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Cover photo: Montego Bay Convention Centre

JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD
MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS NEWSLETTER
SPRING/SUMMER 2019 ISSUE



Greetings FROM JOHN WOOLCOCK

Dear Valued Partners,

On behalf of the Jamaica Tourist Board's Groups and Conventions team, I am thrilled to share that the first half of 2019 has got off to a great start. This is due in large measure to your amazing work in engaging your clients to choose Jamaica as the preferred destination for meetings and conventions.

With rising demand for new and unique meetings venues, Jamaica presents a better opportunity than ever to host your event. We were the first Caribbean destination in 2019 to welcome over one million visitors, a milestone we achieved in March. In anticipation of a heightened demand throughout the year, Jamaica has obtained increased airlift from the United States, securing over 1.8 million seats for the summer season from all markets.

In this issue of *Meet You In Jamaica*, we will once again shine the spotlight on the Montego Bay Convention Centre (MBCC) as we present the second of a two-part interview with Interim General Manager Karron Benjamin. We'll also hear from Lorraine Bellas, Director of Sales for Unique Vacations, Inc. (UVI), an affiliate of the worldwide representatives for Sandals Resorts and Beaches Resorts in the quick word section. And as is customary, we will share some of the places where we will be.

As you consider Jamaica as the possible choice for your meetings, we sincerely hope that this issue of *Meet You in Jamaica* can inform you of all the possibilities and experiences awaiting you and your groups/events on our beautiful island.

We have the airlift, the accommodation and attractions ready to suit your budget and your needs. So come and meet us in Jamaica!

One Love,
John Woolcock
Manager - Groups & Conventions
Jamaica Tourist Board

Destination Buzz



Montego Bay Convention Center: Caribbean's Newest & Finest



Mr. Karron Benjamin
General Manager, Montego Bay
Convention Center

Jamaica has long been a meeting planner's dream and the Montego Bay Convention Centre remains a favorite, due to its location. Recently, we caught up with Interim General Manager Karron Benjamin who shared with us about his strategy to grow the island's meetings and incentives business. In the second of a two-part series highlighting the Convention Centre, we find out from Mr. Benjamin talks about his priorities for the facility moving forward.

What are your top priorities for the Montego Bay Convention Centre moving forward?

To fulfil the mandate, programmes and priorities of MBCC, we have identified three main areas which we will seek to build and maintain:

- Brand awareness
- Develop specialized talent and
- Meet and exceed customer expectations through our enhanced customer service programmes

These initiatives will tie directly into the Ministry of Tourism's plans and priorities namely new product, new market, new partnerships, new investment, and human capital. The Centre's ongoing strategic approach aims to position the Centre as the premier convention centre in the Caribbean.

Destination Buzz

Jamaica has been growing its meetings and incentives business. In what way can MBCC help to further this objective?

The Montego Bay Convention Centre (MBCC) was conceptualized to serve this segment of the market and the facility has hosted several conferences, banquets, sporting events and conventions that would under normal circumstances not be possible without the centre. We are continuously outfitting the facility to make it even more dynamic and flexible to accommodate the growing needs of the sector. The MBCC is the largest conference facility in the English-speaking Caribbean, fully equipped with all the requisite technology for world class meetings and events, firmly placing Jamaica as a preferred and viable option for large meetings and incentive groups. The location of the facility is a major plus, strategically located on the Elegant Corridor within a 5-minute radius of the top hotels, championship golf courses, spas and other attractions, presenting event planners with a unique meeting experience. Recently, we copped our 7th consecutive win for the World Travel Award for 'Caribbean's Leading Meeting & Conference Facility' this is further testament of the outstanding service and product that we are providing in growing the lure of Jamaica for meetings and incentives groups.

Why choose MBCC?

It has been documented that the MBCC is the largest facility of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean, we have picked up 7 consecutive World Travel Award wins, we are in Montego Bay, one of the best tourist destinations in the world. Much has been said of the facilities, the design, dynamism and flexibility but what truly makes the Centre stand out is the excellent service delivered by our hardworking SMG staff with over 100 years of combined human capital industry experience. We will go beyond the norm to exceed our clients' requests; we partner with our planners to see that every detail is executed properly as their success is our success. We are an SMG managed facility. SMG is the largest convention and event management company in the world and that allows us to provide a level of dynamism in service that's unmatched.

Anything else you would like to add?

Like Jamaica, the Montego Bay Convention Centre is open and ready to do business and your next event should be here!



Quick Word



Lorraine Bellas
Director of Sales
Unique Vacations, Inc. (UVI)

First, please tell us how long you've been working in this position?

This year marks eight years that I have been with Unique Vacations, Inc. (UVI), an affiliate of the worldwide representatives for Sandals Resorts and Beaches Resorts. For the past eight years, I've had the pleasure of working as the Regional Meeting & Incentive Manager for the Midwest for UVI.

What makes Jamaica appealing to the MICE market?

Beyond the captivating topography and beautiful beaches, Jamaica is an easily accessible and affordable destination to the MICE market. With great flights from most major gateways, Jamaica is an appealing destination to travel to. Group travelers arriving in Jamaica will experience the country's vibrant culture the moment they step foot on the island. Known for its reggae music and delicious jerk chicken, meetings travelers are sure to have an authentic Caribbean experience wherever they are on-island. When given some down time, MICE travelers can experience the unique off-property tours and excursions available throughout Jamaica instead of being in a room all day. With everything Jamaica has to offer, the destination appeals to everyone.

What was the thinking behind building a convention center at Sandals Montego Bay?

As the flagship resort of Sandals Resorts, there was a need to include conference facilities that would accommodate the requirements of the MICE market at Sandals Montego Bay. The MICE market needed an innovative and cutting-edge center that would provide them with the best meeting experience. The newly built center boasts 2,380 sq. ft. of meeting space, 480 sq. ft. of pre-function space, and has a courtyard perfect to host cocktail receptions for groups.

How much was invested in this facility?

After a recent \$60 million dollar renovation, Sandals Montego Bay now boasts all new room offerings, a new "living room" lobby area, more 5-Star Global Gourmet™ dining restaurants such as Butch's Steak and Seafood, specializing in exquisite chops and meat; a new Jerk Shack, serving the finest authentic Jamaican jerk; and Soy, a sushi restaurant. For our MICE market – Sandals Montego Bay now offers a high-tech conference center that hosts up to 300 guests, positioning the resort as the best destination in Montego Bay for international and local meetings groups. Other luxury additions include Latitudes Overwater Bar and a reimagined swim-up pool bar, since Sandals Montego Bay was the originator of the swim-up pool bar 35 years ago.

What do planners enjoy about most about your property?

Beyond the new high-tech conference center that's ideal for MICE travelers, a key reason why meeting planners choose Sandals Montego Bay and its facilities is because of its proximity to the airport. When staying at a Sandals Resort, airport transfers are included at no additional cost, so there's no need to take your wallet out. Plus, Sandals Montego Bay is now the newest and hottest resort in Jamaica, boasting incredibly innovative offerings all guests can indulge in. Once on-resort, meeting planners will find the destination's welcoming hospitality amplified, because we always set out to exceed our guests' expectations.

Any unique features?

A unique overwater bar Sandals Montego Bay recently opened is a true hotspot for all our guests. Latitudes Overwater Bar boasts 360° ocean views from its prime location just off the coast of the resort's pristine white-sand beach. Groups looking for some downtime can lounge on a hammock suspended above turquoise waters by day and enjoy sunset cocktails gathered around the fire pits by night. Best of all, pours of premium liquors and Robert Mondavi Twin Oaks® wines are included with your stay – and you can get them right at Latitudes!

What kind of groups do you attract?

Thanks to Jamaica's beauty, the destination is an ideal location for all groups. We work prominently with incentive groups but also have the pleasure of working with meetings, conferences, and all social groups. We pride ourselves on being the most modern, open-concept, 5-Star Luxury Included Resort in the Caribbean, and this attracts all forms of groups to our resort.

How do you ensure groups keep fun in their agenda?

Sandals Resorts is all about fun! We offer a multitude of activities that are included in the price. From unlimited land sports such as golf to unlimited water sports such as kayaking - it's always unlimited and always included. In addition to what's offered on-resort, we encourage all our guests to get out and experience the beautiful destination of Jamaica. Located right in the lobby, groups will find an Island Routes desk with adventurous representatives ready to book your next excursion or answer any questions you may have. Island Routes provides hand-picked tours that have gone through a comprehensive selection process that includes an assessment of safety standards and procedures, guest satisfaction ratings, training, insurance coverage, and commitment to sustainable tourism protection. They offer everything from catamaran cruises and off-road safaris to bamboo river rafting and zip lining to help groups maximize their quality time together. For those guests who prefer to discover a completely unique mind-body experience, our signature Red Lane Spa® experience awaits.

Advice for meeting planners?

Know your product. Always take the time to visit and experience the destination and resort that is proposed or sold to a client. First-hand knowledge benefits all parties involved and ensures a seamless experience with little room for miscommunication and makes sure that all expectations are met.



Here's where we plan to be...



ASAE Annual Meeting & Expo

Columbus, Ohio

August 10-13, 2019

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting & Exposition is where thousands of association professionals and industry partners gather to exchange time, resources, strategies, solutions, and more. Over three days of learning, growing, and finding inspiration, attendees are equipped with a year's worth of support in their daily responsibilities as leaders in the association industry. Jamaica will be in attendance promoting the Montego Bay Convention Center to the association market. For more info see here: <https://annual.asaecenter.org/>.



Meeting & Incentive Forums The Americas

Chicago, Illinois

August 25-28, 2019

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) Groups & Conventions team will be at Meeting & Incentive Forums The Americas in Chicago in August. Over three days 200 elite buyers will partake in pre-scheduled meetings, networking activities and evening dinners. For more info visit: <https://www.mi-forums.com/suppliers/forums/2019/Americas.aspx>

EVENTS CALENDAR

Beenie Man Summa Sizzle

Jamalco Sports Club, Clarendon

August 10, 2019

Summa Sizzle Music Festival is a prodigious cultural festival in commemoration of International Reggae Artiste - Beenie Man's 41st year in music. The event features an exciting and unique range of family-oriented entertainment by day and an assemblage of the absolute best in local and international music genres and talent by night. The event highlights innovative work by present Jamaican artistes in the fields of music, dance, health, visual arts, food and fashion.



Caribbean Hoopfest

Montego Bay Community College

August 16-19, 2019

This is a four-day International Basketball Tournament and festival with family entertainment, opening & closing ceremonies as well as an all-White party, fashion show, and cocktail event. The tournament features basketball teams from Jamaica, US, Canada, Mexico & Puerto Rico. Special guests include "Talent" Bob Sumner (co-founder of Def. Comedy Jam) and former Jam-American NBA player Ben Gordon.



Follow us!

To stay abreast of Jamaica's events and happenings, please follow the official handle of the Jamaica Tourist Board @VisitJamaica. Each logo links to our respective social media page.



APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF DUTIES/BOND:

Should you wish to make your event even more special by including material and equipment brought from abroad – such as gifts, trophies, etc– you will need to apply to the Ministry of Finance for a waiver of customs duties and bonds. The Jamaica Tourist Board Groups and Conventions Department will be happy to help you through this process. Your application must be received no fewer than 20 working days before the date of shipment and travel.

For more information, please contact groups@visitjamaica.com.

TAX DEDUCTION STATUS

U.S. Public Law 96-608 and Jamaica's Exemption

On December 16, 1981, the U.S. Senate passed a protocol to the Income Tax Treaty with Jamaica. According to the protocol, expenses incurred by a citizen or resident of the United States in connection with attendance at a convention, seminar or similar meeting held in Jamaica shall be deductible for the purpose of taxation in the United States to the same extent as if the convention, seminar or similar meeting were held in the United States.

Contact us anytime for information, direction or planning. We're here to help!

MEET THE JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD GROUPS & CONVENTIONS TEAM

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) Groups & Conventions Team is committed to helping you with all aspects of your meeting, convention or incentive program. As your partner, the JTB not only promises to make your event pleasurable and memorable, we will also provide a host of services designed to ensure every stage of the planning process and all aspects of the visit go well.

Contact

John Woolcock / Margaret Clarke

Groups & Conventions

Jamaica Tourist Board

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www.visitjamaica.com

The Jamaica Tourist Board offices are located in Kingston, Montego Bay, Miami, Toronto and London.

Representative offices are located in Düsseldorf, Barcelona, Rome, Amsterdam and Tokyo.

For details on upcoming special events, attractions and accommodations in Jamaica go to the JTB's website at www.visitjamaica.com, or call the Jamaica Tourist Board at 1-800-JAMAICA (1-800-526-2422).

Follow the JTB on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube: