

Jamaica takes lead in tourism awards

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Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett (third left) congratulates Chukka Caribbean Adventures on their recent World Tourism Awards win. Sharing in the moment are (from left) Basil Smith, director of Jamaica Tourist Board; Co-Managing Director Marc Melville, Chukka Caribbean Adventures; Co-Managing Director John G. Byles, Chukka Caribbean Adventures; Carole Guntley, director general of the Ministry of Tourism; John Lynch, chairman of Jamaica Tourist Board and Deputy Director David Shields, Jamaica Tourist Board. - Contributed

Providenciales, Turks and Caicos:

On the heels of recording exceptional stop-over arrival figures for 2007, Jamaica's momentum continued at the World Travel Awards (WTA) at Beaches Resort in Turks and Caicos last night when the country copped a record number of awards.

The island's land, [cruise](#) and attraction operators, national carrier Air Jamaica and the Jamaica Tourist Board held the country's flag high, upstaging some of the region's most celebrated tourism companies.

Jamaica was named Leading Caribbean Destination and Leading [Cruise Destination](#) while the Jamaica Tourist Board took home the Leading Tourist and Conventions Bureau title.

Newcomers to the prestigious arena, Chukka Caribbean Adventures and Trafalgar Travel were named Caribbean's Leading Nature Adventure Excursion and Leading [Travel Agency](#) respectively.

Of all the government entities, Air Jamaica stole the show accepting three prestigious awards, namely the Caribbean's Leading Airline, Leading Business Class and Leading Airline Website.

An impressive achievement

Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, who has taken on the responsibility as the country's 'chief salesman', said that in a competitive global market to be measured up against other powerful brands and world-class tourism infrastructure and adjudged tops in any category is an impressive achievement.

He said: "Destination Jamaica will gain valuable advertising exposure and no doubt added bookings as a resort."

He, however, noted that the country was not getting the lion's share of the [cruise business](#); consequently the Leading Cruise Destination award was invaluable to drive the country's promotion strategies.

With attractions being one of the main focuses of the Minister, Chukka Caribbean's award is extremely timely. The company's Director of Marketing, Dominique Peterkin, told **The Gleaner** that her organisation feels it is its duty to design the best nature-based historical and culturally fun-filled experiences in the region.

"We are not trying to create manmade experiences; we take nature and find the most innovative way to show it in its truest form," the marketing director pointed out.

Chukka Caribbean was born 25 years ago on a spirit of exploration, "Danny Melville, our chairman, is an explorer," added Mrs. Peterkin.

The other stakeholders that made the island proud included Round Hill Hotel and Villas, Leading Caribbean Villa Hotel; Half Moon, Caribbean's Leading Golf Resort and Sandals Resorts International, which again this year tallied the most amount of prizes, including Caribbean's Leading Hotel Brand.

In its 14th year, the WTA recognises those organisations that have made the greatest contribution to the global tourism and travel trade. Tagged 'Tourism's Oscar Awards', however, unlike the Oscars, it is a personal endorsement from thousands of professionals worldwide, say the organisers.

This year some 165,000 travel agencies and professionals in over 200 countries worldwide voted to recognise excellence in [travel destinations](#), airlines, hotels and companies worldwide.

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