

Jamaica's COVID protocols praised by Site Midwest

Noel Thompson/Shamir Brown

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), through its partnership with some of the world's leading travel and tourism brands, continue to reap tremendous recognition from its partners on the steps being executed for the safe reopening of the tourism sector.

The most recent commendation has come from the influential travel group SITE Midwest based out of the United States, which has praised the COVID-19 protocols in place for Jamaica's tourism sector.

Approximately 50 members of the travel incentive group, the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE Midwest Chapter), visited the island for their second annual Smart Forum, held at the Secrets Wild Orchid Resorts and Spas in Montego Bay between last Thursday through Saturday. It was the first time that the

forum was being held outside the US and Montego Bay was the destination of choice.

The deal was brokered by the team at the JTB Miami office and was spearheaded by its manager for groups and conventions, John Woolcock. "Kudos to the JTB and John for making this occasion a reality," said Mike Farmer, director of sponsorship for the SITE Midwest Chapter of SITE Global (the parent body).

Many of the attendees were visiting Jamaica for the first time. Others had experienced Jamaica's tourism product before, but this time was in stark contrast, given the pandemic onset. They have lauded the country on its COVID-19 systems in place.

Farmer told the *Western Mirror* that Jamaica's safety measures have been well coordinated to the overseas markets. "I think the protocols Jamaica has in place is perfect. It's well



communicated. The JAM-COVID website registration for travel authorization was fast and efficient. It's great that they allow antigen test because that is readily available," Farmer remarked.

WISE DECISION

Meantime, Woolcock, said partnering with SITE for the event was a wise decision. "It's a great partnership. The Jamaica Tourist Board has had a long-standing relationship with SITE and so the opportunity to take part in their Smart Forum was for us a perfect fit. We had to do it and we were pleased that they selected Jamaica," Woolcock remarked. He also highlighted that

The Jamaica Tourist Board's Group and Conventions Manager, John Woolcock (far right), shares company with several members of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE Midwest Chapter), based in the United States, during their Second Annual Smart Forum, held at the Secrets Wild Orchid Resorts and Spas in Montego Bay between last Thursday through Sunday.

Jamaica's airlift capacity and diversity of product also played a role in SITE coming to Jamaica for their conference.

Farmer said he was pleased with his overall experience. "I think that everything that I saw from the moment I landed in Jamaica led me to believe that this is not a wink-wink we're COVID safe situation, but the overall demonstration proved it. People are spraying their hands and the stations they have throughout the airport. They take it seriously

and I think that's great for my audience," said Farmer, who is also the vice president of sales with the St. Louis based Strategic Incentive Solutions.

It's good for my audience to know and see their safety is taken seriously and even at Secrets Resorts, the protocols were practiced at a very high standard and were easy to adapt", Farmer emphasized.

Lylibeth Eaton, Area Group Sales manager at Secrets/Breathless Resorts and Spas, said the Secrets brand is honoured to have partner with the Jamaica

Tourist Board to host such an important event, adding, "we look forward to welcoming many groups to Jamaica in the near future."

"We adhere to the COVID-19 protocols established by the Jamaican government, along our AMR Clean Complete Verification Programme to ensure the health and safety of our valued guests. The JTB has been instrumental in forming these great partnerships with hospitality industry leaders across the globe in making safe events as these a reality," Eaton said.

U.S. TRAVEL BUYERS 'IN LOVE' WITH JAMAICA AND ITS PEOPLE

VOX POP

Noel Thompson - Contributor

Captivated by its natural beauty, the culture and friendly people, approximately 50 high-profile U.S. based marketers and travel planners with direct contacts to U.S. multi-billion-dollar corporations, have expressed their 'unconditional love' for Jamaica and a commitment to sell the island as a choice destination to their clientele.

The Groups and Conventions department at the Jamaica Tourist Board's (Miami Office) and the U.S. based SITE Midwest organization are being credited for bringing the group to Jamaica to participate at its recent SMART FORUM, held at Secrets Resorts and Spas in Montego Bay. The sentiments were expressed during interviews with **The Western Mirror**.

These travel planners are the architects in securing corporate incentive trips of large groups to pre-selected destinations worldwide.



SUSAN BARNES - California, and first-time visitor to Jamaica: "I'm in love with Jamaica. Everywhere you go, they say welcome home, and being in Jamaica I'm home. I feel like I could never leave. The people are so warm and welcoming. I have never felt more genuine

attention to my every whim and really making me feel comfortable here. I am very appreciative of all the COVID-19 protocols in place on the island, which is to the benefit of the locals, as well as visitors."



LATOYA WILLIAMS - Buffalo, New York: "I feel safe coming to Jamaica. It was a seamless process applying online for permission to enter the country and the response time was quick. I like the fact that it is also a requirement for every person to have a negative COVID-19 test in order for us to enter the country. Everyone wears a mask, your bags are sanitized and on arrival at our hotel - Secrets Resorts and Spas, they were very compliant with all the required protocols. I feel safe and I will definitely come back to Jamaica and I will be sending my clients here too. Jamaica is a lovely place. I have a couple of groups confirmed to visit Jamaica next year, so I am excited."

CATHY HANES - Illinois: "I love Jamaica because of the people and the culture. They are so friendly and warm. I have recommended Jamaica and Secrets Resorts to family and friends. The staff are amazing. I appreciate that Jamaica as a whole is trying to be as safe as possible by observing strict COVID-19 protocols."



TIMOTHY GLANZER - Nevada: "I've been to Ja-



JEROME WADE - Colorado, and a first-time visitor to Jamaica: "I'm a sailor and I have travelled to a bunch of the islands and I've never received the level of concierge experience I had from the airport to the resort. That's the key to creating extra-ordinary experiences for a destination and its visitors. Jamaica is so spectacular and they're ahead of the competition."



DANA WEAVER - Illinois: "This is my seventh trip to Jamaica and I always feel like I'm home. What keeps me coming back is the people, the warmth they show and the service they give to their guests. A place like Secrets Resorts, they just roll out the red carpet for their guests. Jamaica is a great destination."

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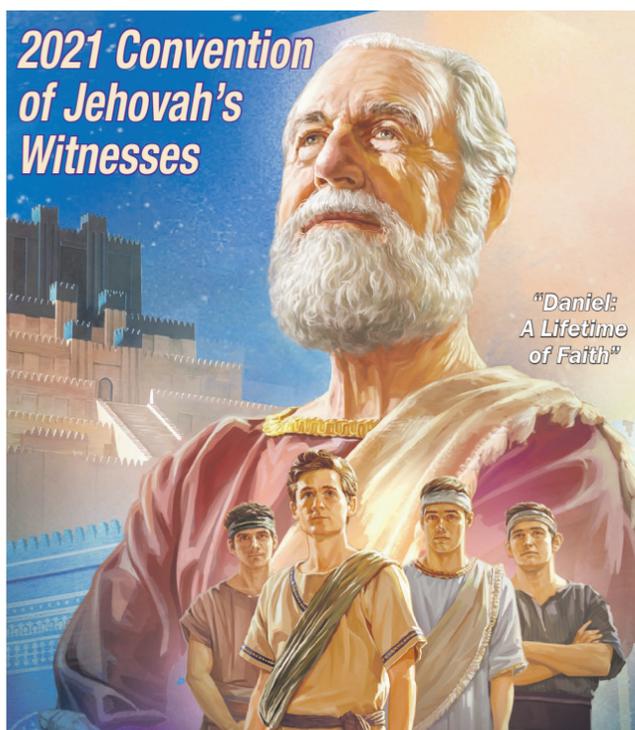
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Powerful By Faith!

The Virtual Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses continues despite the cancellation of nearly 6000 in-person conventions in over 240 lands to eliminate the risk of the contagion of COVID-19. This "Powerful By Faith!" convention is being delivered in over 500 languages with the upcoming release of the fifth of six installments which corresponds to the Sunday morning session of the usual three day event. Faith is a powerful force for good - It can give a person stability now and a reliable hope for the future. Whether someone has never believed in God, has lost their faith, or would like to strengthen their faith, the Bible can help!

DANIEL: A Life-time of Faith, the most anticipated highlight of the Sunday afternoon program is the finale of the two-part feature Bible drama, "Daniel: A Lifetime of Faith". All are encouraged all to watch the program for the climax of this faith strengthening Bible production on Daniel. Part 1 is still open for download from jw.org, and the equally thrilling Part 2 is now available.

Few stories have captivated Bible readers as much as the account about Daniel - a masterpiece of Bible education emphasizing the theme of faith. Captured and exiled to a foreign land as a youth, he was pressured to engage in activities that would have violated his conscience. Would



Daniel be faithful to his God despite mounting pressures to abandon pure worship? It is indeed faith strengthening to see how Daniel reacted to temptations, trials and ridicule, and how he was rewarded for his faith in God.

"The featured film on Daniel, his life and how even as a boy he was faithful to his Creator; faithful to his roots as an Israelite; as a prophet under several different governments; and through difficulties and tribulations he remained faithful." "No matter what is going on around us, whether the pandemic or something affecting us personally in our

home, faith can get us through. It has the power to see beyond the trouble, beyond the crisis and to the solution."

This gripping drama offers hope to all in the family who can see themselves in the life of Daniel. Youths worldwide, including Jamaican children, suffer many forms of injustices often stemming from peer pressure. Like Daniel they can be empowered by faith to rise above any adversity, not allowing their environment or situation in life to define them.

The program is available for free download at the link 2021 Convention Program—Powerful by Faith! | JW.ORG

SMART FORUM

Embarking on their mission for 2021 to get back to travel and connecting the tourism industry, several members and sponsors of the U.S. based Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE Midwest Chapter), along with representatives of the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) Miami Office's Groups and Conventions Department, flew into Montego Bay for the staging of SITE Midwest's Second Annual SMART Forum held at the Secrets Wild Orchid Resorts and Spas between last Thursday and Sunday. Our camera captured some of the highlights for you.



This unmistakable iconic Brand Jamaica banner was one of several, which were strategically placed during the staging of the opening of the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) Midwest four-day Second Annual SMART Forum, held at Secrets Wild Orchid Resorts and Spas in Montego Bay from last Thursday through Sunday. Proudly promoting Brand Jamaica locally and overseas is John Woolcock (right), the Groups and Conventions Manager at the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) Miami office. At left is Mary Clare Darland, a Director at Maritz Global Events based in the US.



Jennifer Brown (centre), director of incentives and meetings for all-inclusive resorts at the Hilton Resorts in Missouri, USA, engages her colleague Chasley Bradbury (left) in a conversation on the current and future trends in the incentive travel industry. Paying keen attention to the discussion (at right) is John Woolcock, Groups and Conventions Manager at the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) Miami Office.

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Drive your Ambition

U.S. Incentive Travel Planners selling Jamaica

Noel Thompson - Contributor

Several top incentive travel planners from across the U.S. are now formulating marketing strategies to promote Jamaica as the definitive Caribbean holiday get-away destination to wealthy corporate American conglomerates.

Although the Jamaican tourism sector receives about 70 per cent of its retail travel business from the United States, the U.S. incentive travel niche market, remains arguably vastly untapped with limitless economic opportunities to exploit.

The approximately 50 incentive travel buyers (plan-



Mike Farmer, Director of sponsorship at Site Midwest.



Ashley Lawson, President of SITE Midwest.

ners) who are all members of the U.S. based Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) Midwest organization, recently visited Montego Bay to experience the Jamaican tourism product, as well as to attend the staging of the SITE Midwest SMART Forum, held at the Secrets Resorts and Spas. The forum was held in partnership with the Groups and Conventions department of the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) Miami office.

Buoyed by their overall experience of the tourism product, the high standard demonstrated by Secrets Resorts, the group have commended the JTB for playing an integral role in partnering with SITE Midwest in making their experience an impactful one. Accordingly, several of the members have collectively concurred that Jamaica will be an easy sell for them.

Endorsing Jamaica's tourism product, president of

SITE Midwest, Ashley Lawson remarked: "We are so happy to have the partnership with the Jamaica Tourist Board. Planning travel right now can be very hard to navigate. Knowing that we have a partner in the Jamaica government that is verse in the travel and tourism business is just fantastic. What is wonderful about Jamaica is that it is already wrapped up in a bow and tied up beautifully for incentive planners like myself to sell. The infrastructures are in place, as well as destination management companies that know how to handle large groups. A lot of smaller islands don't understand the group business, so Jamaica has a lot

going for it."

"Putting the SMART forum together would not have been possible without the JTB. Personally, I have had a passion for Jamaica, so having the JTB by my side will make it so much easier for me to sell the island," said Mike Farmer, director of sponsorship at Site Midwest.

Planner Leslie Beemer, who was visiting Jamaica for the first time said she had started selling Jamaica to her clients during her visit. "They are so excited about Jamaica. Now I have a confirmed booking for a group of 80 for next February."

In her contribution, member Jennifer Brown, said it

was smart of the JTB and SITE Midwest to have established the partnership to bring people to a new destination to experience it. "As a representative of the Hilton international brand, I am even more excited to sell Jamaica as a destination to my clients, based on the education I gained during the forum, as well as my personal experience of the island and its tourism product."

Meanwhile, members Emily Carman and Jim Micklos have expressed similar commitments. Between them, they have several years of experience in planning and executing incentive travel packages for numerous clients.

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N.B Only candidates that are shortlisted will be contacted.



IN SUPPORT OF FRONTLINE WORKERS: Over 80 lunches (hot meals) were donated to the Cornwall Regional Hospital (CRH) frontline workers on Sunday, September 5, 2021 by the Janet Richards Foundation and its sponsors and support team. Staff members have been putting in extra hours since the onslaught of the COVID-19 Pandemic and need the extra support. Here, Shannette Brown Smith (2nd from left) Hospital Administrator accepts the goodies from Janet Richardson supported by Sonia Clarke-Bowen and Dr. Anthony Taylor (right). **Phillip Green photo**

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