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22 **24H TRAVEL**

WEDNESDAY
4 2011



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 Gap Adventures recently released its 2011 Trips, from exploring the off-beaten paths of Ghana, to visiting coffee plantations in Colombia, walking in pirates' footsteps in Cuba, sailing the Nile or seeing China's historic sites on an eight-day express tour, the group has added 100 new adventures to their roster. Visit gapadventures.com. —REUTERS

Canadian heads to Cayman Cookout
 Celebrated Chef Susur Lee will represent Canada at the third-annual Cayman Cookout, Jan. 13-16. The event presents four days of epicurean experiences including demonstrations and personal encounters with participating super-star chefs and sommeliers. For details, see caymanislands.ky/cayman_cookout. —QMI AGENCY



JAMAICA'S MYSTIC MOUNTAIN

Bobsled like an Olympian



LORI HENRY
TripAtlas.com

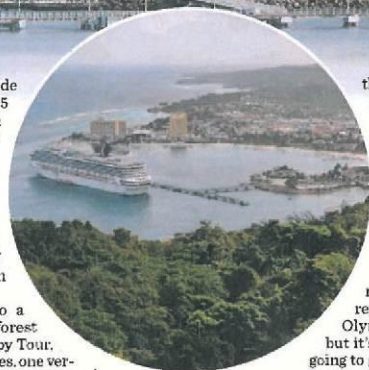
In 1988, the first Jamaican bobsled team made its way to Calgary to compete in the XV Olympic Winter Games. The team's perseverance to qualify in a sport that most Jamaicans had never even heard of was met in Canada with disbelief. Yet the team managed to become a fan favourite, famously finishing its third run by walking their sled across the finish line after a spectacular crash disqualified them. On my winter trip to Jamaica, I was determined to find a place to try bobsledding for myself. Off the highway in Ochos Rios, I found it: A new attraction called Mystic Mountain, which opened in July 2008.

Join the bobsled team ... or just pretend to
 More than 3,000 feet of Jamaican bobsledding track silently cuts through jungle, not interfering with the trees or wildlife. The forest that Mystic Mountain was developed on covers more than 100 acres of wilderness, including tropical plants, trees, natural springs and a variety of birds. There is no snow, of course, so the track is made from stainless steel rails and is designed to curve and bend around the jungle terrain. I got into the black, green and yellow bobsled, feeling quite like an Olympic athlete. There was even a handbrake that allowed me to speed up or slow down, depending on

how adventurous I felt. Instead of pushing off like the bobsled team does, though, I stayed put and just pushed the kid-friendly handbrake to "Go." Weaving in and out of the jungle canopy track took me about six minutes to complete. I held back a bit on the corners, though, so when I got off the ride, I was right back in line again, waiting to go full speed. The second time I did, reaching up to 40 kilometres per hour. I guess practice makes perfect.

Sky-high activities
 The attraction also has the Rainforest Sky Lift Explorer, which takes riders from the park entrance up 213 metres to the top of the mountain.

The chairlift ride takes about 15 minutes each way, a great time to explain what an ecopark is to the younger generation while looking out over views of the Caribbean Sea. There is also a fantastic Rainforest Zip-Line Canopy Tour, with five zip lines, one vertical descent and one suspension walking bridge. Make sure to take your camera (in a case around your neck), as there are many opportunities to snap photos of your family zipping through



the adjacent Mystic Pavilion with an exhibition of the country's history through sports and culture. Between rides, you can use this exhibition as downtime for the kids. Bobsledding on Mystic Mountain may not be an exact replica of the Winter Olympics experience, but it's as close as you're going to get while vacationing in sunny Jamaica.

Lori Henry is a travel writer based in Vancouver, Canada. She covers Cultural Dance, Outdoor Adventures, Solo Travel, and Wellness/Spa Travel for a number of publications including TripAtlas.com.

HOT DEALS OF THE WEEK

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<p>1</p> <p>Vancouver - Jamaica Roundtrip Airfare Jan 15, 2011 - Jan 26, 2011</p> <p>\$199 <small>16,900 taxes (est.)</small></p> <p>Jamaica for \$199</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Costa Club Punta Arena*** Puerto Vallarta, Mexico All Inclusive + Hotel Room Jan 15, 2011 + 6 nights</p> <p>\$317 <small>+\$273 taxes (est.)</small></p> <p>Save over 50%</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Melis Azul**** Itzapa, Mexico All Inclusive + Oceanview Balcony Feb 3, 2011 + 7 nights</p> <p>\$798 <small>+\$273 taxes (est.)</small></p> <p>Guaranteed UPGRADE!</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Celebrity Century Hawaiian Itinerary Cruise Only + Inside Cabin Nov 1, 2011 + 10 nights</p> <p>\$1039 <small>+\$55 taxes (est.)</small></p> <p>\$50 Offboard Credit</p>
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