

The Gleaner

Hospitality Jamaica

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019



The
best
of the
best

Minister Edmund Bartlett cops RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Pioneer Award

RECOGNISED FOR his wide-ranging expertise and accomplishments in the political arena, Edmund Bartlett has given over 40 years of service to Jamaica, working both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

Bartlett was first appointed minister of tourism in 2007, serving until December 2011. Before this appointment, he already had a solid track record of service as an outstanding legislator in central government in both Chambers of Parliament. While serving in the shadow Cabinet following his first stint as tourism minister, Bartlett travelled the world forging alliances with strategic partners for global initiatives. He returned to the helm of the Ministry of Tourism following his party's victory in Jamaica's February 2016 general election.

As one of the world's leading tourism ministers, Bartlett has represented Jamaica regionally and internationally. He served as chairman of the Board of Affiliate Members of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and vice-chairman of

the UNWTO Executive Council, as well as vice-chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO). He is presently the chair of the Regional Commission of the Americas (CAM) since being appointed in May 2019, and the founder and co-chair of the Global Tourism and Resilience Crisis Management (GTRCM) Centre at The University of the West Indies, Mona.

A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

He is the first to serve on the executive of both the public- and private-sector arms of this prestigious organisation. This wealth of experience has made him a much-sought-after speaker at tourism-related forums.

Minister Bartlett is an ardent proponent of public-private partnerships, which he considers essential to the sustainable development of the tourism industry. These alliances span the various sectors, locally and internationally, that make up tourism, including transportation, agriculture and manufacturing. Some of these partnerships have taken the form of foreign direct investment, particularly in

the area of accommodation.

Tourism has been positioned by him as a catalyst for economic growth and the transformation of communities. He has established five networks (gastronomy, shopping, health and wellness, sports and entertainment, and knowledge) to fuel growth and initiated the Tourism Linkages Network within the ministry to strengthen sustainable linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy.

The region has also benefited from his innovative thinking, as he views other Caribbean and Latin American destinations not as Jamaica's competitors, but as partners that can use their combined tourism offerings to attract more visitors to experience multi-destination tourism. He has taken bold steps to have this facilitated under a special memoranda of understanding between nations in the region.

Minister Bartlett has copped numerous awards. He was awarded Minister of the Year Worldwide by the Pacific Area Travel Writers Association in March 2018 and Caribbean Tourism Minister of the Year at the Caribbean Travel Awards 2017.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (left) accepts the Pioneer Award from Group CEO at the RJRGLEANER Communications Group, Gary Allen.

Most recently, he received the International Institute for Peace through Tourism Champions in Challenge Award at the International Travel Crisis

Management Summit in London in November 2018, and last month, he was bestowed the 2019 Pioneer Award by the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica.

Personality of the Year – Christopher Issa



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Hospitality Personality of the Year, Chris Issa accepts the award from Janet Silvera, coordinator of Hospitality Jamaica.

CHRISTOPHER ISSA is a past student of Campion College and holds a BA in economics from Holy Cross College and a MBA in finance from University of Chicago.

A commercial real estate developer, Issa became a hotelier in 2009 when he converted the former Spanish Court Shopping Centre into the Spanish Court Hotel. In the last years under his leadership, the Spanish Court Hotel has received a number of awards for its design and service.

It was voted the third trendiest hotel in the Caribbean in the TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards 2012. The Hotel received the World Travel Awards – Best Business Hotel in Jamaica for the

five years. Spanish Court Hotel was also awarded the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Best of Chamber Medium-sized Business in 2012. In 2016, Spanish Court was voted the best hotel in the Caribbean by Expedia VIP members.

In 2016, Issa purchased the former Breezes Montego Bay Hotel, next door to the Doctor's Cave Bathing Club, which was extensively remodelled and opened on January 27, 2019. A month after, on February 27, 2019, USA Today named the trendiest hotel pools in the Caribbean for 2019 and The S Hotel main pool and sky pool were listed among the best.

He has a strong interest

in Jamaican culture and has published a number of books, including **How to Speak Jamaican** with Ken Maxwell, and **Jamaica, the Land, The People**.

He is also a former motorcycle racer and race car driver, and was champion driver of Jamaica in 1992.

A past president of the Rotary Club of Kingston and a past dean of the Consular Corps of Jamaica, he currently serves as the honorary consul of Slovakia in Jamaica.

Mr Issa is married to Kimberly Mais and has two sons and one daughter. On Saturday, November 16, he was recognised with the 2019 RJRGLEANER Hospitality Personality of the Year Award.

S HOTEL JAMAICA



A renaissance of the city of Montego Bay and the world-famous Jimmy Cliff Boulevard

One of the two pools at the S Hotel.

CONTRIBUTED

NESTLED ALONG the Jimmy Cliff Boulevard, the new S Hotel Jamaica made a splashy entrance into Montego Bay earlier this year, putting the western resort city back on the map among international travellers.

In fact, it is its elegant forward-thinking design and a modern take on the Jamaican hospitality that clearly defines it.

The presence of the hotel, located on the world-famous Doctor's Cave Beach, comes as another major and significant investment, standing out as part of the renaissance of the strip once known as Gloucester Avenue.

Now accustomed to receiving awards, the hotel's General Manager, Lisa Gardner, says the inspiration of the contemporary 120-room S Hotel is as cosmopolitan as it comes, but the feeling is notably Jamaican as the property welcomes guests to their home away from home, balancing a cozy atmosphere with its purposeful design and sophisticated amenities.

"S Hotel's prime location on famed Doctor's Cave Beach and the irie Hip Strip serves as a stylish based camp to explore the area's new shops, restaurants and



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Interim General Manager at the Montego Bay Convention Centre, Karron Benjamin (second right), presents the Best Opening of the Year Award to General Manager of the S Hotel, Lisa Gardner (centre) and her team.

entertainment," Gardner said.

She noted that guests are exposed to several buzzing bars, a

high-spirited pool scene, the exclusive Sky Deck for concierge floor guests, international restaurants,

a café, a spa with therapeutic plunge pools, a gym and spacious modern guest rooms, thoughtfully

combined to create a modern and effervescent sense of place.

"Staff and management all had big smiles on their faces after news broke that we had won the Best Hotel Opening Award, and the smiles turned into cheers when it was announced that Mr Christopher Issa won the Hospitality Personality Award of the year. It was an evening filled with pride and celebration," Gardner said of this year's fifth staging of the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards.

"We're grateful for the overwhelmingly positive response as we continue striving to surpass our guests' expectations," added Gardner.

She said the aim was to open a hotel for everyone that supports and integrates the local community to authentically share the Jamaican culture with visitors and also be a home away from home for Jamaicans.

Coupled with the genuine enthusiasm of the staff and team at the hotel, Gardner said it was rewarding that S Hotel had been recognised for bringing something new to hospitality in Montego Bay, and Jamaica as a whole.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Gleaner News Editor Adrian Frater presents the Best in Cuisine award to the Couples Swept Away team.

COUPLES SWEPT AWAY

Jamaica's Best in Cuisine

MENTION THE name 'Couples Swept Away', and the first words that you will hear in response is will be 'excellent food'.

In fact, some guests have declared this all-inclusive resort "top-notch in food". It is a hotel where variety is the order of the day and where the most splendid dishes are prepared under the command, and with the feminine touch, of executive chef Simone Haughton Campbell.

As the resort boasts six restaurants and eight bars, guests at RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica's Best in Cuisine award winner can enjoy five-star dining spanning tasty local seafood and fresh farm-to-table cuisine featuring tropical fruits and

vegetables and signature cocktails, at an ecologically friendly, Jamaican-owned hotel.

The Palms restaurant offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner in an open-air setting. Breakfast features an array of fresh fruits, freshly baked breads and pastries, and made-to-serve omelettes. The options for lunch and dinner include salads and fresh seafood.

The Patois Patio, on the other hand, provides bistro-style fare with Caribbean and Latin flavours for dinner, while the

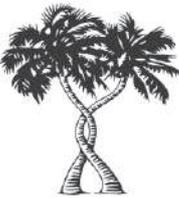
Seagrape Café provides the freshest juices and salads, fruit smoothies, veggie dips, and mouth-watering salads and sandwiches.

Open all day and late at night, the Cabana Grill offers an array of mouth-watering sandwiches and salads, jerk chicken, and Jamaican patties, while the Asian-style Lemon Grass restaurant delights with its version of cuisine from the Far East, serving dinner from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Feathers is not to be missed. This

restaurant delivers a five-star gourmet dining experience that is beyond compare. And if guests are feeling like having breakfast in bed, lunch in bed, or dinner in bed, there is always in-suite dining at Couples Swept Away. Your wish is their command.

Regardless of which of the seven options guests prefer, they can be confident in knowing that Couples Swept Away's cuisine is prepared with Jamaica's freshest ingredients by some of the best chefs in the Caribbean.

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THE DIRECTORS OF COUPLES RESORTS SALUTE OUR
**CORPORATE EXECUTIVE CHEF, STEFAN SPATH AND
EXECUTIVE CHEF, SIMONE HAUGHTON-CAMPBELL AND THEIR TEAM**



 **COUPLES
RESORTS
JAMAICA**

PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Tropical Tours' Roxanne Smith (third right) presents the Special Award for Investment in Tourism to the RIU Ocho Rios team.



RIU honoured by RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards

Newly refurbished hotel doing 'extremely well'

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

THE RECENTLY refurbished RIU Ocho Rios has expressed delight at being given a special award at the 2019 RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards.

The hotel picked up the Special Award for Investment in Tourism after a massive US\$85 million upgrade to the St Ann property, which reopened in September.

Niruka Garcia-Linton, RIU's director of Sales – Jamaica, said the hotel is honoured to have received the award.

"It's truly an honour to receive this Special Award for Investment in Tourism," Garcia-Linton said. "The RJRGLEANER Hospitality Awards has gained great recognition through the years as it seeks to showcase institutions that have made an outstanding contribution to the development of such a key industry in Jamaica. We are honoured and grateful for this award."

RIU Ocho Rios closed on April 29 for the upgrading exercise that saw the addition of 45 rooms, a spanking new water park, and a complete renovation of rooms and other areas of the hotel.

The new rooms, which feature two-bedroom family rooms, brought the room stock to 901. Restaurants were upgraded with the Mandalay, which serves Asian cuisine, expanded to facilitated 108 seats.

RIUland, which hosts and takes care of children from four to 12 years old, is another new feature and so too, RIU4U, which caters to teenagers.

But the most satisfying addition for the brand would have been the water park, Splash, which is the first RIU water park on the island.

Garcia-Linton said the amount spent on the upgrade was equivalent to building a new hotel and showed the trust that the hotel brand has in Jamaica.

The property reopened on September 21 and has been doing well since. "RIU Ocho Rios has been doing extremely well since it opened its doors at the end of September," the director of sales disclosed.

"The support from the local and international market has surpassed our expectations. The feedback we are receiving from our guests, travel agency community and tour operators alike confirms that the renovation and new features added to the resort have been a success."

RIU opened its first hotel in Jamaica in 2001 and after 18 years, boasts six hotels and over 3,000 rooms. Worldwide, RIU has over 90 hotels in 20 countries, welcoming over four million guests annually, with a staff complement of over 29,000.



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The Board, Management & Staff of the Tourism Product Development Company Ltd (TPDCo) congratulates the Hon. Edmund Bartlett CD, MP, on achieving the Hospitality Jamaica inaugural Pioneer Award 2019. You continue to lead by example and to inspire Team Jamaica to be more, to do more.

It is said that “consistency is the true foundation of trust...” you have been steadfast in your commitment to improving Jamaica’s tourism product for all Jamaica and have positively placed our little island on the global stage. Through the many innovations you have spearheaded your visionary leadership and contagious passion, the future looks bright.

WE SALUTE YOU!



Jamaica's Best Purveyor – Caribbean Producers Jamaica

CARIBBEAN PRODUCERS Jamaica (CPJ) is a multiaward-winning purveyor and food processor which has, since 1994, been providing goods to meet the demands of local and foreign guests who patronise Jamaica's hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

The company was conceptualised by tourism industry veterans Thomas Tyler and Mark Hart, who envisioned a vertically integrated food-service company focusing on providing high-quality products consistently to the hospitality sector.

CPJ has an interesting history. It started operations with a single container of toilet paper from its then base, a 16,000-square foot warehouse at the LOJ Complex in Montego Freeport. Within two years, it expanded its line of products to include the full gamut of paper products, dry goods, canned goods, and condiments.

The company also grew its distribution portfolio to include wines and spirits to service the hospitality industry and is considered the leading importer of those products in Jamaica, representing many of

the world's most acclaimed wine producers and internationally recognised spirit brands.

In 1999, CPJ entered the manufacturing arena through the construction of a beverage plant to produce and distribute juice concentrates and frozen mixes such as pina colodas for the beverage-system programmes used largely in resort areas.

The company also partnered with farmers to process liquid pasteurised eggs for the hospitality and baking Industries – a venture

that was the first of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean – and converted what used to be an imported item to a locally produced offering. Earlier this year, it opened a new facility, a 56,000-sq ft. state-of-the-art distribution centre at its Montego Freeport location.

At 25, the company, which is now listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, has truly come of age. This company is truly deserving of its Purveyor of the Year Award for its invaluable contribution and commitment to the hospitality industry.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Mayor of Montego Bay Councillor Homer Davis (right) presents the Purveyor of the Year award to Dr David Lowe (second right), CEO of Caribbean Producers Jamaica (CPJ) and his team.

The best!

Ocho Rios revels in RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Award

CARL GILCHRIST
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

OVER THE years, the resort town of Ocho Rios, St Ann, has won several tourism-related international awards, but there is always a special feeling when the award comes from your peers.

Last week, at its annual awards ceremony, **Hospitality Jamaica** presented the Best Resort Town Award to Ocho Rios, reflecting the town's upward trajectory over the past few years.

Blessed with natural beauty, Ocho Rios has been enhanced with the development of several world-renowned attractions over the years that have seen arrivals to the town increase annually.

For Michael Belnavis and Vana Taylor, who collected the award on behalf of the resort town, the recognition is also reflective of the improvement work done in the town in recent years.

Belnavis wears many hats, being the chairman of the Jamaica Cruise Council, councillor of the Ocho Rios division and mayor of St Ann's Bay. The award is reflective

of a new era for Ocho Rios.

"It's really a big thing, I don't think they've awarded us before," Belnavis said. "The work we've been doing in the town in terms of cleaning up, the planting of trees and flowers and foliage, and erection of signage, is reflective of a whole new era," he added.

Belnavis hailed the decreased crime rate in the resort town and noted the increase in cruise ship arrivals.

"It's wonderful, splendid. It's amazing that we won the award," Taylor reacted.

The St Ann Chamber of Commerce president and Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) area chair also acknowledged that a lot of work has gone into Ocho Rios in recent times.

"We must commend the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) for all the money they have poured into Ocho Rios over the years – Turtle River Road, the promenade. Main Street still has issues and needs to be completed, but they've pumped in a lot of money. Port Authority has also done a lot of work with the



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Copa Airline's Nicole Cunningham (right) presents the Best Resort Town Award to Mayor of St Ann's Bay Michael Belnavis and President of the St Ann Chamber of Commerce, Vana Taylor.

fishing village, the Reynolds' Pier," Taylor said.

She also commended the businesses in Ocho Rios, the JHTA members, hotels, attractions, the

municipal corporation, NWA [National Works Agency], and other agencies working in St Ann. "It's a collective effort," Taylor noted.

"So we're really excited. We have a lot more work to do, but I think [that] working together as a team, we can continue to win more."

Spirit-filled cultural offering awaits you at Joy Spence Appleton Experience Rum Tour

Albert Ferguson
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

ONCE YOU go to the Joy Spence Appleton Experience Rum Tour you will know, because you will be exposed to a sparkling, rich cultural experience that people travel from across the world to indulge in.

Located in Nassau Valley, St Elizabeth, the award-winning facility is named in honour of the world's first female master blender, Joy Spence. Visitors to the attraction leave with a deep appreciation for the quality of not just Jamaican rum, but the Appleton Estate Jamaica blend boasting the warmth and flavour of the country's heartland.

Marsha Lumley, marketing director for Jamaica and the



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Master blender Joy Spence accepts the Best Cultural Experience Award for the Joy Spence Appleton Estate Rum Experience Tour at the 2019 RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards at the Montego Bay Convention Centre.

Caribbean, says customers are offered a unique sensory experience, one that encompasses the history of the Appleton Estate, accompanied by their high-quality blends delivering an intimate journey through the history of what is arguably the finest rums in the world.

"A fine example of this is the recently held 'Epicurean Journey with Joy Spence', which included food-pairing menus designed to delight the palates of our guests. This is just one example of how we treat rum enthusiasts to flavour-filled adventures to uncover the secrets behind the exquisite tastes they have grown to love over the years," Lumley said.

On November 15, the Joy Spence Appleton Experience Rum Tour found their way into the

hearts of their customers much deeper when they came away with the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Award for the Best Cultural Experience/Tour for 2019, surpassing two other finalists, the Bob Marley Tours and JaMIN Tours.

"We are elated having won the award. There is a lot of passion that goes into giving customers the best tour possible; one that makes them feel as though they are more knowledgeable on the rum the Jamaican people have loved for so long," said Lumley. "To be recognised in this light is an honour and a privilege. We look forward to further preserving this rich and exquisite piece of our heritage for many years to come," she added.

Jamaica's Best European Hotel, Half Moon to open Eclipse in 2020



CONTRIBUTED

The new Eclipse at Half Moon, which is scheduled to open officially in March 2020.

ON THE heels of copping the award for Jamaica's Best European Plan Hotel at the recent RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards, Half Moon, one of the Caribbean's most iconic destinations, will open the highly anticipated Eclipse at Half Moon, a stunning new luxury resort experience on March 1, 2020.

The addition of Eclipse at Half Moon creates a triumvirate of accommodation options under the Half Moon brand, which has already been voted as Jamaica's finest resort. Guests can now also enjoy two other distinct resort choices: Founders Cove at Half

Moon and Rose Hall Villas at Half Moon, which are located at opposite ends of the 400-acre property.

Framed by the glistening Caribbean Sea to the north and the lush hillsides to the south, Eclipse at Half Moon is one of the most luxurious additions to the Caribbean in a generation. The new property features 57 luxurious and spacious accommodations, two restaurants, three bars, a market café, Fern Tree – a salamander spa, a sweeping infinity-edge swimming pool, and private beachfront with a natural swimming cove. The resort will begin accepting reservations as of this Sunday, December 15.

"Eclipse is a true, distinct luxury experience, and one that honours Half Moon's legacy and character," says Guy Steuart III, chairman of Half Moon. "Guests will discover traditional, elegant architecture amid an abundance of beach and grounds on which to roam – all of which appeal to our loyal guests and the next generation of traveller."

Half Moon is just 10 minutes from Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport, and for decades has served as a chosen retreat for royalty, presidents and celebrities. Founded 65 years ago, three of the original founding families remain owners of the property.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

The Gleaner's Shernette Robinson (right) presents the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Best European Plan Resort Award to Half Moon's Shernett Crichton (centre) and Sharon Logan.

"Eclipse is a remarkable addition to Half Moon and the Caribbean's luxury landscape," says Sheila Johnson, founder and CEO of Salamander Hotels & Resorts, which manages Half Moon. "It takes vision and foresight to create such a notable experience, and Eclipse will undoubtedly become one of 2020's most sought-after retreats."

Designed exclusively for the luxury traveller by the renowned design firm Hart Howerton of New York, the resort embraces the rich history of the Caribbean and Jamaica's natural beauty. The enclave's Great House, inspired by the island's distinctive culture and style, features

elegant shutters, vibrant colours and local artwork. A sweeping arrival experience is framed by a large guango tree, also known as a rain tree, one of over 70 trees that were carefully re-planted to ensure mature – natural surroundings.

Rooms and suites offer spectacular views of the Caribbean Sea and feature expansive outdoor living spaces. The resort also introduces the one of the most anticipated suites in the Caribbean: the Great House Ocean Suite, overlooking the grand lawn and featuring breathtaking vantage points for both sunrises and sunsets.

There's no other way: Jamaica Inn revels in eco/sustainability efforts

Carl Gilchrist

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IT APPEARS Hospitality Jamaica's (HJ) Most Eco/Sustainable Award could have gone to any other hotel but Jamaica Inn.

The long list of green initiatives at the hotel is implemented "with vigour and enthusiasm. There is no other way at Jamaica Inn," the hotel says in response to winning the HJ 2019 Award.

"We're just proud to have won the award, proud to have been a part of the ceremony," says Emanuella Owens, sales and marketing manager at the Ocho Rios-based resort.

Owens said she is "immensely" proud of all the hotel has achieved, especially the sustainable efforts.

"It's been a long time coming. The team has worked very hard, multiple departments are working together to make sure we are a sustainable hotel. I know that it is a passion project of our general manager and our environmental health and safety manager



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Tai Flora Luxe's Jessica Riley (second right) presents the Best Eco/Sustainable Resort Award to Jamaica Inn's team. At right is Kyle Mais.

and multiple team members, who are very passionate about the environment as well."

A Green Globe-certified hotel for the past six years, Jamaica Inn has implemented

many green initiatives, such as composting, recycling waste, recycling grey water, tree-planting initiatives, use of renewable energy, use of eco-friendly chemicals in all

departments, eliminating the use of styro-foam products, installation of LED bulbs in every area of the property.

In addition, the hotel has implemented departmental 'green mandates,' offers the quarterly 'Most Environmentally Aware' award, established a green committee called the Green Transformers, and actively celebrates Earth Day with new and diverse initiatives each year.

Two of the better-known projects that Jamaica Inn is involved in are the White River Fish Sanctuary and the turtle conservation programme.

The RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Award would have lightened the hearts of the Jamaica Inn family, which is reeling from the recent tragic death of co-owner Peter Morrow. The hotel has dedicated the award to his memory.

After nearly seven decades, the colonial-style boutique hotel remains one of the top luxury hotels in the Caribbean, and continues to attract prominent guests from across the world.

Best Tour Operator



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CONTRIBUTED
The GO! Jamaica Travel team cutting their 24th anniversary cake earlier this year at The Knutsford Court Hotel.

GO! JAMAICA TRAVEL Jamaica's Best Tour Operator

THE TRAVEL industry in Jamaica is very competitive; however, that did not stop the small yet effective and more-than-competent GO! Jamaica Travel from securing its foothold in a tightly held niche.

Formed in 1995 in Kingston by CEO Dave A. Chin Tung, GO! Jamaica Travel has served to fulfil the much-needed alternative to the major tour companies.

The company has accrued a large market base over its 24 years. Major giants such as the RIU Hotels, Royalton, Moon Palace and the Jewel chains are some of the top hotels represented by GO! Jamaica Travel.

In 2014, it was the top seller of the RIU Hotels in the entire Caribbean. They don't, however, stop at just the major hotels. The

company has contracts with many small, independent entities worldwide, over 144,000 and growing, as well as cruise lines and car rentals.

With a steady and rapidly growing reputation in Jamaica, It's not a secret that GO! Jamaica Travel works hand in hand with the Jamaica Tourist Board and that of a few other Caribbean islands in promoting tourism to the islands. The company's database was the driving force behind the JTB's Experience Jamaica website. With its home base in Jamaica, the company offers its many resources to other travel agencies in the Cayman Islands, The Bahamas, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados and Curaçao.

GO! Jamaica Travel proves its determination to be a top player in the field of tour companies. In the last six years, GO! Jamaica

Travel won the Caribbean's Leading Tour Operator in the World Travel Awards. In 2017, they were awarded the The Caribbean's Leading Destination Management Company, and in 2018 copped the coveted prize again. Their continued dominance showed them also winning the Hospitality Jamaica's Best Destination Management Company Award amid fierce competition.

Two years later, they have been named Jamaica's Best Tour Operator by the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards readers.

With the ever-growing rise of social media and its many platforms, GO! Jamaica stands at the pinnacle of customer service. With more than 80 per cent of their clientele based on social



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

GO! Jamaica Travel's Dave Chin Tung accepts the Best Tour Operator Award from Dynamic Event Service's Tameka Bryce.

media, GO! Jamaica dedicates their full attention to interpersonal relationships with their clients, providing excellent service and competitive rates. They

are fast becoming a giant among many; the Caribbean is but the tip of the iceberg for them and the world is but a playground, with exponential room for growth.



Find paradise at the Royalton Blue Waters Montego Bay resort

One of Jamaica's best all-inclusive resorts, the elegant Royalton Blue Waters Montego Bay promises guests a luxurious escape, surrounded by stylish architecture, a pristine beach and soothing tropical breezes. This new-generation all-inclusive property offers discerning travelers a family-friendly vacation experience with entertainment for guests of all ages including a lazy river.

Designed to deliver unrivaled tropical getaways, from the unlimited à la carte dining to the signature handcrafted DreamBed™ mattresses, Royalton Blue Waters sets itself apart. Guests can take advantage of the 'stay at 1 play at 2' benefits of side-by-side luxury all-inclusive resorts with access to adjacent Royalton White Sands.



www.royaltonresorts.com

Royal intimacy at Jamaica's best resort under 300 rooms

The Royalton Blue Waters

Albert Ferguson
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

A ROYAL, intimate and specialised all-inclusive vacation awaits you beyond the perimeters of the Royalton Blue Waters, neatly etched along the sands of Montego Bay, the tourism gateway of the Caribbean, and, arguably, the world.

The resort's Director of Sales, Kerry-Ann Quallo-Casserly, said the hotel, which recently copped the Best All-inclusive under 300 Rooms prize at the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards, is among the leaders of the new generation of all-inclusive hotels, offering discerning travellers a family-friendly vacation experience, where guests of all ages are captivated from

morning to night.

The beautiful architecture which houses just under 300 luxurious ocean view rooms, is combined with an exquisite product, featuring incomparable service and incredible attention to detail.

"Every aspect of your stay, from the unlimited à la carte dining to our signature handcrafted Dream Bed, has been carefully designed to deliver a personalised service while you relax in upscale ambience," Quallo-Casserly told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

She said the services offered are very intimate and personal, which provides a better dining experience for each guest who makes Royalton Blue Waters the home away from home enjoys a homely feeling.

"It gives a feeling of great



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Director of Sales for Blue Diamond Resorts – Jamaica, Kerry-Ann Quallo-Casserly (third left) accepts the coveted Best All-inclusive under 300 Rooms Award for Royalton Blue Waters in Trelawny from The Gleaner Company (Media) Limited's chairman, Carl Domville (right). The team from Royalton Blue Waters shares in the occasion.

achievement," Quallo-Casserly said of the recognition, which saw the resort triumphing over a total of six competitors.

"It means that we are doing

something that works not only for our valued guests, but also for our team. It is hard work, but when you have a dedicated team that has nothing but love and passion for the industry, the

end product is priceless – we have a great product that we will continue to build on, thus exceeding our guest expectations," she said.

CONTRIBUTED
Royalton Blue Waters.



A presidential suite at the Royalton Blue Waters in Trelawny.



The RJRGleaner Hospitality Jamaica **BEST BUSINESS HOTEL**



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NEW KINGSTON JAMAICA



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

It is a privilege and great joy to extend thanks to all those who voted us - Jamaica's Best Business Hotel. We wish to congratulate the dedicated Courtleigh team for their commitment to maintaining the standards of the hotel. As we continue to serve our guests, we will strive to provide the highest level of hospitality in everything we do!

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Courtleigh Hotel and Suites

Jamaica's best business hotel

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites.

KINGSTON'S COURTLEIGH Hotel and Suites and the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica 2019 Best Business Hotel awardee is all about customising the guest experience.

IN FACT, since opening its doors in 1997, the hotel, which is operated under The Courtleigh Hospitality Group has continued to upgrade, improve and offer exceptional services and amenities, recognising that today's traveller is always looking for more, states Nicola Madden-Greig, director of marketing and sales.

Beaming with pride after collecting the coveted award, Madden-Greig spoke of how pleased and honoured the group was to be named Jamaica's best business hotel.

"Our team members strive to give personalised service to our guests and partners," added the director of marketing and sales. Special group rates are available and gives persons the perfect opportunity to experience the cultural centre of the Caribbean – Kingston, even while conducting business.

Located at 85 Knutsford Boulevard, The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites is home to 127 deluxe rooms and suites, meeting and conference rooms, and every guest is given a complimentary buffet breakfast every morning.

In addition to the Alexander's Restaurant, there is the Mingles Bar and Lounge, and every Wednesday there is the Courtleigh's Jerk, BBQ and Jive. The hotel offers all guests complimentary high-speed Wi-Fi, and both the business centre and private gym are open all day and night.

The gym has been recently expanded and totally rebuilt and facilitated with brand new, state-of-the-art equipment. The hotel has a 'Borrows Programme' for guests who might have forgotten an item or two. "Whether it is an adaptor, phone charger or curling iron," Madden-Greig says.

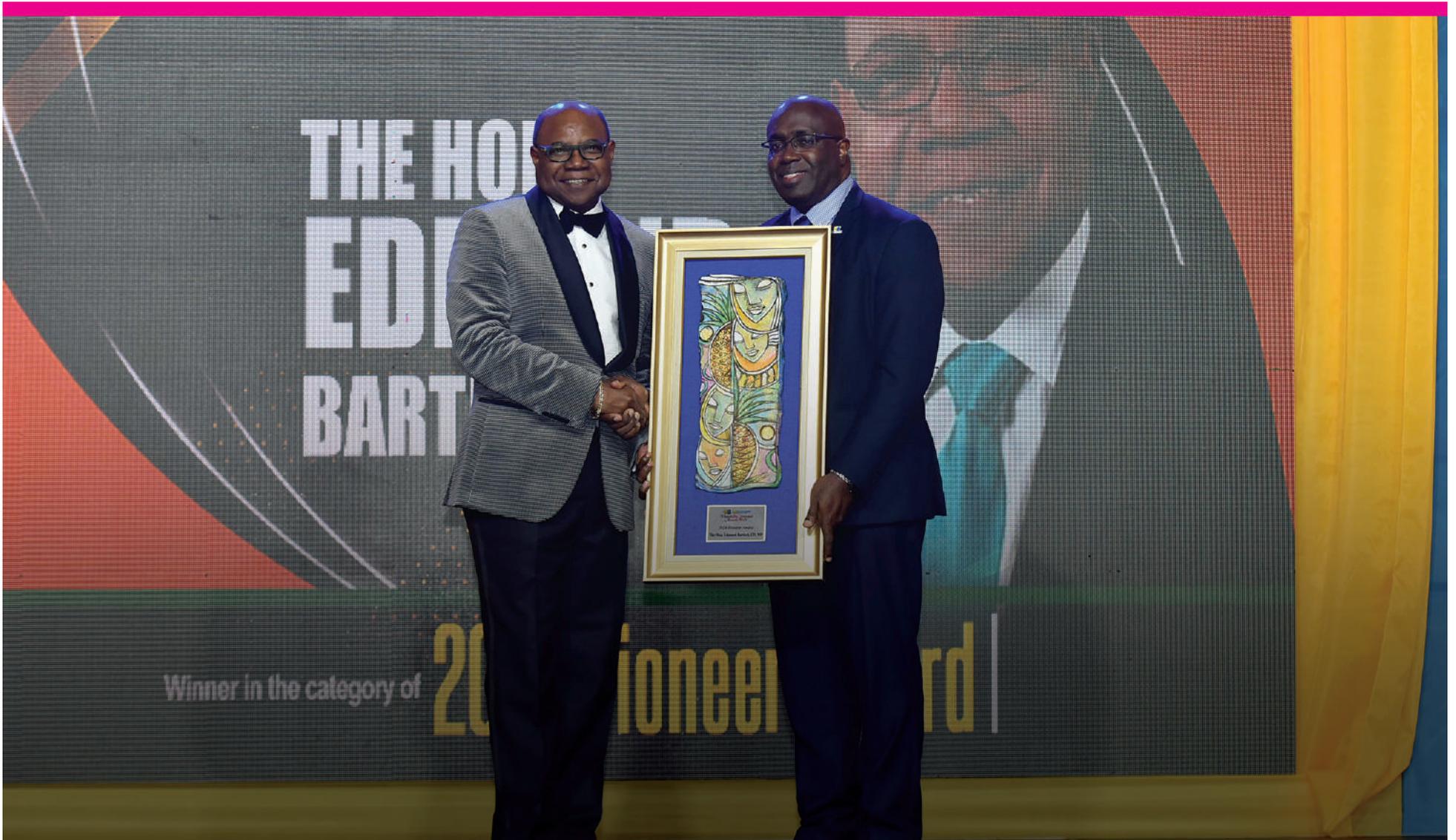
The layout of rooms for frequent returning guests is also customised, with the goal aimed at making it more than just a business experience. "We work to make it a personal experience," explained Madden-Greig.



Rainforest Seafoods' Everod Wilson (second right) presents the Best Business Hotel Award to The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites team (from left): Kevin Hendrickson, Cecile Hyatt Reynolds, Jackie Hendrickson and Nicola Madden-Greig. **ASHLEY ANGUIN**



A meeting room at The Courtleigh Hotel and Suites.



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PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Elise Yap (second left) of The Blue House Boutique Bed & Breakfast accepts an Everard Powell-designed artwork (plaque) from chief financial officer of the RJRGLEANER Communications Group, Andrea Messam. Yap's brother and the rest of her staff share in the occasion.

IT'S THE FOOD ...

Blue House Boutique happy for recognition

Carl Gilchrist
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

IT'S NO longer a secret. The Blue House Boutique Bed & Breakfast is top class. And if you were to ask owner Elise Yap, she would tell you immediately that it is the food.

"We are known for our food, that's a huge draw for us," Yap says.

"We're number one on TripAdvisor in Ocho Rios and number two in the island, and every one of our over 400 reviews scream rave reviews for our food; we're the only property on the whole of TripAdvisor (where) every review talks about the food. Food is our biggest draw. We only have, like, two negative reviews, and even they raved over the food."

Blue House picked up the award for Best Kept Secret at this year's RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica

Awards, and Yap couldn't be more pleased.

"We're happy, we're over the moon!" was her delighted response. "We need some serious exposure. We're excellence, but nobody knows about us."

Yap said she was happy that a category opened up for her bed-and-breakfast facility to enter the HJ Awards and eventually in.

"It's been a long time in coming and I'm very happy that Janet (Silvera) put a category that we could win, because the last time the category we were in was best small hotel, and we didn't have a chance against people like Round Hill and such. We only have five rooms."

Only five rooms, but service is excellent at the luxury property, located off the beaten track on Marcliff Drive,

opposite Couples Sans Souci Hotel.

According to Yap, Blue House doesn't attract tourists but, instead, attract "travellers who want to know the real country that they go to, people who want to know the culture and mingle with the real people. But we're luxury".

These guests usually want Jamaican food and this, no doubt, prompted the direction the culinary offerings have taken.

"We serve Jamaican food because they mostly want Jamaican food. But if they come to us for a week or two, we break it up with some Chinese food, some Italian food, some Thai food, but mainly they want Jamaican food and we do upscale Jamaican food like, for a regular Sunday dinner, rice and peas and chicken, we throw in shrimp and papaya to make it upscale."

Sandals South Coast – Jamaica's best all-inclusive over 300 rooms

ANYONE WHO stays at Sandals South Coast will agree that it is an amazing, alluring property, where all you are compelled to do is simply bask in its splendour.

It is easy to see why the 50-acre property copped top honours as the Best All-inclusive Hotel over 300 rooms, at the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards recently. It offers all the ingredients that pull lovers to visit Jamaica: romance, fine food, gorgeous beaches and world-class service.

Set in a European-style village, Sandals South Coast boasts 360 rooms and suites with spectacular views of the Caribbean Sea. It also offers a two-mile stretch of beach and features nine extraordinary restaurants. The freshest ingredients are used to concoct the most succulent dishes ranging from Italian, Asian and Mediterranean, to Caribbean and, of course, Jamaican.

The property's award-winning Red Lane Spa offers rejuvenation for

the mind, body and soul, making the property a haven for wellness seekers.

The architecture of Sandals South Coast's over-the-water bungalows is designed for wellness and provides excellent thalassotherapy through an unrivalled connection to the Caribbean Sea. They are the proverbial talk of the town.

In addition to its elite butler service, the bungalows come designed with luxury in mind, offering, among other niceties, hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings, custom-crafted king-size beds, complete with soft, luxurious bedding for the ultimate sleep experience and spa-style bathrooms. With glass floor panels and lit water, guests are able to enjoy undersea views.

On the outside, there is a private patio equipped with an extended sun deck, outdoor shower, sun loungers, and a bistro set for two, a private outdoor tranquillity soaking tub for two, and over-water hammocks.

Sandals South Coast is absolutely fantastic!



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Deputy Chairman of Sandals Resorts International Adam Stewart (third right) accepts the Best All-inclusive over 300 rooms RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Award from Gary Allen, group CEO, RJRGLEANER Communications Group. Other executives from Sandals share in the occasion.

Home-grown talents ignite Hedonism as the entertainment magnet of tourism – Best in nightlife

Albert Ferguson
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

HOME-GROWN ENTERTAINMENT coordinators have helped to establish Hedonism II in Negril as a dominant force in entertainment, a feat that has also served to leave a lasting and memorable experience with their guests.

Renowned as the ‘entertainment magnet’, Hedonism II, located in the western rustic resort town easily won the 2019 RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards for Jamaica’s Best Nightlife, based on its incredible offerings to the island’s tourism industry.

According to the hotel’s General Manager, Kevin Levee, the resort has always had a reputation for entertainment overall since 1976, and to win the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Award – Best Nightlife is a continuation of the tradition of excellence in the entertainment arena.

“It is a great recognition for the resort and the resort team. It is something that we relish, working every day of the year – we are not afraid to tell everybody that



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Laura Heron, general manager, Guardsman Hospitality (4th from right) presents the Best in Nightlife Award to the Hedonism II team.

we have the best entertainment package in Jamaica,” Levee stated, proud of the hotel’s achievement.

This the resort’s second award from the tourism trade publication,

having copped the Best in Cuisine Award in 2017.

“Our entertainment team is 100 per cent home-grown, we are very proud of that. Over the years of

the multitude of talent that exist in Jamaica we have been able to take full advantage of that and continue to expose it in our resort,” he revealed.

Levee said Hedonism’s entertainment package includes a nightclub, Piano Bar, along with three major theme nights on a weekly basis.

“We do outside parties three nights per week, we do a Glow Pool Party on Tuesday nights; Foam Party on Thursdays, and on Fridays we do a courtyard party – several times throughout the year we bring in international artists, we just had Barbara Tucker, the Queen of House Music, to enhance the offerings,” said Levee.

Adding that the resort boasts a huge canvas, and is not purely competing in Jamaica, Levee noted that he and his team were competing with the rest of the world. “We are very proud of that, which is a testament to our entertainment team led by Winston Bartley,” he said.

Cognisant of the fact there were huge expectations from his guests, the resort general manager said visitors expect to see and experience something they can’t experience anywhere else in Jamaica. “In reality, something they can’t experience anywhere else in the world.”

Sandy Haven Resort – Jamaica’s best small hotel

LOCATED IN the heart of Negril’s famous hip strip and directly on the pure, fine white-sand beach, Sandy Haven Resort is the diva of Negril’s luxury boutique hotels and the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Best Small Hotel for 2019.

Ideally situated to take advantage of the wealth of activities on the seven-mile beach, guests can find a peaceful haven in this luxury escape.

Completely self-contained with a unique blend of luxury and elegant rustic, Sandy Haven Resort offers a seamless flow between a series of outdoor and indoor environments.

The romantic rooms exude a relaxed yet polished tropical sensibility of sophisticated contemporary interiors with rich, textual contrasts.

Sensory details, imaginative amenities and dedicated attentive staff culminate to an unparalleled vacation experience.

The hotel has a capacity of 35 rooms with five various categories – the premium units being located on the ocean front. Each room is exquisitely decorated with contemporary style furnishings and provides a comfortable atmosphere for guests. Amenities include soaking tubs robes, slippers and wine coolers are above standard.



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Acend Innovation’s Tashana Russell (right) presents the Best Small Hotel award to Sandy Haven Hotel’s Robert Headley (left) and his team.

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“Best Boutique Hotel” 2019 RJR Gleaner Hospitality Awards

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Jamaica's Best Boutique Resort

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A premium luxury villa at Round Hill.

THE RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards 2019 Best Boutique Resort, Round Hill Hotel and Villas, has become renowned as the place of choice for cultural icons, world leaders, and Hollywood A-listers.

Situated on a lush 110-acre peninsula not very far from Montego Bay, this classic and classy resort continues to attract jet-setters from around the world. They have gone there to “enjoy timeless glamour and understated luxury”, to relax on its pristine natural beaches, and to bathe in the warm Caribbean Sea.

Accommodations include 36 Ralph Lauren-designed oceanfront guest rooms, 90 luxurious villa rooms and suites, and a selection of 27 private two- to six-bedroom villas, most of which have private pools. They were “impeccably designed by Ralph Lauren to evoke a crisp, clean Caribbean ambience”, Round Hill says.

The oceanfront rooms are as “stunning as they are comfortable”. They have cool, white stone floors and romantic four-poster mahogany beds and upholstered furniture from the designer’s Home Collection, while spacious bathrooms feature deep-soaking tubs, free-standing rain showers, and



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

The Gleaner’s editor-in-chief, Kaymar Jordan, presents the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica 2019 Best Boutique Resort award to Round Hill Hotel and Villas’ Omar Robinson (right) and Calvin Lewis.

double vanities to take the luxury to another level.

There are 27 Jamaica villas,

which are uniquely designed and exude their own essence, ranging from “the ultimate in sophisticated

luxury to classic, charming island living”.

The deluxe, luxury, and

premium luxury villas offer “enchanting, meandering pathways enveloped in lush tropical foliage, from which panoramic views of the ocean add to the delight of the experience.”

The beautifully designed open-air living spaces are outfitted with cool tiles and rich woods and encompass cosy, yet expansive bedrooms and “well-appointed bathrooms”.

Each villa’s dedicated, on-site staff takes care of guests, who are well-served throughout their stay and get a “fresh, made-to-order breakfast” on their terrace every morning.

Other features of the property include open-air terrace dining and The Grill at Round Hill, award-winning family programmes, an infinity pool, tennis courts, and an Elemis spa, located in a beautifully restored 18th-century plantation house.

“It is an honour to be recognised as the best of the best within the Jamaican hospitality industry. Our fellow nominees all offer exquisite experiences, and for our classic resort to be selected by the public as premier speaks to the legacy of our property and core values of our stakeholders,” Round Hill says.

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Reggae Sumfest cops Best Event of the Year RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica 2019 Award

REGGAE SUMFEST copped the Entertainment – Best Event prize in the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica 2019 Awards from a field including Rebel Salute, Dream Weekend, and Buju Banton’s Long Walk to Freedom.

In its fifth year, the Hospitality Jamaica Awards introduced this category to showcase events which attracted significant numbers of visitors to the island and positively impacted the tourism product.

Joe Bogdanovich, CEO of Downsound Entertainment, which acquired the Reggae Sumfest brand in 2016, was ecstatic at the recognition and honour embodied by the award. “We are proud and delighted by this accolade. It demonstrates that our strategy three years ago to focus strongly on reggae and dancehall as the natural creative resource of the country, as well as to develop an expansive marketing plan to reach millions of reggae and Jamaica fans across the globe, has been justified.”

In addition, he said broadening the concept to expand the activities to a week of events, providing the opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in all aspects of Jamaica’s culture, is paying off nicely.

“We will not, however, become complacent and we are already making plans for 2020, which will see us widening our



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Chief judge for the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica Awards, Marcia Erskine of Marcia Erskine and Associates (third right), presents the Best Event of the Year Award to the Joe Bogdanovich-led (second right) Downsound Entertainment team.

green initiative towards an environmentally sustainable Jamaica. Reggae Sumfest will continue to symbolise the best in our island; its beauty, its music and its culture,” said Bogdanovich.

In its 26-year history, Reggae Sumfest established a reputation for being the best reggae show globally. However, in 2019, the festival broke all records of attendance, attracting close to 40,000 attendees over

the two show nights. The stellar line-up, led by Buju Banton, Beres Hammond and Chronixx, benefited from a sustained and creative marketing campaign starting some four months before the show. After the initial announcement, other outstanding reggae and dancehall icons such as Bounty Killer, Beenie Man, Elephant Man, Etana, Spice and exceptional newcomers – Dalton Harris and Koffee – were added to the line-up, consistently generating additional interest.

Bogdanovich highlighted the support of sponsors. “This year we welcomed Caribbean Airlines, our presenting sponsor for 2019, as well as J. Wray and Nephew, Tourism Enhancement Fund, and CB Foods.”

He went on to thank traditional sponsors Red Stripe, Jamaica Tourist Board, Pepsi, Hardware & Lumber, Ward’s, Seaboard Shipping, Tracks and Records, Pure Country, Avis Car Rental, Jamaica Tours, Nuvo Media, Iprint/NOA; hotel partners Iberostar, Secrets, Hilton Rose Hall, Round Hill, Holiday Inn, Half Moon, Royalton, R Hotel, RIU, Sea Gardens and Deja; and media partners RJRGLEANER Communications Group, Irie FM, Mello FM, Sun City FM, ZIP FM, Hype and Mega Jams for their continued support. Back on board for the second year were Mastercard, Salada, NCB and Grace Foods.



Patrons were locked into the performances at Reggae Sumfest last year 2018.

FILE



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VOTED JAMAICA'S BEST ATTRACTION



PHOTO BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

The Gleaner's acting general manager, Garfield Grandison (centre), presents the Best Attraction award to the Jamwest team.



CONTRIBUTED

Bobsledding at Jamwest Motorsports and Adventure Park.

JAMWEST Jamaica's Best Attraction

“AMAZING”, “EPIC”, “time well spent”, and “money well spent” are some of the descriptions visitors to Jamwest Motorsports and Adventure Park give of their experience at the Westmoreland-based attraction, winner of the RJRGLEANER Hospitality Jamaica's Best Attraction award.

Jamwest is a complete, authentically Jamaican attraction providing memorable experiences for not only thrill seekers but even the most laid-back of visitors.

Ranked as one of the top 15 locations for outdoor activities in Negril, the attraction was initially established in 2003 as the Jamwest Speedway and featured racing on a quarter-mile drag strip.

Jamwest is located less than half an hour's drive from the resort town of Negril and is not only home to the largest speedway in the west but is the only drag and circuit tracks in the Caribbean, offering an ‘arrive and drive’ experience in which drivers can drive a race car and go for top speeds.

In addition to the Jamwest Speedway driving experience, the facility boasts an ATV tour that takes visitors through some of Jamaica's most beautiful lowland terrain and down to the azure Caribbean Sea. It also offers a racing zip line, horseback, riding and rock climbing.

For the less adventurous, there is the opportunity to take a dip in the cool, crisp waters of the mineral bath, plunge into the pool from the extreme water slide, or visit the petting zoo. Not to be forgotten is that the property also has the distinction of being home to the largest goat farm in Jamaica.

The non-racing offerings at the facility encircle the Jamwest Speedway, which comprises spectator stands; parking for race cars; control towers; and other supporting buildings, including a clubhouse with restaurant, bar, and gift shop and an administrative building with a nurse's station and rest area, making Jamwest the complete attraction.



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Rock climbing at
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Motorsports and
Adventure Park.

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