

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATIONS

From the lazy, beach-oriented playgrounds of the resort centers to the offbeat, atmospheric towns of the western and southern coasts, Jamaica offers a compelling range of accommodations for every budget and style. If you're traveling on a shoestring, head to a simple guest house, where rooms can be had for US\$30 to US\$60. Midrange hotels are priced up to US\$150: if this is your budget, you'll enjoy a wide range of choice in appealing small hotels, many with splendid gardens, sea views or both. If traveling with your family or a group, consider one of the hundreds of villas available to rent across the island. And if you've decided to splurge on something sumptuous, Jamaica's luxury hotels rank among the finest in the world.

Throughout this book and unless otherwise stated, prices (given in US dollars) are for double rooms in high season and refer to European Plan, or room only with bathroom. Don't forget to check if the quoted rate includes tax and service charge; if not, the compulsory 6.25% to 15% GCT (and possibly a 10% to 15% service charge) may be added to your bill.

Low season (summer) is usually mid-April to early-December; the high season (winter) is the remainder of the year, when hotel prices increase by 40% or more and popular hotels are often booked solid. All-inclusive packages are usually based on three-day minimum stays.

Even out of high season, it is advisable to book top-end hotels and all-inclusive resorts well in advance. You should make reservations directly with hotels, preferably by phone or email, or use a travel agent, hotel representative or online reservation service. Online services to consider include **Travelocity** ([www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)) and **Expedia** ([www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)).

## All-Inclusive Resorts

All-inclusive resorts offer a cash-free, self-contained vacation: you pay a set price and (theoretically) nothing more once you arrive.

## PRACTICALITIES

- Electricity is 110V, 50Hz. Sockets throughout Jamaica are usually two or three pin – the US standard.
- The *Jamaica Gleaner* is the high-standard newspaper; its rival is the *Jamaica Observer*. The best domestic magazine is *Air Jamaica's Sky Writings*.
- There are 30 radio stations and seven TV channels; most hotels have satellite TV.
- The video system used is NTSC, the same as in the US.
- Metric and imperial measurements are both used. Distances are measured in meters and kilometers, and gas in liters, but coffee (and ganja) is most often sold by the pound.

**BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE**

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Some of the resorts are undeniably classy. The prospect of leaving your wallet in the room safe and testing your all-you-can-eat-and-drink capacity each night *does* carry a certain appeal. If this sounds like your kind of holiday, you have many options.

The all-inclusive experience, however, precludes discovering the colorful, gritty, off-the-beaten-track Jamaica, and mingling with locals. All-inclusive meals and drinks discourage many guests from exploring Jamaica's wonderfully diverse independent restaurants and nightspots. Most resorts offer excursions, and you're free to explore on your own, but a majority of guests never leave the property.

Rates for all-inclusive resorts presented in this book are guidelines based on each resort's unpublicized 'rack' or 'standard' rate. You will likely spend considerably less depending on the source of booking, season and current specials. Most resorts perpetually publicize special rates; further discounts can be found either on their websites or on booking sites like Expedia and Travelocity.

The major all-inclusive resort chains include the following:

**Couples** (in the USA ☎ 800-268-7537 or 954-416-1280, in the UK ☎ 1582-794-420; [www.couples.com](http://www.couples.com))

**Franklyn D Resorts** (in the USA ☎ 888-337-5437, in the UK ☎ 1582-792-260; [www.fdrholidays.com](http://www.fdrholidays.com)) Family-oriented resort that also operates the Pebbles resort.

**Riu** (in the USA ☎ 888-666-8816, in Canada ☎ 866-845-3765, in Spain ☎ 34-971-269-460; [www.riu.com](http://www.riu.com))

**Sandals** (in the USA ☎ 800-726-3257 or ☎ 305-284-1300, in Canada ☎ 800-545-8283, in the UK ☎ 0207-823-8758; [www.sandals.com](http://www.sandals.com)) Also operates Beaches.

**Superclubs** (in the USA ☎ 800-467-8737 or ☎ 954-925-0925, in Canada ☎ 800-701-5923, in the UK ☎ 0208-339-4150; [www.superclubs.com](http://www.superclubs.com)) Also operates Breezes, Starfish, Grand Lido and Hedonism resorts.

**B&Bs**

A B&B (bed and breakfast) is usually a lodging where the owner plays live-in host and provides breakfast in the quoted room rate.

In Jamaica, some establishments purporting to be B&Bs actually charge for breakfast, and true B&Bs are few and far between.

**Camping**

Jamaica is not developed for campers, and it is unsafe to camp anywhere in the wild. Many budget properties will let you pitch a tent on their lawns for a small fee. Some even rent tents and have shower, toilet and laundry facilities.

**Guest Houses**

Most guest houses are inexpensive, and are good places to mix with the locals. Some are self-contained apartments, and some are indistinguishable from hotels or faceless motels. The best offer economical, unusual and comfortable lodging off the beaten track.

Companies that represent guesthouses in Jamaica include these ones:

**Carolyn's Caribbean Cottages** (☎ 382-6384; [www.carolynscaribbeancottages.com](http://www.carolynscaribbeancottages.com)) Operates a wide range of cottages islandwide.

**Port Antonio Guest House Association** (☎ 993-7118; [www.go-jam.com](http://www.go-jam.com)) Represents guest houses in Portland parish and across Jamaica.

**Homestays**

You can make your own arrangements to stay with individuals or families who do not rent rooms as a normal practice. The following agencies coordinate homestays:

**Countrystyle Community Tours** (☎ 962-7758; [countrystyle@mail.infochan.com](mailto:countrystyle@mail.infochan.com); PO Box 60, Mandeville) Can arrange homestays in central Jamaica as part of community tours.

**Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency** (☎ 610-0818; [www.stea.net](http://www.stea.net); 3 Grants Office Complex, Albert Town) Coordinates homestays in the wild and woolly Cockpit Country.

**Hotels**

Jamaican hotels run the gamut, from simple roadside lodgings to wildly expensive palaces. Anyone who wants to support the local economy should seek out independent hotels. **Insiders Jamaica** ([www.insidersjamaica.com](http://www.insidersjamaica.com)), a website created by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), promotes small hotels and inns.

For something different, Jamaica offers travelers some quintessentially Caribbean boutique hotels that are unpretentious and gracious. Some of the best are available through **Island Outpost properties** (in the USA ☎ 800-688-7678, in the UK ☎ 800-6887 6781; [www.islandoutpost.com](http://www.islandoutpost.com); 2107 N Decatur Rd Ste 432, Decatur GA 30033, USA).

**Villa Rentals**

Jamaica boasts hundreds of private villas for rent, from modest cottages to lavish beachfront estates. They range from one to eight bedrooms in size and offer additional living space such as living rooms, dining areas, patios or verandas. Most have their own pool and are fully staffed. They're cost-effective for those traveling with family or a group of friends.

Rates start as low as US\$100 per week for budget units with minimal facilities. More upscale villas begin at about US\$750 weekly and can run to US\$10,000 or more for a sumptuous multibedroom estate. Rates fall as much as 30% in summer. A large deposit (usually 25% or more) is required.

Two good starting points are the **Caribbean Villas Owners Association** (☎ 877-248-2862; [www.cvoa.com](http://www.cvoa.com)) and the **Jamaican Association of Villas & Apartments** (JAVA; ☎ 974-2508; [www.villasinjamaica.com](http://www.villasinjamaica.com); PO Box 298, Ocho Rios).

Here are other villa-rental companies:

**Caribbean Way** (☎ 877-953-7400, in North America ☎ 514-393-3003; [www.caribbeanway.com](http://www.caribbeanway.com); Ste 1305, 740 Notre Dame W, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 3X6).

**Sun Villas** (☎ 888-625-6007, in the USA ☎ 941-922-9191; [www.sunvillas.com](http://www.sunvillas.com); 1410 South Lake Shore Dr, Sarasota, FL 34231)

**Villascaribe** (☎ 800-645-7498, in North America ☎ 678-417-0081; [www.villascaribe.com](http://www.villascaribe.com))

**ACTIVITIES**

For an island its size, Jamaica packs an impressive punch with sports and outdoor activities for those who bored of bumming on the beach. Reefs beckon for diving, mountains for hiking, rivers for rafting, and the island is renowned for a dozen golf courses. For more on outdoor activities, see p53.

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Most business offices are open 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. Very few offices are open Saturday.

Most stores open at either 8am or 9am and close at 5pm, though on Saturday they close at noon. Generally shops are closed on Sunday, except pharmacies, which are open every day.

**CHILDREN**

All-inclusive resorts such as Franklyn D Resort, FDR Pebbles, Beaches (Boscobel, Negril and Whitehouse) and Starfish (Trelawny) cater to families and have an impressive range of amenities for children.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan, gives you the lowdown on preparing for family travel.

**Practicalities**

Many hotels offer free accommodations or reduced rates for young children in their parents' room; many provide a babysitter/nanny by advance request. Increasingly, resorts and upscale hotels offer free childcare centers.

It's a good idea to prearrange necessities such as cribs, babysitters, cots and baby food at hotels other than family resorts.

Many car-rental agencies in Jamaica do not offer safety seats. One agency that does is Island Car Rentals (p294).

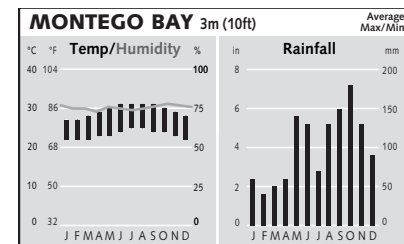
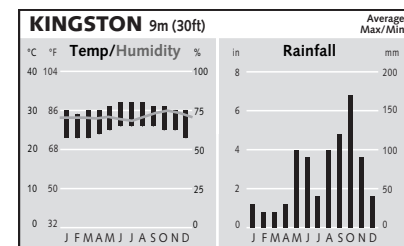
Breastfeeding in public is regarded as something of a spectacle.

**Sights & Activities**

Negril, Ocho Rios and Montego Bay are perhaps the best towns for children. Each is replete with kid-friendly attractions and activities, most notably Dunn's River Falls (outside Ocho Rios), Kool Runnings Water Park (Negril), Aquasol Theme Park (Montego Bay) and horseback riding (all three).

**CLIMATE CHARTS**

One of Jamaica's greatest allures is its idyllic tropical maritime climate. Coastal temperatures average a near-constant 26°C to



30°C year-round. Temperatures fall steadily with increasing altitude but even in the Blue Mountains average 18°C or more.

The annual rainfall averages 1980mm, but nationwide there are some considerable variations, with the east coast receiving considerably more rain than elsewhere on the island. Parts of the John Crow and Blue Mountains receive an average of 7620mm a year. By contrast, the south coast sees little rain and in places is semi-barren.

A 'rainy season' starts in May or June and extends through November or December, with the heaviest rains in September and October. Rain can fall at any time of year, however, and normally comes in short, heavy showers, often followed by sun.

Jamaica lies in the Caribbean 'hurricane belt.' Officially the hurricane season lasts from June 1 to November 30; August and September are peak months.

See also p13.

## CUSTOMS

### Entering Jamaica

You are allowed to import the following items duty-free: 25 cigars, 200 cigarettes and two liters of alcohol. You may bring a 'reasonable' amount of duty-free goods for personal use; anything deemed in excess of 'reasonable' may incur an import tax.

You may need to show some proof that laptop computers and other expensive items (especially electronics) are for personal use; otherwise you may be charged import duty.

For more information, see **Jamaica Customs** ([www.jacusto.ms.gov.jm](http://www.jacusto.ms.gov.jm)).

### Leaving Jamaica

Returning US citizens who have been away for two days or more are allowed, once every 30 days, to bring back US\$600 worth of merchandise duty-free. You'll be charged a flat rate of 10% duty on the next US\$1000 worth of purchases. On gifts, the duty-free limit is US\$100.

Canadian citizens are allowed an annual allowance of C\$750, plus 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1kg of loose tobacco and 1.2L of liquor. In addition, you can mail unsolicited gifts valued up to C\$60 per day.

British citizens may import goods worth up to £145 in addition to 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or 250g of loose tobacco, and 2L of wine plus 1L of spirits (depending on alcohol proof).

Australians can bring back A\$900 of gifts and souvenirs, plus 250 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco, and 2.25L of alcohol.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The Jamaica Tourist Board publishes a pocket-size pamphlet, *Helpful Hints for Your Vacation*, containing concise tips for safer travel. Use the **JTB hotline** (☎ 888-991-9999) for emergency assistance.

The **US State Department** (☎ 202-647-5225; [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)) publishes travel advisories that advise US citizens of trouble spots, as does the **British Foreign & Commonwealth Office** (☎ 020-7008-0232; [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk); Travel Advice Unit, Consular Division, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1 Palace St, London SW1E 5HE).

## Crime

Jamaica has the highest murder rate for any country not in the throes of war (the nation had a record 1574 murders in 2007, a 17% rise on the previous year), and Kingston and Spanish Town have the worst reputations in the Caribbean for violent crime. Although the vast majority of violent crimes occur in ghettos far from tourist centers, visitors are sometimes the victims of robbery and scams. Crime against tourists has dropped in recent years, however, and the overwhelming majority of visitors enjoy their vacations without incident.

Most crime against travelers is petty and opportunistic. Take sensible precautions with your valuables. Steer clear of ghettos, where you are very likely to get into serious trouble. Try to avoid walking at night in Kingston and downtown Montego Bay, but if you do, stick close to main thoroughfares. Take taxis when possible, preferably arranged by the hotel's front desk.

Keep hotel doors and windows securely locked at night, and lock car doors from the inside while driving. Don't open your hotel door to anyone who can't prove their identity. If you're renting an out-of-the-way private villa or cottage, check in advance with the rental agency to establish whether security is provided. And don't assume you're entirely safe at all-inclusive resorts: readers have reported security issues even there.

Carry as little cash as you need when away from your hotel. Keep the rest in a hotel safe. You can rely on credit cards and traveler's checks for most purchases, but you'll need

## PREVENTING CHILD-SEX TOURISM IN JAMAICA

Tragically, the exploitation of local children by tourists is becoming more prevalent throughout Jamaica. Various socio-economic factors make children susceptible to sexual exploitation, and some tourists choose to take advantage of their vulnerable position.

Sexual exploitation has serious, lifelong effects on children. It is a crime and a violation of human rights.

Jamaica has laws against sexual exploitation of children. Many countries have enacted extra-territorial legislation that allows travelers to be charged as though the exploitation happened in their home country.

Responsible travelers can help stop child-sex tourism by reporting it. It is important not to ignore suspicious behavior. Cybertipline is a website where sexual exploitation of children can be reported. The website can be found at [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com). You can also report the incident to local authorities and if you know the nationality of the perpetrator, report it to their embassy.

Travelers interested in learning more about how to fight against sexual exploitation of children can find more information on the ECPAT International website at [www.ecpat.org](http://www.ecpat.org).

Beyond Borders is the Canadian affiliate of ECPAT. It aims to advance the rights of children to be free from abuse and exploitation without regard to race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Its website can be found at [www.beyondborders.org](http://www.beyondborders.org).

ECPAT – USA (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) is part of a global network working on these issues with over 70 affiliate organizations around the world. The US headquarters is located in New York, and can be contacted on ☎ +1-718-935-9192. Its website can be found at [www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org).

cash for most transactions in rural areas and at gas stations.

Many local police are members of the communities they serve and cannot always be trusted to be impartial.

## Driving Hazards

Driving in Jamaica is dangerous. Licenses can be bought without taking a driving test, and the roads are governed by an infatuation with speed completely incongruous with the rest of Jamaican life. Look out for people along the roads or animals that might dash in front of you, and pay extra attention at roundabouts, where driving on the left is not always adhered to. Pedestrians should beware of the many drivers who would as soon hit you as slow down.

For tips on driving conditions, see the **Transportation** chapter, p285.

## Drug Trade

Ganja (marijuana) is everywhere in Jamaica and you're almost certain to be approached by hustlers selling drugs. Cocaine is also widely available (Jamaica is the major stop on the Colombia-US drug route). The street sale of drugs is a sad pandemic that has corroded society and led to frightening levels of violence.

Despite their ubiquity and cultural eminence, drugs are strictly illegal and penalties are severe. Roadblocks and random searches of cars are common, undertaken by well-armed police in combat gear (professionalism is never guaranteed, and 'dash' – extortion – is often extracted to boost wages). If you *do* buy drugs, don't be stupid enough to try to take any out of the country. If you're caught, you will *not* be getting on your plane home, however small the amount. A night (or a lengthy sentence) in a crowded-to-bursting Jamaican lockup is bad for your health!

## Harassment

Usually the traveler's biggest problem is the vast army of hustlers (mostly male) who harass visitors, notably in and around major tourist centers. A hustler is someone who makes a living by seizing opportunities, and the biggest opportunity in Jamaica is you!

Hustlers walk the streets looking out for potential buyers of crafts, jewelry or drugs, or to wash cars, give aloe-vera massages or offer any of a thousand services. A sibilant 'ssssst!' to catch your attention is the first indication that hustlers have their eyes on you.

It's important to be polite but firm in repressing unwanted advances; never ignore them, which can be taken as a grave insult.

Aggressive persistence is the key to their success and trying to shaking them off can be a wearying process. Hustlers often persist in the hope that you'll pay just to be rid of them. A good defensive gambit is to play like a savvy local: 'Cho mon, doan't harass de tourists!' or pretend to be a tourist from a non-English-speaking country (few Jamaicans speak Croatian). If harassment continues, seek the assistance of a tourist police officer or the local constabulary.

## DISABLED TRAVELERS

Very few allowances have been made in Jamaica for travelers with disabilities. Useful resources include these ones:

**Council for Persons with Disabilities** (☎ 922-0585; 4 Ellesmere Rd, Kingston 5)

**Disabled Peoples' International** (☎ 967-9439; caribbean.dpi.org; PO Box W123, Woods Centre, St John's, Antigua)

**Disabled People's Organisations of the Caribbean** (☎ 967-9439; Ministry of Labour Building, 1F North St, Kingston)

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Unless otherwise noted, details are for embassies.

### Jamaican Embassies & Consulates

**Canada** Ottawa High Commission (☎ 613-233-9311; fax 613-233-0611; hc@jhcottawa.ca; Standard Life Bldg, Suite 402, 275 Slater St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9); Toronto Consulate General (☎ 416-598-3008; jcgtoronto@attcanada.net; Suite 402, 214 King St W, Toronto, Ontario M5H 1KA)

**Germany** (☎ 49 30 85 99 450; info@jamador.de; Schmargendorfer Strasse 32; 12159 Berlin)

**UK** (☎ 207-823-9911; hc@jhcuk.com; Jamaican High Commission, 1-2 Prince Consort Rd, London SW7 2BZ)

**US** Miami Consulate General (☎ 305-374-8431; fax 577-4970; 842 Ingraham Bldg, 25 SE Second Ave, Miami, FL 33131); New York Consulate General (☎ 212-935-9000; fax 935-7508; 2nd fl, 767 Third Ave, New York, NY 10017); Washington (☎ 202-452-0660; fax 202-421-0081; 1520 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC)

### Embassies & Consulates in Jamaica

If your country isn't represented in this list, check 'Embassies & High Commissions' in the yellow pages of the Greater Kingston telephone directory.

**Australia** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3550, 926-3551; 64 Knutsford Blvd, Kingston High Commission, Kingston 5)

**Canada** Kingston High Commission (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-1500; 3 West Kings House Rd, Kingston); Montego Bay

Consulate (Map p184; ☎ 952-6198; 29 Gloucester Ave, Montego Bay)

**France** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-0210; 13 Hillcrest Ave, Kingston 6)

**Germany** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6728; 10 Waterloo Rd, Kingston 10)

**Italy** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-8464; 10 Surbiton Rd, Kingston 10)

**Japan** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-7534; 1 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5)

**Netherlands** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2026; 53 Knutsford Blvd, Kingston 5)

**Sweden** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 941-3761; Unit 3, 69 Constant Spring Rd, Kingston Consulate, Kingston 10)

**Switzerland** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-7857; 22 Trafalgar Rd, Kingston Consulate, Kingston 10)

**UK** Kingston High Commission (Map pp80-1; ☎ 510-0700, 926-9050; bhckingston@cwjamaica.com; 28 Trafalgar Rd, Kingston); Montego Bay Consulate (☎ 912-6859, Montego Bay)

**US** Kingston (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4850, 926-6440 after hours; kingstonacs@state.gov; Life of Jamaica Bldg, 16 Oxford St, Kingston); Montego Bay Consulate (Map p184; ☎ 952-0160, 952-5050; usconsagency.mobay@cwjamaica.com; St James Plaza, 2nd fl, Gloucester Ave, Montego Bay)

## FOOD

Some Eating sections in destination chapters of this book are divided into budget, midrange and top-end categories. We define a midrange restaurant as one where a main dish at lunch or dinner costs between US\$10 and US\$20. Budget and top-end places cost, respectively, less than US\$10 and over US\$20. For the full story on eating in Jamaica, see the Food & Drink chapter, p42.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Jamaica is an adamantly homophobic nation. Sexual acts between men are prohibited by law and punishable by up to ten years in prison and hard labor. Some reggae dancehall lyrics by big-name stars like Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, Buju Banton and Sizzla seem intent on instigating violence against gays. Law enforcement in most cases fails to prosecute perpetrators of gay bashing; when gay-rights activist Brian Williamson was stabbed to death by a mob in June 2004, police maintained that he was a robbery victim. In 2007, Mandeville was the scene of several gay-bashing incidents, and a policeman who came out of the closet was forced to go into hiding.

The debate over institutional homophobia in Jamaica heated up in 2004 with the release of a report by Human Rights Watch detailing the abuse meted out to sexual minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS. As a form of protest, most gays refuse to visit the island; those who do find that they cannot express their sexuality openly without an adverse – and often dangerous – reaction.

**J-Flag** (helpline ☎ 978-8988; www.jflag.org) is Jamaica's first human-rights organization created to serve the needs of sexual minorities.

The following organizations can provide assistance in planning a trip:

**International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association** (☎ 954-776-2626, 800-448-8550; www.iglta.com; 4431 N Federal Hwy No 304, Ft Lauderdale, FL 33308, USA)

**Purple Roofs** (www.purpleroofs.com/caribbean/jamaica.html) Lists gay-friendly accommodations in Jamaica.

## HOLIDAYS

**New Year's Day** January 1

**Ash Wednesday** February

**Good Friday & Easter Monday** March/April

**Labour Day** May 23

**Emancipation Day** August 1

**Independence Day** August 6

**National Heroes' Day** October 19

**Christmas Day** December 25

**Boxing Day** December 26

## INSURANCE

However you're traveling, it's worth taking out travel insurance. Everyone should be covered for the worst possible case: an accident, for example, that requires hospital treatment and a flight home.

Consider purchasing a travel insurance policy that covers theft, loss of baggage and medical treatment. You might also consider trip-cancellation insurance if you have booked a prepaid package with cancellation penalty clauses. Any travel agent can recommend an appropriate package.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Many upscale hotels provide in-room, dial-up access for laptop computers. Wireless networks are making their first appearances in the best hotels. Most town libraries now offer internet access (US\$1 for 30 minutes), though you may find there's only one or two terminals and waits can be long. Most towns also have at least one commercial entity where you can get online.

## LEGAL AGE

- Consent (heterosexual): 16
- Drinking: 18
- Driving: 16
- Voting: 18

## LEGAL MATTERS

Jamaica's drug and drunk-driving laws are strictly enforced. Don't expect leniency because you're a foreigner. Jamaican jails are Dickensian hellholes! If you are arrested, insist on your right to call your embassy in Kingston to request its assistance.

## MAPS

The Jamaican Tourist Board (JTB) publishes a *Discover Jamaica* road map (1:350,000). No topographical details are shown.

The best maps are Hildebrandt's Jamaica map (1:300,000) and ITMB Publishing's maps (1:250,000), available online or at travel bookstores.

The most accurate maps are the Jamaica Ordnance Survey maps published by the **Survey Department** (☎ 922-6630; 231-1/2 Charles St, PO Box 493, Kingston 10).

## MONEY

The unit of currency is the Jamaican dollar, the 'jay,' which uses the same symbol as the US dollar (\$). Jamaican currency is issued in bank notes of J\$50, J\$100, J\$500 and J\$1000. The official rate of exchange fluctuates daily; see the inside front cover for exchange rates at the time of going to press.

Prices for hotels and valuable items are usually quoted in US dollars, which are widely accepted.

For international transfers, **Western Union** (☎ 926-2454, 888-991-2056; www.westernunion.com; 7 Hillview Ave, Kingston 5) has offices islandwide.

## ATMS

Most of the city bank branches throughout Jamaica have 24-hour automated teller machines (ATMs) linked to international networks such as Cirrus or Plus. In more remote areas, look for ATMs at gas stations.

## Black Market

Young Jamaican men are eager to change Jamaican dollars in street transactions. It's

strictly illegal, however, and not worth it: the black-market rate is rarely more than 5% lower than the official exchange rate, and many black-marketeers are scam artists.

### Cash

It's a wise idea to always have some 'J' on hand throughout your island visit. Carry small bills: it can be hard to get change for any note over J\$100. US dollars are widely accepted, but you'll be given change in Jamaican dollars. Almost any commercial entity will change dollars for you.

### Credit Cards

Major credit cards are widely accepted throughout the island. To report lost or stolen credit cards from Jamaica, call **American Express** (☎ 800-877-3060), **MasterCard** (☎ 800-307-7309) or **Visa** (☎ 800-847-2911).

### Moneychangers

Virtually every town and village has at least one licensed moneychanger. They offer rates slightly lower than banks and charge a processing fee of between 2% and 5% of the transaction. All kinds of outlets operate as 'cambios,' including supermarkets and general stores.

### Tipping

A 10% tip is normal in hotels and restaurants. Some restaurants automatically add a 10% to 15% service charge to your bill. Check your bill carefully, as the charge is often hidden. Some all-inclusive resorts have a strictly enforced no-tipping policy. Outside Kingston, tourist taxi drivers often ask for tips but it is not necessary; JUTA (route) taxis do not expect tips.

### Traveler's Checks

Traveler's checks are widely accepted in Jamaica, although some hotels, restaurants and exchange bureaus charge a hefty fee for cashing them.

Immediately report lost traveler's checks to **American Express** (in the USA ☎ 800-221-7282, in Jamaica ☎ 800-877-3060) or **Thomas Cook** (☎ 800-223-7373).

### POST

When sending mail to Jamaica always include the addressee's name, address or post-office box, town and parish, plus 'Jamaica, West Indies.'

You can have mail addressed to you marked 'Poste Restante' care of a major central post office. You should have a letter or package addressed with '(your name), Poste Restante, General Post Office,' then the town and parish, plus 'Jamaica, West Indies.'

Every town has a post office and most villages have postal agencies.

Airmail letters worldwide cost J\$60 to J\$90 per 15 grams. Domestic letters cost J\$30 for up to 230 grams. Jamaica Post's website, [www.jamaicapost.gov.jm](http://www.jamaicapost.gov.jm), lists rates.

Airmail to North America usually takes about two weeks, and a week longer to Europe. If you're in a rush, try FedEx ([www.fedex.com](http://www.fedex.com)) or DHL ([www.dhl.com](http://www.dhl.com)), with offices in most major cities.

### SHOPPING

Jamaica offers a wide range of arts, crafts and duty-free items, plus food items and drinks such as Blue Mountain coffee, rum liqueurs and other gourmet products.

Tens of thousands of Jamaicans make a living as artists selling to tourists. Much of the artwork is kitsch; paintings and carvings of Bob Marley or Rasta men, fish and animals, often painted in rainbow hues and touched with pointillist dots. There's plenty of first-rate art, however, at galleries islandwide.

Good buys include colorful bead jewelry, baskets and other straw goods, including straw hats, and woodcarvings. Look for 'jippi-jappa' hats (pronounced hippy-happa) from St Catherine parish, beautifully woven from fine strips of palm leaf in the style of Panama hats.

Never pay the asking price for crafts. Haggle! It's expected. Expect to settle on a price at least 20% below initial asking price. Don't waste energy haggling in most shops, however, as prices there are generally fixed.

### TELEPHONE

Jamaica has a fully automated digital phone system operated by **Cable & Wireless Jamaica** (☎ 888-225-5295; [www.cwjamaica.com](http://www.cwjamaica.com)), which has offices islandwide where you can make direct calls.

Major hotels have direct-dial calling; elsewhere you may need to go through the hotel operator or call from the front desk. Hotels add a 15% government tax, plus a service charge, often at outrageous rates.

### Cell Phones

You can bring your own cell phone into Jamaica, but if your phone is locked by a specific carrier, don't bother. A good option is to purchase an inexpensive cellular phone (from US\$35) and a prepaid phone-card. Cards are sold in denominations of up to J\$1000 and you'll find them at many gas stations or stationery shops.

Cell-phone providers include **bMobile** (☎ 888-225-5295; [www.cwmobile.com/jamaica](http://www.cwmobile.com/jamaica)) and **Digicel** (☎ 888-344-4235; [www.digiceljamaica.com](http://www.digiceljamaica.com)).

### Phone Codes

If you wish to call Jamaica from abroad, dial your country's international dialing code, then ☎ 876 (Jamaica's country code), and the seven-digit local number.

Jamaican numbers mostly have seven digits, which you dial for calls within the same parish. For calls to other parishes, dial '1' then the seven-digit number.

### Phonecards

Public phones require a prepaid phonecard, available from Cable & Wireless Jamaica offices, retail stores, hotels, banks and other outlets. The card is available in denominations up to J\$500. For international calls, Cable & Wireless WorldTalk cards can be used from any phone.

### TIME

In autumn and winter, Jamaican time is five hours behind Greenwich Mean Time, and the same as in New York (Eastern Standard Time). Jamaica does not adjust for daylight saving time. Hence, from April to October, it is six hours behind London and one hour behind New York.

### TOILETS

There are very few public toilets, and those that do exist are best avoided. Most restaurants have restrooms, but many require that you make a purchase before they'll let you use them.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

The **Jamaica Tourist Board** (JTB; [www.visitjamaica.com](http://www.visitjamaica.com)) has offices in key cities around the world. You can request maps and literature, including hotel brochures, but they do not serve as reservation agencies.

### Tourist Offices Abroad

**Canada** (☎ 416-482-7850; [jtb@jtbcanada.com](mailto:jtb@jtbcanada.com); 1 Eglinton Ave E No 616, Toronto M4P 1L3)

**Germany** (☎ 2104-832974; [jamaica@travelmarketing.de](http://jamaica@travelmarketing.de); c/o Fast Forward-Marketing, Schwarzbachstrasse 32, 40822 Mettmann)

**Italy** (☎ 648-90-12-55; [sergat@rmnet.it](mailto:sergat@rmnet.it); c/o Sergat Italia, Via Nazionale 230, 00184 Rome)

**Japan** (☎ 3-3400-2974; [tourist-board@jamaica.co.jp](mailto:tourist-board@jamaica.co.jp); Strategic Tower Bldg 2F, 2-11-1 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0002)

**Netherlands** (☎ 34-843-0829; [info@ontdekjamaica.nl](mailto:info@ontdekjamaica.nl); Postbus 2073, 3441 DB Woerden)

**UK** (☎ 207-224-0505; [jamaicatavel@btconnect.com](mailto:jamaicatavel@btconnect.com); 1-2 Prince Consort Rd, London SW7 2BZ)

**USA** (☎ 800-233-4582, 305-665-0557; [jamaicatriv1@aol.com](mailto:jamaicatriv1@aol.com); Ste 1101, 1320 South Dixie Hwy, Coral Gables FL 33146)

### Local Tourist Offices

The JTB has offices in **Kingston** (☎ 929-9200; [info@visitjamaica.com](mailto:info@visitjamaica.com); 64 Knutsford Blvd, Kingston 5), **Montego Bay** (☎ 952-4425; Cornwall Beach) and **Port Antonio** (☎ 993-3051; City Centre Plaza, Harbour St).

### VISAS

No visas are required for entry to Jamaica for citizens of European Union countries, the USA, Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Japan or Israel.

Nationals of the UK, Ireland, USA and Canada may stay for six months. Nationals of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Commonwealth countries (except Sri Lanka and Pakistan) may stay for three months. Nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, France, Greece, Japan, Portugal and Spain may stay for 30 days.

All other nationalities require visas (citizens of most countries can obtain a visa on arrival, provided they are holding valid onward or return tickets and evidence of sufficient funds).

Immigration formalities require every person to show a return or ongoing airline ticket when arriving in Jamaica.

### WOMEN TRAVELERS

Many Jamaican men display behavior and attitudes that might shock visiting women, often expressing disdain for the notion of female equality or women's rights.

If you're single, it may be assumed that you're on the island seeking a 'liddle love

beneat' de palms.' Protests to the contrary will likely be met with wearying attempts to get you to change your mind. If you go along with the flirting, your innocent acceptance will be taken as a sign of acquiescence. Never beat about the bush for fear of hurting the man's feelings.

Many women welcome these advances, as evidenced by the proliferation of 'rent-a-dreads' – semiprofessional good-time guys, or gigolos – on the arms of North American and European women. Expect to be the moneybags in any romantic encounter.

Rape is not uncommon in Jamaica and occasionally involves female tourists. Women

traveling alone can reduce unwanted attention by dressing modestly when away from the beach. You should avoid walking alone at night and otherwise traveling alone in remote areas.

See also p38.

### **WORK**

Visitors are admitted to Jamaica on the condition that they 'not engage in any form of employment on the island.' Professionals can obtain work permits if sponsored by a Jamaican company, but casual work is very difficult to obtain.

# Transportation

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Expect a wait in the immigration halls at the airports in Kingston and Montego Bay. There are often only two or three immigration officers on hand to process the planeloads of passengers and often multiple flights land within minutes of each other, increasing the burden on officials. See p283 for information about visa requirements.

### Passport

US citizens traveling to and from the Caribbean by air or sea are now required to have a passport or another secure, accepted document in order to enter or re-enter the USA.

Canadian citizens do not need passports for visits of up to six months. However, they *do* need two pieces of identification, including proof of citizenship or permanent residency, such as a passport, birth certificate or driver's license with photo ID. Other visitors must arrive with a passport. British citizens need passports that will still be valid six months after their arrival.

### AIR

#### Airports & Airlines

Jamaica's international airports are in Montego Bay and Kingston. For flight

arrival and departure information, call the airports, visit their websites or call the airline directly.

The majority of visitors to Jamaica arrive at **Donald Sangster International Airport** (☎ 952-3124; www.mbjairport.com), about 3km north of Montego Bay.

There's a Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) information booth in the arrivals hall and a 24-hour money-exchange bureau immediately beyond immigration. There is also a transportation information desk plus desks representing tour companies, hotels and rental cars immediately as you exit customs. A **police station** (☎ 952-2241) is outside.

Ensure your luggage is locked and never leave valuables in unlocked pockets.

The adjacent terminal serves domestic flights. The terminals aren't linked by walkways and are a sweaty 10-minute walk apart. The charter airlines, including Air Jamaica Express, provide connecting shuttles.

**Norman Manley International Airport** (☎ 924-8452, 888-247-7678; www.manley-airport.com.jm) is 18km southeast of Kingston downtown.

There's a JTB desk in the arrivals hall, a money-exchange bureau before customs, and a taxi information booth as you exit customs. Beyond customs there's a bank and Island Car Rentals. Ahead is the JUTA taxi office, a **police station** (☎ 924-8002), an ATM, a telephone office and the Otahetis Café.

The following major airlines have offices in Jamaica:

**Air Canada** (www.aircanada.com) Kingston (☎ 924-8211); Montego Bay (☎ 952-5160, 888-991-9063)

### THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).

**Air Jamaica** ([www.airjamaica.com](http://www.airjamaica.com)) Kingston (☎ 888-359-2475)

**Air Jamaica Express** ([www.airjamaica.com/express.asp](http://www.airjamaica.com/express.asp)) Kingston (☎ 888-359-2475); Montego Bay (☎ 952-4300; 9 Queens Dr); Ocho Rios (☎ 726-1344)

**American Airlines** ([www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)) Kingston (☎ 800-744-0006; 26 Trafalgar Rd); Montego Bay (☎ 800-744-0006)

**British Airways** ([www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)) Kingston (☎ 929-9020; 25 Dominica Dr); Montego Bay (☎ 952-3771)

**BWIA West Indies Airways** ([www.bwee.com](http://www.bwee.com)) Kingston (☎ 800-538-2942; 33 Tobago Ave)

**Cayman Airways** ([www.caymanairways.com](http://www.caymanairways.com)) Kingston (☎ 926-1762; 23 Dominica Dr)

**COPA Airlines** ([www.copaair.com](http://www.copaair.com)) Kingston (☎ 926-1762, 926-1763; 23 Dominica Dr); Montego Bay (☎ 952-5530)

**Cubana** ([www.cubana.cu](http://www.cubana.cu)) Kingston (☎ 978-3410, 978-3406; 22 Trafalgar Rd); Montego Bay (☎ 952-0527, 940-2345)

**International AirLink** ([www.intlairlink.com](http://www.intlairlink.com)) Montego Bay (☎ 940-6660)

**Northwest Airlines** ([www.nwa.com](http://www.nwa.com)) Montego Bay (☎ 800-225-2525)

**US Airways** ([www.usairways.com](http://www.usairways.com)) Montego Bay (☎ 800-622-1015)

## Tickets

The cost of plane tickets to Jamaica varies widely, depending on such variables as time of year, weather and traffic in the region. Higher

fares normally apply in 'high season,' from mid-December through mid-April, with even higher fares for peak times such as Christmas and around the New Year. You can save 20% or more by traveling in low season; weekday flights offer savings, too.

Airlines often run specials fares, so it's worth checking their websites or calling directly. Before you book, compare ticket prices on online travel sites. Some discount online services are likely to quote rates offered to wholesalers and consolidators, for which special conditions and restrictions apply (see p290). Here are some that we recommend:

- [www.cheaptickets.com](http://www.cheaptickets.com)
- [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)
- [www.itn.net](http://www.itn.net)
- [www.lowestfare.com](http://www.lowestfare.com)
- [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com)
- [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com)

## DEPARTURE TAX

Jamaica's departure tax is US\$22. In most cases this fee is paid with your plane ticket, but if not it will be collected when you check in for your flight. You can pay in either Jamaican or US currency, but credit cards are not accepted.

The travel agencies usually can't match rock-bottom fares, but offer greater security. Firms such as **STA Travel** (☎ in the USA 800-781-4040, in the UK 0870-160-0599; [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)) have offices worldwide and specialize in low fares for students, although no discount fares are available to Jamaica from North America.

If you plan on visiting additional Caribbean destinations, consider buying an air pass that permits any number of stopovers (see p288).

## Charter Flights

Charter flights from the US, Canada, UK and Europe offer another option for getting to Jamaica. Fares are often cheaper than on regularly scheduled commercial airlines, but you usually have to go and come back on a specific flight, and you'll probably have no flexibility to extend your stay.

Although charter companies do most of their business booking package tours that include both accommodations and airfare, they will often find themselves with a few empty seats on planes they've chartered. The seats will sometimes be sold for bargain prices a week or two prior to departure.

In the USA you can sometimes find these seats advertised in the travel pages of larger Sunday newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*.

Travel agencies that specialize in discount travel can also be helpful.

## Asia & Africa

There are no direct flights; travelers fly via London or the USA.

In Asia, there are several offices of **STA Travel** (Bangkok ☎ 0-2236 0262; [www.statravel.co.th](http://www.statravel.co.th); Hong Kong ☎ 2736 1618; [www.statravel.com.hk](http://www.statravel.com.hk); Japan ☎ 0353-912 922; [www.statra.vel.co.jp](http://www.statra.vel.co.jp)); Singapore ☎ 6737 7188; [www.statravel.com.sg](http://www.statravel.com.sg)).

Another resource in Japan is **No 1 Travel** (☎ 0332-056073; [www.no1-travel.com](http://www.no1-travel.com)); in Hong Kong try **Four Seas Tours** (☎ 2200 7760; [www.fourseastravel.com/english](http://www.fourseastravel.com/english)).

**Rennies Travel** ([www.renniestravel.com](http://www.renniestravel.com)) and **STA Travel** ([www.statravel.co.za](http://www.statravel.co.za)) have offices throughout Southern Africa. Check their websites for branch locations.

## Australia & New Zealand

Travelers from Australia or New Zealand must fly via the USA, where you can connect to flights to Jamaica. Fares from Australia to

Los Angeles begin at about A\$1850. From New Zealand, fares to Los Angeles begin at about NZ\$2650.

Direct service between Australia, New Zealand and California is provided by the following airlines:

**Air New Zealand** Auckland (☎ 0800-737-000); Sydney

(☎ 02-8235-9999; [www.airnz.co.nz](http://www.airnz.co.nz))

**Delta Airlines** Auckland (☎ 09-379-3370); Sydney

(☎ 02-9262-1777)

**Qantas** Auckland (☎ 09-357-8900); Sydney (☎ 02-9957-0111)

**United Airlines** Auckland (☎ 09-307-9500); Sydney (☎ 02-9237-8888)

You can also fly via Santiago, Chile, or Buenos Aires, Argentina.

For online bookings, try [www.travel.com.au](http://www.travel.com.au), [www.travel.co.nz](http://www.travel.co.nz), [www.zuji.com.au](http://www.zuji.com.au) or [www.zuj.i.co.nz](http://www.zuj.i.co.nz).

These are our agencies that specialize in the Caribbean:

**Caribbean Bound** (☎ 02-9267 2555; [www.caribbean.com.au](http://www.caribbean.com.au); Suite 102, 379 Pitt St, Sydney 2000, NSW, Australia)

**Contours** (☎ 03-9670 6900; [www.contourstravel.com.au](http://www.contourstravel.com.au); Lvl 6, 310 King St, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia)

**Flight Centre** Australia (☎ 133 133; [www.flightcentre.com.au](http://www.flightcentre.com.au)); New Zealand (☎ 0800 243 544; [www.flightcentre.co.nz](http://www.flightcentre.co.nz))

**STA Travel** Australia (☎ 1300 733 035; [www.statravel.com.au](http://www.statravel.com.au)); New Zealand (☎ 0508 782 872; [www.statravel.co.nz](http://www.statravel.co.nz))

## Canada

**Air Canada** (☎ 888-247-2262; [www.aircanada.com](http://www.aircanada.com)) serves Montego Bay from Montreal, Halifax, Kingston and Winnipeg in winter, and Montego Bay from Toronto daily year-round. **Air Jamaica** (☎ 888-359-2475, in the USA 800-523-5585; [www.airjamaica.com](http://www.airjamaica.com)) flies nonstop from Toronto. Fares from Toronto to Montego Bay begin at about C\$800.

**Canadian Universities Travel Service** (☎ 866-246-9762; [www.travelcuts.com](http://www.travelcuts.com)) sells discount airfares. The agency has 25 offices throughout Canada.

Check with the following companies for information on charter flights and package charters to Jamaica:

**Air Transat Holidays** (☎ 800-587-2672; [www.airtransat.com](http://www.airtransat.com)) Charters to Montego Bay from Toronto,

Quebec and Montreal.

**Conquest Tours** (☎ 866-266-7974; [www.conquestvacations.com](http://www.conquestvacations.com))



**GG Tours** (☎ 416-487-1146; www.ggtours.ca) Charters to Kingston from Toronto.

**Signature Vacations** (☎ 416-967-1112; www.signaturevacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Toronto.

**Sunquest Vacations** (☎ 416-485-6060, 877-485-6060; www.sunquest.ca) Charters to Montego Bay from Toronto and Ottawa.

**Tours Maison** (☎ 800-361-8835; www.toursmaison.ca) Charters to Montego Bay from Montreal.

## The Caribbean

**Air Jamaica** (www.airjamaica.com; hub Kingston; ☎ Europe ☎ 020-8570-7999; Jamaica ☎ 888-359-2475; North America & the Caribbean ☎ 800-523-5585) uses Montego Bay as a hub for connecting its US flights with the Caribbean destinations of Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Bonaire, Havana (you can reserve flights between Jamaica and Cuba in the USA, but you must purchase your ticket in Jamaica), Curaçao, Santo Domingo, Grenada, St Lucia and Turks and Caicos. Many flights are operated by Air Jamaica's domestic airline, **Air Jamaica Express**.

Other airlines flying within the Caribbean include the following:

**ALM/Dutch Caribbean** (☎ 876-926-1762; www.flydca.com; hub Curacao) Serves Montego Bay and Kingston from Curacao.

**BWIA** (☎ 800-538-2942; www.bwee.com; hub Trinidad) Serves Kingston from Antigua, Barbados and Trinidad.

**Cayman Airways** (☎ 876-926-1762, 876-926-7778; www.caymanairways.com) Serves Montego Bay and Kingston from Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac.

**Sky King** (☎ 649-941-5464; www.skyking.tc) Serves Kingston from Turks and Caicos.

## AIR PASSES

Air Jamaica's Caribbean Hopper Program enables travelers flying on an Air Jamaica flight from a US city to visit three or more islands (economy US\$399, first class US\$699) that are within their Caribbean and Central American network, which includes anywhere in Jamaica, Turks and Caicos (Providenciales), Grand Cayman, the Bahamas, Cuba, Panama City, Bonaire, Barbados, Grenada and St Lucia. The minimum stay is three days and the maximum is 30. No backtracking is allowed.

American Airlines offers the American Eagle Caribbean Explorer pass, which allows travelers from the USA, Canada and Mexico who fly to the American Eagle hub in San Juan to then explore 23 other Caribbean

destinations. Tickets must be purchased seven days in advance and travel must begin within 14 days of arrival in San Juan. Tickets are nonrefundable and some holiday black-out dates apply.

**BWIA** (☎ 020-8577-1100; www.bwee.com) offers a Caribbean Travelers Air Pass to anyone flying into the Caribbean on a BWIA international flight. This pass (economy US\$399; first class US\$599) lets passengers travel within 30 days to any of the airline's Caribbean destinations. On this 30-day pass, the itinerary must be set in advance and there's a US\$20 charge to make changes. Each destination can be visited only once, other than for connecting flights.

## Continental Europe

The following carriers provide direct flights. Typical return fares to Montego Bay are €550 low season and €800 high season.

**Condor** (☎ 01802-337135; www.condor.de) Serves Montego Bay from Frankfurt.

**Iberia** (☎ 902-400-500; www.iberia.com) Serves Montego Bay from Vienna, Dusseldorf, Munich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt and Hamburg.

**LTU** (☎ 800-888-0200; www.ltu.de) Serves Montego Bay from Dusseldorf.

**Martinair** (☎ 020-60-11-767; www.martinair.com) Serves Montego Bay from Amsterdam.

In France, recommended travel agencies include these ones:

**AnyWay** (☎ 08 92 89 38 92; www.anyway.fr)

**Lastminute** (☎ 08 92 70 50 00; www.lastminute.fr)

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr)

**OTU Voyages** (www.otu.fr) This agency specializes in student and youth travelers.

**Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com)

In Germany, try:

**Expedia** (www.expedia.de)

**Just Travel** (☎ 089-747-3330; www.justtravel.de)

**Lastminute** (☎ 01805-284-366; www.lastminute.de)

**STA Travel** (☎ 01805-456-422; www.statravel.de) For travelers under the age of 26.

Other recommended travel agencies in Continental Europe include the following: **Airfair** (☎ 020 620 5121; www.airfair.nl) A reputable agency in the Netherlands.

**Barcelo Viajes** (☎ 902 11 62 26; www.barceloviajes.com) In Spain.

**CTS Viaggi** (☎ 064-62-04-31; www.cts.it) In Italy, specializing in student and youth travel.

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 902-17-09-79; www.nouvelles-frontieres.es)

In Spain try the following:

**Viajes Marsans** (☎ 913 43 30 00; www.marsans.es)

Offers charter flights to Montego Bay from Madrid.

## UK

The following airlines offer direct flights to Jamaica. Typical fares average about £875 in the low season, and £950 in the high season.

**Aeroflot** (Eire ☎ 06-47-2299; UK ☎ 020-7355 2233; infres@aeroflot.co.uk; 70 Piccadilly, London W1V 9HH)

Weekly service to Montego Bay from Ireland.

**Air Jamaica** (UK ☎ 020-8570 7999; www.airjamaica.com) Serves Kingston and Montego Bay from London-Heathrow.

**British Airways** (☎ 0870-850 9850; www.britishairways.com) Serves Kingston and Montego Bay from London-Gatwick.

**Virgin Atlantic** (☎ 0870/380-2007; www.virgin.com) Serves Kingston and Montego Bay.

It can be cheaper to instead fly via the USA, changing aircraft in New York or Miami (return fares between London and Miami can be as low as £250 in low season). Airlines that fly to the USA from the UK include **American Airlines** (☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com), **British Airways** (☎ 020-8897 4000; www.britishairways.co.uk), **Delta Airlines** (☎ 800-221-1212; www.delta.com), **United Airlines** (☎ 084-5844 4777; www.unitedairlines.co.uk) and **Virgin Atlantic** (☎ 800-862-8621; www.virgin.com).

For discount tickets from the UK, try the following travel agencies:

**Council Travel** (☎ 020-7437 7767; 29a Poland St, London W1V)

**London Flight Centre** (☎ 020-7244 6411; www.topdecktravel.co.uk; 125 Earls Court Rd, London SW5)

**STA Travel** (☎ 087-0160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk; 86 Old Brompton Rd, London SW7)

**Trailfinders** (☎ 020-7937 5400; www.trailfinders.co.uk; 215 Kensington High St, London W8)

For additional low-fare options, look in the magazine *Time Out* and the Sunday papers for ads.

## CHARTER FLIGHTS

Jamaica is a major charter destination from the UK. All charter flights are into Montego Bay. They are usually considerably cheaper than scheduled fares, although departure and arrival times are often inconveniently

scheduled in the middle of the night. You should be able to find fares as low as £300 in the low season, and £650 in high season.

Good resources include **Charter Flight Centre** (☎ 020-7854 8434; www.charterflights.co.uk) and **Dial a Flight** (☎ 087-0566 6666; www.dialaflight.co.uk).

Leading charter operators to Jamaica include the following:

**British Airways Holidays** (☎ 01293-617000; www.britishairways.com/holidays)

**Caribtours** (☎ 020-7751 0660; www.caribtours.co.uk)

**Cosmos Holidays** (☎ 08704-435285; www.cosmosholidays.co.uk)

**Thomas Cook Airlines** (☎ 0884-855-0515; www.thomascookairlines.co.uk) Charters to Montego Bay from London-Gatwick.

**Thomas Cook Signature** (☎ 0870-443 4582; www.thomascooksignature.com)

**Thomson Holidays** (☎ 0870-165 0079; www.thomson-holidays.com)

## USA

The most popular routings are via Miami (90 minutes) and New York (three hours, 20 minutes). Jamaica is also served by direct flights from about a dozen other cities.

Fares quoted around press time for round-trip travel to Montego Bay originating on a weekend averaged about US\$600 low season and US\$750 high season from New York, and US\$500 low season and US\$650 high season from Miami. These should be considered only ballpark figures.

The following carriers fly from the US to Jamaica:

**Air Jamaica** (☎ 800-523-5585; www.airjamaica.com) Direct flights from Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia and Washington DC.

**Air Transat** (☎ 866-847-1112; www.airtransat.com) Has regular service to Montego Bay from Toronto and Montreal.

**American Airlines** (☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com) Flies to Kingston and Montego Bay from Miami, New York and Boston.

**Continental Airlines** (☎ 800-523-3273; www.continental.com) Flies to Kingston and Montego Bay from Newark.

**Delta** (☎ 800-221-1212; www.delta.com) Flies to Montego Bay from Atlanta.

**Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800-225-2525; www.northwestairlines.com) Flies to Montego Bay from Detroit, Minneapolis and Memphis.

**United** Flies to Montego Bay from Chicago.

**US Airways** (☎ 800-428-4322; www.usairways.com) Flies to Montego Bay from Charlotte, Fort Lauderdale and Philadelphia.

**CHARTER FLIGHTS**

These flights generally offer the lowest fares for confirmed reservations (as much as one-third lower than regular airline prices). Some of the key operators to Jamaica include the following:

**Adventure Tours** (☎ 800-999-9046; www.adventuretoursusa.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Denver.

**American Trans Air** (☎ 800-435-9282; www.ata.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Dallas.

**Apple Vacations** (☎ 800-365-APPLE, 847-640-1170; www.applevacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Chicago, Detroit, St Louis and Milwaukee.

**Funjet Vacations** (☎ 800-558-3050; www.funjet.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Chicago, St Louis, Detroit, Houston and Milwaukee.

**GWV International** (☎ 800-225-5498; www.gwv.vacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Boston.

**MLT Vacations** (☎ 800-328-0025; www.mltvacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Minneapolis.

**Sunburst Holidays** (☎ 800-MONTEGO, 800-666-8346; www.sunburstvacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Boston.

**Trans Global Vacations** (☎ 800-338-2160; www.tg.vacations.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Minneapolis.

**Vacation Express** (☎ 800-486-9777; www.vacationexpress.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Atlanta, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville and Washington.

**Vacations by Sun Country** (☎ 800-752-1218; www.suncountry.com) Charters to Montego Bay from Minneapolis.

**DISCOUNT & LAST-MINUTE TICKETS**

Discount travel agencies in the USA are known as consolidators (though you won't see a sign on the door saying 'Consolidator'). San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities.

A number of discount ticket agencies sell reduced-rate tickets to the Caribbean. Online, try **Airfares For Less** (☎ 800-627-8468; http://martin.travelservices.com/airfares/); **Cheapairlines** (☎ 800-852-2608; www.cheapairlines.com) and **Discount Airfares** (www.discount-airfares.com).

If you can fly on very short notice (usually within seven days of booking), consider buying a ticket from a 'last-minute' ticket broker. These companies buy surplus seats from airlines at hugely discounted prices. Discounts can be as great as 40%.

**Last Minute Club** (☎ 416-449-5400, 877-970-3500; www.lastminuteclub.com) specializes in air and hotel pack-

ages to the Caribbean. Also check out **Moment's Notice** (☎ 888-241-3366; www.moments-notice.com).

**SEA**

Jamaica is a popular destination on the cruise roster, mainly for passenger liners but also for private yachters. Arrival by freightliner is even an option.

For maps and charts of the Caribbean, contact **Bluewater Books & Charts** (☎ 954-763-6533, 800-942-2583; www.bluewaterweb.com; 1811 Cordova Rd, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316). The **National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration** (☎ 301-713-9312; chart-maker.ncd.noaa.gov) sells US government charts.

**Cruise Ship**

More than 800,000 cruise-ship passengers sail to Jamaica annually, making it one of the world's largest cruise-ship destinations. While the ships get bigger, the amenities also grow and today your ship can have everything from climbing wall and inline skating rink to nightclubs and waterfalls. Most ships hit four or five ports of call, sometimes spending a night, other times only a few hours.

The typical cruise-ship holiday is the ultimate package tour. Other than the effort involved in selecting a cruise, it requires minimal planning – just pay and show up – and for many people this is a large part of the appeal. While the majority of mainstream cruises take in fine scenery along the way, the time spent on the islands is generally limited and the opportunities to experience a sense of island life are more restricted.

Port visits are usually one-day stopovers at either Ocho Rios or Montego Bay, with Falmouth expected to become a port of call in 2009. Most cruises last one to two weeks and will include other western Caribbean destinations such as Cozumel and Progreso in Mexico, Grand Cayman, and Key West and Miami FL. Cruise lines featuring Jamaica as a port of call include the following (all phone numbers are in North America).

**Carnival Cruise Lines** (☎ 800-327-9501; www.carnival.com)

**Celebrity Cruises** (☎ 800-722-5941; www.celebritycruises.com)

**Costa Cruise Lines** (☎ 800-462-6782; www.costa.cruises.com)

**Holland America** (☎ 800-426-0327; www.hollandamerica.com)

**Princess Cruises** (☎ 800-774-6237; www.princess.com)

**OFF THE BOAT**

Cruise-ship passengers who show interest in the local culture and put money directly into the hands of small merchants are more appreciated by Jamaicans than those who stay wrapped in the cocoon of organized land tours or see nothing beyond the duty-free shops.

While the cruise-lines' optional land tours are conveniently packaged to take in many of the island's sightseeing highlights, they also move quickly and tend to shield visitors from interaction with the local people. In addition, a fair percentage of the money paid for these tours stays with the organizers rather than going into the local economy. If you venture out on your own, you're likely to enjoy a richer cultural experience. If you want to tour the island, consider hiring a local taxi driver, who will likely shed light on local issues and give you a more colorful tour. Wander the streets of the main town, poke into little shops, eat at local restaurants and buy souvenirs from street vendors, or veer off the beaten track. Visit small businesses and chat with the owners, buy local rums and other souvenirs in small shops instead of on board – you'll help fuel the local economy (and save money in the process).

**Radisson Seven Seas Cruises** (☎ 877-505-5370; www.rssc.com)

**Royal Caribbean International** (☎ 888-398-9819; www.royalcaribbean.com)

**COST**

The cost of a cruise-ship trip can vary widely, depending on season and vacancy. While it will save you money to book early, keep in mind that cruise lines want to sail full, so many offer excellent last-minute discounts, sometimes up to 50% off the full fare. You'll pay less for a smaller room, but beware that the really cheap cabins are often claustrophobic and poorly located (be sure to ask before booking).

Some cruise lines provide free or discounted airfares to and from the port of embarkation (or will provide a rebate if you make your own transportation arrangements), while others do not. Meals, which are typically frequent and elaborate, are included in the cruise price. Alcoholic drinks are usually not included and are comparable in price to those in bars back home. Guided land tours are almost always offered at each port of call, generally for about US\$40 to US\$100 each. Most cruises end up costing around US\$200 to US\$400 per person per day, including airfare from a major US gateway city. Port charges and government taxes typically add on about US\$150 per cruise. Be sure to check the fine print about deposits, cancellation and refund policies, and travel insurance.

**BOOKING A CRUISE**

When it comes to figuring out what cruise to take, read whatever you can, ask around

for referrals, then call some travel agencies. Agents most knowledgeable about cruises usually belong to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), an organization of cruise lines that works with about 20,000 North American travel agencies. Check out **Cruise Critic** (www.cruisecritic.com), which gives ship profiles, reviews of the different cruise-ship companies and details about bargains and special deals.

For travelers with physical limitations, **Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ 507-451-5005, 800-535-6790; www.flyingwheelstravel.com) specializes in booking disabled-accessible Caribbean cruises.

Several agencies in the US deal specifically in booking Caribbean cruises. They are often a great source of information on special deals. Here are some we recommend:

**Cruise Outlet** (☎ 800-775-1884; www.thecruiseoutlet.com)

**Cruise.com** (☎ 888-999-2783; www.cruise.com)

**Cruise411** (☎ 800-553-7090; www.cruise411.com)

**Cruises at Cost** (☎ 800-274-3866; www.cruisesatcost.com)

**World Wide Cruises** (☎ 800-882-9000; www.worldwidecruises.com)

**Freighter**

Several freighters that ply between North America and Europe call in on Jamaica, and some take paying passengers. Most have plush cabins and passengers are well looked after by stewards. Book early!

**Ford's Freighter Travel Guide** (☎ 818-701-7414; 19448 Longelius St, Northridge, CA 91324, USA) lists freight ships that take some passengers.

The following agencies specialize in freighter cruises:

**Freighter World Cruises** (☎ 626-449-3106; www.freightworld.com; Suite 335, 180 South Lake Ave, Pasadena CA 91101)

**Hamburg-Sud Reiseagentur** (☎ 040-370 5155; Ost-West Strasse 59-61, 20457 Hamburg, Germany)

**Maris USA** (☎ 203-222-1500, 800-996-2747; www.freightercruises.com; 215 Main St, Westport CT 06880, USA)

**NSB Frachtschiff-Touristik** (☎ 0421-338-8020; www.nsb-reisebuero.de; Cioenstrasse 22, D-28195 Bremen, Germany)

### Private Yacht

Many yachters make the trip to Jamaica from North America. If you plan to travel in summer, keep fully abreast of weather reports; mid to late summer is hurricane season.

Upon your arrival in Jamaica, you *must* clear customs and immigration at either Montego Bay (Montego Bay Yacht Club), Kingston (Royal Jamaican Yacht Club, Port Royal), Ocho Rios (St Ann's Bay) or West Harbour in Port Antonio. In addition, you will need to clear customs at *each* port of call in Jamaica.

You'll need the regular documentation for foreign travel (see p283).

## GETTING AROUND

### AIR

There are four domestic airports: Tinson Pen in Kingston, Boscobel Aerodrome near Ocho Rios, Negril Aerodrome, and Ken Jones Aerodrome at Port Antonio.

Montego Bay's Donald Sangster International Airport has a domestic terminal adjacent to the international terminal. It's a bit of a walk – Air Jamaica Express provides a shuttle.

In Kingston, most domestic flights use Tinson Pen, 3km west of downtown, but it's a 40-minute ride to the domestic airstrip from Norman Manley International Airport.

### Airlines in Jamaica

**Air Jamaica** (Jamaica ☎ 800-359-2475; North America & the Caribbean ☎ 800-523-5585; UK ☎ 20-8570-7999; www.airjamaica.com) offers a daily service between Kingston and Montego Bay, and between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios through its domestic air service, Air Jamaica Express.

Typical one-way fares (for purchase outside Jamaica) are US\$60 for Kingston to

Montego Bay (seven daily) and US\$56 for Montego Bay to Ocho Rios (two daily).

**TimAir** (☎ 952-2516, 979-1114; www.timair.net; domestic terminal, Donald Sangster International Airport) has charter flights between its hub in Montego Bay and Kingston (US\$205), Mandeville (US\$175), Negril (US\$179), Ocho Rios (US\$362) and Port Antonio (US\$599). Rates are for two passengers; fares go up or down for fewer or more passengers.

### Helicopter

You can charter a four-passenger Bell Jetranger helicopter for transportation to any airport or for personalized tours from **Island Hoppers** (☎ 974-1285; www.jamaicahelicoptertours.com; 120 Main St, Ocho Rios; tours per person 20-/30-/60-minutes US\$360/520/1000, minimum 3 paid seats). Tours depart from Montego Bay and Ocho Rios.

### BICYCLE

Mountain bikes and 'beach cruisers' (bikes with fat tires, suitable for riding on sand) can be rented at most major resorts (US\$15 to US\$30 per day). However, road conditions are hazardous and Jamaican drivers are not very considerate to bicyclists. For serious touring, bring your own mountain or multi-purpose bike. You'll need sturdy wheels to handle the potholed roads.

### BOAT

The ferry that has long sailed from the Kingston waterfront to Port Royal was not in service at the time of research.

See p290 for details on cruising in Jamaican waters.

### BUS & PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Traveling by public transportation could be the best – or worst! – adventure of your trip to Jamaica. An extensive transportation network links virtually every village and comprises several options that range from standard public buses to private taxis, with minibuses and route taxis in between.

For the adventurous traveler who doesn't mind getting up close and personal with fellow passengers without the comfort of air-conditioning and is unfazed by the wild and often dangerous maneuverings of the drivers, this is the cheapest way to get around Jamaica. There is usually no set timetable – buses leave when the driver considers them full – and passengers are crammed in with

little regard for comfort. Guard your luggage carefully against theft.

Public buses, minibuses and route taxis depart from and arrive at each town's transportation station, which is usually near the main market. Locals can direct you to the appropriate vehicle, which should have its destination marked above the front window (for buses) or on its side.

Don't expect drivers to be able to make change for large bills. Carry a supply of Jamaican coins and bills in denominations of J\$50 and J\$100.

Public buses and minibuses are regulated by the **Ministry of Transport & Works** (☎ 754-2584; www.mtw.gov.jm; 138 Maxfield Ave, Kingston 10).

See p295 for more information about public transportation.

### Classes BUSES

Large buses are few and far between in Jamaica due to the narrow twisting roads. Throughout the island, there are bus stops at most road intersections along routes, but you can usually flag down a bus anywhere except in major cities, where they only pause at designated stops. When you want to get off, shout 'One stop!' The conductor will usually echo your request with, 'Let off!'

### MINIBUSES

Private minibuses, also known as 'coasters,' have traditionally been the workhorses of Jamaica's regional public transportation system. All major towns and virtually every village in the country are served.

Licensed minibuses display red license plates with the initials PPV (public passenger vehicle) or have a Jamaican Union of Travelers Association (JUTA) insignia. JUTA buses are exclusively for tourists. They usually depart their point of origin when they're full; they're often overflowing, with people hanging from the open doors.

### ROUTE TAXIS

These communal taxis are the most universal mode of public transportation, reaching every part of the country. They operate like minibuses, picking up as many people as they can squeeze in along their specified routes.

Most route taxis are white Toyota Corolla station wagons marked by their red license plates. They should have 'Route Taxi' marked

on the front door, and they are not to be confused with similar licensed taxis, which charge more. A rule of thumb: avoid any taxi that lacks the red license plate.

### Costs

Taking public transportation is terrifically inexpensive. Buses and minibuses charge in the neighborhood of US\$1 per 50km, and route taxis charge about US\$2 to US\$3 per 50km.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE Automobile Associations

There is no national roadside organization to phone when you have car trouble. Most car-rental agencies have a 24-hour service number in case of breakdowns and other emergencies. If you do break down, use a local mechanic only for minor work; otherwise the car-rental company may balk at reimbursing you for work it hasn't authorized. If you can't find a phone or repair service, seek police assistance. *Never* give your keys to strangers.

### Driver's License

To drive in Jamaica, you must have a valid International Driver's License (IDL) or a current license for your home country or state, valid for up to six months. In the USA you can obtain an IDL by applying with your current license to any Automobile Association office.

### Fuel & Spare Parts

Many gas stations close at 7pm or so. In rural areas, stations are usually closed on Sunday. At time of research, gasoline cost about US\$1.85 per liter. Most gas stations only accept cash for payment, although a growing number of modern gas stations in the larger towns accept credit cards.

### Rental

Several major international car-rental companies operate in Jamaica, along with dozens of local firms. Car-rental agencies are listed in the local yellow pages.

High-season rates begin at about US\$45 per day and can run as high as US\$125, depending on the vehicle. Cheaper rates apply in the low season. Some companies include unlimited distance, while some set a limit and charge a fee for excess kilometers driven. Most firms require a deposit of at least US\$500, but

accept a credit-card imprint. Keep copies of all your paperwork. Renters must be 21 years old (some companies will rent only to people aged 25 or older).

You can reserve a car upon arrival, but in the high season be sure to make your reservation in advance. Reconfirm before your arrival.

Before signing, go over the vehicle with a fine-tooth comb to identify any dents and scratches. Make a note of each one before you drive away. You're likely to be charged for the slightest mark that wasn't noted before. Don't forget to check the cigarette lighter and interior switches, which are often missing.

Most of the companies rent out modern Japanese sedans. A big car can be a liability on Jamaica's narrow, winding roads. Some companies also rent 4WD vehicles, which are highly recommended if you intend to do *any* driving away from main roads.

Stick shift is preferable because frequent and sudden gear changes are required when potholes and kamikaze chickens appear out of nowhere. Remember that you'll be changing gears with your *left* hand. If this is new to you, you'll soon get the hang of it.

Jamaica's largest and most reputable car-rental company is **Island Car Rentals** ([www.islandcarrentals.com](http://www.islandcarrentals.com)); Donald Sangster International Airport (☎ 952-7225); Kingston (☎ 926-8012; 17 Antigua Ave); Norman Manley International Airport (☎ 924-8075); North America (☎ 800-892-4581); Ocho Rios (☎ 974-2666). Eleven categories of cars cost US\$44 to \$99 daily.

Major international companies, with rates comparable to those of Island Car Rentals, are represented by these offices in Jamaica:

**Avis** ([www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)); Donald Sangster International Airport (☎ 952-0762); Norman Manley International Airport (☎ 924-8293)

**Budget** ([www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com)); Norman Manley International Airport (☎ 759-1793); Ocho Rios (☎ 974-1288)

**Hertz** ([www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)); Donald Sangster International Airport (☎ 979-0438) Norman Manley International Airport (☎ 924-8028)

**Thrifty** ([www.thrifty.com](http://www.thrifty.com)); Donald Sangster International Airport ☎ 952-5825

Local rental agencies often provide better daily rates than the international chains, but the cars are sometimes road-worn. Reputable agencies include these ones:

**Beaumont's Car Rentals** Kingston (☎ 926-0311; 56c Brentford Rd); Montego Bay (☎ 971-8476; [www.beaumonts-car-rental.com](http://www.beaumonts-car-rental.com); 34 Queens Dr)

**Caribbean Car Rentals** (☎ 926-6339; [www.caribbean-carrentals.net](http://www.caribbean-carrentals.net); 31 Hope Rd, Kingston)

**Triple-A-Car Rental** (☎ 974-2859; [www.tripleacar.com](http://www.tripleacar.com); 180 Main St, Ocho Rios)

### Insurance

Check in advance whether your current insurance or credit card covers you for driving while abroad. All rental companies will recommend damage-waiver insurance, which limits your liability in the event of an accident or damage. This costs about US\$12 to US\$40 per day and is a valuable investment.

### Road Conditions

Jamaica's roads run the gamut from modern multilane highways to barely passable tracks. You can expect any road with the designation 'A' before its number to be in fairly good condition. 'B' roads are in general much more narrow and often badly potholed, but still passable in the average rental car. Minor roads, particularly those in the Blue Mountains and in the Cockpit Country, can be hellish. If you plan to drive off the major routes, it's essential to have a stalwart 4WD vehicle.

Signage on main roads is good, but directional signs are few and far between as soon as you leave the main roads. Many B-roads are not shown on maps. And what may appear on a map to be a 30-minute journey may take several hours. More often than not there are no signs to indicate sharp curves, steep ascents or work in progress. In addition roads are often poorly lit, if at all.

### Road Hazards

Jamaican drivers rank among the world's rudest and most dangerous. Cars race through towns and play chicken with one another, overtaking with daredevil folly. Jamaica has the third-highest auto fatality rate in the world, behind Ethiopia and India. Use extreme caution and drive defensively, especially at night when you should be prepared to meet oncoming cars that are either without lights or blinding you with their high-beams. Use your horn liberally, especially when approaching blind corners.

### Road Rules

Always drive on the left. Remember: 'Keep left, and you'll always be right.' Here's another local saying worth memorizing: 'De left side is de right side; de right side is suicide!' Even

these dictums may go out the window when you find yourself negotiating a roundabout.

Jamaica has a compulsory seatbelt law.

Speed limits range from 50km to 80km and vary from place to place across the island.

### HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking is common enough among Jamaicans but, because public transportation is absurdly cheap, few tourists stick out their thumbs.

Hitchhiking is never entirely safe in any country in the world and we don't recommend it. Travelers who decide to hitchhike should understand that they are taking a small but potentially serious risk. If you choose to take that risk, you will be safer if you travel in pairs and let someone know where you are planning to go.

### LOCAL TRANSPORTATION Bicycle

Bicycle rentals are commonly available in resort towns (US\$15 to US\$30 per day) but the frenetic nature of Jamaican traffic may preclude you from having the pleasant experience that you had in mind.

If you want to do any serious riding, consider bringing your own bike. However, you need to be prepared to fix your own flats and broken chains. Bike shops are virtually nonexistent.

### Buses

Kingston's **municipal bus system** (Jamaica Urban Transport Co Ltd; ☎ 749-3196; fares US\$0.35-0.50; ☎ 5am-10pm) operates a fleet of Mercedes-Benz and Volvo buses, including some for the disabled. Buses stop only at official stops.

Students, children, disabled persons and pensioners pay half the full fare.

### Motor Scooter & Motorcycle

Dozens of companies hire motorcycles and scooters; they're available at any resort town. These companies are far more lax than the car-rental companies; you may not even have to show your driver's license. If you are not an experienced motorcycle driver, it might be better to rent a scooter, which is far easier to handle. Scooters cost about US\$35 per day

and motorcycles cost about US\$45 a day; note that the deposits can be high.

Road conditions in Jamaica are hazardous. If the rental agency has helmets available, *wear one!*

### Route Taxi

Route taxis, which are generally white Corolla station wagons with red PPV plates, provide vital transportation on both the local and national level. You can generally flag them down anywhere. See p293 for more information.

### Taxi

Licensed taxis – called 'contract carriages' – have red PPV license plates (those without such plates are unlicensed). They're expensive, but affordable if you share the cost with other passengers.

**Jamaica Union of Travelers Association** (JUTA; [juta@cwjamaica.com](http://juta@cwjamaica.com); Kingston ☎ 926-1537; Montego Bay ☎ 952-0813; Negril ☎ 957-9197) operates islandwide and is geared almost exclusively to the tourist business. Other taxicab companies are listed in the yellow pages and in the regional chapters of this book.

The Transport Authority has established fixed rates according to distance (different rates apply for locals and tourists, who pay more). Licensed cabs should have these posted inside. Taxis are also supposed to have meters, but many don't use them.

The following were typical fares in 2007, based on up to four people per taxi:

Route	Fare
Around Montego Bay	US\$15-20
Kingston-Ocho Rios	US\$120-150
Kingston-Port Antonio	US\$100-120
Montego Bay-Ocho Rios or Negril	US\$100
Norman Manley International Airport-Kingston (Uptown)	US\$25
Donald Sangster International Airport-Montego Bay	US\$8

### TRAIN

Although Jamaica was the proud home to the first railway lines outside Europe and North America, those railway tracks marked on the maps are all that's left of them. The railway system was shut down in 1992. Talks of putting the trains back into operation have come to naught.

# Health

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Obviously prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. Travelers who receive the recommended vaccines and follow commonsense precautions usually come away with nothing more than a little diarrhea – a rite of passage to any tropical holiday.

From the medical standpoint, Jamaica is generally safe as long as you're reasonably careful about what you eat and drink. The most common travel-related diseases, such as dysentery and hepatitis, are acquired by consumption of contaminated food and water. Mosquito-borne illnesses are not a significant concern on the island, except during outbreaks of dengue fever.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

**Chickenpox** For travelers who've never had chickenpox; two doses one month apart. Possible side effects are fever or a mild case of chickenpox.

**Hepatitis A** Recommended for all travelers; one dose before trip, and a booster six to 12 months later. Side effects may include soreness at injection site, headaches or body aches.

**Hepatitis B** Recommended for long-term travelers in close contact with the local population; three doses over six months. Side effects may include soreness at injection site or low-grade fever.

**Measles** One dose, recommended for travelers born after 1956 who've had only one measles vaccination. Side effects could include fever, rash, joint pains or allergic reactions.

**Rabies** For travelers who may have contact with animals and may not have access to medical care; three doses over three to four weeks. Possible side effects: soreness at injection site, headaches, body aches (and it's expensive).

**Tetanus-diphtheria** For all travelers who haven't had a booster within 10 years; one dose lasts 10 years. There may be some soreness at injection site.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Bring medications in their original containers, clearly labeled. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing all medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If you're carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

### INSURANCE

If your health insurance does not cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider supplemental insurance. US travelers can find a list of medical-evacuation and travel-insurance companies on the **US State Department website** ([www.travel.state.gov/medical.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/medical.html)). Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditure.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they are given, visit a physician four to eight weeks before your departure. Ask your doctor for an international certificate of vaccination (known as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received. It's mandatory for countries requiring proof of yellow-fever vaccination upon entry, but it's a good idea to carry it wherever you travel.

No vaccinations are required to enter Jamaica unless you have visited any of the following locations within the previous six weeks: Asia, Africa, Central and South America, Dominican Republic, Haiti or Trinidad and Tobago. Check with the **Jamaica Tourist Board** (JTB; [www.visitjamaica.com](http://www.visitjamaica.com)) or your travel agent before departure to see what current regulations may be. Yellow fever is not a threat in Jamaica, but immunization may be required of travelers arriving from infected areas, chiefly in Africa and South America.

### MEDICAL CHECKLIST

Recommended items for a personal medical kit:

- acetaminophen/paracetamol (Tylenol) or aspirin
- adhesive or paper tape
- antibacterial ointment (eg Bactroban) for cuts and abrasions
- antibiotics
- anti-diarrheal drugs (eg loperamide)
- antihistamines (for hay fever and allergic reactions)
- anti-inflammatory drugs (eg ibuprofen)
- bandages, gauze and gauze rolls
- DEET-containing insect repellent for the skin
- iodine tablets (for water purification)
- oral rehydration salts
- permethrin-containing insect spray for clothing, tents and bed nets
- pocketknife
- scissors, safety pins and tweezers
- steroid cream or cortisone (for poison ivy and other allergic rashes)
- sunblock
- syringes and sterile needles
- thermometer

### INTERNET RESOURCES

There is a wealth of travel health advice on the internet. **Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) is a good place to start. The **World Health Organization** ([www.who.int/ith/](http://www.who.int/ith/)) publishes a superb book called *International Travel and Health*, which is revised annually and is available online on its website at no cost. Another website of general interest is **MD Travel Health** ([www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com)), which provides complete

travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily, also at no cost.

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available.

**Australia** ([www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au))

**Canada** ([www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english))

**UK** ([www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice](http://www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice))

**USA** ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel))

### FURTHER READING

If you're traveling with children, *Lonely Planet's Travel with Children* may be useful. *ABC of Healthy Travel* by E Walker et al, and *Medicine for the Outdoors* by Paul S Auerbach, are other valuable resources.

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility, and the longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel through the blood vessels to the lungs, where they could cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of deep vein thrombosis is swelling or pain in the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travelers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent development of deep vein thrombosis on long flights, you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

### JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones, and is characterized by insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag, try drinking plenty of fluids (nonalcoholic) and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating

motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

## IN JAMAICA

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Acceptable health care is available in most major cities and larger towns throughout Jamaica, but may be hard to locate in rural areas. Most travelers will find the quality of health care will not be comparable to that in their home country. To find a good local doctor, your best bet is to ask the management of the hotel where you are staying or contact your embassy in Kingston or Montego Bay (see p280).

Many doctors and hospitals expect payment in cash, regardless of whether you have travel health insurance. If you develop a life-threatening medical problem, you'll probably want to be evacuated to a country with state-of-the-art medical care. Since this may cost tens of thousands of dollars, be sure you have insurance to cover this before you depart (see p296).

Many pharmacies are well supplied, but important medications may not be consistently available. Be sure to bring along adequate supplies of all prescription drugs.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES

#### Dengue Fever

Although extremely rare, dengue fever is present in Jamaica, notably in Portland parish and around Kingston. Dengue is a viral infection transmitted by *Aedes* mosquitoes, which bite mostly during the daytime and are usually found close to human habitations, often indoors. They breed primarily in artificial water containers such as jars, barrels, cisterns, metal drums, plastic containers and discarded tires. As a result, dengue is especially common in densely populated, urban environments.

Dengue usually causes flulike symptoms that can include fever, muscular aches, joint pains, headaches, nausea and vomiting, often followed by a rash. The experience of body aches may be quite uncomfortable but most cases resolve uneventfully within a few days. Severe cases usually occur in children under 15 who are experiencing their second dengue infection.

There is no treatment for dengue fever except to take analgesics such as acetaminophen or paracetamol (Tylenol) and drink plenty of fluids. Severe cases may require hospitalization for intravenous fluids and supportive care. There is no vaccine.

#### Hepatitis A

In Jamaica hepatitis A is the second most common travel-related infection (after traveler's diarrhea). Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that is usually acquired by ingestion of contaminated water, food or ice, though it may also be acquired by direct contact with infected persons. The illness occurs throughout the world, but the incidence is higher in developing nations. Symptoms may include fever, malaise, jaundice, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Most cases resolve without complications, though it occasionally causes severe liver damage. There is no treatment.

The vaccine for hepatitis A is extremely safe and highly effective. If you get a booster six to 12 months later, it lasts for at least 10 years. You really should get it before you go to any developing nation. Because the safety of hepatitis A vaccine has not been established for pregnant women or children under age two, they should instead have a gammaglobulin injection.

#### Hepatitis B

Like hepatitis A, hepatitis B is a liver infection that occurs worldwide but is more common in developing nations. Unlike hepatitis A, the disease is usually acquired by sexual contact or by exposure to infected blood, generally through blood transfusions or contaminated needles. The vaccine is recommended for long-term travelers (on the road for more than six months) who expect to live in rural areas or have close physical contact with locals. Additionally, the vaccine is recommended for anyone who anticipates sexual contact with the local inhabitants or possible medical, dental or other treatments while abroad, especially if a need for transfusions or injections is expected.

Hepatitis B vaccine is safe and highly effective. However, three injections are necessary to establish full immunity. Several countries added hepatitis B vaccine to the list of routine childhood immunizations in the 1980s, so many young adults are already protected.

#### HIV/AIDS

In 2005 around 1.5% of all Jamaican adults carried HIV, and that percentage is believed to have risen. The Caribbean is the second-worst affected region in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. Be sure to use condoms for all sexual encounters. If you think you might visit a piercing or tattoo parlor, or if you have a medical condition that might require an injection, make certain you bring along your own sterile needles.

Jamaica has a toll-free **AIDS/STD Helpline** (☎ 888-991-4444, 967-3830; 📞 10am-10pm Mon-Fri).

**Jamaica AIDS Support** (JAS; Kingston ☎ 978-2345; 4 Upper Musgrave Ave; Montego Bay ☎ 952-9817; 1st fl, Van Haze Bldg, 16 East St; Ocho Rios ☎ 974-7236; www.jamaicaaidsupport.com; McDowell Bldg, Pineapple Pl) operates a hospice and provides assistance for anyone infected with HIV.

The website of the **National AIDS Committee** (☎ 967-1100; www.nacjamaica.com; 2-4 King St, 4th fl, Oceana Bldg, Kingston) is an informative resource.

#### Sexually Transmitted Diseases

There's a high prevalence of venereal disease in Jamaica. Gonorrhea and syphilis are the most common; sores, blisters or rashes around the genitals and discharges or pain when urinating are common symptoms. Symptoms for women may be less marked or not observed. Syphilis symptoms eventually disappear, but the disease continues and can cause severe problems, even death, in later years. The treatment of gonorrhea and syphilis is by antibiotics.

While sexual abstinence is the only certain preventative, using condoms is also effective. High-quality condoms are readily available in Jamaica's resort areas, but less so in the smaller towns.

#### Tetanus

This potentially fatal disease is present in Jamaica as in other tropical areas. It is difficult to treat, but is preventable with immunization. Tetanus (lockjaw) occurs when a wound becomes infected by a germ that lives in the feces of animals or people; clean all cuts, punctures or animal bites. The first symptom may be discomfort in swallowing, or stiffening of the jaw and neck, followed by painful convulsions of the jaw and whole body.

#### TRAVELER'S DIARRHEA

Throughout most of Jamaica, tap water has been treated and is safe to drink, but in some

far-flung rural areas it is safest to avoid it unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets). To prevent diarrhea, eat fresh fruits or vegetables only if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurized milk; and be highly selective when eating food from street vendors.

If you develop diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluid, preferably an oral rehydration solution containing lots of salt and sugar. A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an antiarrheal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhea is bloody or persists for more than 72 hours, or is accompanied by fever, shaking chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

### ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

#### Animal Bites

Do not attempt to pet, handle or feed any animal, with the exception of domestic animals known to be free of any infectious disease. Most injuries caused by animals are directly related to a person's attempt to touch or feed them.

Any bite or scratch by a mammal, including bats, should be promptly and thoroughly cleansed with large amounts of soap and water, then an antiseptic such as iodine or alcohol should be applied. The local health authorities should be contacted immediately regarding possible post-exposure rabies treatment, whether or not you've been immunized against rabies. It may also be advisable to start an antibiotic, since wounds caused by animal bites and scratches frequently become infected. One of the newer quinolones, such as levofloxacin (Levaquin), which many travelers carry in case of diarrhea, would be an appropriate choice.

Various fish and other sea creatures can sting or bite dangerously (see p300). Jamaica has no venomous snakes.

#### Bedbugs, Lice & Scabies

Bedbugs often live in dirty mattresses and bedding. Spots of blood on bedclothes or on the wall around the bed can be read as a suggestion to find another hotel.

Lice, which are easier to see, cause itching and discomfort. They make themselves

at home in your hair (head lice), clothing (body lice) or pubic hair (crabs). You catch lice through direct contact with infected people or by sharing combs, clothing and the like. Powder or shampoo treatment will kill the lice.

Likewise, scabies – an infestation of microscopic mites – is acquired through sexual contact, bed linen, towels or clothing. The first sign – severe itching caused by an infestation of eggs and feces under the skin – usually appears three to four weeks after exposure (as soon as 24 hours for a second exposure) and is worse at night. Infestation appears as tiny welts and pimples, often in a dotted line, most commonly around the groin and the lower abdomen, between the fingers, on the elbows and under the armpits. Treatment is by pesticidal lotions.

At the same time as using the treatment, you must wash *all* your clothing and bedding in hot water.

### Cuts & Scratches

Skin punctures can easily become infected in hot climates and may be difficult to heal. Treat any cut with an antiseptic. Where possible, avoid bandages and Band-Aids, which can keep wounds wet. Coral cuts are notoriously slow to heal, as the coral injects a weak venom into the wound. Clean any cut thoroughly with sodium peroxide if available.

### Food

Salads and fruit should be washed with purified water or peeled where possible. Ice cream is usually OK, but beware of street vendors who sell ice cream that has melted and been refrozen. Thoroughly cooked food is safest, but not if it has been left to cool or has been reheated. Shellfish such as oysters and clams should be avoided as well as undercooked meat, particularly in the form of mince. Steaming does not make shellfish safe to eat. Wash your hands before eating.

### Mosquito Bites

To prevent bites wear long sleeves, long pants, hats, and shoes rather than sandals. Bring a good insect repellent, preferably one containing DEET, which should be applied to exposed skin and clothing but not to the eyes, mouth, cuts, wounds or irritated skin. In general, adults and children over 12 should use preparations that contain 25% to 35%

DEET, which usually lasts for about six hours. Children between two and 12 years of age should use preparations containing no more than 10% DEET, applied sparingly, which will usually last for about three hours. Products that contain lower concentrations of DEET are as effective, but for shorter periods of time. Neurological toxicity has been reported from DEET, especially in children, but appears to be extremely uncommon and generally related to overuse. Compounds containing DEET should not be used on children under the age of two.

Insect repellents containing certain botanical products, including eucalyptus oil and soybean oil, are effective but last only 1½ to two hours. Products based on citronella are not effective.

For additional protection, you can apply permethrin to clothing, shoes, tents and bed nets. Permethrin treatments are safe and remain effective for at least two weeks, even when items are laundered. Permethrin should not be applied directly to skin.

Don't sleep with the window open unless there is a screen. If sleeping outdoors or in accommodations that allow entry of mosquitoes, use a bed net, preferably treated with permethrin, with edges tucked in under the mattress. The mesh size should be less than 1.5mm. If the sleeping area is not otherwise protected, use a mosquito coil, which will fill the room with insecticide through the night. Wristbands impregnated with repellent are not effective.

### No-See-Ums

These well-named irritants are almost microscopically small fleas that hang out on beaches and appear around dusk (especially after rain), and have a voracious appetite. Their bite is out of all proportion to their size. Most insect repellents don't faze them. A better bet is a liberal application of Avon's Skin So Soft, a cosmetic that even the US Army swears by.

### Sea Creatures

Spiny sea urchins and coelenterates (coral and jellyfish) are a hazard in some areas. If you're stung by a coelenterate, apply diluted vinegar or baking soda. Remove tentacles carefully, and not with bare hands. If you get stung by a stinging fish, such as a stingray, immerse the limb in water at about 45°C.

Local advice on where to swim is the best way to avoid contact with jellyfish. If you get stung, dousing with vinegar will deactivate any stingers that have not 'fired.' In addition to calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics may reduce the reaction and relieve the pain.

### Sun

To protect yourself from excessive sun exposure, you should stay out of the midday sun, wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed sun hat, and apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher, with both UVA and UVB protection. Sunscreen should be generously applied to all exposed parts of the body approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure and should be reapplied after swimming or vigorous activity. Travelers should also drink plenty of fluids and avoid strenuous exercise when the temperature is high.

You'll sweat profusely in Jamaica. Don't rely on feeling thirsty to indicate when you should drink water. Not needing to urinate, or very dark yellow urine, is a sign of dehydration. You'll lose quite a bit of salt through sweating. Salt deficiency is characterized by fatigue, lethargy, headaches, giddiness and muscle cramps, and in this case salt tablets may help. Vomiting or diarrhea can also deplete your liquid and salt levels. Anhydrotic heat exhaustion, caused by an inability to sweat, is quite rare. Unlike other forms of heat exhaustion, it is likely to strike people who have been in Jamaica's hot climate for some time, rather than newcomers.

Long, continuous periods of exposure to high temperatures can leave you vulnerable to heat stroke, a sometimes fatal condition that occurs if the body's heat-regulating mechanism breaks down and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels.

The symptoms are feeling unwell, not sweating very much (or at all) and a high body temperature. Where sweating has ceased, the skin becomes flushed and red. Severe throbbing headaches and lack of coordination will also occur, and the sufferer may be confused or aggressive. Eventually the victim will become delirious or convulse. Hospitalization is essential, but meanwhile get victims out of the sun, remove their clothing, cover them with a wet sheet or towel and fan them continually.

Prickly heat is an itchy rash caused by excessive perspiration trapped under the skin.

It usually strikes people who have just arrived in a hot climate and whose pores have not yet opened sufficiently to cope with increased sweating. To alleviate symptoms, keep cool and bathe often, use a mild talcum powder, or resort to air-con.

Don't underestimate the power of the tropical sun, no matter how dark your skin color. You can get sunburned surprisingly quickly, even on cloudy days. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or more. Build up your exposure to the sun gradually. A hat provides added protection, and you should also use a barrier cream for your nose and lips. If you do get burned, calamine lotion and aloe vera will provide soothing relief.

Avoid booze by day, as your body uses water to process alcohol. Drink water, or coconut water straight from the husk.

### Water

Water is generally safe to drink from faucets throughout the island except in the most far-flung rural regions. It is safest, however, to stick with bottled water. It's a good idea to avoid ice, particularly ice sold at street stands as 'bellywash,' 'snocones' or 'skyjuice,' shaved-ice cones sweetened with fruit juice.

Unless you're certain that the local water is not contaminated, you shouldn't drink it. Vigorous boiling for one minute is the most effective means of water purification. At altitudes greater than 2000m, boil for three minutes. In Jamaica's backwaters, clean your teeth with purified water rather than tap water.

Another option is to disinfect water with iodine pills. Instructions are usually enclosed and should be carefully followed. Or you can add 2% tincture of iodine to one quart or liter of water (five drops to clear water, 10 drops to cloudy water) and let it stand for 30 minutes. If the water is cold, longer times may be required. The taste of iodinated water may be improved by adding vitamin C (ascorbic acid). Iodinated water should not be consumed for more than a few weeks. Pregnant women, people with a history of thyroid disease and those allergic to iodine should not drink iodinated water.

A number of water filters are available on the market. Those with smaller pores (reverse osmosis filters) provide the broadest protection but they are relatively large and are readily plugged by debris. Those with somewhat larger pores (microstrainer filters)

are ineffective against viruses, although they remove other organisms. Manufacturers' instructions must be carefully followed.

### **Worms**

Parasitic worms are common in rural tropical areas. They can be present on unwashed vegetables or in undercooked meat, and you can pick them up through your skin by walking barefoot. If left untreated, they can cause severe health problems.

### **CHILDREN & PREGNANT WOMEN**

In general, it's safe for children and pregnant women to go to Jamaica. However, because some of the vaccines listed in this chapter are not approved for use in children and pregnant women, these travelers should be particularly careful not to drink tap water or consume any questionable food or beverage.

When traveling with children, make sure that all their routine immunizations are up to date. It's sometimes appropriate to give children some of their vaccines a little early before visiting a developing nation. You should discuss this with your pediatrician. If pregnant, you should bear in mind that, should a complication such as premature labor develop while you're abroad, the quality of medical care available may not be comparable to that in your home country.

The yellow fever vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women or children less than nine months old. If arriving from a country with yellow fever, these travelers should obtain a waiver letter, preferably written on letterhead stationery and bearing the stamp used by official immunization centers to validate the international certificate of vaccination.



# Language

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## UNDERSTANDING PATOIS

When Jamaicans speak patois, the discussion may be incomprehensible to visitors. It might sound like a chaotic babble without rules. But don't be misled: there are rules. They're just different from those of traditional English grammar.

Some words are unexpectedly present, for example, where others are unexpectedly missing. New words are invented and slip into general parlance as quickly as others fall from grace, and vowel sounds go sliding off into diphthongs. Like Yorkshire folk, Jamaicans often drop their 'h's' (thus, *ouse* instead of 'house') and add them in unexpected places (for example, *hemphasize*). Jamaicans usually drop the 'h' from 'th' as well: hence, *t'ree* for 'three,' and *t'anks* for 'thanks.' 'The' is usually pronounced as *de* and 'them' as *dem*. They also sometimes drop the 'w,' as in *ooman* (woman).

Jamaicans also often flip letters, as in *flim* for 'film,' and *cerfiticket* for 'certificate.' They rearrange syllables and give them their own inflections. In patois, the word 'up' is used to intensify meaning: thus, cars *mash up*. Patois words are usually spelled phonetically, so their written form reflects their sound quite closely.

In order to express the mood of the moment, 'Jamaica talk' infuses words with intonation, repetition, gesture, imagery and drama. It is not a static, written language, but an oral, vital thing that infuses life into inanimate objects. Thus, one does not forget to mail a letter; instead, *dat letter jus' fly out of mi mind*. A waiter does not simply drop a tray full of crockery; *dat wurtless t'ing jump right out of mi hands*. Among

people who believe in *duppies* (ghosts), such reasoning can permit individuals to disclaim responsibility for their actions.

Such animate imagery, a carryover of West African proverbs, infuses Jamaica talk with life and is used to crystallize sayings based on the wisdom of experience, often using living creatures as teachers. In the context of a society torn from its roots and oppressed, the islanders have evolved countless sayings that express simple warnings about behavior and interpersonal relationships. Thus, 'Every day you goad donkey, 'im will kick you one day.' Or, 'When you go to donkey's house, doan't talk about ears' and 'If you play with puppy, 'im lick your mouth.'

Jamaican patois is liberally laced with sexual innuendo and slang, often of an extremely sexist nature. Cuss words abound, especially the word *rass*, an impolite term that originally meant 'backside' or 'arse'; its meaning now varies according to circumstance. It's a word visitors to Jamaica should know, as it's one of the most commonly used (and misunderstood) words. Generally it is a term of abuse, as in *Im a no good rass!* (mild), or when used with the most offensive (yet common) Jamaican derogatory term, *Im a rass blood claat* (a menstrual pad). It can also be used as an endearment (*Hey, rass, gi mi smallers*) or in a similar vein to describe a superlative (*Dat gal pretty to rass, mon!*).

Patois is not gender specific. Everyone and everything is simply *im* or *dem*. Possessive pronouns such as 'my' and 'mine' are often replaced with *a fi*, which can also be an intensifier, as in *A fi mi bike* (It's my bike). Plurals are often either ignored (as in 'five finger') or signified by the word *dem*, as in *De byah dem go to school* (The boys have gone to school). Note how the present tense is used to convey a past action.

Since you'll not be able to walk far without being asked for money, it helps to know enough patois to comprehend what you're hearing. Expect to hear *Gi mi a smallers no bass* (Give me some money now boss); *bass* means 'boss' and is often used to address

persons in authority or those able to dispense favors.

There are several Jamaican pocket guides to understanding patois, including *Membra de Culcha: Chief Words, Phrases, Proverbs & Riddles in Jamaican Dialect* by Cecily Reece-Daly.

## COLONIAL CARRYOVERS

Many words in the Jamaican lexicon have been carried over from early English colonial days, reflecting true Shakespearean English. The language is imbued with terms that are otherwise considered archaic. One of the most obvious is 'chain,' the old English measurement (22 yards), which is still used liberally, though rarely accurately. Similarly, you may find yourself being served a drink in a 'goblet.'

A few terms derive from slave days. Thus visitors can expect to be called *massa* (master) or 'mistress.' The term 'pickaninny' is still used for children, despite its racist connotations in Western culture; for example, the bus conductor might say *pickney stan' up an gi big people seat*.

## AFRICAN HERITAGE

Scores of words have been passed down from Africa, mostly from the Ashanti, Comorante and Congolese languages. Thus, a Jamaican may refer to a fool as a *bo-bo*. A commonly used African word is *nyam*, which means 'to eat.'

## SAYINGS & PROVERBS

Jamaicans use plenty of metaphors and proverbs. They will tell you *Cockroach no business in a fowlyard* (Mind your own business). If a Jamaican tells you, *De higher monkey climb, de more 'im expose*, he or she is telling you that your boasting is transparent and that you're acting pretentiously, exposing more than you should.

Some phrases you'll hear may not mean what they suggest. *Soon come*, for example, is a common refrain, but don't hold your breath! The phrase *really* means the subject will arrive eventually – almost the opposite of what you would expect. Likewise, *jus' up de road* or *jus' a likkle distance* can mean miles or the other side of town.

The most common greeting you'll hear is *Everyting cool, mon?* or *Everyting irie?*

## 'JAMAICA TALK'

A good preparatory source is the movie *Dancehall Queen*, with dialogue in thick, at times impenetrable, Jamaican dialect. Here are some words you'll be sure to hear while strolling through the streets.

**ago** – to be intent on doing something, as in 'Me ago duntown.'  
**agony** – a sexual act, or a style of dancing that suggests it  
**almshouse** – anything negative  
**arms house** – a violent posture, common during sound-system clashes  
**atops** – Red Stripe beer

**Babylon** – the establishment, white society  
**bakra** – a slave owner, white man  
**baldhead** – a non-Rasta; person of unsound viewpoint  
**bandulu** – a hustler, criminal, or the act of being swindled  
**bangarang** – a commotion, sometimes associated with rival, deafening sound-system noise  
**bankra** – a basket  
**bashment** – a large dance or party; anything fabulous  
**batty** – a bottom or rear end, as in 'Yu batty too big, mon!' (as heard from a woman who doesn't give a damn for a propositioner's looks)  
**batty boy** – a gay man

**batty riders** – tight lycra hot pants for showing off one's *batty*, favored by dancehall queens  
**bawl** – to call out, especially in anguish  
**beenie** – small  
**big up** – to inflate or promote oneself, as in 'Big up yo chest, mon!'  
**blood** – a respectful greeting, as in 'Wh'appen blood?' Also a swear word, most often used with *claat* (see p300)  
**bly** – a chance or opportunity; sometimes a feeble excuse  
**Bobo dread** – a Rastafarian follower of Prince Emanuel Edwards

**bomba** – commonly used abusive term, usually allied with *claat*, as in 'Get de bomba-claat car out mi way!'  
**boonoonoonoo** – fabulous, greatest; street or beach party  
**boops** – a man who keeps a woman in idle splendor (men, watch out if a woman tells you, 'Mi wan' you fi mi boops')  
**brawta** – additional  
**breadkind** – any starchy vegetable used as a side dish in lieu of bread  
**bredda** – a friend, usually male  
**bredren** – male friends  
**brownings** – brown-skinned women; also a 'well-heeled' woman showing off her status  
**buck** – to meet someone  
**bumper** – a rear end or backside  
**burn** – to smoke ganja  
**busha** – an overseer of a slave plantation  
**byah** – a boy

**carry go bring come** – to spread gossip  
**chalice** – a Rastafarian's holy ganja pipe (also known as a *cutchie*)  
**charged** – stoned or drunk  
**check** – to appreciate, especially a point of view or a person's physical attraction; also to pay a visit  
**chillum** – a pipe for smoking ganja  
**cho** – an expression to signify that the speaker is becoming annoyed  
**chronic** – particularly potent ganja  
**claat, clawt** – one of the strongest and most frequently heard Jamaican expletives (see p300)  
**coolie** – someone from India  
**cool runnings** – no problem  
**cool yu foot** – slow down, relax  
**copasetic** – cool, *irie*  
**cork** – full  
**cotch** – to relax, rest; also means to brace or support something, as well as a place to sleep  
**cris** – from 'crisp,' meaning attractive or top-notch; 'Im a cris, cris 'ing!' ('He's handsome!')  
**cris-biscuit** – anything *cris* or excellent  
**crub** – to dance salaciously, as in 'winning'  
**cuss-cuss** – an argument  
**cutchie** – ganja pipes

**dally** – the opposite of to linger; to go  
**dawta** – a respectful term for a young woman  
**de** – the  
**degeh** – mealy or pathetically small, usually used in a derogatory sense  
**deh-deh** – to be someplace, as in 'Mi deh-deh!' ('I'm here!')  
**deportees** – used cars, imported from Japan  
**dibby-dibby** – pathetic, especially a competitor's weak sound system  
**do** – please, as in 'Do, me a beg yu'  
**don** – a male authority figure  
**downpresser** – a Rastafarian term for an oppressor  
**dread** – a Rastafarian; also a terrible situation  
**dunzer** – money; also known as *smalls*  
**duppy** – a ghost

**facety** – cheeky, impertinent, as in 'Yu facety to rass, gal!' ('You're rude, girl!')  
**fiyah** – a Rastafarian greeting  
**flex** – how one behaves; to party wildly

**ganga-lee** – a gangster  
**ganja** – marijuana; also known as 'de 'oly 'erb,' 'wisdom weed,' 'colly weed,' *kaya*, *sensie* and *tampie*  
**ginnal** – a swindler or con artist  
**gorgon** – a person to be feared  
**gow** – an empty boast  
**gravilishas** – greedy  
**grind** – see *flex*

**guidance** – a Rastafarian parting term, meaning 'May God be with you'  
**gwan** – go away  
**gyal** – a woman

**heartical** or '**eartical** – an esteemed person, someone with integrity; authentic  
**herb** or '**erb** – marijuana (see *ganja*)  
**higgler** or '**iggler** – a market vendor, usually female; also a person who bargains  
**him** or '**im** – any singular pronoun: he, she, him, her, it  
**hottie-bottie** or '**ottie-bottie** – an attractive woman

**ldren** – brethren, used by Rastafarians to mean friends  
**irie** – alright, groovy; used to indicate that all is well; also a greeting ('Everyting irie?')  
**iron bird** – an airplane  
**I-tal** – natural foods, health food, purity  
**iyah** – a greeting

**Jah** – God; an Old Testament name, popular with Rastafarians  
**Jamdung** – Jamaica (also known as Jah-Mek-Ya, as in 'God's work')  
**janga** – shrimp, crayfish  
**Joe Gring** – a man with whom a woman has an affair while her husband or boyfriend is away  
**jook** – to pierce or stab

**kaya** – marijuana (see *ganja*)  
**kingman** – a husband  
**kiss me neck** – to express surprise  
**kiss mi** – not an invitation, but a common profane exclamation, as in 'Kiss mi rass!'

**labba labba** – talk  
**labrish** – gossip  
**leggo beast** – rowdy person  
**let off** – to give  
**level vibes** – no problem  
**lick** – to smoke; to be in vogue; to strike a blow  
**lick shot** – a gun fired at a dancehall to express appreciation  
**lion** – upright, usually describes a righteous Rastafarian  
**lovers rock** – romantic reggae

**maarga** – thin (from meager), as in 'Da boy deh maarga' ('That man there is skinny')  
**mantel** – good-looking man, usually one who's promiscuous  
**market mammie** – a higgler  
**mash up** – to have an accident  
**massah** – mister; derived from 'master' of slavery days and now used for any male, particularly one in authority  
**massive** – a noun used to describe a crowd  
**matey** – girlfriend who is one of several sexual partners  
**men** – used in the singular for a gay man

**mule** – childless woman

**myal** – white magic, used to do good, that incorporates use of herbal medicines and control of *duppies*

**naa** – won't, as in 'Mi naa go dung deh' ('I won't go down there')

**natty** – dreadlocks; also 'natty dread'; also used for a Rastafarian

**nuff** – plentiful; also used as a greeting with 'respect,' as in 'Nuff respect!'

**obeah** – illegal black magic that incorporates use of herbal medicines and witchcraft

**one love** – parting expression meaning unity

**peeny-wally** – insect that flashes phosphorescent

**pickney** – child or children, shortened version of 'pickaninny'

**pollution** – people living in spiritual darkness

**posse** – a group of young adults who form a clique

**prentice** – a young man

**punny printers** – extremely tight *batty riders*

**queen** – a respectful term for a woman, usually a Rastafarian woman

**ragamuffin** – a no-good person

**ramp** – to annoy someone or interfere, as in 'De gyal ramp wid me!'

**rass** – a backside; also one of the most violent cuss words

**reach** – to arrive, as in 'De bus not reach yet, mon!'

**reality** – ghetto reality or a hard life

**reason** – to debate or discuss

**red-eye** – an envious or greedy person

**renk** – foul-smelling; extreme rudeness

**respect** – commonly used greeting and farewell

**rhaatid** – like *rass*, but a gentler and more commonly used expletive; its meaning depends on intonation and facial expression, but usually expresses surprise

**riddim** – Jamaica's reggae has it

**risto** – a member of the elite (derives from aristocrat)

**roots** – coming from the people or communal experience

**roughneck** – a scoundrel or ragamuffin

**rude boy** – a ghetto criminal or vandal

**runnings** – whatever is happening; also means crafty business schemes

**rush** – to be the focus of things

**samfi-man** – a con man

**satta** – an invitation to sit, usually to meditate

**sensie** – marijuana (see *ganja*)

**siipple** – slippery

**skank** – to con; also an early 1970s dance move

**sketel** – a beautiful and promiscuous woman, one with many boyfriends

**skin-out** – to abandon whatever one is doing to have sex, usually at a stagershow

**skylark** – to dawdle or idle

**slack** – sexually explicit lyrics

**smaddy** – somebody

**smallers** – money; also known as *dunzer*

**soke** – to fool around, as in 'No soke wi' mi' ('Don't mess with me')

**stagershow** – a live music event

**stoosh** – airs of superiority, condescending behavior

**structure** – one's body, as in 'A fi mi structure!' ('It's my body!')

**sufferer** or **suffrah** – a poor but righteous person

**swimp** – shrimp

**talawah** – small but powerful, as in 'De byah likkle but 'im talawah'

**tampie** – marijuana (see *ganja*)

**tea** – any hot drink

**ting** – a thing or woman, as in 'A mi ting, she' ('That's my girlfriend'); also used for genitals (male or female)

**trace** – to cuss someone

**trash** – to dress up, to be well turned out

**wine** – a sensuous dance movement

**wolf** – a Rastafarian imposter

**work** – sex

**yard** – a Jamaican's home

**yardie** – a gangster-type from the ghettoes, used by Jamaicans to mean anyone from Jamaica

**yush** – a greeting used by *rude boys*

# Glossary

The following are common nouns and other terms used in this book.

**abeng** – goat horn

**all-inclusive resort** – resort hotel where all activities, meals, beverages, entertainment, etc are included in the room rate

**Antilles** – the Caribbean islands

**Arawak people** – indigenous pre-Columbian inhabitants of Jamaica

**Babylon** – term used by *Rastafarians* for oppression or corruption; sometimes used to denote the police

**calabash** – gourd whose hardened shell serves as a vessel for holding liquid

**cay** – coral isle

**charcoal-burners** – people who eke out a meager living burning mangrove to make charcoal

**cimaroon** – Spanish term for an escaped slave

**cockpits** – limestone hillocks separated by canyons

**custos** – colonial-era representative of the Crown at parish level

**dancehall** – type of reggae, popularized through the 1980s, in which DJs perform over prerecorded music; a place where dancehall is performed (usually an open space)

**dancehall queen** – female habitué of *dancehall* clubs

**DEA** – US Drug Enforcement Agency

**dreadlocks** – uncut, uncombed hair, as worn by *Rastafarians*

**dub** – remixed version of a recording with the vocal removed

**endemic** – native, or regularly found here; usually refers to species of flora and fauna

**free colored** – offspring of white slave owners and black slaves; accorded some special rights

**General Consumption Tax (GCT)** – charge of between 6.25% and 15% on most hotel bills and some restaurant bills or store purchases

**go-go** – exotic dancing; staple of Jamaican nightlife

**Jamintel** – Jamaica International Telephone

**JLP** – Jamaica Labour Party

**JTB** – Jamaica Tourist Board

**JUTA** – Jamaica Union of Travelers Association

**Maroons** – community of escaped slaves who resisted the British during the colonial period; also their contemporary descendants

**mento** – first indigenous Jamaican music

**MoBay** – slang for Montego Bay

**NEPA** – Negril Environmental Protection Area

**NRCA** – Natural Resources Conservation Authority

**Nyahbinghi** – Rastafarian council site; also a type of drum

**Ochi** – slang for Ocho Rios

**PADI** – Professional Association of Dive Instructors

**parish** – one of 14 political districts

**pirogue** – canoe hollowed out of a large tree trunk; long wooden fishing boat

**PNP** – People's National Party

**ragga** – type of digital reggae epitomizing *dancehall* music since 1985

**Rastafarian** – adherent of the religious philosophy Rastafarianism, whose main tenets hold that those of African descent are one of the 12 lost tribes of Israel, that Emperor Haile Selassie is divine, and that he will lead Rastafarians to *Zion*; also called a Rasta

**rum shop** – local bar, usually utilized by the working class

**Sandals** – large chain of *all-inclusive* resort hotels

**soca** – combination of soul and calypso music

**sound system** – mobile disco using giant speakers, such as a *dancehall*

**spliff** – joint; marijuana rolled in paper

**SuperClubs** – large chain of *all-inclusive* resort hotels

**toaster** – DJ who talks or sings over a record in a *dancehall*

**Xaymaca** – *Arawak people's* term for Jamaica

**yabbas** – earthenware pots

**Zion** – the Promised Land (Ethiopia) in the *Rastafarian* religion

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