

Jamaican tourism website creating ripples

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A LOCAL website about Jamaica is attracting thousands of visitors who wish to know more about the Caribbean island.

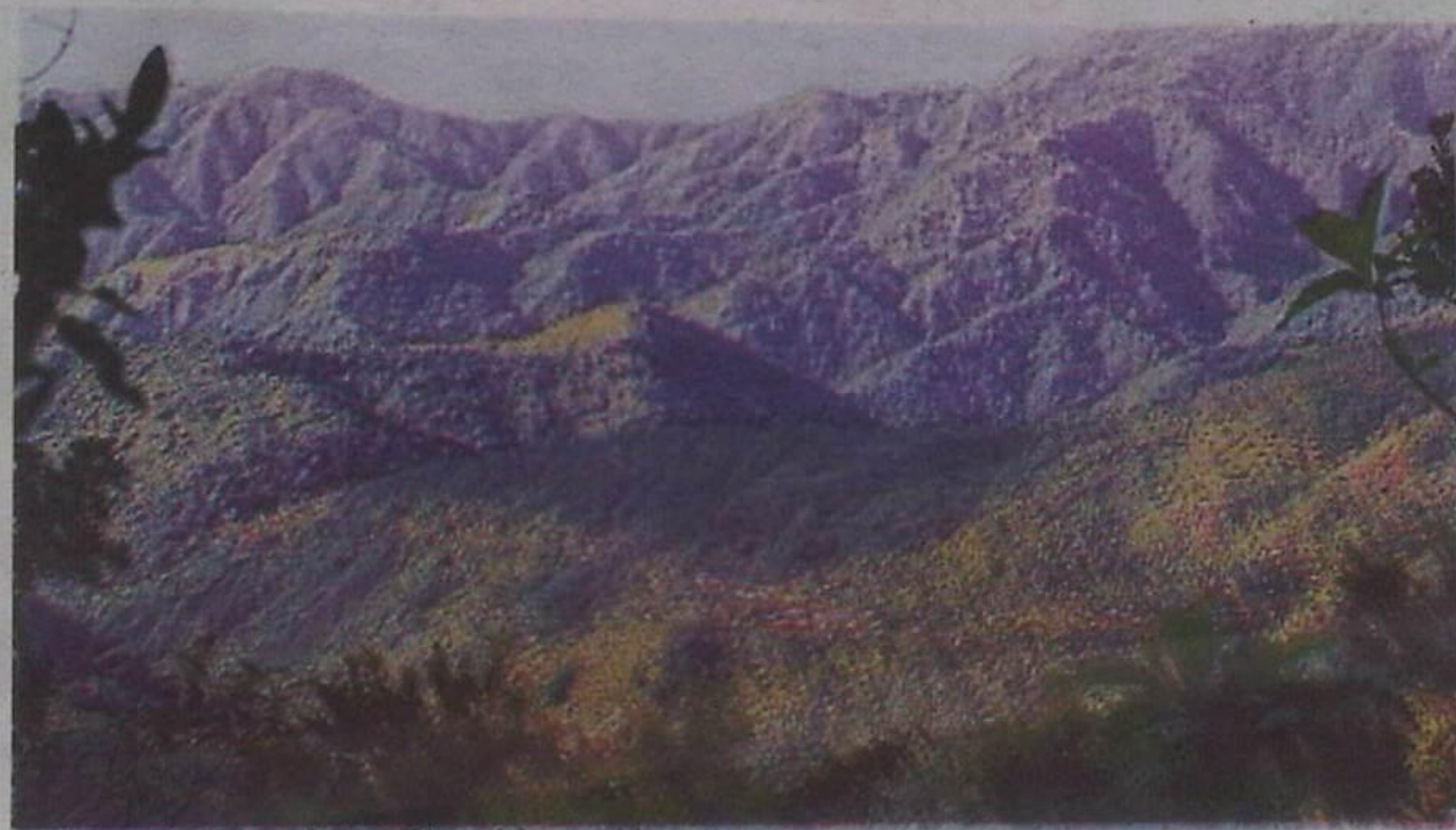
my-island-jamaica.com is the brainchild of Montego Bay-based entrepreneur Wellesley Gayle who, four years ago, decided to combine love for his country and a passion for the internet to build a website that would promote his native island.

With more than 360,000 hits, my-island-jamaica.com is fast becoming one of the most authoritative sources about Jamaica. The website is an informative, interactive portal where visitors to the island can find a wealth of information ranging from history to culture, food, accommodations, attractions, and major events.

FAN OF THE INTERNET

"I do this because I love my country and I've always been a fan of the Internet," said Gayle. "So I just decided to combine the two and turn it into a business."

On my-island-jamaica.com, visitors can share and read reviews of attractions, hotels, restaurants, and upload photos of their trip. Information is also available on



A perspective of the Blue Mountains

colleges and financial institutions as well as a photo gallery of Jamaican symbols and local trivia. Visitors can also subscribe for a free copy of Gayle's ebook titled *101 Facts about Jamaica*.

"I really do little advertising for the site ... most of our traffic is organic, meaning people find it through search engines," he explained. "We talk about attractions, best beaches, food, culture, just about

everything Jamaican. We also allow visitors to post pictures about Jamaica or about their vacation here," Gayle added.

The site is complemented by a fan page on the social-networking site Facebook, accumulating nearly 5,000 fans in less than a year. Facebook fans can share photos and participate in question and answer trivia about Jamaica.

"A lot of the information is from my

personal experience travelling around the country. I take a lot of pictures, talk to people in the industry, and I do a lot of research at the library and in the local newspapers."

The website is enjoying great reviews from visitors who applaud the depth of information and the quick responses to their queries about Jamaica.

GREAT WEBSITE

One Canadian visitor commented, "I have done many searches on your country and I couldn't find the info I wanted until I found your site. It's just great!"

Another from the United Kingdom described it as a "really good website" which gave all the information she needed to find out about Jamaica.

Eighty-five percent of the traffic to the site originates outside Jamaica, and Gayle wants to see more Jamaicans visiting the site. He also plans to add more interactive features in a bid to double site visits by year end.

"Only 15 per cent of the traffic now is Jamaican, the rest comes from overseas. So I'm trying to get it more interactive and spread the word so more people will know about it, and more Jamaicans will use it for information."