy to take a group photo at the end of the presentation. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Waitress Angelisa Palache was serving up smiles and Chef Heron's signature drink, 'Energy Booster', to the travel agents as they entered.

**T**RAVEL AGENTS are one of the key players in keeping the tourism industry alive. The Courtleigh Hospitality Group (CHG) hosted a breakfast presentation for the Professional Travel Agents of North America, through a partnership with the Jamaica Tourist Board, at the Courtleigh Hotel & Suites recently.

Group Director of Marketing & Sales Nicola Madden-Greig says one of the main objectives of gatherings like these are to build partnerships that later grow the tourism economy. "Whether it's for business or pleasure, Kingston can offer several amenities to guests, and we wanted to



Sales and Reservations Manager Maurice Bryan giving an informative presentation to the travel agents.



From left: Joan Bennett, Racine Gooding, Angela Wheeler and Elicia Slatten raised their glasses to a great morning at The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites.

showcase that there's more to Jamaica that can be experienced.”

Madden-Greig says the CHG is dedicated to making Kingston a destination of choice for visitors. The group has received significant bookings for meetings and conferences but wants to make more city weddings become a reality. “Kingston is the perfect backdrop to enhance your love story, with the hotels’ indoor and outdoor venues as well as all the garden-like settings and historic sites the city has to offer.”

The travel agents got a taste of Jamaica with an array of authentic Jamaican breakfast dishes prepared by Courtleigh Hotel’s Executive Chef Lij Heron and his team. The breakfast was the culmination of visits throughout Kingston and tours of the CHG; The Courtleigh Hotel & Suites, The Knutsford Court Hotel and The Jamaica Pegasus hotel.

The agents were given an insightful presentation on CHG and its drive to motivate guests to stay in the heartbeat of Jamaica.

Sales and Reservations

Manager Maurice Bryan highlighted events, tours, historic sites and attractions that guests can enjoy while staying in Kingston. “It is important to sell Kingston as a destination as it has so much to offer for a city vacation. It is the entertainment, cultural, sporting and business capital of the Caribbean” said Bryan.

He also highlighted the benefits travel agents can now receive when they book CHG. “Travel agents can now receive bonus American Airline miles as well as bonus commission for bookings made online between now and December.” He added that the group has implemented special rates for travel agents who wish to experience the city life.

The hotel group has now added a travel agent portal on their websites to advise these professionals on how they can reap their rewards and exclusive offers.

Madden-Greig stated, “The Courtleigh Hospitality Group will continue to engage in more of these types of collaborations so as to improve the city experience and further build the economy.”



Jamaica Tourist Board’s Business Development Manager for North East USA, Victoria Harper, was delighted to be served by waiter Andre Miller.

Taino artefacts. PHOTOS  
BY PAUL H. WILLIAMS

360 RECYCLE

# TRANSFORMING LIVES

## FROM RUBBISH

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

**S**CHEED COLE is no stranger to media coverage. The 2017 Jamaica Energy Global national awardee is known as the man at the helm of 360 Recycle, an entity that turns “trash into treasure”.

Yes, he has been spending his life since 2016 transforming people’s refuse into planters, rubbish bins, playground fixtures and outdoor seats, under the tagline of ‘Transforming the environment, transforming lives’.

Recently, **Hospitality Jamaica** caught up with him at the Health Home and Garden Expo at the National Arena and based on what was observed, his booth was well attended, and he was perhaps the ‘star of the show’.

Cole’s lifelike sculpted animals and life-size sculpture of National Hero Marcus Garvey were the pull. They are made of the same material as the aforementioned items, but the images look so “alive” and “real”, patrons could not resist touching them, and taking selfies with ‘Garvey’.

The Garvey sculpture is part of a project, but Cole said he has been creating the animals and other sculptures for a while and they are mounted all over the place. On display at the National Arena were an iguana, an elephant and two lion heads. There are

A call or two back to the past this telephone will give.



A patron viewing black-and-white pictures through a 19th-century apparatus.

two massive horses on a property along Eastwood Park Road in St Andrew, and at the Montego Bay Legend Circles there are two lions and two crocodiles, and an elephant is at Heritage Plaza in Spanish Town.

He said animals are his “passion”, and being the realist that he is, he sculpted them to look as real as possible. “Realism was always my passion ... I was never the abstract or the expressionism-type of person. I was always trying to get things as real as possible, and I think that’s where I branched out, and I kept true to myself,” he said.

In addition to the animals, there are impressions of national heroes Sam Sharpe and Marcus Garvey, national heroine Nanny, and singers Bob Marley and Jimmy Cliff at the Montego Bay Legends Circle. The ‘sand-castle’ at the entrance to Hellshire Beach is also his work, and there are metal pieces in private collections.

The trained art educator said thought he studied art at the then Mico Teachers’ College, his training did not prepare him for what he is doing with the sculptures. He was taught art history and the theory of art, and mounted exhibitions, but he was not trained to be an artist and/or an artisan.

“I haven’t got any form of training,” he said, in reference to sculpting. Yet, it was at Mico that the former visual arts teacher said he discovered that he could sculpt. There are

two pieces of his work still at Mico since 2000, and two years ago he started a sculpture park there.

Though he did not want to be boxed in the category of ‘sculptor’, he has grown to accept the tag and sculpting has been his life. Over the years, the artist/sculptor has worked on large pieces for a telecommunications company. He has done Marcus Garvey, Bob Marley, former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, and the late Roger Clarke.

He first got into business in 2010 after 15 years of classroom teaching, and has worked with cement, fibreglass, metal, etc. He started using recycled material in 2016. As a “material scientist”, he went in search of lightweight, eco-friendly, durable materials with which to do his sculptures. He found garbage (paper, plastic, styrofoam, etc) and transformed them into a “blend of recyclables”.

He invented a mixture called 360 RM to replace cement, and this is the material from which he now makes his sculptures. He has infused recycled material in his art and now operates a spin-off business called Sculptural Elements and Construction 01 Limited.

With his wife and some of his six children active in the business, the family is actively protecting the local environment from harmful man-made refuse. They are into the business of “responsible artistic excellence”.



A 1957 Daily Gleaner front page.

# Jamaica ranked second in the world for prioritising tourism, says Bartlett

OCHO RIOS, ST ANN:

**M**INISTER OF Tourism Edmund Bartlett says Jamaica has been ranked second in the world for the prioritisation of travel and tourism.

The ranking, which was done by the World Economic Forum through its Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), highlights that Jamaica prioritises tourism through government policies and legislation which enable growth of the sector.

Minister Bartlett, who made the announce at the Ministry of Tourism's strategic retreat at the Moon Palace Hotel in Ocho Rios today, said, "This ranking falls in line with our consistent drive to create strategies that promote growth in arrivals, earnings and, ultimately, inclusive growth for our small players in the sector.

I am pleased that this ranking gives credibility to our effort, as it shows tangibly that the Government is doing all that it can

to achieve this consistent growth in the sector."

Published every two years by the World Economic Forum, the TTCI measures the travel and tourism competitiveness of 140 economies. The measurement includes the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the travel and tourism sector which contributes to the competitiveness of the country.

Minister Bartlett added that, "Jamaica was also ranked sixth for the effectiveness of promotion and



**BARTLETT**

brand marketing. This augurs well for our digital transformation drive through the Jamaica Tourist Board, which has transformed the way we market Brand Jamaica in the digital space. Both rankings mean that Jamaica is doing it right and the world is taking notice."

TTCI 2019 results also indicated that air transportation, digital connectivity and international openness are advancing in a global context of growing trade tensions and nationalism.

## Jamaica to invest \$66m on development of health

**TOURISM MINISTER** Hon Edmund Bartlett says that over the next three years, the Tourism Linkages Network intends to invest J\$66 million to develop Jamaica's health and wellness tourism product.

Speaking recently at the opening ceremony for the inaugural Jamaica Health and Wellness Tourism Conference, the minister noted that "Jamaica has a genesis in health and wellness as a tourism industry, and we want to drive that and spend more time on building it out. Therefore, we will be spending \$22 million annually over the next three years to assist this process".

The network will also be working in partnership with industry stakeholders to help Jamaicans create accredited market-ready health and wellness tourism services, based on their knowledge of traditional uses of endemic herbs and plants.

"Jamaica has been famous for all these oils that come from our 'bush' or herbs. But for us to be able to leverage all of that cultural heritage so that it can have an enormous impact in the tourism space, will be a huge development," said the Minister.

The tourism minister pointed to studies which have identified, to date, 334 plants growing in Jamaica that can be used for medicinal purposes, with the unofficial list being 366.

"Of these plants, 193 have been tested for bioactivity, and crude extracts from samples of these have identified natural products which are bioactive.

Some 31 of these plants tested were endemic to Jamaica, which possesses the ideal conditions for cultivation of a wide variety of medicinal herbs, more so that 60 per cent of the world's major medicinal

herbs are currently grown in Jamaica," he said.

This focus on health and wellness forms part of the Ministry of Tourism's mission to expand tourism beyond the traditional 'sand, sea and sun' concept.

"Research has also shown that health and wellness tourism represents one of the fastest growing travel segments. Therefore, we must find ways to better support the enhancement and development of Jamaica's health and wellness product," said Minister Bartlett.

The Health and Wellness Network, headed by acclaimed scientist Dr Henry Lowe, has been working with partners to develop an effective governance framework to make Jamaica's wellness industry more internationally competitive.

The network will also be packaging, promoting and marketing health and

wellness assets as an important tourism niche area.

The Jamaica Health and Wellness Conference took place at the Montego Bay Convention Centre from November 20-21. It brought together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of health and wellness tourism.

Discussions focused on global health and wellness tourism data and insights; wellness travel experiences; nutraceuticals; herbaceuticals; medical tourism; and the health and wellness tourism value chain.

The Tourism Linkages Network, which is a division of the Tourism Enhancement Fund, organised the event with the assistance of key industry partners. It is the first event of its kind to take place in the island.