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HIDDEN GEMS

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NEW HOTSPOT IN MONTEGO BAY

When you think of taking a vacation to the islands, you think of sun, fun, beaches, sprawling all-inclusive resorts, kids running around, parties, and pumping Reggae music. But there's a new hidden gem in Montego Bay that is challenging that notion and what a Jamaican vacation can actually be.

The newly opened S Hotel brings chic boutique and a new sense of sophisticated luxury to Jimmy Cliff Boulevard, affectionately known as the Hip Strip.

The hotel is the masterpiece of Jamaican entrepreneur, Christopher Issa, whose vision was to impact and help revitalize Montego Bay's standing as the tourism mecca of Jamaica. It's the same motivation Issa used for the development of his other popular Jamaican hotel, Spanish Court Hotel in the city of Kingston.

BOUTIQUE ON THE "BAY"

Opening its doors in January 2019, S Hotel has 120 rooms, including suites with balconies, plush soaking tubs, and beds handcrafted right on the island.

Upon arrival, the walk into the lobby gives you a sense of Miami's South Beach, with art, decor, furnishings, and an immediate sighting of a glistening pool that lets you know it's time to experience island life. Jamaican touches are weaved throughout the hotel including works by local artists, and prints of everyday Jamaicans by famed Jamaican artist, Michael Thompson.

The property sits on private Doctor's Cave Beach and boasts stunning views and sunsets. There is a rooftop bar, lounge, and pool, known as Sky Deck. And The Irie Baths and Spa for relaxation and wellness.

The hotel is just steps away from the Issa-owned Tracks and Records restaurant, founded by renowned Olympic Gold medalist, the fastest man in history, Jamaican track star, Usain Bolt.

I sat down with Lisa Gardner, General Manager, S Hotel for more insight on the development of the property, the inspiration, and a few other tidbits that as a native Jamaican even surprised me.



A boutique hotel in Jamaica, in Montego Bay? What was the inspiration behind that idea?

You're on the Hip Strip we do have a lot of all-inclusive hotels in Jamaica in and around Montego Bay. When you get to the strip you have smaller hotels, some EP (European Plan), some all-inclusive. We wanted to in our efforts to revitalize, we also understood that we had to raise the bar, which is what we were trying to do with the S hotel. Not only to put another hotel in Montego Bay or Jamaica, but to have something of really good quality that the people would see and of course that would uplift the area.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Where S hotel is located we think it's perfect, the location is great here. You're literally minutes away from the airport, 5 minutes max from the [Sangster International] airport (editor's note: this is true, I timed it!)

The Hip Strip of Montego Bay, now Jimmy Cliff Boulevard, again it doesn't get much better than that because it opens up our clientele to so many different experiences through dining, entertainment, just basic interaction with the people and our culture and the beaches.

I was a little skeptical of whether an idea like this will work here. And now that I'm here, I'm like this should have been here 10 years ago.

So many people have been saying the same thing. The Jamaicans that come through are like oh my gosh this is one of the best things that's happened.

"S" IS FOR SERVICE

We want people to understand that S Hotel is for everyone. It's somewhere that we want our Jamaican people to come and feel very welcome when they come here as customers. But it's also somewhere that we want our international clients to come and not just be welcome, but to really compare us with everybody else out there and says yes our quality is great.

We want our clients to walk away saying that this was an authentic Jamaican experience with the best quality service they've ever received.

