

**PRESENTATION BY THE RT. HON. P J PATTERSON
PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF ISLAND VILLAGE
ON
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2002
OCHO RIOS**

Salutations

Ministers

Chris Blackwell

Distinguished Guests

Ladies & Gentlemen

As youngsters, we were weaned on the numbers 007. Later that got replaced by Toots and the Maytal's 5446. Now thanks to Chris Blackwell we are being asked to recite 020202.

One can always depend on Chris, the consummate marketer to come up with catchwords, phrases and numbers to popularize any product with which he is associated.

✓
sc

After more than 40 years in the entertainment business he has moved from Island Records to Island Village.

UWI Libraries

There is no better place to have created and developed Island Village than here in Jamaica, along the scenic coastline of Ocho Rios.

Jamaica, as a brand, enjoys a particular strength that has served it very well indeed. The island is the most highly recognized of Caribbean destinations, with a diversity of landscape and product that is literally unmatched in the region.

With the island's rich heritage, vibrant culture and people who never hesitate to make their mark on any world stage, Jamaica has enjoyed notable success in an increasingly competitive global tourism industry.

MODERN PORT FACILITIES

Investments such as Island Village cannot occur overnight.

They happen through foresight and the understanding of the importance of this aspect of the industry.

For its part, the Government knows the importance of having in place, infrastructure such as modern, efficient port facilities to support the growing cruise ship business.

In this regard, the Port Authority of Jamaica, in 1995, embarked on a major dredging program to deepen the Ocho Rios harbour and to upgrade the terminal facilities.

This massive infrastructural investment will enable a far larger class of cruise ship vessel to use the port of Ocho Rios.

The Port Authority has now been given total responsibility for cruise shipping facilities and operations.

The rationale behind this is that apart from being in charge of the ports, many of the major clients of the Kingston Container Terminal – the Transshipment Port – own and operate cruise ships.

The assumption of this responsibility by the Port Authority, will also result in closer coordination and improvement of the national promotional programme for investments and visitor attraction with particular emphasis on European cruise ship passengers.

More recently, the Port Authority has embarked on a programme that will result in significant upgrading and refurbishing of cruise ship facilities in different parts of the Island.

A prime example of this is what is happening in Port Antonio. Within the framework of the West Harbour Development, there will be the creation of a mega-yacht marina and the improvement of the Ken Wright pier.

In Montego Bay the Port Authority plans to upgrade the terminal and expand the berths.

I am pleased to say that while upgrading work is going on at other ports there are more plans for the Ocho Rios pier.

The Port Authority is even now, in the process of developing the drawings for the further expansion of existing berths, the establishment of new berths and upgrading the terminal building.

This will be a welcome boost for the Ocho Rios tourism product.

An essential aspect of this is that these port facilities will themselves become attractions. The piers and the surrounding areas will be designed so the cruise ship berthing facilities are comfortable, safe and inviting.

UWI Libraries

They must also be kept clean and attractive. Northern Parks and Markets is going to require the support and cooperation of every individual and hotel entity to ensure that this is done.

The upgrading of the Port of Ocho Rios over the years has made it one of the most sought after cruise ship destinations in the world.

UWI Libraries

WELCOME – ISLAND VILLAGE

It is into this environment that we welcome Island Village. Here we have a visible example of the type of attraction that we seek to have established in Jamaica.

It is an entertainment theme park with the ambiance of a colourful Caribbean coastal community. The Village, has been constructed by the investors to house entities which will showcase the best of Jamaica.

These will include craft shops and boutiques, restaurants, an art gallery and a reggae square for street parades, music and cultural events as well as a modern cinema complex – a welcome addition for the people in this area. These facilities which will cater to locals and visitors alike.

I am happy to learn that one of the main attractions will be Reggae Xplosion, a music museum that will offer a highly visual interactive tour of the history of Jamaican music from Mento and Ska, through to rock steady, reggae and dance hall.

The inclusion of the National Gallery in the Village, will give Jamaicans in this part of the island, an opportunity to see our art showcased.

The concept of Island Village, was conceived by Chris Blackwell. His unique talent and ability to infuse local traditions and culture into resort development has given him, yet another historical venture.

I expect Island Village to be one more in a string of successful, attractive and fun properties belonging to the Island family.

Blackwell's Island creations have always done us proud. We celebrate with him on his elevation to the select Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The only non-performer to be so distinguished as his citation reads:

"the single person most responsible for turning the world on to reggae music."

An essential ingredient of the Chris Blackwell's Island philosophy is working closely with adjacent communities. Chris assures me that Island Village will be no different. The village will work closely with the Ocho Rios community and will involve fishermen, taxi and tour operators and craft vendors as well as the environmental agencies and youth in the resort area.

The development comes at the right time, joining several other new attractions in the area including the newly refurbished Ruins, Dolphin Cove and Roaring River.

Already many have been employed during the construction stage and now there will be jobs available for persons to work in the stores and the various facilities in the village.

INCENTIVES

Recognizing the need to sustain this industry, the Government of Jamaica, launched several initiatives to bring back visitors to the island and to encourage those who wish to make Jamaica their holiday destination.

In support of this program, Cabinet has given approval for an interim package of incentives to the tourism industry. These are pending the development of a longer term recommendation from the Tourism Master Planning process.

Some of the significant elements of the package include:

- granting of import duty concessions similar to those obtained under the current legislation to hotel properties with less than 10 bedrooms and apartments and villas, where these configurations do not allow them to be classified as either a hotel or resort cottage for the purpose of building and refurbishing activities;
- the widening of benefits in respect of GCT exemption under the Modernization of Industry Programme (NIP) for refurbishing activities, based on an expanded list of items as provided in the Hotel Incentive Act (HIA and Resort Cottage Incentive Act (RCIA) to include customs duty exemptions for hotels with one hundred rooms or less;

- the granting of benefits in special circumstances after rigorous assessments by the Committee set up for these purposes for hotels with one hundred (100) rooms or more, and
- the granting of incentives to approved tourist attractions subject to the list of items being agreed by the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

We, in Jamaica, have a natural beauty which is unlike any other in the world. It is in our heritage, our people and our culture. It is what defines us and what is harnessed by investors in creating attractions such as Island Village which fits perfectly with the nation's commercial and environmental goals.

Island Village is the first attraction to be approved by the Ministry of Finance for incentives equivalent to the hotel sector.

It is also the first attraction to access international capital markets.

The project represents the substantial investment of US\$16 million (J\$800 million).

UWI Libraries

CONCLUSION

We must all pay tribute to the Jamaican design team including Ann Hodges, lead architect and winner of the Governor General's architectural award for Strawberry Hill.

I also wish to pay special commendation to the 300 workers who worked tirelessly night and day to make this possible.

It shows that once we put our minds to it and work as one we can create wonders.

It gives me great pleasure to declare Island Village open.