

TEARS OF HAPPINESS IN DISCOVERING JAMAICA

Jovel Johnson takes you on a rough ride from the top of the world and an unforgettable experience

PHEWW! What a trip! I think it is safe to say that the Discover Jamaica Tour held by the Tourism Product Development Corporation (TPDCo) was one of the most exciting things I have ever done in my life. Saturday, October 1 is a date that will always be etched in my mind, as I have flown in mid-air (well, I actually glided on cables) traveled on water (in the rain) and met some wonderful people along the way. The tour took us to Chukka Cove Adventures, Margaritaville in Montego Bay and ended at Coral Cliff where everyone got a chance to unwind after the excitement. Workers from various tourist attractions got the chance to play the tourist role as they "discovered" Jamaica for themselves.

ALL ABOARD!

It all started at the Ocean Village Car Park, Ocho Rios, where everyone met about 7:00 a.m. to start off the trip. Spirits were high in the two buses that took us to our various destinations and after fun introductions the day of fun was truly on the way.



All aboard...

First stop was Chukka Cove Adventures, where some of the participants were to meet those who were coming from Ocean Village. There were three activities to choose from: ATV (riding the four-wheeled dirt bikes), horseback riding and the Canopy Tour. Now, on the bus, I kind of got an idea of what the canopy tour was. I heard that it had involved some form of swinging and I had made up my mind that I wasn't going to do that - I would play it safe and do the horse back riding. But when we got to Chukka Cove and I heard that some wetting up was involved in the horseback riding, I decided to take the chance and go for the Canopy Tour.

OFF TO CHUKKA COVE



And up the bad road we go...

We brave souls who opted to do the Canopy Tour went by bus to where we were going to be doing our tour. Twice we had to get out of the bus - once in a district called Chester and another time in Spicy Grove. The second time, we walked until we got to where we were going to begin the tour. The roads were so bad, the bus could not go up the hill with us inside.

We were introduced to the able team who would "have our lives in their hands". We were put into harnesses, given helmets and given all that we were going to need for the tour. This was when I somewhat had more understanding of what the Canopy Tour was all about (remembering what I saw on brochures). They gave us the safety talk - what to do, what not to do and then we were on our way to our starting point.

I don't know if it was because I didn't have breakfast before going, but my knees were shaking as we walked down the nearly 300 steps (or so I've been told) to the starting point, leaving everyone to wonder if walking was going to be most of the tour.

LORD, WHY MI DO DIS?...

This was a question some of us asked when we stood up on the platform of the first of about 13 platforms we had to glide from (nine traverses or cables) to get to the end of the tour. I could beat myself when I looked down and saw how far "down" was (the highest point is 180 feet from ground level and the lowest is 40 feet). "Lawd Jesus, why mi sign up fi dis?" was what someone asked. My sentiments exactly!

Others before me were strapped up to the first cable and my heart started beating in my mouth. It was my time to go, I just said, "Lord. If it's my time, take me. I'm ready." I followed the instructions, "Go into the sitting position and raise your legs." I did that and the momentum took me across the traverse. My adrenaline was really pumping. I went along doing three more and stated to get used to it (although I was still terrified) and came up on the first surprise. This time, the traverse was shorter and slant, making us go faster than usual. This gave the "roller coaster" effect. That was rough. I heard that we had five more to go. Oh no! I got back some more courage until I met up on the second surprise, the traverse went straight to the ground. That was also terrifying. There were three swift ones that made us complacent, then it was time for the last go.

It is always said that the best is left for last and it seemed as if that's the effect they were looking for. As if on purpose, they allowed us to wait a while before we went on the last traverse - the longest one. Others who went before me let out screams and I wondered why because the long traverses were always the easy going ones. Then I got on it - I saw what all the noise was about. Going along the traverse was the worst one to me because of the bouncing effect. That's when I felt as if I was on a roller coaster! That's when tears came to my eyes! When it was all done, I had to hold on to something to keep my composure, while laughing and wiping away the tears at the same time.

We were all glad to get out of the harnesses and everything that came with it. We were even happier that it was over. Some said that the surprises were the roughest parts to deal with, while others spoke about the last leg of the tour. Some had no problem at all (well, apart from the fact that they were strapped in too tight). We walked until we went into Cranbrook, got some refreshments and made our way by bus back to Chukka Cove.

See what happens next week when we hit Montego Bay.



Eagerly awaiting our various tours. Most of us went on the Canopy Tour.

TEARS OF HAPPINESS IN DISCOVERING JAMAICA (Part II)

Jovel Johnson continues the delightful and exhilarating journey of the Discover Jamaica Tour

ON TO MONTEGO BAY

We hit the road to Montego Bay where we were going to sail on the catamaran at Margaritaville. There were a few "Olivers" on the trip, as there were those who kept us laughing all the way to our destination. When we arrived we were told to take off our shoes before stepping on the catamaran. The day looked really overcast and my fears were confirmed when we set sail and it started to rain. This, however, did not put a damper on anything, as the rowdy and hilarious crowd made the best of the rain - dancing, drinking and making merry.

After we hit dry land, we walked barefoot across the road to Coral Cliff where we were to have lunch (or dinner for some). The food was great - rice and peas, fresh and steamed vegetables, baked chicken, fish and pastries were in the mix. That gave us some time to sit back and talk about the trip to that point. Other who had started their trip from Kingston, Negril and Westmoreland met up at Coral Cliff.

After eating, we felt like kids at Chucky Cheese when we bought tokens

and proceeded to play games which spat out tickets, giving us the opportunity to get or buy. Then Coral Cliff's Mascot, Chilly, a polar bear, danced for the young and old alike, showing everyone that he could get down with the best of them.

Then it was concert time. The idea was to have each chapter giving at least one item. Not so at first - Ocho Rios took over the dance floor. The talented Ocho Rios group did their thing in dance, song and poetry. They even took over MC duties. Eventually, the other chapters warmed up and soon everybody was having a good time. However, it didn't take a genius to see that most of us were dead tired from the day's activities.

We boarded our buses to head back to our various destinations. For us it was Ocho Rios. We were all looking to sleep (even though on the way, we stopped at Scotchies, a jerk food place).

It was a trip we (especially I) will never forget. It was a day where I could tell someone, "Yeah, I did that!" That seemed to put the icing on Tourism Week.



Chilly, Coral Cliff's mascot, showed the crowd how to get down.



After that a long a vigorous tour, everyone was hungry.

RECOGNITION
A Very Powerful & Profitable Gesture

Advertise Your Business!

Widest Array of Promotional Items

Embroidered Shirts, Bags & Caps

We are fast and efficient When you look good, we look good

GROUP 7 PROMOTIONS ST. ANN LTD.

130 Main Street, Ocho Rios, St. Ann
Tel: 974-9343 Fax: 974-9306

Visit our showroom or website at www.group7promotions.com

Now in Ocho Rios

North Coast TIMES

NOBODY KNOWS THE COAST LIKE WE DO

Email: northcoasttimes@yahoo.com

IT NEWS SPORTS

There is something for everyone