



JAMAICA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	General
	3	Passport
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Resorts & Excursions
	10	Sport & Activities
	11	Social Profile
	12	Business Profile
	13	Climate
	14	History and Government
	15	Overview

1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Caribbean.

Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB)
64 Knutsford Boulevard, Kingston 5, Jamaica
Tel: 929 9200. Fax: 929 9375. E-mail: jamaicatr@aol.com
Web site: <http://www.jamaicatravel.com>

Jamaica High Commission
1-2 Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BZ
Tel: (020) 7823 9911. Fax: (020) 7589 5154. E-mail: jamhigh@jhcuk.com
Web site: <http://www.jhcuk.com>
Opening hours: 0900-1700 Monday-Friday (High Commission), 1000-1530 Monday-Friday (Consulate).

Jamaica Tourist Board
Address as above.
Tel: (020) 7224 0505 (trade) or (0800) 445 533 (general enquiries). Fax: (020) 7224 0551. E-mail: jtb_uk@compuserve.com
Web site: <http://www.jamaicatravel.com>

British High Commission
PO Box 575, 28 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica
Tel: 926 9050. Fax: 929 7869. E-mail: bhckingston@cwjamaica.com
Web site: <http://www.fco.gov.uk>

Jamaican Embassy
1520 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 452 0660. Fax: (202) 452 0081. E-mail: emjam@sysnet.net or emjam@frontiernet.net
Web site: <http://www.emjam-usa.org>

Jamaican Consulate

2 GENERAL

767 Third Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 935 9000. Fax: (212) 935 7507.
E-mail: passport@jamcongen-ny.org
Web site: <http://www.jamcongen-ny.org>

Jamaica Tourist Board
801 Second Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 856 9727. Fax: (212) 856 9730. E-mail: jamaicatr@aol.com
Web site: <http://www.jamaicatravel.com>

Embassy of the United States of America
3rd Floor, Mutual Life Building, 2 Oxford Road, Kingston 5, Jamaica
Tel: 929 4850/9. Fax: 935 6000 or 935 6019 (visa section).
Web site: <http://usembassy.state.gov/kingston>

Jamaica High Commission

275 Slater Street, Suite 800, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9
Tel: (613) 233 9311. Fax: (613) 233 0611. E-mail: jhcott@comnet.ca
Consulates in: St Albert, Toronto and Winnipeg.

Jamaica Tourist Board
1 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 616, Toronto, Ontario M4P 3A1
Tel: (416) 482 7850. Fax: (416) 482 1730. E-mail: jtb@jtbcanada.com
Web site: <http://www.jamaicatravel.com>

Canadian High Commission
PO Box 1500, 3 West Kings House, Kingston 10, Jamaica
Tel: 926 1500/7. Fax: 511 3493 (consular section).

Country dialling code: 1 876.

General

Area: 10,991 sq km (4244 sq miles).

Population: 2,530,000 (1995).

Population Density: 230.2 per sq km.

Capital: Kingston. Population: 643,801 (1991).

Geography: Jamaica is the third-largest island in the West Indies, a narrow outcrop of a submerged mountain range. The island is crossed by a range of mountains reaching 2256m (7402ft) at the Blue Mountain Peak in the east and descending towards the west with a series of spurs and forested gullies running north and south. Most of the best beaches are on the north and west coasts. The island's luxuriant tropical and subtropical vegetation is probably unsurpassed anywhere in the Caribbean.

Government: Constitutional monarchy. Gained independence from the UK in 1962. Head of State: HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented locally by Governor General Sir Howard Cooke since 1991. Head of Government: Prime Minister P J Patterson since 1992.

Language: The official language is English. Local patois is also spoken.

Religion: Protestant majority (Church of God, Anglican, Baptist and Methodist) with Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Bahai communities. Rastafarianism, a religion based on belief in the divinity of the late Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari), is also widely practised.

Time: GMT - 5.

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 50Hz, single phase. American 2-pin plugs are standard, but many hotels offer, in addition, 220 volts AC, 50Hz, single phase, from 3-pin sockets.

Communications:

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 1 876. There are no area codes. Outgoing international code: 011.

Mobile telephone: TDMA network, non-GSM compatible. Handsets can be hired from Cable & Wireless (tel: (1 888) 344 4825 (toll free; Jamaica only); web site: <http://www.cwjamaica.com>). A deposit is payable (J\$5000), as are an access charge (J\$100 per day), a registration fee (J\$740) and a hire charge (J\$100 per day).

Fax: This service is available from 0700-1000 daily at the Cable & Wireless office in Kingston. Widely available in most hotels and offices.

Internet/E-mail: There are a few free Internet kiosks at shopping centres in Kingston; more should soon be available. Cybercafés exist mainly in the Kingston area. ISPs include Cable & Wireless (web site: <http://www.cwjamaica.com>).

Telegram: Facilities are widely available.

Post: Airmail to Europe takes up to four days. Post office hours: 0830-1630 Monday to Friday.

Press: Daily papers are The Daily Gleaner, The Daily Star and The Jamaica Herald.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:
MHz17.8415.226.1955.975

Voice of America:
MHz13.749.5906.1305.995

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	No	Yes
Australian	Yes	No	Yes
Canadian	Yes	No	Yes
USA	1	No	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	No	Yes
Japanese	Yes	No	Yes

PASSPORTS: Valid passport required by all except the following:

(a) 1. nationals of the USA holding a certified copy of a birth certificate and photo identification (eg driver's licence or student ID).

Taiwanese nationals also need to complete an Affidavit of Identity Form (available from the Consulate) and submit an additional passport photo.

VISAS: Required by all except the following:

(a) nationals of EU countries (nationals of the UK and Ireland for a stay not exceeding 6 months; nationals of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden for a period not exceeding 90 days;

(b) nationals of Commonwealth countries for stays not exceeding 90 days (except nationals of Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Nigeria who do need visas);

(c) nationals of the USA (including Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico) and Canada for stays not exceeding 6 months;
(d) nationals of Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Liechtenstein, Mexico, Norway, San Marino, Surinam, Switzerland and Turkey for stays not exceeding 90 days;
(e) nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Hong Kong (SAR), and Uruguay for stays not exceeding 30 days;
(f) nationals of Venezuela for stays not exceeding 14 days.
All of the above must have evidence of sufficient funds and a return or outward-bound ticket for their next destination.

Note: (a) Except for persons in certain categories, a Work Permit is required for a business visit. The Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy or High Commission) can advise. (b) Nationals of the following countries can obtain a visa on arrival, provided holding valid onward or return tickets and evidence of sufficient funds: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia. These visas cost US\$20.

Types of visa and cost: Entry and Transit. Cost: £25.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy or High Commission); see address section.

Application requirements: (a) 1 passport-size photo. (b) Valid passport. (c) Completed application form. (d) For Business visas, letter from company. (e) Fee, plus £5 for return postage. (f) Proof of onward flight and sufficient funds.

Working days required: 48 hours, but longer in cases where applications are referred to Immigration authorities in Kingston.

Temporary residence: Enquire at Embassy.

4 MONEY

Currency: Jamaican Dollar (J\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of J\$500, 100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of J\$5, 1, and 25 and 10 cents.

Currency exchange: Money can be exchanged at the airport as well as at banks, hotels and bureaux de change. Receipts must be retained, as changing money on the black market is illegal. There are cash dispensers all over the island.

Credit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are all widely accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Eurocheques: Now accepted by all commercial banks.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Jamaican Dollar against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00=62.2063.0163.7066.01 \$1.00=41.9042.0044.0045.20

Currency restrictions: The import and export of both local and foreign currency are unrestricted, subject to declaration.

Banking hours: 0900-1400 Monday to Thursday; 0900-1200 and 1430-1700 Friday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Jamaica without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 1 litre of spirits (excluding rum); 1 litre of wine; 340ml of eau de toilette; 150g of perfume.

Prohibited items: Explosives, firearms, dangerous drugs (including marijuana), meat, flowers, fresh fruit, rum, vegetables (unless canned), coffee in any form and honey.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Feb 28 Ash Wednesday. Apr 13 Good Friday. Apr 16 Easter Monday. May 23 Labour Day. Aug 5 Emancipation Day. Aug 6 Independence Day. Oct 15 National Heroes' Day. Dec 25-26 Christmas. Jan 1 2002 New Year's Day. Feb 13 Ash Wednesday. Mar 29 Good Friday. Apr 1 Easter Monday. May 23 Labour Day. Aug 4 Emancipation Day. Aug 5 Independence Day. Oct 21 National Heroes' Day. Dec 25-26 Christmas.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	1
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	2	-

1: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers over one year of age coming from infected areas.

2: Mains water is normally chlorinated, and whilst relatively safe may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available. Milk is pasteurised and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat.

Hepatitis A occurs.

Health care: Health insurance is recommended. There are 16 public and 6 private hospitals.

Travel - International

AIR: Jamaica's national airline is Air Jamaica (JM). British Airways operates four flights a week non-stop from London to Kingston. Other airlines serving Jamaica include American Airlines, Air Canada, ALM, BWIA, Trans World Airlines and Northwest Airlines.

APPROXIMATE FLIGHT TIMES: From Kingston or Montego Bay to London is 10 hours (direct flight), to Los Angeles is 5 hours 30 minutes and to New York is 3 hours 20 minutes.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS: Norman Manley International (KIN) (Kingston) is 17 km (11 miles) southeast of the city. Coach, bus and taxis depart to the city (journey time - 30-60 minutes). Airport facilities include banks/bureaux de change (open until last flight), bars, restaurants, shops and duty-free facilities and car hire. Car hire firms include Hertz and Avis. Montego Bay (MBJ) (International) is 3km (2 miles) north of the city. Duty-free facilities are available.

Air Jamaica Express runs shuttle services between the airports.

DEPARTURE TAX: J\$1000 (payable in cash only) for all passengers over two years of age at airports and at the seaports of Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. Transit passengers are exempt.

SEA: Both Montego Bay and Ocho Rios are ports of call for the following cruise lines: Celebrity, Carnival Cruise, Costa Cruise Line, Premier Cruises, Princess Cruises, Norwegian, Royal Caribbean, Sun Cruises and Holland America. Other passenger/freight lines (Geest) sail from North, South and Central American ports. Lauro Lines sail to Kingston from the Mediterranean.

Travel - Internal

AIR: The new Air Jamaica Express (formerly Trans Jamaica Airlines) runs services to and from Kingston, Port Antonio, Ocho Rios and Negril. During the winter season there are frequent daily flights, as well as shuttle flights between the two major airports. For more information contact the airline (tel: 922 4661 or (1 800) 523 5585 (toll free; Jamaica only) or (1 888) 359 2475 (toll free; North America and the Caribbean only).

SEA: There are a number of local operators running yacht tours around the island, as well as cruises. Boats and yachts can also be hired on a daily or weekly basis. Contact the Tourist Board for details.

RAIL: Since 1994, the service has been suspended with no immediate plans to resume a daily scheduled service.

ROAD: There is a 17,000km (11,000-mile) road network, one-third tarred. Traffic in Jamaica drives on the left. Speed limits are 30 mph (48 kph) in towns and 50 mph (80 kph) on highways. Bus: Reliable service in Kingston and Montego Bay; less reliable for trans-island travel. Coach and minibus tours are bookable at most hotels. JUTA (tel: 952 0813; fax 952 5355) is the main provider of scheduled and unscheduled bus/minibus and vehicle charter services. Taxi: These have red plates marked PPV (Public Passenger Vehicle). They charge fixed rates, and it is best to check standard charges prior to embarkation. A 10% tip is usual. Car hire: Most major towns, as well as airports, have hire facilities, both local and international. Hire can also be arranged via hotels. Drivers must be aged 25 or over. There is a general consumption tax of 15% on all car hire transactions. Documentation: A full UK driving licence is valid for up to a year.

URBAN: Most transport in the capital is now by private minibus.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Montego Bay to other major cities/towns in Jamaica.

AirRoadRail
Kingston0.303.004.00
Negril0.201.30-
Ocho Rios0.302.00-
Port Antonio0.404.30-

8 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There are over 144 hotels and guest-houses throughout the island; all are subject to 15% general consumption tax. 90% of all hotels belong to the Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association, 2 Ardenne Road, Kingston 10 (tel: 926 3635/6; fax: 929 1054; e-mail: jhta@colis.com). There is an annual 'Spring Break' over March/April, during which students vacationing in Jamaica are offered discount rates at selected hotels. Contact the Jamaica Tourist Board for details (see address section).

Grading: Hotels are government-controlled in four categories: A, B, C and D. The categories are based on rates charged. Many of the hotels offer accommodation according to one of a number of 'Plans' widely used in the Caribbean; these include Modified American Plan (MAP), which consists of room, breakfast and dinner, and European Plan (EP), which consists of room only.

SELF-CATERING: There are over 837 cottages for rent on the island. Information is available from the Jamaica Tourist Board. The properties range from small apartments to houses with several bedrooms. Some tour operators can arrange villa accommodation including car rental and tours, as well as travel to and from the villa. Information is also available from the Jamaican Association of Villas & Apartments Ltd (JAVA), PO Box 298, 11A Pineapple Place, Ochooooo Rios, St Ann (tel: 974 2508 or 974 2763; tel/fax: 974 2967; e-mail: java-jam-villas.com; web site: <http://www.villasinjamaica.com>).

CAMPING/CARAVANNING: The island has many campsites, including the well-known Strawberry Fields, which offers all types of facilities, including the hiring of tents and ancillary equipment.

9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

Jamaica is a tropical island of lush green vegetation, waterfalls and dazzling white beaches. Columbus was in the habit of declaring that each new island he chanced upon was more beautiful than the last, but he seems to have maintained a lifelong enthusiasm for the beauty of Jamaica, despite having been marooned there for a year on his last voyage. One of the larger islands of the Caribbean, it offers excellent tourist facilities and superb beaches and scenery. For the purposes of this guide the main resorts in Jamaica have been divided into the following **sections:** Montego Bay (including the northwest coast resort of Negril); the North Coast Resorts (including Falmouth, Ocho Rios and Port Antonio); and Kingston and the South (including Mandeville and Spanish Town).

Montego Bay

Montego Bay (or Mo'Bay, as it is more colloquially called) is the capital of Jamaican tourism and market town for a large part of western Jamaica. Dating back to 1492, Montego Bay is Jamaica's second-largest city and one of the most modern in the Caribbean. From Gloucester and Kent avenues there is a superb view onto the clear Caribbean waters - the main tourist attraction - and the long reef protecting the bay. Most of the hotels are found on a strip of coastline about a **mile and a half long. There are three main beaches:** Doctor's Cave Beach (so named because it was once owned by a Dr McCatty and had a cave that has since eroded away) which has beautiful white sand, and where the exceptionally clear water is believed to be fed by mineral springs; Walter Fletcher Beach, nearest the centre and a short walk from the Upper Deck Hotel; and Cornwall Beach, which is a few yards from the local Tourist Board Office. A short way inland from the Bay is Rose Hall, a restored Great House on a sugar plantation.

Rocklands Feeding Station: Rocklands Feeding Station is home to some of the most exotic birds in the world, such as the mango hummingbird, orange quit and the national bird of Jamaica, the Doctor Bird. Visitors are allowed to feed the birds at certain times of the day. Very popular is a motor coach ride through thick mountain forests into the interior, passing through banana and coconut plantations and Ipswich Caves (a series of deep limestone recesses) to the sugar estate of the famous Appleton Rum Factory and Catadupa, where shirts and dresses are made to measure.

Negril: Negril is 80km (50 miles) west of Montego Bay and has a beach stretching for 11km (7 miles) which offers sailing, water-skiing, deep-sea fishing, scuba diving, parasailing and windsurfing. First coming to attention as an artists' centre and, later, as a focus of 'alternative' culture in the 1960s, it is becoming increasingly popular as a holiday destination which, perhaps untypically, seems likely to preserve much of its original character - indeed, the law requires all buildings to be of modest proportions. Along the street, entrepreneurial Jamaicans sell a variety of craft goods from the many shanty-like shops in Negril. There is also a hectic nightlife in the many clubs that have, over the years, proliferated along the beach. Rick's Café is a favourite haunt both for Jamaicans and visitors; located at West Point, which is as far west as Jamaica goes, it is famous as the place from which to observe the sun going down.

North Coast Resorts

Falmouth: Falmouth is a delightful harbour resort, 42km (26 miles) from Montego Bay. From here one can visit Rafters Village for rafting on the Martha Brae, and a fascinating crocodile farm called Jamaica Swamp Safaris. There is also a plantation mansion, Greenwood Great House, once owned by the Barrett Brownings. The Church of St Paul offers Sunday services, where visitors can listen to the choir singing.

Ocho Rios: Ocho Rios lies roughly 108km (67 miles) east of Montego Bay. The name is said to have come from the old Spanish word for roaring river or, in modern Spanish, eight rivers. Ocho Rios was once a sleepy fishing village, and although there are now resort facilities, international hotels and restaurants offering a variety of cuisines, the town has kept something of the sleepy atmosphere of small-town Jamaica. One of the most stunning sights in Jamaica is Dunn's River Falls, a crystal water stairway which leads to the nearby botanical gardens. Ocho Rios is known as the garden-lover's paradise, and the Shaw Park Botanical Gardens exhibit the fascinating variety of the area's exotic flora, for which the town is celebrated. Not surprisingly, two of the most popular tours available are to working plantations at Brimmer Hall and Prospect where sugar, bananas and spices are still grown and harvested, using many of the traditional skills handed down through generations. Any sightseeing itinerary should include a drive along Fern Gully, a road running along an old riverbed that winds through a 6.5km (4-mile) valley of ferns.

Another tour is the Jamaica Night on the White River, a canoe ride up the torchlit river to the sound of drums. Dinner and open-air bar is available on the riverbank (Sunday evenings). Columbus Park, at Discovery Bay, commemorates Columbus' arrival in Jamaica with a museum and 24-hour open-air park exhibiting relics of Jamaican history. Other tours include Runaway Bay, which has fine beaches, excellent scuba diving and horseriding; and the Runaway Caves nearby, which offer a boat ride 35m (120ft) below ground on a lake in the limestone Green Grotto.

Port Antonio: Port Antonio, one of the Caribbean's most beautiful bays, is surrounded by the Blue Mountains. The town dates back to the 16th century, and sights include Mitchell's Folly, a 2-storey mansion built by the American millionaire Dan Mitchell in 1905, and the ruins of a 60-room Great House. The surrounding sea is rich in game fish, with blue marlin as the great prize (there is an annual Blue Marlin Tournament run alongside the Jamaican International Fishing Tournament in Port Antonio every autumn); there are also kingfish, yellowtail, wahoo and bonito. The island's most palatial homes nestle in the foothills. Rafting is available on the Rio Grande, comprising 2-hour trips on 2-passenger bamboo rafts, which begin high in the Blue Mountains at Berrydale, sail past plantations of bananas and sugar cane, and end up at Margaret's Bay. The scenic Somerset Falls nearby are a popular picnic spot. Beaches in the Port Antonio area include San San and Boston (where the Jamaican 'jerk pork' is found), while the Blue Lagoon is a salt-water cove offering fishing, swimming and water-skiing and is considered one of the finest coves in the Caribbean.

Kingston and the South

Kingston: Kingston is Jamaica's capital city and cultural centre. With the largest natural harbour in the Caribbean (and seventh-largest in the world), Kingston is also an industrial centre where Georgian architecture mixes with modern office blocks while, on the outskirts, spreading suburbs house the hundreds of thousands who increasingly work in the city. Although most tourists head for the beaches and resorts, Kingston has much to offer in the way of sightseeing. The National Gallery of Art has a colourful display of modern art and is recommended. Hope Botanical Gardens contain a wide variety of trees and plants, and are particularly famous for orchids. A band plays here on Sunday afternoons. There is a Crafts Market on King Street and the Port Royal, on top of the peninsula bordering Kingston Harbour, is a museum to the time when Port Royal was known as the 'richest and wickedest city on earth' under the domination of Captain Morgan and his buccaneers. The White Marl Arawak Museum is also worth visiting; here one can see artefacts and relics of the ancient culture of the Arawak Indians. The grounds of the University of the West Indies, built on what was once a sugar plantation, are open to the public. Caymanas Park is a popular racetrack, where one can bet on the horses every Wednesday and Saturday and also during public holidays.

Spanish Town: Spanish Town, a short drive to the west of Kingston, is the former capital of Jamaica. The Spanish Town Square is said to be one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in the Western hemisphere. The Spanish Cathedral of St Jago de la Vega is the oldest in the West Indies.

Mandeville: Mandeville is set amid beautiful gardens and fruits, at the heart of Jamaica's citrus industry, 600m (2000ft) above sea level and the highest town on the island. Mandeville offers cool relief from the heat of the coast, and has a golf course and tennis and horseriding facilities. The town is the centre of the bauxite industry, and as such is a good starting point for trips to the surrounding areas.

On the south coast are Milk River Spa, a naturally radioactive mineral bath with waters at a temperature of 33°C (86°F); Lover's Leap in the Santa Cruz Mountains, a sheer 18m (60ft) cliff overhanging the sea; Treasure Beach and the resort of Bluefields.

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Watersports: Watersports: Many hotels have swimming pools and beaches. The best beaches for bathing are mainly on the northern coast. Surfing is also best on the north coast, east of Port Antonio, where long lines of breakers roll into Boston Bay. Most beach hotels have sunfish, sailfish and/or windsurfing boards for hire. To charter larger boats contact the Royal Jamaica Yacht Club. Facilities for water-skiing are offered at most beach hotels and at the Kingston Ski Club at Morgan's Harbour.

Divng: Diving: Jamaica has many attractions for divers, including close-to-shore wrecks, sponge forests, underwater caves and coral reefs. In some areas, visibility is exceptional, reaching 100 feet. Popular dive sites include the Throne Room near Negril, where it is possible to see corals, sponges, nurse sharks and cubera snapper; Ricky's Reef, with brightly coloured fish; and the wreck of the Kathryn. There are many professional dive operators on the island; contact the Tourist Board for a list of licensed operators (tel: (1 800) 233 4583; toll free). Shops are equipped for rentals and offer guided snorkel and scuba trips.

Fishing: Fishing: Fresh- and sea-water fishing are popular. Mountain mullet, hognose mullet, drummer and small snook are caught in rivers. Deep-sea fishing charters can be arranged through hotels in main resorts. Spearfishing is permitted among the reefs. No licence is needed. Entry forms are available for the Blue Marlin Tournament competition held in Port Antonio during September.

Golf: Golf: Jamaica has developed some of the Caribbean's most beautiful and challenging golf courses. Montego Bay is the best area and it is not necessary to be resident at a hotel to play on its three courses. Other golf courses include Caymanas Golf Course (which hosts the Jamaica Open and Pro-Am every November) and Constant Spring near Kingston. For those keen on mountain climbing and hiking, the Blue Mountains, which reach above 7000 feet, offer unspoilt scenery and a variety of flora and fauna. It is best to go hiking with a guide. Some stables for horseriding are open all year, others run schedules during the winter season and most arrangements can be made through hotels. Cricket is the 'national obsession' and matches are played from January to August in Sabina Park, Kingston and other locations throughout the island. Probably the second most popular sport is football, which is played throughout the year. There are plenty of tennis courts, and most hotels without their own court have access to those nearby. Polo has a tradition going back over a century; matches are played all year round in Kingston. Matches at Kingston and at Drax Hall, near Ocho Rios, are played every week. Horse races are held at Caymanas Race Track, Kingston.

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: Jamaican food is full of fire, taking advantage of pungent spices and peppers. Jamaican dishes include 'rice and peas', a tasty dish with no peas at all but with kidney beans, white rice, coconut milk, scallions (spring onions) and coconut oil. Another dish is salt fish (dried cod) and ackee (the cooked fruit of the ackee tree), curried goat and rice (spicy and strong), Jamaican pepperpot soup (salt pork, salt beef, okra and Indian kale known as callaloo), chicken fricassé Jamaican-style (a rich chicken stew with carrots, scallions, yams, onions, tomatoes and peppers prepared in unrefined coconut oil) and roast suckling pig (a 3-month-old piglet which is boned and stuffed with rice, peppers, diced yam and thyme mixed with shredded coconut and

corn meal). Patties are the staple snack of Jamaica (pastries filled with ground beef and bread crumbs) and can be found everywhere, but vary in price and filling. Waiter service is usually available in catering establishments. Drink: Jamaican rum is world-famous, especially Gold Label and Appleton. Rumona is a delicious rum cordial. Red Stripe beer is excellent, as is Tia Maria (a Blue Mountain coffee and chocolate liqueur). Fresh fruit juice is also recommended, as is Blue Mountain coffee, an excellent variety. Bars have table and/or counter service. There are no licensing hours and alcohol can be bought all day.

Nightlife: There is no shortage of night-time entertainment on the island that is the home of reggae music. Every town or village has some sort of nightlife, and there are regular street dances. Folkloric shows at larger resort hotels are held and steel bands often play. At least once a week there is a torchlit, steel-band show with limbo dancing and fire-eating demonstrations. Nightclubs feature jazz, soca, reggae and other music. For details of events, visitors should consult local newspapers. The Jamaica Tourist Board arranges 'Meet the People' evenings in various scenic locations through the island. Contact the Tourist Board in Kingston, Montego Bay, Port Antonio or Ocho Rios.

Shopping: Special purchases are locally made items and duty-free bargains. Crafts include hand-loomed fabrics, embroidery, silk screening, woodcarvings, oil paintings, woven straw items and sandalmaking. Custom-made rugs and reproductions of pewter and china from the 17th-century ruins of the ancient submerged city of Port Royal can be bought in the In-Craft workshop. At Highgate Village in the mountains, Quakers run a workshop specialising in wicker and wood furniture, floor mats and other tropical furnishings. Jamaican rum, the Rumona liqueur (the world's only rum-based liqueur, hard to find outside the island) and Ian Sangsters Rum Cream are unique purchases. Other local specialities are Pepper Jellies, jams and spices. There are shops offering facilities for 'in-bond' shopping which allows visitors to purchase a range of international goods free of tax or duty at very competitive prices. These goods are sealed (hence the 'bond') and because goods are tax- or duty-free can only be opened once away from **Jamaican waters or territory. All goods must be paid for in Jamaican currency.**
Shopping hours: 0900-1700 Monday to Saturday. Some shops close half day Wednesday in Kingston, and Thursday in the rest of the island.

Special Events: The following is a selection of the major festivals and other special events celebrated annually in Jamaica. For a complete list, contact the Jamaica Tourist Board (see address section).

Jan-Feb 28 Annual National Exhibition, Kingston. Feb Bob Marley's Birthday Bash, Kingston. Mar 30-Apr 1 Jamaica Orchid Society Annual Spring Show. Apr Easter Race Meet (motor racing event), St Ann. Apr 22-29 Carnival, Kingston. Jun-Jul National Finals of the Performing Arts, Little Theatre, Kingston. Jun 9-17 Ocho Rios Jazz Festival. Aug Annual Reggae Sumfest, Montego Bay; Mello Go Roun' (cultural festival), St Andrew. Aug 6 Independence Day Parade, Kingston. Oct James Bond Oracabessa Marlin Tournament, St Mary. Nov Jamaican Film and Music Festival, Montego Bay.

Throughout the year there are also fishing, equestrian, golf, tennis, fashion, musical and horticultural events.

Social Conventions: Handshaking is the customary form of greeting. Normal codes of practice should be observed when visiting someone's home. Jamaicans are generally very hospitable and guests will usually be encouraged to stay for a meal. In these instances a small gift is appreciated. Casual wear is suitable during the day, but shorts and swimsuits must be confined to beaches and poolsides. Evening dress varies from very casual in Negril to quite formal during the season in other resorts, where some hotels and restaurants require men to wear jackets and ties at dinner. In the summer people dress up less. As tourism is a major industry in Jamaica, the visitor is well catered for, and hotel and restaurant staff are generally friendly and efficient.

Outside Kingston the pace of life is relaxed and people are welcoming and hospitable. Music and African culture are very apparent, as are old British colonial influences. Signs can be seen on the island claiming 'Jah lives', Jah being the name given to God by the Rastafarians. Possession of marijuana may lead to imprisonment and deportation. Above all the visitor must not try to smuggle it out of the country since the authorities are aware of all the tricks. Tipping: Most Jamaican hotels and restaurants add a service charge of 10%; otherwise 10-15% is expected. Chambermaids, waiters, hotel bellboys and airport porters all expect tips. Taxi drivers receive 10% of the fare.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Jamaica is one of the world's largest producers of bauxite, which accounts for half of the country's export earnings: despite expanding production, low world prices and falling demand have kept revenues static. After a period of rapid expansion in the mid-1970s, tourism has become the major source of foreign exchange. Agriculture (principally sugar cane, bananas, coffee and cocoa) has maintained a steady position in the economy, with improved efficiency and production methods offset by climatic conditions and the state of the world markets. The manufacturing sector produces cement, textiles, tobacco and other consumer goods among the products. Imported oil and gas account for the bulk of the island's energy requirements. Recent economic policy has pursued a familiar course of privatisation of state-owned enterprises, deregulation, and tight budgetary controls, implemented with IMF support and aimed principally at reducing Jamaica's large overseas debts. Reform of the tax and banking systems followed in the mid-1990s. Although pressure on the Jamaican exchequer has eased, the economy is still in some difficulty: inflation and unemployment remain stubbornly high. The USA dominates Jamaica's trade, providing half the country's imports and taking over 30% of exports (followed by the UK, Canada and Norway). Jamaica is a member of the Caribbean trading bloc, CARICOM, and of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Business: The traditional 'shirtjac' (jacket without a tie), also known locally as a kareba, which was popular until the 1970s, has been replaced by a suit, jacket and tie. Usual formalities are required and appointments and business cards are normal. All trade samples now need an import licence which can be obtained from the Trade Board, 107 Constant Spring Road, Kingston 10 (tel: 969 0478; fax: 925 6513; e-mail: tboard@colis.com). Samples of non-commercial value are allowed into the country without a licence prior to arrival, although it may still be necessary to visit the office of the Trade Administrator to exchange the licence copy for a clearance copy which the customs authorities demand before clearing the goods. Office hours: 0830-1630 Monday to Friday.

Commercial Information: The following organisation can offer advice: Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and Associated Chambers of Commerce of Jamaica, 7 East Parade, Kingston (tel: 922 0150; fax: 924 9056; e-mail: jamcham@cwjamaica.com; web site: <http://www.jcc.org.jm>).

Conferences/Conventions: The Jamaican Conference Centre in Kingston was opened by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1983. There are also several hotels in Jamaica with dedicated conference facilities. Seating is available for up to 1000 persons at some centres. The Jamaica Tourist Board (see address section) can supply information.

13 CLIMATE

Tropical all year. Temperate in mountain areas. The rainy months are May and October, but showers may occur at any time. Cooler evenings.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens; light woollens are advised for evenings. Avoid synthetics. Waterproofing is necessary all year round.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Initially occupied by the Spanish, then the British in 1655, Jamaica soon became the most important of the British Caribbean slaving colonies. Within 100 years, virtually the whole island had been divided up into large plantations owned by absentee landlords and worked by forced labour imported from West Africa. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, Jamaica became relatively prosperous under orthodox colonial rule until the early 20th century when a spate of natural disasters, compounded by the depression of the 1930s, put the economy into decline. The 1930s also saw the rise of black political activity and trade union organisation, forming in the process the rivalries which characterise modern Jamaican politics. Since independence in 1962, the political arena has been dominated by the struggle between the right-wing Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) and the leftist People's National Party (PNP). The JLP held power throughout the 1960s, but lost the national election of 1972 to the PNP under the leadership of Michael Manley, whose father Norman had founded the party. Despite growing economic difficulties, Manley and the PNP were returned to office in 1976 with an increased majority. The next three years brought no improvement in the economy and political violence increased alarmingly, as a result of which the PNP was defeated and the JLP under Edward Seaga formed the next government. Seaga adopted a pro-American stance in economic and foreign affairs, loosening controls on foreign investment in Jamaica and contributing troops to the American-led invasion of Grenada in 1983. Manley was eventually returned to power in 1989. During that term of office, the PNP government dropped much of its previous radical agenda, effecting free-market economic policies and making great efforts to stay on good terms with the USA. In poor health, Manley retired in early 1992 and was replaced by his former deputy, P J Patterson. Elections in April 1993 confirmed Patterson in the post with a landslide victory. Demands for constitutional and electoral reform continued, and the JLP repeatedly accused the Government of deliberately delaying progress towards such reform. Industrial relations were initially fraught, and the country's poor economic performance (with a high inflation rate and increasing trade deficit) compounded widespread dissatisfaction with the Government throughout 1994 and 1995. In 1996, in a bid to stabilise the economy and halt continued industrial unrest the Government proposed a 'social contract' with the trade unions and the private sector. At the general election of 18 December 1997, the PNP won 56% of votes cast and 50 of the 60 seats in the House of Representatives; the JLP obtained 39% of the vote and 10 seats. Patterson was subsequently sworn in as Prime Minister for a third consecutive term, with an undertaking to institute significant constitutional reform during his forthcoming term of office. The island's poor economic condition has dominated Patterson's latest term of office. Tax rises in 1999 were followed by riots, forcing the Government to back down.

Government: The head of state is the British monarch, represented by a Governor General who has nominal and rarely used powers. The 60-member House of Representatives, which is responsible for legislation, is elected every five years by universal suffrage. An upper house, the Senate, has 21 appointees to ratify legislation.

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Everybody knows Jamaica as the home of Bob Marley, but there's more to it than just reggae and Rastafarians. The third largest island in the Caribbean has everything - wonderful white-sand beaches, mountains, waterfalls, wildlife and the best coffee in the world. Kingston is its lively capital, surprising visitors with elegant, old colonial houses against the stunning backdrop of the Blue Mountains. Jamaica has gained a reputation for violence, and there certainly are no-go areas in Kingston, but most Jamaicans are overwhelmingly friendly and fun-loving.

The two main tourist resorts are Negril and Montego Bay - known to one and all as Mo' Bay, Jamaica's second city. Negril boasts one of the longest beaches in the country, some 11km (7m) of it, with all the watersports you'd expect in a lively resort. But venture a little way along the coast and you'll find 'the real Jamaica' with fishing villages like Treasure Beach, Port Antonio and Oracabessa providing quieter retreats.

Tourism grows, encouraged by the governing People's National Party that won its third successive victory in the 1997 elections. Many visitors return as they succumb to Jamaica's charms, the beautiful scenery, the warmth of the people, and of course wherever you go there is always music, music, music.

More countries : <http://www.umzugs.com>