

History

Out of the past of fire and suffering and neglect, the human spirit has survived – patient and strong, quick to anger, quick to forgive, lusty and vigorous, but with deep reserves of loyalty and love and a deep capacity for steadiness under stress and for joy in all the things that make life good and blessed.

Norman Manley, Jamaica's first prime minister

Ever since the Spanish conquered the peaceful Arawaks in the early 16th century, Jamaica has endured a painful history tinged with an undercurrent of violence. Yet it's also the story of epic resistance to tyranny and a passion for freedom. It's this passion, and the perseverance of the Jamaican people that have made the island and its inimitable culture so vital.

XAYMACA

An Amerindian group, the Arawaks (also known as the Tainos), settled the island around AD 700 to 800. The Arawaks are believed to have originated in the Guianas of South America perhaps 2000 years earlier. After developing seafaring skills, they gradually moved north through the Caribbean island chain.

Once settled, they made their homes in conical thatched shelters. Their communal villages were made up of several family clans, which were headed by a *cacique* (chief). Subsistence farmers to the core, the women gathered food, while the men tilled the fields, hunted and fished. Jamaica's fertile soils yielded yams, maize, beans, spices and cassava, which the Arawaks leached of poison and baked into cakes and fermented into beer. The Arawaks called the island 'Xaymaca,' meaning 'land of wood and water.'

Having neither the wheel nor a written language, the Arawaks did not use beasts of burden or metals (except for crude gold ornamentation). They honed skills as potters, carvers, weavers and boat builders. (Columbus was impressed with the scale of their massive canoes hewn from silk cotton trees.) They were particularly adept at spinning and weaving cotton into clothing and hammocks – the latter an Amerindian invention.

For recreation, the Arawaks got fired up with maize alcohol, smoked dried leaves and snorted a powdered drug through a meter-long tube they called a *tabaco*. They worshipped a variety of gods believed to control rain, sun, wind and hurricanes, and who were represented by *zemes*, idols of humans or animals.

The Arawaks believed that, after death, the soul went to a joyful land called Coyaba, a place of perpetual feasting and dancing.

COLUMBUS & SPANISH SETTLEMENT

Jamaica's first tourist was none other than Christopher Columbus, who landed on the island in 1494 on the second of his four voyages to the New World. Anchoring offshore in Bahía Santa Gloria (modern-day St Ann's Bay), Columbus sailed down the coast to a horseshoe-shaped cove (Discovery Bay), where he had his men fire crossbows at a group of Arawaks that failed to welcome him. He also set a fierce dog – the first the Arawaks had ever seen – on them, establishing the vicious tone of future colonial occupation. Columbus claimed the island for Spain and christened it Santo Jago. The Arawaks soon reappeared with peace offerings and feasted the strange newcomers throughout their brief stay.

On May 9 Columbus sailed on to El Golfo de Buen Tiempo (the Gulf of Good Weather, now Montego Bay) and then on to Cuba. He returned later that year and explored the west and south coasts before again departing.

Like so many later visitors to Jamaica, Columbus could not keep away. In 1503 he returned on his fourth and final voyage, still hell-bent on finding that elusive passage to Asia. Unfortunately, his worm-eaten ships were falling apart. He abandoned one, the *Gallega*, off Panama. Another sank off Hispaniola. Later, as he headed back to Hispaniola, storms forced him to seek shelter in Jamaica and he barely made it to Bahía Santa Gloria. The two remaining vessels were so worm-riddled that Columbus and his 120 crew were forced to abandon ship and watch both vessels sink.

The hapless explorers spent almost a year marooned and suffered desperately from disease and malnutrition. Finally, two officers paddled a canoe 240km to Hispaniola, where they chartered a ship to rescue the now broken explorer and his men. On June 29, 1504, Columbus sailed away (see the boxed text, p170).

Though he'd had enough of the New World to never again leave the Old, Jamaica became Columbus' personal property. When he died in 1506, it passed to his son Diego, whose descendants carry the honorary title of Marquis of Jamaica to this day. Diego appointed as governor one of his father's lieutenants, Don Juan de Esquivel, who established a capital called Nueva Sevilla (New Seville) near present-day Ocho Rios.

From their arrival the Spaniards had exacted tribute from the Arawaks, whom they enslaved and killed off through hard labor and ill-treatment. European diseases decimated the Amerindians too, for they had no resistance to the common cold, influenza and such deadly European exports as syphilis. By Esquivel's time, the Indian population had been virtually wiped out, and to replenish the labor pool, the Spaniards began importing slaves from West Africa to Jamaica, the first arriving in 1517.

In 1534 the Spanish uprooted and created a new settlement on the south coast, Villa de la Vega (Spanish Town). However, the Spaniards never

Jamaica National Heritage Trust (www.jnht.com) provides a guide to Jamaica's history and heritage.

TIMELINE

1494

Christopher Columbus first lands on Jamaica, which he names Santa Jago – it later becomes his personal property.

1503

Columbus is irresistibly drawn to Jamaica, returning for the fourth time, convinced he can forge a passage to Asia. However, his return is disastrous. His decrepit ships are ruined and he and his party become stranded.

1517

Jamaica's brutal African slave trade is begun by the Spanish, who enslave West Africans to do their bidding on the island in place of the Arawaks, whose population has been decimated by European disease and appalling treatment.

1655

The English capture Jamaica from the Spanish, who retreat to Cuba.

1670

At the Treaty of Madrid, the Spanish relinquish all claim to the island, ceding Jamaica (as well as the Cayman Islands) to the English. Both nations agree to cease trading in each others territories.

1692

Port Royal slides into the harbor after an earthquake. More than 2000 people die.

developed their Jamaican colony and it languished as a post for provisioning ships en route between Spain and Central America.

THE ENGLISH INVASION

In 1654, Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England, devised his ill-fated 'Grand Western Design' to destroy the Spanish trade monopoly and amass English holdings in the Caribbean. He assembled a fleet, jointly led by Admiral William Penn and General Robert Venables, to conquer the Spanish-held Caribbean islands. The ill-equipped expedition was repulsed in April 1655 by Spanish forces on Hispaniola.

Deciding on an easier target, Penn and Venables then sailed to weakly defended Jamaica. On May 10, 1655, this expeditionary force of 38 ships landed 8000 troops near Villa de la Vega. The Spaniards retreated north over the mountains, from where they set sail to Cuba.

In a rare act of benevolence, the departing Spanish freed their slaves – encouraging them to harass the English, who promptly destroyed the Spanish capital. These *cimarrones* (wild runaways) took to the hills, where they mastered the tactics of guerrilla warfare and fiercely defended their freedom. A small band of Spanish loyalists under General Cristobal Ysassi also fought a guerrilla war against the English with less success. The decisive battle at Rio Bueno (outside Ocho Rios) in 1660 was won by the English under Colonel Edward D'Oyley.

In December 1656, some 1600 English arrived to settle the area around Port Morant near the eastern tip of Jamaica. The region proved too swampy: within a year, three-quarters of the settlers had succumbed to disease. Other settlers fared better and a viable economy began to evolve.

By 1662, there were 4000 colonists on the island, including exiled felons as well as impoverished Scots and Welshmen, who arrived as indentured laborers. Settlement hastened as profits began to accrue from cocoa, coffee and sugarcane production.

THE AGE OF THE BUCCANEERS

Throughout the 17th century, Britain was constantly at war with France, Spain or Holland. The English sponsored privateers to capture enemy vessels, raid their settlements and contribute their plunder to the Crown's coffers. These privateers, or buccaneers (from *boucan*, a French word for smoked meat, of which the privateers were fond), evolved as a motley band of seafaring miscreants, political refugees and escaped criminals who decided their ill-gotten gains were better off in their own pockets. They formed the Confederacy of the Brethren of the Coast, committed to a life of piracy. Gradually they replaced their motley vessels with captured ships and grew into a powerful and ruthless force, feared throughout the Antilles – even by their English sponsors.

Initially, the newly appointed governor of Jamaica, Sir Thomas Modyford, joined with the Spanish in attempts to suppress the buccaneers. But the outbreak of the Second Dutch War against Holland and Spain in March 1664 forced England to rethink its policy. Modyford contrived for the Brethren to defend Jamaica. Port Royal and Kingston Harbour became their base. Their numbers swelled astronomically, and within a decade Port Royal was Jamaica's largest city – a den of iniquity and prosperity.

With England at peace with Spain, buccaneers were now regarded merely as pirates. Mother Nature lent a hand in their suppression when a massive earthquake struck Port Royal on June 7, 1692, toppling much of the city into the sea. More than 2000 people – one-third of the Port Royal population – perished.

THE SLAVE TRADE

Meanwhile, Jamaica's English planters grew immensely wealthy from sugar, and English merchants from the sordid market in slaves – whose lot marked a brutal contrast. Wrenched from the Ashanti, Cormorante, Mandingo and Yoruba tribes of West Africa, they were bought from African slave traders

Port Royal Project (http://nautarch.tamu.edu/port_royal) is a site that offers a fascinating look at the work of maritime archaeologists in the submerged historic neighborhoods of Port Royal, which have lain underwater since the great earthquake of 1692.

A PIRATE HALL OF INFAMY

Even after they were forced out of Port Royal following the 1692 earthquake, pirates contributed to the colony's problems, plundering ships of all nations and coming ashore to raid the sugar plantations sprouting all over Jamaica. Several pirates chased booty across the Spanish Main, rising to infamy for their cruelty, daring and, occasionally, their colorful ways.

The most flamboyant was undoubtedly Blackbeard (whose real name was Edward Teach). This brutal giant terrorized foes by going into battle wearing flaming fuses in his matted beard and hair. Do not try this at home.

A ruthless young Welshman, Henry Morgan, established his supremacy and guided the buccaneers to their pinnacle. Morgan pillaged Spanish towns throughout the Americas before crowning an illustrious career by sacking Panama City. Eventually Morgan became lieutenant governor of Jamaica and was ordered to suppress privateering. Even so, he caroused in Port Royal, where he succumbed to dropsy (edema) and was entombed at Port Royal in 1688.

'Calico Jack' Rackham, although equally ruthless, became known more for his soft spot for calico underwear...and rum. The latter weakness played a role during his capture in 1720 (see boxed text, p220), when, in the midst of his revels in Bloody Bay near Negril, he was subdued by English soldiers. 'Calico Jack' was hanged the next day, his body hung on an iron frame on a small cay off Port Royal (the cay is still called Rackham's Cay).

In the course of Rackham's capture, the English were surprised to discover that two blood-thirsty, machete-wielding comrades of his were actually women in disguise. Mary Read and Anne Bonney were tried by an admiralty court and, like Rackham, sentenced to hang. The two women warriors got a reprieve due to the fact that both were pregnant. Bonney was later pardoned but Read died in prison in 1721, and was buried in St Catherine parish.

1693

Kingston is officially founded. Before that it had been known as Hog Crawle on account of the small pig-raising settlement that had emerged there since the arrival of English settlers in 1655.

1700

There are more than five slaves for every English settler on Jamaica. The practise of slavery creates enormous economic bounty for English at terrible cost to the slaves, who share none of Jamaica's new riches.

1814

Jamaican sugar production peaks at 34 million pounds. During the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, Jamaica is the world's largest producer of sugar.

1834

Slavery is abolished throughout the British Empire, causing economic chaos in Jamaica.

1845

A railroad is built connecting Spanish Town and Kingston. It is the first one built outside North America and Europe.

1872

The administrative capital of Jamaica is moved from Spanish Town to Kingston, which retains the title until independence in 1962 makes it the capital.

David Howard's *Kingston* is an engaging exploration of the capital's history, from Spanish to modern times.

and shipped across the Atlantic to Kingston, where they were auctioned off. Estimates as to the number transported from Africa run as high as 20 million slaves.

Many never made it that far. The 'Middle Passage' across the Atlantic lasted anywhere from six to 12 weeks. The captives were crammed so tight in the festering holds that there wasn't room enough to lie down; many died of disease.

Those slaves who were still alive at the end of the voyage were fattened up as the boat reached port, and oiled to make them appear healthy before being auctioned. Their prices varied between £25 and £75 for unskilled slaves. Slaves who had been trained as carpenters or blacksmiths fetched a premium – often £300 or more. The most wretched had a worth of no more than a shilling.

Kingston served as the main distribution point for delivery to other islands. Of the tens of thousands of slaves shipped to Jamaica every year, the vast majority was re-exported. The slave ships then returned to England carrying cargoes of sugar, molasses and rum.

MAROON RESISTANCE

By the end of the 17th century, Jamaica was also under siege from within. The first major slave rebellion occurred in 1690 in Clarendon parish, where many slaves escaped and joined the descendants of slaves who had been freed by the Spanish in 1655 and had eventually coalesced into two powerful bands (called Maroons, from the Spanish word *cimarrón*): one in the remote Blue Mountains and one in the almost impenetrable Cockpit Country of southern Trelawny, from where they raided plantations and attracted runaway slaves. The eastern community became known as the Windward Maroons; those further west were called Leeward Maroons.

In 1729 the English launched the First Maroon War offensive to eradicate the Maroons. The thickly jungled mountains, however, were ill-suited to English-style open warfare and the Maroons had perfected ambush-style guerrilla fighting. Nonetheless, after a decade of costly campaigning, the English gained the upper hand.

On March 1, 1739, Colonel Guthrie and Cudjoe, the leader of the Maroons of Cockpit Country, signed a peace treaty granting the Maroons autonomy and 1500 acres of land. In return, the Maroons agreed to chase down runaway slaves and return them to the plantations and to assist the English in quelling rebellions.

The Maroons of the Blue Mountains, under a leader named Quao, signed a similar treaty one year later.

KING SUGAR

During the course of the 18th century, Jamaica became the largest sugar producer in the world. The island was jointly ruled by a governor

Mavis Campbell's *The Maroons of Jamaica* is a serious study of the origins of the Maroons and their evolution as a culture through to the late-19th century.

JAMAICA'S NATIONAL HEROES

Jamaica has its equivalent of George Washington and Joan of Arc – individuals deemed worthy of special status as national heroes, earning the honorific title 'the Right Excellent'. There are seven national heroes:

- Paul Bogle (unknown–1865) led the march on Morant Bay in 1865 that spun out of control and became the Morant Bay Rebellion.
- Alexander Bustamante (1884–1977) was a firebrand trade unionist and founder of the Jamaica Labour Party, who became the independent nation's first prime minister, 1962–67.
- Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) is considered the father of 'Black power' and was named Jamaica's first national hero in 1980.
- George William Gordon (1820–65), a mixed-race lawyer, assemblyman and post-emancipation nationalist, was a powerful advocate of nationalism and the rights of the poor.
- Norman Manley (1893–1969) founded the People's National Party, fought for political and became the self-governing island's first prime minister (1959–62), prior to independence.
- Nanny (dates unknown) was a leader of the Windward Maroons in the 18th century. Folklore attributes her with magical powers.
- Sam 'Daddy' Sharpe (1801–32), a town slave and Baptist deacon who was hanged by British authorities for his role in leading the 1831 slave rebellion that engulfed the western parishes.

Curiously, the world's most famous Jamaican is not among this venerable pantheon, though a movement is afoot to confer National Hero status on Robert Nesta Marley (1945–1981).

(appointed by the English monarch) and an elected assembly of planters. Jamaica was divided into the same 13 parishes that exist today. The Crown's interests at the parish level were looked after by an appointed *custos* (the Crown's local representative).

The planters built sturdy 'great houses' in Georgian fashion high above their cane fields. Many planters were absentee landlords who lived most of the year in England, where they formed a powerful political lobby. In Jamaica the planters lived a life of indolence, with retinues of black servants. Many overindulged in drink and sexual relations with slave mistresses, frequently siring mulatto children known as 'free coloreds,' who were accorded special rights.

The economic and political life of the times was an exclusively male arena. The planters' wives spent much of their time playing cards, arranging balls and other events, and otherwise socializing, while the day-to-day care of their children was undertaken by wet nurses, who were often female slaves.

The Story of the Jamaican People by Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett offers a new interpretation of Jamaica's history that eschews the imperial perspective, instead looking to Africa for the keys to understanding the island's complex culture.

1887

Marcus Garvey, the main proponent of the 'back to Africa' movement, is born. He dies in 1940.

1891

The Great Exhibition is held in Kingston, drawing over 300,000 visitors – the largest attendance of its time in proportion to the local population.

1907

A great earthquake topples much of Kingston on January 14th, causing widespread destruction and killing more than 800 people.

1915

Hurricanes devastate the island, and again during 1916 and 1917, natural disasters that compound the hardships being experienced as a result of the demise of trade during WWI.

1930

Haile Selassie is crowned emperor of Ethiopia, encouraging the rise of Rastafarianism in Jamaica.

1938

Jamaica's first political party, the People's National Party, is formed by Norman Manley, who works with the Bustamante Trade Union to position working-class issues at the front and centre of Jamaican politics for the first time.

THE MORANT BAY REBELLION

Following emancipation in 1834, the local black population faced widescale unemployment and extreme hardship, conditions exacerbated by heavy taxation and the harshness of local magistrates. In the 1860s Paul Bogle, a Black Baptist deacon in the hamlet of Stony Gut, preached passive resistance against the oppression and injustice of the local authorities and planters in St Thomas. He was supported by George William Gordon, a wealthy mulatto planter who had become an assemblyman.

On October 11, 1865, Bogle and 400 supporters marched to the Morant Bay courthouse to protest the severe punishment meted out to a vagrant who had been arrested on a petty charge. An armed militia shot into the crowd and a riot ensued in which 28 people were killed, and the courthouse and much of the town center were razed. The countryside erupted in riots. Bogle fled with a £2000 bounty on his head, but was soon captured by Maroons (who had agreed in their peace treaty with the British to act as bounty hunters) and hanged the same day from the center arch of the burned-out courthouse. Gordon was arrested in Kingston, ferried to Morant Bay, condemned by a kangaroo court and also hanged.

Governor Edward Eyre ordered reprisals. The militia swept through St Thomas, razing more than 1000 houses and summarily executing more than 430 people. The British government was outraged by Eyre's reaction (a tribunal found that the punishments were 'excessive...reckless... and...at Bath positively barbarous') and forced the Jamaica House of Assembly to relinquish its power to the British parliament. Thus the island became a Crown colony, leading to reforms of the harsh judicial system.

THE CRUELTY OF SLAVERY

Slavery dominated Jamaican life. By 1700 there were perhaps 7000 English and 40,000 slaves in Jamaica. A century later, the number of whites had tripled and they ruled over 300,000 slaves. Tens of thousands were worked to death. Many were put to work building factories, houses and roads. Others were domestic servants, cooks, footmen, butlers and grooms.

During their few free hours, the slaves cultivated their own tiny plots. Sunday was a rest day and slaves gathered to sell yams and other produce at the bustling markets. In rare instances, slaves might save enough money to buy their freedom, which masters could also grant as they wished.

The planters ran their estates as vicious fiefdoms under the authority of an overseer (the *busha*), who enjoyed relatively free rein. Some planters showed kindness and nurtured their slaves, but most resorted to violence to terrorize the slave population into obedience. The extreme treatment was eventually regulated by slave codes, but plantation society remained tied to the rule of the whip.

REVOLT

New slaves kept arriving, most of them put to work on sugar plantations in appalling conditions. Bloody slave insurrections occurred with frightening

frequency. The last and largest of the slave revolts in Jamaica was the 1831 Christmas Rebellion, inspired by 'Daddy' Sam Sharpe, an educated slave and lay preacher who incited passive resistance. The rebellion turned violent, however, as up to 20,000 slaves razed plantations and murdered planters. When the slaves were tricked into laying down arms with a false promise of emancipation – and then 400 were hanged and hundreds more whipped – there was a wave of revulsion in England, causing the Jamaican assembly finally to abolish slavery in 1834.

The resulting transition from a slave economy to one based on wage labor caused economic chaos, with most slaves rejecting the starvation wages offered on the estates and choosing to fend for themselves. Desperation over conditions and injustice finally boiled over in the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, led by a black Baptist deacon named Paul Bogle (see the boxed text, p188).

BANANA BOOM & BUST

In 1866 a Yankee skipper, George Busch, arrived in Jamaica and loaded several hundred stems of bananas, which he transported to Boston and sold at a handsome profit. He quickly returned to Port Antonio, where he encouraged production and soon had himself a thriving export business. Captain Lorenzo Dow Baker followed suit in the west, with his base at Montego Bay. Within a decade the banana trade was booming. Production peaked in 1927, when 21 million stems were exported.

To help pay the passage south to Jamaica, banana traders promoted the island's virtues and took on passengers. Thus, the banana-export trade gave rise to the tourism industry.

BIRTH OF A NATION

With the Depression of the 1930s, sugar and banana sales plummeted, and the vast majority of Jamaicans were unemployed and destitute. Strikes and riots erupted, spilling over in 1938 when a demonstration at the West Indies Sugar Company factory at Frome, in Westmoreland, got out of hand. A battle between police and the unemployed seeking work left several people dead. The situation was defused when a locally born labor leader, Alexander Bustamante, mediated the dispute.

Amid the clamor, the charismatic Bustamante, son of an Irish woman and a mulatto man, formed the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) in 1938. That same year, Bustamante's cousin Norman Manley formed the People's National Party (PNP), the first political party in the colony. Separately they campaigned for economic and political reforms. As historians Philip Sherlock and Barbara Preston observed, 'Bustamante swept the Jamaican working class into the mainstream of Jamaican political life and Norman Manley secured the constitutional changes that put political power

Before his execution on May 23, 1832, Sam Sharpe is quoted as saying 'I would rather die upon yonder gallows than live in slavery.'

Tony Sewall's *Garvey's Children: The Legacy of Marcus Garvey* provides a look at the rise of Black Nationalism inspired by national hero Marcus Garvey.

1945

Reggae superstar Bob Marley (d 1981) is born in Nine Mile in St Ann's Parish.

1962

Jamaica becomes an independent nation within the British Commonwealth.

1963

At the height of the ska era in Jamaican music, Clement Dodd begins recording Bob Marley and the Wailers.

1966

On the second stop of his Caribbean trip, HIM Haile Selassie I is greeted by nearly 100,000 chanting Rastafarians at the airport. He refuses to leave the plane until his security is assured.

1976

In the lead up to the election, tensions between Jamaica's two political parties erupt into open warfare in the street between politically aligned gangs. A state of emergency is declared; Jamaica teeters on the brink of civil war.

1978

The One Love Peace concert is held in Kingston, following Bob Marley's homecoming. A ceasefire between the People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party is declared in honor of the event. 100,000 people attend the concert.

ONE GOD, ONE AIM, ONE DESTINY

Marcus Garvey was born of working-class parents in St Ann's Bay on August 17, 1887. As a young man he traveled extensively throughout Costa Rica, Panama and England. He returned well educated and a firm believer in self-improvement. Inspired to raise the consciousness and well-being of the African diaspora, he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 to unite 'all the Negro peoples of the world to establish a state exclusively their own.' When Jamaica proved largely unresponsive to his message, he moved in 1916 to the US, where he formed a branch of the UNIA in New York. At its peak in the 1920s, the UNIA had five million members. Garvey, a gifted orator, established a weekly newspaper, the *Negro World*, and built an enormous following under the slogan 'One God! One Aim! One Destiny!'

Garvey set up the Black Star Line, a steamship company, with the aim of eventually repatriating Blacks to Africa. The company, however, failed due to poor management.

The American and British governments considered Garvey a dangerous agitator. They conspired against him, and in 1922 they arrested him on mail-fraud charges. He served two years in Atlanta Federal Prison before being deported to Jamaica. Back in his homeland, the Black Nationalist founded the reformist People's Political Party. Universal franchise did not then exist in Jamaica, and he failed to gather enough support at the polls. In 1935 he departed for England, where he died in poverty in 1940.

His remains were repatriated to Jamaica in 1984 and interred with state honors in National Heroes Park (p75).

in their hands.' Not content with trade union activism, Bustamante formed Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) in 1943.

Adult suffrage for all Jamaicans, and a new constitution that provided for an elected government, were introduced in 1944, and Bustamante's JLP won Jamaica's first election. In 1947 virtual autonomy was granted, though Jamaica remained a British colony under the jurisdiction of Parliament and the Crown – a prelude to full independence.

On August 6, 1962, Jamaica finally gained its independence (while remaining part of the British Commonwealth). At midnight the Union Jack came down, replaced by Jamaica's new flag with three new colors: black (for the people), green (for the land) and gold (for the sun).

TURBULENT YEARS

Postindependence politics have been largely dominated by the legacies of Bustamante and Manley. Manley's son Michael led the PNP toward democratic socialism in the mid-'70s, his policy of taxation to fund social services deterring foreign investment and causing a capital flight at a time when Jamaica could ill afford it. Bitterly opposed factions engaged in open urban warfare before the 1976 election. A controversial state of emergency was declared and the nation seemed poised on the edge of civil war, but the

Jamaica carries a debt to foreign banks exceeding US\$800 billion. *Life & Debt*, a documentary film by Stephanie Black, takes a provocative look into the island's burden.

PNP won the election by a wide margin and Manley continued with his socialist agenda.

Unsurprisingly, US government was hostile to the Jamaica's socialist turn, and when Manley began to develop close ties with Cuba, the CIA purportedly planned to topple the Jamaican government. Businesses pulled out, the economy (tourism in particular) went into sharp decline and the country was under virtual siege. Almost 800 people were killed in the lead-up to the 1980 elections, which were won by the JLP's Edward Seaga. Seaga restored Jamaica's economic fortunes somewhat, severed ties with Cuba and became a staunch ally of the Reagan Administration – even dispatching Jamaican troops to assist in the invasion of Grenada in 1983. Relatively peaceful elections in 1989 returned a reinvented 'mainstream realist' Manley to power; he retired in 1992, handing the reins to his deputy, Percival James Patterson – Jamaica's first black prime minister.

RECENT YEARS

The Patterson-led PNP romped in the 1993 and 1997 elections. In spring 1999, the country erupted in nationwide riots after the government announced a 30% increase in the tax on gasoline. Kingston and Montego Bay, where sugarcane fields were set ablaze, were particularly badly hit. After three days of arson and looting, the government thought better of it and rescinded the tax.

In the lead-up to the 2002 elections, violence in West Kingston soared to new heights as criminal gangs battled to control electoral turf and profit from the largesse that victory at the polls in Jamaica brings. Rival political gangs turned the area into a war zone, forcing residents to flee and schools, businesses and even Kingston Public Hospital to close.

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan bounced off Jamaica en route to the Cayman Islands, causing widespread damage, and Edward Seaga – still representing the JLP as opposition leader – retired after over three decades of life in politics. Two years later, Prime Minister Patterson resigned in 2006, giving way to Portia Simpson-Miller. Jamaica's first female prime minister, 'Mama P' was initially popular with the masses, but 18 years of PNP rule bred gradual voter disillusionment with the party. In the 2007 elections, Bruce Golding of the JLP carried the day.

The Jamaica Golding inherits faces several battles, and most Jamaicans will tell you the greatest is crime (the 2007 murder rate was 17% higher than the previous year's). Illiteracy is also a grave concern (according to UNESCO, over 90% of 15 to 24 year olds couldn't both read and write in 2004) as are threats to the environment through deforestation and overdevelopment (see p51). In the meantime, the Jamaican people face the future with resolve and a measure of good humor – they've endured so much worse in the past.

Pieces of the Past (www.jamaica-gleaner.com/pages/history) is a compendium of thematic essays about Jamaican history.

1980

1988

1992

2004

2006

2007

The Jamaica Labour Party's Edward Seaga is elected to power, and begins transforming Jamaica's foreign engagement, cutting ties with Cuba, and positioning himself as a friend of the Reagan administration.

Hurricane Gilbert slams Jamaica, killing 45 people and causing damage estimated at up to US\$1 billion.

The Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park is established. Formed during the Cretaceous Period (c144–65million years ago), the mountain range itself is the island's oldest geological feature.

At least 15 people are killed by Hurricane Ivan, with Negril being particularly hard hit. The banana-tree population is ravaged, and the following year banana exports drop by 68%.

Portia Simpson-Miller, of the People's National Party, becomes Jamaica's first female prime minister. But the people are cynical of change after PNP's 18 years in power, and the Jamaica Labour Party wins the 2007 elections.

The Cricket World Cup is held in the West Indies, with opening ceremonies held in Falmouth. Won by Australia, the tournament was overshadowed by the death of Pakistani coach Bob Woolmer, apparently of heart failure.

The Culture

Although many of the package tourists that descend on Jamaica for some fun in the sun nurture packaged visions of the locals beyond the walls of their all-inclusive resorts, Jamaicans are as diverse a people as the island's geography is varied. Far from being confined to the dreadlocked, spliff-puffing Rastafarian vibing to reggae or the violent 'rude boy' of the ghetto, Jamaicans comprise many social and demographic strata. It's up to the tourist to scratch the surface, to become a traveler.

To be sure, street-level Jamaica can be daunting at first. Poverty blights Jamaica's towns, and tourists mean money. Nevertheless, with reasonable precaution, you'll soon fall under the spell of Jamaica's inimitable charms. Violence rarely impinges on foreigners; it is mostly restricted to drug wars and political gang feuds in the claustrophobic ghettos of Kingston, Spanish Town and sections of Montego Bay that you're highly unlikely ever to set foot in.

What emerges is a panoply of communities: from the sleepy fishing hamlets that line all the coasts to the cosmopolitan business sector of the capital, from the bustling market towns to the autonomous Maroon hillside villages. And while you can of course meet Rastas happy to smoke ganja with you, you'll also encounter proud matriarchs presiding over the family-owned rum shop; dancehall enthusiasts delighted to take you to the local sound-system party; bush-medicine doctors who can explain the benefits of every local root, herb and flower; or students who know as much about your own country as you do.

You'll learn to greet strangers with the local salutation 'blessed', and by the time you leave Jamaica, you'll realize you have been.

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Many Jamaicans will tell you their island is not part of the Caribbean, but Africa. And while the vestiges of the slave era unsurprisingly weigh heavily on the national psyche, over the last century the rise of Jamaican nationalism and an explosion in homegrown culture have engendered a proud and vibrant contemporary culture.

Jamaicans are an intriguing contrast. Much of the population comprises the most gracious people you'll ever meet: hard-working, happy-go-lucky, helpful, courteous, genteel and full of humility. If you show them kindness, they will give it back in return. However, charged memories of slavery and racism have continued to bring out the spirit of anarchy latent in a former slave society divided into rich and poor. Jamaicans struggling hard against poverty are disdainful of talk about a 'tropical paradise.'

Jamaicans love to debate, or 'reason.' You'll not meet many Jamaicans without strong opinions, and they tend to express themselves forcefully, turning differences of opinion into voluble arguments with some confounding elliptical twists and stream-of-consciousness associations.

Jamaicans' sarcasm and sardonic wit is legendary. The deprecating humor has evolved as an escape valve that hides their true feelings. The saying that 'everyting irie' is black humor, because life is a problem. Often Jamaican wit is laced with sexual undertones. Jamaicans like to make fun of others, often in the subtlest yet no-punches-pulled way, but they accept being the source of similar humor in good grace. Individual faults and physical abnormalities inspire many a knee-slapping jibe. If directed at you, take it in the good humor it's proffered.

Traditional folk healing is still very much alive. Healers, called 'balmists,' rely on concoctions of native herbs – bush medicines, the recipes for which span many generations.

The devious spider Anancy, Jamaica's leading folk hero, derives from folktales that originated with the Ashanti tribe of Ghana. Over centuries they have become localized.

VISITORS DOS & DON'TS

- Don't ignore beggars, hustlers or higglers. Offer a firm but polite 'not interested,' 'sorry' or 'no thank you' where appropriate; simply walking past is taken as an insult that might soon be broadcast up and down the street.
- Do relax. Tropical time happens at a slower pace. 'Soon come' is a favorite expression often taken at face value by foreigners – in fact it means 'it'll happen when it happens.'
- Do empathize. Try to understand the hardships that the majority of Jamaicans face. Don't try to take advantage of an individual's plight.
- Don't call Jamaicans 'natives.' The term is laden with racial connotations and can be taken as a slur. 'Islanders' or simply 'Jamaicans' is more appropriate.
- Do be formal with strangers. Jamaicans are more formal than many foreigners, particularly North Americans, who are used to quickly reaching a first-name basis. To show respect, address people you meet with 'Mr' or 'Miss,' or even 'Sir' or 'Lady.' Using a first name can be taken as treating someone as inferior.
- Do ask before snapping a photo. Many Jamaicans enjoy being photographed, sometimes for a small fee, but others prefer not to pose for tourists and can respond angrily.

LIFESTYLE

Many Jamaicans live in the hills, out of sight of tourists: some get by quite adequately, living in homes made of aged wooden houses in Caribbean style or concrete cinder block in Western style. Others eke out a marginal existence in ramshackle villages and rural shacks, sometimes in pockets of extreme poverty, as in Kingston's ghettos and shanties. Many low-income Jamaicans have been unable to find a way out of poverty, so they hustle. They hang out on the streets waiting for an opportunity to present itself. A general malaise prevalent among a large segment of the male underclass is fired by a belief that a subtle apartheid force is purposely holding them back. The average per capita income is only US\$3500, slightly lower than that of Guatemala.

Jamaica has a significant middle class, which lives a lifestyle familiar to its counterparts in Europe and North America. Middle-class Jamaicans are, as a whole, well educated; they have vivacious and well-honed intellects, are entrepreneurial and contemporary looking, and exhibit a preference for shopping trips to Miami or New York. But many of the middle class live with a surprising lack of contact with the harsh reality in which the majority of Jamaicans live, and they seem to be able to muster little empathy. Not infrequently you'll hear defensive denials that poverty even exists in Jamaica.

Sex & Family Life

To the outsider, Jamaicans are sexually active at an early age. Uncommitted sexual relationships are not unusual, especially among the poorer classes. Approximately 80% of children are born out of wedlock, and the local lexicon is full of terms related to the theme ('jacket,' for example, refers to a child fathered by someone other than a woman's husband). And while middle-class Jamaicans mores are decidedly less permissive, visitors to the island are ever-conscious of its aura of sexual freedom.

Sadly, Jamaican free-spirited attitudes do not extend to acceptance of gays. The island is an intensely homophobic place, and you are extremely unlikely to see displays of public intimacy between same-sex locals. For advice to gay travelers, see p280.

Jamaican proverbs are a proud celebration of heritage and dialect. A sample: 'So cow a grow so him nose hole a open.' This roughly translates to 'Live and learn.'

POPULATION

Jamaica's population is currently estimated at a little over 2.7 million, out of which about 750,000 live in Kingston. At least another two million live abroad, generally in the US, UK or Canada. Some 91% of the population are classified as being of pure African descent; 7.3% are of Afro-European descent; the remainder are white (0.2%), East Indian and Middle Eastern (1.3%), and Afro-Chinese and Chinese (0.2%).

MULTICULTURALISM

The nation's motto, 'Out of Many, One People,' reflects the diverse heritage of Jamaica. Tens of thousands of West Africans, plus large numbers of Irish, Germans and Welsh, arrived throughout the colonial period, along with Hispanic and Portuguese Jews and those whom Jamaicans call 'Syrians' (a term for all those of Levantine extraction). In 1838, following emancipation, Chinese and Indian indentured laborers arrived from Hong Kong and Panama.

Jamaica proclaims itself a melting pot of racial harmony. Still, insecurities of identity have been carried down from the plantation era. Class divisions in Jamaica are still related to color and there is much lingering resentment – as well as prejudice – against whites, particularly among the poorer segment of society.

RELIGION

Jamaica professes to have the greatest number of churches per square kilometer in the world, with virtually every imaginable denomination represented. Although most foreigners associate the island with Rastafarianism, more than 80% of Jamaicans identify themselves as Christian.

Christianity

On any day of the week, but most notably on weekends, it's common to see adults and children walking along country roads holding Bibles and dressed in their finest outfits – the girls in white, the men and boys in somber suits, and the women in heels, hats and bright satins. On Sundays every church in the country seems to overflow with the righteous, and the old fire-and-brimstone school of sermonizing is still the preferred mode. Bible-waving congregations sway to and fro, and wail and shriek 'Hallelujah!' and 'Amen, sweet Jesus!' while guitars, drums and tambourines help work the crowds into a frenzy.

The most popular denomination, the Anglican Church of Jamaica, accounts for 43% of the population. About 5% of the population today is Catholic. Fundamentalists have made serious inroads in recent years because of aggressive proselytizing.

Revivalist Cults

Jamaica has several quasi-Christian, quasi-animist sects that are generically named Revivalist cults after the postemancipation Great Revival, during which many blacks converted to Christianity. The most important Revivalist cult is Pocomania, which mixes European and African religious heritages.

The cults are derived from West African animist beliefs (animism has nothing to do with animal spirits; the name is derived from the Latin word *anima*, soul) based on the tenet that the spiritual and temporal worlds are a unified whole. A core belief is that spirits live independently of the human or animal body and can inhabit inanimate objects and communicate themselves to humans; how humans call them determines whether they will be a force of good or evil.

Many Jamaican elders still observe Nine Nights, a 'wake' held on the ninth night after someone's death to ensure that the spirit of the deceased departs to heaven (and doesn't hang around to haunt the living!).

Rastafarianism

Rastafarians, with their uncut, uncombed hair grown into long sun-bleached tangles known as 'dreadlocks' or 'dreads,' are as synonymous with the island as reggae. There are perhaps as many as 100,000 Rastafarians in Jamaica. A faith rather than a church, Rastafarianism has no official doctrine or dogmatic hierarchy and is composed of a core of social and spiritual tenets that are open to interpretation. Not all Rastafarians wear dreads, for example, and others do not smoke ganja. All adherents, however, accept that Africa is the black race's spiritual home to which they are destined to return.

Rastafarianism evolved as an expression of poor, black Jamaicans seeking fulfillment in the 1930s, a period of growing nationalism and economic and political upheaval. It was boosted by the 'back to Africa' zeal of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded in 1914 (see the boxed text, p32). Rastafarians regard Garvey as a prophet. He predicted that a black man – a 'Redeemer' – would be crowned king in Africa. Haile Selassie's crowning as emperor of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) on November 2, 1930, fulfilled Garvey's prophecy and established a fascination with Ethiopia that lies at the core of Rastafarianism.

One charismatic leader, Leonard Percival Howell, developed the tenets of Rastafarianism and, in 1940, established the first Rastafarian community, the Pinnacle, at Sligoville, northwest of Kingston. His followers adopted the 'dreadlocked' hairstyle of several East African tribes – an allegory of the mane of the Lion of Judah.

Howell's document 'Twenty-One Points' defined the Rastafarian philosophy and creed. One tenet was that the African race was one of God's chosen races, one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel descended from the Hebrews and displaced. Jamaica is Babylon (named after the place where the Israelites were enslaved) and their lot is in exile in a land that cannot be reformed. A second tenet states that God, whom they call Jah, will one day lead them from Babylon – any place that 'downpresses' the masses – to Zion (the 'Promised Land,' or Ethiopia). A third addresses Selassie's status as the Redeemer chosen to lead Africans back to Africa.

Rastafarian leaders continue to petition Queen Elizabeth II to repatriate them to Africa. While she mulls over their appeal, they wait for redemption.

Rastafarians believe that ganja provides a line of communication with God. Again, they look to the Bible, specifically Psalm 146:8, which says of God:

A UNIQUE LEXICON

One of the 21 tenets of Rastafarianism is the belief that God exists in each person, and that the two are the same. Thus the creed unifies divinity and individuality through the use of personal pronouns that reflect the 'I and I.' ('One blood. Everybody same, mon!') 'I' becomes the id or true measure of inner divinity, which places everyone on the same plane. Thus 'I and I' can mean 'we,' 'him and her,' 'you and them.' (The personal pronoun 'me' is seen as a sign of subservience, of acceptance of the self as an 'object'.)

Rastafarians have evolved a whole lexicon that has profoundly influenced 'Jamaica talk' (for more information, see the Language chapter) and is laced with cryptic intent and meaning. This revisionist 'English' is inspired by Rastafarian reasoning that sees the English language as a tool in the service of Babylon designed to 'downpress' the black people. In short, they believe the language is biased. Every word is analyzed, and in this frame even the most insignificant word can seem tainted. The well-meant greeting 'Hello!' may elicit the response: 'Dis not 'ell and I not low!'

The Sympathetic Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica by Joseph Owens and Rasta Heart: *A Journey Into One Love* by Robert Roskind are noteworthy books on Jamaica's most talked-about creed.

'Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth. Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of men.'

Most but not all adherents smoke ganja copiously from cigar-size spliffs (reefers) and the 'holy chalice,' a bamboo pipe made of a goat's horn. Through it they claim to gain wisdom and inner divinity through the ability to 'reason' more clearly. The search for truth – 'reasoning' – is integral to the faith and is meant to see through the corrupting influences of 'Babylon.'

Despite its militant consciousness, the religion preaches love and nonviolence, and adherents live by strict biblical codes that advocate a way of life in harmony with Old Testament traditions. They are vegetarians and teetotalers who shun tobacco and the trappings of Western consumption.

SPORTS

Jamaica is a leader on the international athletics scene, regularly producing outstanding track-and-field athletes dating back to sprinter Arthur Wint, Jamaica's first Olympic gold-medal winner (in 1948). At the time of writing, Asafa Powell is the fastest man on the planet, thanks to his world-record time of 9.74 seconds in the 100m sprint, set in September 2007.

Jamaica is cricket mad, and you'll come across small fields in even the most remote backwaters, where boys with makeshift bats practice the bowling and swings that may one day bring them fortune and fame. In 2007, the World Cup was held in the West Indies, with opening ceremonies held at a brand-new stadium in Falmouth. Games between leading regional and international teams are played frequently at **Sabina Park** (☎ 967-0322; South Camp Rd) in Kingston.

Soccer is Jamaica's second sport. It was given a huge boost by the success of the Reggae Boyz – Jamaica's national soccer team – in qualifying for the 1998 World Cup. And though they've had little success since, the reappointment of the '98 team's Brazilian coach Rene Simoes in 2007 has rekindled hopes of a return to glory. Weekend games between village teams draw decent crowds. International matches are played at the **National Stadium** (☎ 929-4970; Arthur Wint Dr) in Kingston.

MEDIA

Since 1834 the **Jamaica Gleaner** (www.jamaica-gleaner.com) has been regarded as the high-standard newspaper in the Caribbean region, while the **Observer** (www.jamaicaobserver.com) offers a more populist counterpoint.

It's radio, however, that best captures the nation's pulse. Jamaica has some 30 stations, the most popular being **Irie Fm** (www.iriefm.net), the island's reggae and dancehall soundtrack. Call-in talk shows are popular, and there is considerable political debate on the air. As the island is so small and parochial, radio serves as a kind of community-service grapevine. Deaths, for example, are announced with somber details (and muted funeral music in the background) followed by a roll call of relatives and friends requested to attend the funeral.

There are seven Jamaican TV stations. News coverage dwells largely on sensational stories of traffic deaths, vigilantism, ghetto politics and good Samaritans. International news is covered broadly, with much attention devoted to the news from Africa.

WOMEN IN JAMAICA

While Jamaican society can appear oppressively macho to outsiders accustomed to dancehall lyrics, women tend to be strong and independent (in 40% of households, a woman is the sole provider). This spirit often translates into the self-assurance so apparent in Portia Simpson-Miller, former prime

One of the most electrifying voices of Jamaican dub poetry is that of Mutabaruka. Learn about his work and read his poems at www.mutabaruka.com.

The Jamaican Woman: A Celebration by Joanne Simpson provides biographies of 200 women who have made major contributions to Jamaican society.

minister (2006–2007) and current leader of the PNP opposition. Jamaican women attain far higher grades in school and have higher literacy rates than Jamaican men, and middle-class women have attained levels of respect and career performance that are commensurate with their counterparts in North America and Europe. Women also make up about 46% of Jamaica's labor force, although the majority are in extremely low-paying jobs.

ARTS Literature

Through the years Jamaican literature has been haunted by the ghosts of slave history and the ambiguities of Jamaica's relationship to Mother England. The classic novels tend to focus on survival in a grim colonial landscape and escape to Africa, which often proves to be even grimmer. Best known, perhaps, is Herbert de Lisser's classic *White Witch of Rose Hall*. This plantation-era tale – now an established part of Jamaican lore – tells of Annie Palmer, the wicked mistress of Rose Hall (see the boxed text, p201) who supposedly murdered three husbands and several slave lovers. The actual truth is less lurid.

Perry Henzell's *Power Game* is a tale of power politics based on real events in the 1970s, told by the director of the movie *The Harder They Come* (see below). The poignant novel of that name, written by Michael Thewell, recounts the story of a country boy who comes to Kingston, turns into a 'rude boy,' (armed thug) and becomes fatally enmeshed in the savage drug culture. The mean streets of Kingston are also the setting for the gritty novels of Roger Mais, notably *The Hills Were Joyful Together* and *Brother Man*. Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus* mines the same bleak terrain from a Rastafarian perspective.

In recent years, a number of Jamaican female writers have gained notice: they include Christine Craig (*Mint Tea*), Patricia Powell (*Me Dying Trial*), Michelle Cliff (*Abeng, Land of Look Behind*) and Vanessa Spence (*Roads Are Down*).

Film

Jamaica has produced some excellent films (often pronounced 'flims' in Jamaica), most notably cult classic *The Harder They Come* (1973), starring Jimmy Cliff as a 'rude boy' in Kingston's ghettos. *Rockers* (1978), another music-propelled, socially poignant fable is a Jamaican reworking of the *Bicycle Thief* featuring a cast of reggae all-stars.

Rick Elgood's emotionally engaging 1997 film *Dancehall Queen* found an international audience for its tale of redemption for a struggling, middle-aged street vendor, who escapes the mean streets of Kingston through the erotic intoxication of dancehall music. Jamaica's highest-grossing film of all time is Chris Browne's 2000 crime drama *Third World Cop*, in which old friends straddling both sides of the law must come to terms with each other.

Music

Music is everywhere – and it's loud! The sheer creativity and productivity of Jamaican music has produced a profound effect around the world. As reggae continues to attract and influence a massive international audience, Jamaica's sound system-based dancehall culture continues to inform contemporary rap, rave and hip-hop cultures.

Reggae is the heartbeat of Jamaica, and it is as strongly identified with the island as R&B is with Detroit or jazz with New Orleans. But reggae is actually only one of several distinctly Jamaican sounds, and the nation's musical heritage runs much deeper. Inspired by the country's rich African folk heritage, music spans mento (a folk calypso), ska, rocksteady, 'roots'

Jamaica has had strong links to James Bond movies ever since novelist Ian Fleming concocted the suave macho spy 007 at his home near Oracabessa. The Bond movies *Dr No* and *Live and Let Die* were both shot on location along Jamaica's north coast.

Jamaica's most celebrated theater company is the National Dance Theater Company, which performs at the Little Theater in Kingston.

Reggae Routes by Wayne Chen and Kevin O'Brien Chang is required reading. This copious, lavishly illustrated volume is an insider's guide to reggae and popular Jamaican music in general, demystifying the music and correcting many misconceptions.

music and contemporary dancehall and regga. Kingston is the 'Nashville of the Third World,' with recording studios pumping out as many as 500 new titles each month.

The legacy of reggae superstar Bob Marley continues to thrive, as witnessed in the month-long celebration held in Ethiopia in early 2005 marking the 60th anniversary of his birth. There's long been talk about elevating Marley to National Hero status, a mantle reserved only for the nation's most pivotal figures.

The term dancehall, although used to mean a sound-system venue, is also used specifically to refer to a kind of Caribbean rap music that focuses on earthly themes dear to the heart of young male Jamaicans, principally 'gal business,' gunplay and ganja. This is hardcore music, named for the loosely defined outdoor venues at which outlandishly named 'toasters' (rapper DJs) set up mobile discos with enormous speakers, and singers and DJs pumped-up with braggadocio perform live over instrumental rhythm tracks. See p59 for more on Jamaican music.

Painting & Sculpture

Jamaican art has its origins in the 18th and 19th centuries, when itinerant artists roamed the plantations, recording life in a Eurocentric, romanticized light that totally ignored the African heritage. English satirist William Hogarth was one of few artists to portray the hypocrisy and savagery of plantation life.

Jamaica Art by Kim Robinson and Petrine Archer Straw is a well-illustrated treatise on the evolution of the island's art scene. Likewise, *Modern Jamaican Art* by David Boxer and Veerle Poupeye provides an illustrated overview of the works of 82 Jamaican painters and sculptors.

THE BIRTH OF VISUAL NATIONALISM

Until the early 20th century, Jamaica's visual, literary and performing arts largely sought to reflect British trends and colonial tastes. With the call for Jamaica's independence, leaders like Norman Manley eloquently called for the articulation of a new national culture. In 1939 Manley wrote, 'National culture is national consciousness reflected in the painting of pictures of our own mountains and our own womenfolk, in building those houses that are the most suitable for us to live in, in writing plays of our adventures and poetry of our wisdom, finding ourselves in the wrestle with our own problems.'

Manley's wife, Edna, an inspired sculptor and advocate for 'indigenous' Jamaican art, became a leading catalyst for change. Edna Manley's bitter opposition to the 'anaemic imitators of European traditions' pushed her to aspire to an 'expression of the deep-rooted, hidden pulse of the Country – that thing which gives it its unique life.' Through the example of seminal works like *Negro Aroused* (1935), which can be seen in the National Gallery (p72) in Kingston, and *Pocomania* (1936), which synthesized African and Jamaican archetypes within a deeply personal vision of the national psyche, Manley provided an electrifying example of the potential of Jamaican art. On a grass-roots level, Manley organized free art classes and volunteer-run training courses to energize and organize rising talent.

Out of this fertile ground emerged – almost simultaneously – three of Jamaica's great painters. Self-taught artist John Dunkley was 'discovered' by Manley in his brilliantly decorated Kingston barber shop. His inimitable style, articulated through brooding landscapes of sinister tropical foliage, never-ending roads and furtive reptiles and rodents, brought visual form to an apocalyptic vision that resonated with the historical traumas of the Jamaican people. At the National Gallery, keep an eye out for the particularly powerful paintings *Jerboa* and *Back to Nature*. In contrast, Albert Huie produced intricately detailed and beautifully composed works like *Crop Time* and *Coconut Piece*, depicting an idyllic dreamscape of rural scenes far removed from the urban strife of Kingston, where he lived and worked. More rooted in his immediate surroundings, David Pottinger's primary interest is in the urban landscape. His portrayals of downtown life, such as *Trench Town*, reveal the desolate melancholy of poverty while also suggesting the indomitable spirit of life.

In the 1920s artists of the so-called Jamaican School began to develop their own style shaped by realities of Jamaican life. The Jamaican School evolved into two main groups: the painters who were schooled abroad, and island-themed 'intuitives' – self-taught artists such as Bishop Mallica 'Kapo' Reynolds (1911–89) and John Dunkley (1891–1947).

Jamaica's foremost sculptor this century is undoubtedly Edna Manley (see the boxed text, opposite), the multitalented wife of ex-prime minister Norman Manley. Her works in wood, metal and stone are displayed in a magnificent collection in the National Gallery in Kingston. In addition to fine artists, thousands of self-taught woodcarvers hew intuitive carvings.

The Afflicted Yard (<http://afflictedyard.com>) is an edgy website out of Kingston featuring commentary and photography.

Food & Drink

From a simple roadside shack to the kitchen of a five-star hotel, Jamaican cuisine is both delicious and completely original. It is a vast stew, which the Arawaks began with callaloo, cassava, corn, sweet potatoes and many tropical fruits. The Spanish tossed in their influence, dishes of the African homelands of slaves jumped in, Indian curries and roti made an appearance, as did Middle Eastern flair, the Chinese touch, and even the coarser meat-pie-dominated food of the British.

But what really makes Jamaican cuisine special, to borrow a phrase from futuristic dancehall remixes, is that all these distinct ethnic foods got the Jamaican ‘one-drop.’ They were radically reinvented with homegrown spark and funk. Jamaicans love to give playful one-drop names for unique food creations, such as ‘solomon Grundy’ for pickled herring, ‘blue drawers’ for duckunoo pudding, ‘mannish water’ for goat soup and ‘fevergrass’ for a type of herbal tea.

Let your taste buds run free. Ackee and saltfish for breakfast, curried goat for lunch and a light I-tal vegetarian dinner will teach you more about Jamaica than a month at an all-inclusive resort.

STAPLES & SPECIALTIES

Main Dishes

Jamaicans typically forsake cornflakes for more savory fare at breakfast: ackee and saltfish is typical. The ackee fruit bears an uncanny resemblance to scrambled eggs when cooked. Served with johnny cakes, callaloo and escoveitch fish, it is the breakfast of the gods.

Lunch is generally a light meal in Jamaica. You might try pepperpot stew, fried fish, ‘jerk’ pork or various island ingredients simmered in coconut milk and spices.

The island staple is rice and ‘peas’ (red beans), most often served with pork. Goat is another common ingredient, usually curried and chopped into small bits with meat on the bone. It is also the main ingredient of mannish water, a soup made from the head of a goat. Jamaican soups are thick, more like stews, and loaded with vegetables and ‘breadkind.’ ‘Dip and fall back’ is a salty stew served with bananas and dumplings.

Vegetables

Many meals are accompanied by starchy vegetables or ‘breadkinds’ such as plantains and yam, or other bread substitutes such as pancake-shaped cassava bread (also known as bammy) and johnny cakes (delicious fried dumplings, an original Jamaican fast food).

The yam is ubiquitous in Jamaica. In addition to fulfilling its time-honored role as a side dish, for special occasions it’s made into wine, punch, buns and cakes, pudding and yam chops. There are about a dozen different types of yam on the island.

Callaloo is a spinachlike vegetable, usually served shredded and steamed or lightly boiled. It also finds its way into spicy pepperpot stew.

Cho cho (also known as christophine) is a pulpy squashlike gourd served in soups and as an accompaniment to meats; it is also used for making hot pickles.

The most notorious vegetable is the Scotch bonnet pepper, celebrated for its delicious citrus sparkle just before your entire mouth and head go up in flames. Scotch bonnets are small hot peppers that come in yellow, orange and red, the very same colors that emanate from your head when you eat one!

A top Jamaican food website is www.jamaicans.com/cooking which serves up a wide selection of dishes, kept fresh by a recipe of the month.

The ubiquitous escoveitch fish was first brought to Jamaica by Jews who immigrated during Spanish rule.

Jerk: Barbecue from Jamaica by Helen Wil-linsky brings to life the visceral joy of preparing a toothsome jerk marinade. You can almost smell the wood smoke and pimento (allspice).

Fruit

‘All fruits ripe’ is a Jamaican expression meaning ‘all is well,’ which is also the state of Jamaican fruit. This island is a tropical-fruit heaven. Sampling them all and finding your favorites is a noble, healthy and rewarding task. Don’t just taste the obvious, like coconut, banana, papaya and mango. Savor your first star apple, soursop, ortanique, naseberry, ugli or tinkin’ toe.

DRINKS

You’ll never go thirsty in Jamaica. If you’re not temperate, you may never go sober either.

Nonalcoholic Drinks

COFFEE

Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee is considered among the most exotic coffees in the world. It’s also the most expensive (see the boxed text, p117).

The coffee is relatively mild and light-bodied with a musty, almost woody flavor and its own unmistakable aroma. Most upscale hotels and restaurants serve it as a matter of course. The majority of lesser hotels serve lesser coffees from other parts of the country or – sacrilege! – powdered instant coffee. Be careful if you ask for white coffee (with milk), which Jamaicans interpret to mean 50% hot milk and 50% coffee.

TEA

‘Tea’ is a generic Jamaican term for any (usually) hot, nonalcoholic drink, and Jamaicans will make teas of anything. Irish moss is often mixed with rum, milk and spices. Ginger, mint, ganja and even fish are brewed into teas. Be careful

Get the lowdown on Pickapeppa, Jamaica’s favorite condiment, at www.pickapeppa.com.

Be warned! The ubiquitous ackee fruit is poisonous if eaten before it’s fully mature. Never open an ackee pod; when the fruit is no longer deadly, the pod will open itself and ask to be eaten.

JAMAICAN FRUIT PRIMER

Ackee Its yellow flesh is a tasty and popular breakfast food, invariably served with saltfish.

Guava A small ovoid or rounded fruit with an intense, musky sweet aroma. It has a pinkish granular flesh studded with regular rows of tiny seeds. It is most commonly used in nectars and punches, syrups, jams, chutney and even ice cream.

Guinea A small green fruit (pronounced gl-nep) that grows in clusters, like grapes, and can be bought from July through November. Each ‘grape’ bears pink flesh that you plop into your mouth whole. It’s kind of rubbery and juicy, and tastes like a cross between a fig and a strawberry. Watch for the big pip in the middle.

Jackfruit A yellow fruit from the large pods of the jackfruit tree. Jackfruit seeds can be roasted or boiled.

Mango A lush fruit that comes in an assortment of sizes and colors, from yellow to black. Massage the glove-leather skin to soften the pulp, which can be sucked or spooned like custard. Select your mango by its perfume.

Naseberry A sweet, yellow and brown fruit that tastes a bit like peach and comes from an evergreen tree. Also known as sapodilla.

Ortanique An unusual citrus discovered in the Christiana market, believed to be a cross between a sweet orange and a tangerine.

Papaya Cloaks of many colors (from yellow to rose) hide a melon-smooth flesh that likewise runs from citron to vermilion. The central cavity is a trove of edible black seeds. Tenderness and sweet scent are key to buying papayas.

Soursop An ungainly, irregularly shaped fruit with cottony pulp that is invitingly fragrant yet acidic. Its taste hints at guava and pineapple.

Star apple A leathery, dark-purple, tennis-ball-sized gelatinous fruit of banded colors (white, pink, lavender, purple). Its glistening seeds form a star in the center. The fruit is mildly sweet and understated.

Sweetsop A heart-shaped, lumpy fruit packed with pits and a sweet, custardlike flesh.

Tinkin’ Toe The Jamaican name for a popular brown fruit that smells like stinky feet. Its scientific name is *Hymenaea courbaril*. Consider it the durian of Jamaica!

Ugli A fruit that is well named. It is ugly on the vine – like a deformed grapefruit with warty, mottled green or orange skin. But the golden pulp is delicious: acid-sweet and gushingly juicy.

TRAVEL YOUR TASTE BUDS

- Escoveitched fish: tangy fish pickled in vinegar, then fried and simmered with peppers and onions. As they say in Portland, 'it wicked.'
- Rundown chicken: cooked in spicy coconut milk, and is usually enjoyed for breakfast with johnny cakes. Some say the dish is named for the method by which the chicken is caught.
- Curried goat: with goats running around everywhere in Jamaica, it's no surprise to find one on the dinner menu.
- Spicy fish tea: 'warm up yuh belly' with this favorite local cure.
- Matrimony: a Christmas dessert made from purple star apples, which ripen in the winter.
- Mannish water is...let's just say it's not for everybody.

if tempted by 'mushroom tea'; the fungus in question is hallucinogenic, so unless you're in search of an LSD-like buzz, steer clear.

COLD DRINKS

A Jamaican favorite for cooling off is 'skyjuice': a shaved-ice cone flavored with sugary fruit syrup and lime juice, sold at streetside stalls, usually in a small plastic bag with a straw. You may also notice 'bellywash,' the local name for limeade. Be wary, though of drinking unpurified water.

Ting, a bottled grapefruit soda, is Jamaica's own soft drink. But the best way to quench a thirst is to drink coconut water straight from the nut. They're sold for about US\$1 from streetside vendors.

Roots tonics, made from the roots of plants such as raw moon bush, cola bark, sarsaparilla and dandelion, are widely available in small shops, or sold roadside from handmade batches. They taste like dirt...but in a good way.

Alcoholic Drinks

No country's liquor cabinet boasts a wider array of rums than that of Jamaica's, ranging from rums seasoned with such flavors as coconut and peppermint, to those aged like Appleton Special to an amber tint in oak barrels for premium smoothness, to the knockout blow of Overproof (151 proof) white rum. While you may sample and savor these varieties in fruit punches, on the rocks or in daiquiris as the mood takes you, be very careful with Overproof: it may come in a shot glass, but it's not a shot and is best enjoyed mixed with Ting, a local grapefruit drink. Downing shots of Overproof will bring you nothing but an early night.

Red Stripe is Jamaica's famous beer, the one crisp and sweet antidote to spicy jerk creations. If you hear locals calling for 'policemen,' don't panic: the beer is named for the 'natty trim' – a conspicuous red seam – on the trouser legs of the uniform of the Jamaican police force. Should you tire of Red Stripe, Real Rock is a slightly heavier, tastier local lager, while the malty Dragon Stout is also popular. Heineken and Guinness are both brewed under license locally.

For something light, try a ginger wine over ice; it's available at most rum shops.

Jamaica produces many liqueurs, mostly of rum, but also of coffee beans and fruits. The original coffee liqueur is Tia Maria.

CELEBRATIONS

No Jamaican needs a reason to throw a party, but some celebrations require days of planning. Some are cause for the slaughter of an animal, usually a goat or a pig. At weddings, funerals or milestone birthdays, a fattened goat is the

Duckanoo (or 'blue drawers' or 'tie-a-leaf') is a dessert made of cornmeal, green bananas and coconut, jacked up with sugar and spices and tied up in a banana leaf.

With all the food that is consumed at celebrations in Jamaica, it's only natural that food itself gets celebrated from time to time with events such as the Portland Jerk Festival, the Jamaica Coffee Festival and the Trelawny Yam Festival.

For the latest word on rum, check out the Ministry of Rum (www.ministryofrum.com).

victim. The meat is used to make a curry, but the head (and sometimes the testicles) is saved to make mannish water, a soup that also includes beans, onions and dumplings and is said to be an aphrodisiac.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

The options for dining in Jamaica range from wildly expensive restaurants to humble roadside stands where you can eat simple fare for as little as US\$1. Don't be put off by their basic appearance (unless they're overtly unhygienic). Most serve at least one vegetarian meal, which is often called 'I-tal,' a Rastafarian inspiration for 'pure' or health food.

The most popular snack in Jamaica is a patty – a thin, tender yet crisp crust filled with highly spiced, well-seasoned beef or vegetables. Each town has at least one patty shop. Be warned: they're highly addictive. American fast-food joints are starting to figure prominently in small towns. The local equivalents are Mother's, King Burger and Juici-Beef Patties.

Most hotels proudly – and often exclusively – incorporate Jamaican dishes in their menus. Every town has several small restaurants and cookshops selling standard Jamaican fare.

Food at grocery stores is usually expensive, as many canned and packaged goods are imported. Dirt-cheap fresh fruits, vegetables and spices sell at markets and roadside stalls islandwide. Wash all produce thoroughly!

You can usually buy fish (and lobster, in season) from local fishermen.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Thanks to the Rastafarians, Jamaica is veggie-friendly. The Rastafarian diet is called I-tal (for 'vI-tal') cooking, and in its evolved form has an endless index of no-nos. For instance: no salt, no chemicals, no meat or dairy and, for that matter, no alcohol, cigarettes or drugs (ganja doesn't count). Fruits, vegetables, soy, wheat gluten and herbs prevail. Because of the popularity of the I-tal diet most restaurants offer I-tal options.

EATING WITH KIDS

Any all-inclusive resort that accepts children keeps the little ones in mind when laying out the all-you-can-eat buffet, but most menus in Jamaica do not include 'kids' meals.'

Children seem to particularly enjoy seeing and tasting fruit from the tree and there are several working plantations with tours that highlight 'the

THE HIGH ART OF JERK

No one escapes the power and spell of jerk when coming to Jamaica. Invented by the Maroons, it has become the signature dish of the island and consequently has evolved into a high art. Jerk essentially is the process and result of creating a tongue-searing marinade for meats and fish, and barbecuing them slowly and deeply in an outdoor pit. The classic jerk pit is an oil drum cut in half, and the meat is best cooked over a fire of pimento wood for its unique flavor.

There is no end to the ingredients that might be found in a jerk marinade. Allspice, a dark berry which tastes like a mixture of cinnamon, clove and nutmeg, is the one essential spice for jerk. Other goodies include Jamaica's famous dark rums, incendiary Scotch bonnet peppers, lime juice, garlic, onions, Worcestershire sauce, maybe a dash of Pickapeppa, fresh ginger, cinnamon and basically anything else growing or lying around the area when you make it.

Jerk is best served hot off the coals wrapped in paper. You normally order by the pound (US\$2 to US\$5 should fill you up).

Watch for sorrel, a traditional bright red Christmas drink made from flower petals.

From the Foods of the Worlds Series, Norma Benghiat and John Demers's *Food of Jamaica: Authentic Recipes from the Jewel of the Caribbean* is a comprehensive exploration of the island's cuisine.

NOUVELLE JAMAICAN CUISINE

In recent years Jamaican nouvelle cuisine – also called Caribbean fusion – has heated up. Reinventing traditional dishes and creating a new and distinct cuisine, it fuses traditional Jamaican ingredients and techniques to haute international tastes.

Here are some of the top trendsetting Jamaican restaurants:

- Houseboat Grill, Montego Bay (p195)
- Hungry Lion, Negril (p238)
- Ivan's Bar, Negril (p238)
- Jake's Place, Treasure Beach (p272)
- Mille Fleurs, East of Port Antonio (p136)
- Norma's on the Terrace, Kingston (p90)
- Red Bones Blues Café, Kingston (p89)
- Rockhouse Restaurant & Bar, Negril (p238)
- Strawberry Hill, near Irish Town (p114)

tastes of Jamaica,' including Croydon in the Mountains (p210), Prospect Plantation (p153) and Sun Valley Plantation (p162).

COOKING COURSES

The best way to learn about Jamaican cooking is to spend time with a cook in his or her home kitchen. Contact the Jamaica Tourist Board to set up an official meeting through the **Meet the People Program** (www.visitjamaica.com), or consider booking the 'Tastes of Jamaica' tour from **Countrystyle Community Tours** (☎ 962-7758; Astra Country Inn, Mandeville).

EAT YOUR WORDS

bammy – cassava pancake, generally served with fried fish

bellywash – limeade

callaloo – leafy green vegetable, the collard greens of Jamaica; also called Chinese spinach or Indian kale

cassava – starchy tuber also known as yucca or manioc

cho cho – small, pear-shaped gourd; *chayote*

escoveitch – usually fish fried and pickled in local spices

festival – a fried biscuit or dumpling shaped like a sausage

flor de Jamaica – crimson hibiscus flower, often used to flavor teas

Irish moss – health-food drink made with seaweed extract

I-tal – healthy, natural Rastafarian vegetarian fare, using no salt or preservatives

janga – crayfish

jelly – baby coconut meat

jerk – spicy marinade for meat and fish

johnny cakes – fried dumplings

peas – beans, lentils

Pickapeppa – the main condiment of Jamaica, a savory, piquant bottled sauce, the recipe for which is a closely guarded secret

pimento – allspice

roti – flat Indian pan bread

rundown – fish cooked in coconut milk

seapuss – the Jamaican term for octopus, which is generally fried.

Ting – Jamaica's grapefruit soda

yampi – endemic Jamaican yam

For the finer points of I-tal cuisine, see Laura Osbourne's *The Rasta Cookbook: Vegetarian Cuisine Eaten with the Salt of the Earth*. Excellent on island fruit and vegetables, not to mention fruit drinks and teas.

Environment

No less a world traveler than Columbus described Jamaica as ‘the fairest isle that eyes beheld; mountainous...all full of valleys and fields and plains.’ And despite its relatively small size, Jamaica boasts an impressive diversity of terrain and vegetation – although few visitors venture far enough afield to experience it all. The country’s primary forest, while dwindling, still harbors an amazing array of birds and plants, and new species are still being discovered in Cockpit Country.

THE LAND

At 11,425 sq km (about equal to the US state of Connecticut, or one-twentieth the size of Great Britain) Jamaica is the third-largest island in the Caribbean and the largest of the English-speaking islands. It is one of the Greater Antilles, which make up the westernmost of the Caribbean islands.

Jamaica is rimmed by a narrow coastal plain except in the south, where broad flatlands cover extensive areas. Mountains form the island’s spine, rising gradually from the west and culminating in the tortuous Blue Mountains in the east, which are capped by Blue Mountain Peak at 2256m. The island is cut by about 120 rivers, many of which are bone dry for much of the year but spring to life after heavy rains, causing great flooding.

Two-thirds of the island’s surface is composed of soft, porous limestone (the compressed skeletons of coral, clams and other sea life), in places several miles thick and covered by thick red-clay soils rich in bauxite (the principal source of aluminum). The interior, dramatically sculpted with deep vales and steep ridges, is highlighted by Cockpit Country, a virtually impenetrable tract in the east full of irregular limestone hummocks, vast sinkholes, underground caves and flat valley bottoms.

Coastal mangrove and wetland preserves, montane cloud forests and other wild places are strewn across Jamaica. Most travelers stick to beach resorts, however. Those who do get close to nature are as yet poorly served by wildlife reserves.

WILDLIFE

Animals

MAMMALS

Jamaica has very few mammal species. Small numbers of wild hogs and feral goats still roam in isolated wilderness areas. The only native land mammal is the endangered Jamaican hutia, or coney, a large brown rodent akin to a guinea pig. Habitat loss now restricts the highly social, nocturnal beast to remote areas of eastern Jamaica.

The mongoose is the animal you are most likely to see, usually scurrying across the road. This weasel-like mammal was introduced from India in the late 19th century to control rats, but it is now considered a destructive pest.

AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

Jamaica harbors plenty of slithery and slimy things. The largest are crocodiles (incorrectly called ‘alligators’ in Jamaica), found along the south coast, but also in and around Negril’s Great Morass and adjacent rivers (see the boxed text on p254). Abundant until biggame hunters appeared around the turn of the century, they are now protected and fewer than a thousand remain.

Jamaica has 24 species of lizard, including the Jamaican iguana, which hangs on to survival in the remote backwaters of the Hellshire Hills.

If you’re into caving, refer to Alan Fincham’s *Jamaica Underground*, which plumbs the depths of Cockpit Country.

Mongoose were imported from India in 1872 to rid sugarcane fields of rats. Unfortunately they proved more interested in feeding on the snake, a natural predator of the rat. Today the rat and mongoose populations are still going strong, while snake populations are in decline.

Geckos can often be seen hanging on the ceiling by their suction-cup feet. Locals attribute a dark side to the harmless critter, from which Jamaicans superstitiously recoil.

Jamaica has five species of snake, none of them poisonous. All are endangered thanks mostly to the ravages of the mongoose, which has entirely disposed of a sixth species – the black snake. The largest is the Jamaican boa, or yellow snake – a boa constrictor (called *nanka* locally) that can grow to 2.5m in length.

The island also harbors 17 frog and one toad species. Uniquely, none of Jamaica's 14 endemic frog species undergoes a tadpole stage; instead, tiny frogs emerge in adult form directly from eggs. All over Jamaica you'll hear whistle frog living up to its name. While it makes a big racket, the frog itself is smaller than a grape.

INSECTS

Jamaica has mosquitoes, bees and wasps, but most bugs are harmless. For example, a brown scarab beetle called the 'newsbug' flies seemingly without control and, when it flies into people, locals consider it a sign of important news to come. Diamond-shaped 'stinky bugs' are exactly that, advertising themselves with an offensive smell.

Jamaica has 120 butterfly species and countless moth species, of which 21 are endemic. The most spectacular butterfly is the giant swallowtail, *Papilio homerus*, with a 15cm wingspan. It lives only at higher altitudes in the John Crow Mountains and the eastern extent of the Blue Mountains (and in Cockpit Country in smaller numbers).

Fireflies (called 'blinkies' and 'peeny-wallies') flash luminously in the dark.

BIRDS

The island has more than 255 bird species, 26 of which, along with 21 subspecies, are endemic. Many, such as the Jamaican blackbird and ring-tailed pigeon, are endangered.

Stilt-legged, snowy-white cattle egrets are ubiquitous, as are 'John crows,' or turkey vultures, which are feared in Jamaica and are a subject of several folk songs and proverbs.

Patoo (a West African word) is the Jamaican name for the owl, which many islanders regard as a harbinger of death. Jamaica has two species: the screech owl and the endemic brown owl. There are also four endemic species of flycatcher, a woodpecker and many rare species of dove.

Bird-watchers can also spot herons, gallinules and countless other waterfowl in the swamps. Pelicans can be seen diving for fish, while magnificent frigate birds soar high above like juvenile pterodactyls.

Jamaica has four of the 16 Caribbean species of hummingbird. The crown jewel of West Indian hummingbirds is the streamertail, the national bird, which is indigenous to Jamaica. This beauty boasts shimmering emerald feathers, a velvety black crown with purple crest and long, slender, curved tail-feathers. It is known locally as the 'doctorbird,' apparently for its long bill, which resembles a 19th-century surgical lancet. The red-billed streamertail inhabits the west, while the black-billed lives in the east. Its image adorns the Jamaican two-dollar bill and the logo of Air Jamaica.

MARINE LIFE

Coral reefs lie along the north shore, where the reef is almost continuous and much of it is within a few hundred meters of shore.

Lepidopterists should refer to *An Annotated List of Butterflies of Jamaica* by A Avinoff and N Shoumatoff.

Bird-watchers should turn to *Birds of Jamaica: A Photographic Field Guide* by Audrey Downer and Robert Sutton. James Bond's classic *Birds of the West Indies*, another reference for serious bird-watchers, was republished as *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of the West Indies*.

DEBT-FOR-NATURE

Nearly a quarter of Jamaica is still covered by deep, verdant rain forest. The forest that runs along the spine of Jamaica's mountains, known to biologists as the Spinal Forest, is home to much of the island's wildlife and most of its plant species. The Spinal Forest also comprises some of the most significant bird habitat in the Caribbean, with 26 species that exist nowhere else.

Jamaica's nascent environmental-protection programs have been focused primarily on addressing the steady degradation of its coral reefs and beaches, natural assets that are integral to the tourism economy. In the meantime, the interior forest has been steadily decimated, the victim of expanding agricultural development, population growth and mining.

In a welcome development, in late 2004 the governments of the US and Jamaica, with substantial support from the **Nature Conservancy** (☎ 703-841-4878, 800-628-6860; www.nature.org; 4245 N Fairfax Dr, Arlington, VA 222203, USA), agreed to a 'debt-for-nature' swap. Under the provisions of the agreement, nearly US\$16 million of Jamaica's debt to the US has been canceled.

In exchange, the Jamaican government has pledged to invest the equivalent of almost US\$16 million over a 20-year period to create a trust fund that will provide long-term funding to protect and manage the island's national parks and forest reserves. The debt-swap funding has allowed the Jamaican government and a network of local, established conservation organizations to have a reliable source of money for important conservation projects such as conducting research and biological surveys, preparing and planning for new national parks and forest reserves, planting trees, restoring damaged ecosystems and conducting public-education and community-outreach activities.

Leaflike orange gorgonians spread their fingers up toward the light. There are contorted sheets of purple staghorn and lacy outcrops of tubipora resembling delicately woven Spanish mantillas, sinuous boulder-like brain corals and soft-flowering corals that sway to the rhythms of the currents.

Over 700 species of fish zip in and out of the exquisite reefs and swarm through the coral canyons: wrasses, parrotfish, snappers, bonito, kingfish, jewelfish and scores of others. The smaller fry are preyed upon by barracuda, giant groupers and tarpon. Sharks, of course, are frequently seen, though most of these are harmless nurse sharks. Further out, the cobalt deeps are run by sailfish, marlin and manta rays.

Three species of endangered marine turtle – the green, hawksbill and log-head – lay eggs at the few remaining undeveloped sandy beaches.

About 100 of the endangered West Indian manatee – a shy, gentle creature once common around the island – survive in Jamaican waters, most numerously in the swamps of Long Bay on the south coast.

Plants

Jamaica boasts 3582 plant species (including 237 orchids), of which at least 912 are endemic. Jamaica also boasts some 60 bromeliad species and 550 species of fern.

Anthuriums, heliconias and gingers are all common, as are hibiscus and periwinkle. Impatiens color roadsides at cooler heights.

Introduced exotics include the bougainvillea, brought from London's Kew Gardens in 1858. Ackee, the staple of Jamaican breakfasts, was brought from West Africa in 1778. The first mango tree arrived in 1782 from Mauritius, and Captain William Bligh arrived in Jamaica in 1779 bearing 700 breadfruit. Cocoa and cashew are native to Central America and the West Indies, as is cassava. A native pineapple from Jamaica was the progenitor of Hawaii's pineapples (the fruit even appears on the Jamaican coat of arms).

Flowering Plants of Jamaica by C Dennis Adams has detailed descriptions of individual species, accompanied by illustrations.

For the latest dope on Jamaica's most notorious crop, click on www.cannabisnews.com.

Needless to say, ganja is grown beneath tall plants in remote areas to evade the probing helicopters of the Jamaica Defense Force. The harvest season runs from late August through October.

TREE SPECIES

The national flower is the dark-blue bloom of the lignum vitae tree. Its timber is much in demand by carvers. The national tree is blue mahoe, which derives its name from the blue-green streaks in its beautiful wood. Another dramatic flowering tree is the vermilion 'flame of the forest' (also called the 'African tulip tree').

Logwood, introduced to the island in 1715, grows wild in dry areas and produces a dark blue dye, for which it was grown commercially during the 19th century. Native mahogany and ebony have been logged and decimated during the past two centuries. Other native trees include the massive silk cotton, said to be a favored habitat of 'duppies' (ghosts).

Palms are everywhere, except at the highest reaches of the Blue Mountains. There are many species, including the stately royal palm (a Cuban import), which grows to over 30m.

Much of Jamaica's coast is fringed by mangroves.

NATIONAL PARKS

Jamaica's embryonic park system comprises four national parks: Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park, Montego Bay Marine Park, Port Antonio Marine Park and Negril Marine Park.

The 780-sq-km Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park (Jamaica's largest) includes the forest reserves of the Blue and John Crow mountain ranges. Both marine parks are situated around resort areas and were developed to preserve and manage coral reefs, mangroves and offshore marine resources.

There is also a fistful of other wilderness areas with varying degrees of protection, such as the Portland Bight Protected Area (p103).

Additional national parks are being conceptualized and have been touted for years. (See the map, p50, for proposed sites.) Proposals to turn Cockpit Country into a national park have been met with stiff resistance from the Maroons who live there and fear increased gov-

To visit Cockpit Country in an ecologically responsible manner, check out the Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency's website www.stea.net.



TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

- Take only photographs, leave only footprints. Don't litter, and if you see it, pick it up.
- Support recycling programs.
- Never take 'souvenirs' such as shells, plants or artifacts from historical sites or natural areas. Treat shells, sea urchins, coral and other marine life as sacred.
- Don't buy products made from endangered species. Buying products made of tortoiseshell, coral or bird feathers contributes to the decimation of wildlife.
- Keep to the footpaths. When hiking, always follow designated trails. Natural habitats are often quickly eroded, and animals and plants are disturbed by walkers who stray from the beaten path.
- Don't touch or stand on coral. Coral is extremely sensitive and is easily killed by snorkelers and divers who make contact. Likewise, boaters should never anchor on coral – use mooring buoys. (For further guidelines on protecting the coral, see p228.)
- Try to patronize hotels, tour companies and merchants that act in an environmentally sound manner. Consider their impact on waste generation, noise levels, energy consumption and the local culture.
- Support community tourism. Many local communities derive little benefit from Jamaica's huge tourism revenues. Educate yourself on community tourism and ways you can participate (see the boxed text, p263). Use local tour guides wherever possible.
- Respect the community. Learn about the customs of the region and support local efforts to preserve the environment and traditional culture.
- Tell others. Politely intervene when you observe other travelers behaving in an environmentally or socially detrimental manner.

ernmental authority will infringe on their hard-won autonomy. In the meantime, the Jamaica Environment Trust is working hard to get the region closed to mining and in 2007 succeeded in getting all prospecting licenses suspended.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Today, the island the Arawak people called Xaymaca (or 'Land of Wood and Water') is in dire environmental straits. In the mid-1990s, Jamaica had the highest rate of deforestation (5% per year) of any country in the world and, although there is now greater awareness of the problem, it is still a threat. Many of Jamaica's endemic wildlife species are endangered or gone forever, and according to the World Conservation Union, Jamaica ranks among the top 10 countries in the world for numbers of both endangered amphibians and endangered plant species. Legislation has been largely ineffectual: authorities are underfunded and fines are absurdly low. For more information, contact the **Rainforest Trust** (☎ 305-669-8955; rft@rainforesttrust.com; 6001 SW 63rd Ave, Miami, FL 33143, USA).

Bauxite mining – the island's second most lucrative industry after tourism – is considered to be the single largest cause of deforestation in Jamaica. Bauxite can only be extracted by opencast mining, which requires the wholesale destruction of forests and topsoil. The access roads cut by mining concerns are then used by loggers, coal burners and yam-stick traders to get to trees in and around designated mining areas, extending the deforestation.

Deforestation has also ravaged the Blue Mountains, where farmers felled trees to clear land to grow lucrative coffee plants. When the dwindling tree population caused migratory birds to shun the area, in turn leaving it to

Over the last decade, deforestation has led to the deterioration of more than a third of Jamaica's watersheds.

insects that ravaged the crop, some farmers began to work with conservationists and park officials planting trees (see p117).

Indeed, the past decade has seen a stirring of eco-awareness. The **National Resources Conservation Authority** (NRCA; ☎ 754-7540; www.nrca.org; c/o Natural Environment & Planning Agency, 10 Caledonia Ave, Kingston 5) is entrusted with responsibility for promoting ecological consciousness among Jamaicans and management of the national parks and protected areas under the Protected Areas Resource Conservation Project (PARC).

The following organizations are also taking the lead in bringing attention to ecological issues:

Jamaica Conservation & Development Trust (☎ 960-2848; www.greenjamaica.org; 95 Dumbarton Ave, Kingston 10)

Jamaica Environment Trust (☎ 960-3693; www.jamentrust.org; 58 Half Way Tree Rd, Kingston 10)

Jamaica Sustainable Development Networking Programme (☎ 968-0323; www.jsdnp.org.jm; 115 Hope Rd, Kingston 6)

National Environmental Societies Trust (☎ 960-3316; www.jsdnp.org.jm/nestjamaica; 95 Dumbarton Ave, Kingston 10)

The Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org /wherewework/caribbean/jamaica) has been instrumental in protecting the Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park.

Jamaica Outdoors

Jamaica's a wily seductress. Luring vacationers by the millions with visions of sugary sand and limitless sun, she soon rouses them from the poolside bar or beach towel with an enticing array of outdoor activities. Indeed, some of the most rewarding items on Jamaica's tourist menu are to be found exploring her caves, reefs, rivers and mountains. Even the most comatose beach-bum is going to wonder just what else is out there after a while.

SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELING

Jamaica's shores are as beautiful below the surface as they are above. This is especially true on the north coast from Negril to Ocho Rios, where conditions for diving are exceptional. Waters offer tremendous visibility and temperatures of around 27°C year-round. Treasures range from shallow reefs, caverns and trenches to walls and drop-offs just a few hundred meters offshore.

By law, all dives in Jamaican waters must be guided, and dives are restricted to a depth of 30m. (See the boxed text, p228, on guidelines for protecting the reef.) If you spend enough time in the water, you're practically guaranteed to see parrotfish, angelfish, turtles, eels and the odd barracuda.

Most diving occurs in and around the Montego Bay and Negril marine parks, in proximity to a wide range of licensed dive operators offering rental equipment and group dives. The main draws around Montego Bay are the Point, a dive wall renowned for its dense corals and fish, sharks and rays, and Airport Reef boasting masses of coral canyons, caves and tunnels, and even a DC-3 wreck.

In Negril the caves off the West End have tunnels and the occasional hawksbill turtle. Among the area's highlights are The Throne, a cave with sponges, plentiful corals, nurse sharks, octopi, barracuda and stingrays; Deep Plane, which holds the remains of a Cessna airplane lying at 21m underwater and Sands Club Reef, which lies in 10m of water in the middle of Long Bay.

In Montego Bay try **Resort Divers** (☎ 953-9699), **Fun Divers** (☎ 953-3268; Wyndham Rose Hall Hotel, Rose Hall) or **Jamaica Scuba Divers** (G66; Half Moon Hotel, Ironshore).

In Negril, most all-inclusive resorts have scuba facilities. **Negril Scuba Centre** has locations at **Mariner's Negril Beach Club** (☎ 957-4425, 957-9641), **Negril Escape Resort & Spa** (☎ 957-0392) and **Sunset @ the Palms** (☎ 383-9533), and offers PADI certification and introductory 'resort courses'.

Dives cost around US\$50/70 for one-/two-tank dives. A snorkeling excursion, which generally includes equipment and a boat trip, costs US\$25 to US\$50. 'Resort courses' for beginners (also called 'Discover Scuba') are offered at most major resorts (about US\$90), which also offer PADI or NAUI certification courses (US\$350 to US\$400) and advanced courses.

RAFTING

It was no less than Errol Flynn, a true convert to the Jamaican way of life, who first saw the fun of coasting down the river on a raft of bamboo poles lashed together. The sybaritic actor got the idea watching the banana loads being transported in that manner down the Rio Grande, and before long he'd popularized rafting for pleasure.

Today, you sit on a raised seat with padded cushions, while a 'captain' poles you through the washboard shallows and small cataracts. It's a marvelous experience and gives you a sample of outback Jamaica. Take a hat and sunscreen to guard against the sun.

'Jamaica's shores are as beautiful below the surface as they are above.'

Sun Venture (☎ 960-6685; www.sunventuretours.com; 30 Balmoral Ave, Kingston 10) Daylong hikes from US\$75 and hikes to the peak with lodging (US\$95). Also leads hikes and birding trips into the Cockpits.

CAVING & SPELUNKING

OK, so caving doesn't technically qualify as part of the outdoors, yet outdoorsy people will be quick to heed their calls. Jamaica is honeycombed with limestone caves and caverns, most of which boast fine stalagmites and stalactites, underground streams and even waterfalls.

The **Jamaican Caves Organization** (www.jamaicancaves.org) provides resources for the exploration of caves, sinkholes and underground rivers. In 2005 the group completed a project to formally classify and evaluate over 70 caves within Cockpit Country.

Some caves are tourist attractions, with guided tours. These include labyrinthine Windsor Cave in Cockpit Country, Green Grotto near Runaway Bay, large, vaulted Roaring River near Savanna-la-Mar, and the Nonsuch and Fox Caves in the Rio Grande Valley near Port Antonio.

SPORT FISHING

Jamaica's waters are a pelagic playpen for schools of blue-and-white marlin, dolphin, wahoo, tuna and dozens of other species. Deepwater game-fish run year-round through the deep Cayman Trench, which begins just over 3km from shore. Charters can be arranged for US\$400/600 per half/full day through hotels or directly through operators in Montego Bay, Negril, Ocho Rios and Port Antonio. A charter includes captain, tackle, bait and crew. Most charter boats require a 50% deposit.

The waters off Jamaica's north coast are particularly good for game fishing. An abyss known as 'Marlin Alley' teems with game fish like sailfish, wahoo, kingfish, dolphin, yellowfin tuna and, yes, the blue marlin. The best time to fish for the latter are between June and August, but if you're here late September be sure to enter the Montego Bay Marlin Tournament, put on by the **Montego Bay Yacht Club** (979-8038).

No Problem (☎ 381-3229) on Pier 1 Marina in Montego Bay operates charters equipped to reel in big-game fish, while **Stanley's Deep Sea Fishing** (957-0667) offers custom fishing-trip charters in Negril.

If your fishing aspirations aren't quite Hemingway material, try heading out on the water with a local fisherman to test your luck. In Negril, fisherman congregating by the bridge are often happy to take you down the South Negril River, and Frenchman's Bay on the southeast coast has plenty of fishermen willing to take you along for a fee.

SURFING

Sure, the east coast lacks the west's fabled sunsets and more celebrated beaches, but the waves rushing in from the Atlantic have been attracting surfers. There's a lot to be said for your beach lacking tranquility: surf's up!

Boston Beach, 14km east of Port Antonio, is the best-known spot. A narrow bay whose waves roll in with occasional ferocity, it contains a small beachside shack from which you can rent boards cheaply. Long Bay, 16km further south, was badly hit by Hurricane Dean in 2007, but the beach itself has recovered, and it's possible to rent boards here as well.

The **Surfing Association of Jamaica/Jamnesia Surf Club** (☎ 750-0103; PO Box 167, Kingston 2) provides general information about surfing in Jamaica and operates a surf camp at Bull Bay, 13km east of Kingston.

Try **Jah Mek Yah** (☎ 435-8806, in the USA ☎ 954-594-9619; www.theliquidaddiction.com/jaspots.html; Morant Bay, St Thomas), a surf lodge in Jamaica's unspoiled eastern corner, offering relaxed, rootsy surf packages.

CYCLING

Although cycling is not terribly common in Jamaica – in no small part due to the perils of island traffic – one of the island's greatest thrills can be had on a bike: the downhill tour from Hardwar Gap in the Blue Mountains. From Ocho Rios or Kingston, **Blue Mountain Bicycle Tours** (☎ 974-7075; www.bmtoursja.com) will pick you by bus and take you to that peak, 1700m above sea level, put you on a mountain bike and send you down.

For more sedate cycling, you can hire bicycles at most of the major resorts. Anything more serious, and you should consider bringing your own mountain or multipurpose bike (you will need sturdy wheels to handle the potholed roads). Check requirements with the airline well in advance, preferably before you pay for your ticket.

Jamaica Mountain Bike Association (Jamba; ☎ 957-0155; rustynegril@hotmail.com; PO Box 104, Negril) A good information source.

Manfred's Jamaican Mountain Bike Tours (in Canada ☎ 705-745-8210; www.nexicom.net/~manfred/; tour US\$795) Based in Canada, offering bicycling tours of the south coast.

Rusty's X-Cellent Adventures (☎ 957-0155; rustynegril@hotmail.com; PO Box 104, Negril; tours per person US\$50) Offers exciting tours in the hills near Negril.

BIRD-WATCHING

A birder's haven, Jamaica is home to over 250 species of bird, the most common of which are snow-white cattle egrets and the ominous 'John crows,' or turkey vultures. Jamaica boasts four of the Caribbean's 16 species of hummingbird. The crown jewel of West Indian hummingbirds is the streamertail, the national bird, which is indigenous to Jamaica and known as the 'doctorbird.' You are sure to see them – if only because it adorns the Jamaican two-dollar bill.

Birders will also spot herons, gallinules and countless other waterfowl in the swamps. Pelicans can be seen diving for fish, while magnificent frigate birds soar high above like juvenile pterodactyls.

Good spots include the Blue Mountains, Cockpit Country, the Black River Great Morass, the Negril Great Morass and the Rio Grande Valley. All you need in the field are a good pair of binoculars and a guide to the birds of the island. **Windsor Great House** (☎ 997-3832; www.cockpitcountry.com; Windsor) organizes a bird-banding effort on the last weekend of each month.

For birding tours and support, try the following:

Ann & Robert Sutton (☎ 904-5454; asutton@cwjamaica.com; per day US\$200) Based in Mandeville, they've been leading major bird tours in Jamaica for more than 30 years.

Fritz Beckford (☎ 952-2009; per 3hr US\$20) At Rocklands Bird Sanctuary, near Montego Bay.

Grand Valley Tours (☎ 993-4116, 858-7338; www.portantoniojamaica.com/gvt.html; 12 West St, Port Antonio) Offers birding trips in the Rio Grande Valley.

Jamaica Explorations (☎ 993-7267; mockbrd@cwjamaica.com; Hotel Mockingbird Hill, Port Antonio) Bird-watching tours in Portland parish and the Blue Mountains.

Strawberry Hill (☎ 944-8400; www.strawberryhillresort.com) Birding trips in the Blue Mountains.

GOLF

Jamaica has 12 championship golf courses – more than any other Caribbean island. All courses rent out clubs and have carts. Most require that you hire a caddy – an extremely wise investment, as they know the layout of the course intimately.

'one of the island's greatest thrills can be had on a bike: the downhill tour from Hardwar Gap in the Blue Mountains.'

'There's a lot to be said for your beach lacking tranquility: surf's up!'

'should your ball land in the water, best leave it as a souvenir for one of the resident crocodiles.'

The two most famous Jamaican courses can be found near Montego Bay. The **Tryall Golf Course** (☎ 956-5660) and the **White Witch Golf Course** (☎ 953-2800) at the Ritz-Carlton Rose Hall are world-class links that lure golf enthusiasts from all over the world. The less advanced or simply curious can also get in a few swings, though Tryall is sometimes closed to nonmembers in high season.

For those enticed by scenic links, **Sandals Ocho Rios Golf & Country Club** (☎ 975-0119) six km southeast of Ocho Rios is widely regarded as the most beautiful of Jamaica's links, while golfers in Negril can try the **Negril Hills Golf Club** (☎ 957-4638) with a delightful setting by the Great Morass swamp-land. And should your ball land in the water, best leave it as a souvenir for one of the resident crocodiles.

For more information on the island's links, contact the **Jamaica Golf Association** (☎ 925-2325; www.jamaicagolfassociation.com; Constant Spring Golf Club, PO Box 743, Kingston 8).

Contemporary Jamaican Music

Each year, Jamaica inspires pilgrims seeking sun, beaches and rum (or a potent cocktail of all three), yet it was the reggae revolution from the late 1960s to the early 1980s that put Jamaican music on the map and made it inexorably distinct from other Caribbean hotspots. Yet while that revolution's legacies can still be heard on the world's stages from great reggae ambassadors such as Jimmy Cliff, Burning Spear and Bunny Wailer, they are no longer the voices of Jamaican youth. There are new faces on the scene and new beats in the air – and no beat is louder than the sound of the dancehall.

Today it is dancehall music not roots reggae that is Jamaica's pulse. By day, it comes at you from streetside cassette vendors, passing minibuses and the corner bar where people gather to play dominoes. At night the hard-driving bass rhythms of megawatt mobile discos, known as sound systems, call from the distance. Jamaicans come from miles away to these makeshift dancehalls to hear the 'champion' sound systems, seeking musical medicine to ease the harsh pressures of daily life. They are rarely disappointed. Outside the dancehall, people linger in the shadows of kerosene lanterns. Vendors and card sharks hustle and groove while the disc jockeys tempt youths to buy a ticket and join the show. In the heat of the dance, the sound systems engage in a 'sound clash,' dueling with custom records to win the crowd's favor and boost their reputation. Dancehall divas model their latest bare-as-you-dare outfits, chiseled young men decked out in bright tops and gold chains crowd around the sound systems to study the DJ's every move and, in the shadows, lovers rock in sensual embraces.

It is impossible to summarize the vast historical terrain of Jamaican music with all of its complexity and cultural nuance in a few short pages. What we hope to do is give you an appreciation of the profound importance of music in Jamaican life, a sense of the richness of this creative expression and some practical advice about how you can get first-hand experience of the music scene while visiting.

JAMAICAN SYNCRETISM

It is somewhat misleading to think of the history of Jamaican music as a neat linear chronology, as the marching of one distinct genre into the other, or the passing of the torch from one musician to another.

Most historical overviews of Jamaican music present an orderly progression from mento (Jamaican folk music; 1930s and '40s) to Jamaican R&B ('50s) to ska (its first popular music; early '60s), rocksteady (a short intermediate step; mid-'60s), reggae (the apex of its achievements; late '60s to late '70s) and finally dancehall (the opposite of everything reggae stood for; post-1981). But this view of Jamaican music is oversimplified and obscures much more than it illuminates. The music of different eras, genres and cultures influence each other rather than remaining pure streams that never intersect. The key concept here is the beautiful fusion (anthropologists call it syncretism) of different cultural elements to create something new. This syncretism is the magic of Jamaican music.

Several musical genres are part of the mix of today's music scene. In the 1960s and '70s, Jamaica experienced a golden age of popular music, with the emergence within 10 years of the holy trinity of ska, rocksteady and

Reggae Explosion: The Story of Jamaican Music, by Chris Salewcz and Adrian Boot, traces the evolution of Jamaican music in words and (amazing) photographs.

Jahworks (www.jahworks.org) is an online zine dedicated to Caribbean (mostly Jamaican) music and culture. The writing is intelligent, informed and entertaining.

Solid Foundation: An Oral History of Reggae is an intensely readable study of Jamaican music in the words of the people who created it.

reggae, but we should not be nostalgic for the past glories; they are very much alive today. The continuing evolution of ska music is an excellent case in point. In Jamaica, ska's popularity peaked in the early '60s with the rise of its most famous band, the Skatalites, and waned by the mid-'60s. Yet a decade later it would be revived in Britain as ska's 'second wave' by the children of Black Jamaican migrants and White English working-class kids who grew up together in London and Birmingham. In turn, these 'two tone' bands (The Beat, Madness, The Specials) would inspire youth in the US to create a 'third wave' of ska in the '80s and '90s (Fishbone, Sublime, Mighty Mighty Bosstones, The Mad Caddies) – and many of their fans have no idea the music originated in Jamaica.

Other classic Jamaican genres such as roots reggae, lovers rock and dub have similarly influenced musicians and fans around the world, and now-local variants of these sounds can be found in nearly every corner of the earth from Kauai to Kathmandu. While the wave of popularity may subside in its birthplace, the music nevertheless lives on and keeps changing in ways that its originators could never have anticipated.

MARLEY'S LEGACY: THE STONE THAT THE BUILDER REFUSED

Bob Marley, in his song 'Trenchtown,' asked if anything good could ever come out of Trenchtown. Posing this rhetorical question, one he must have heard a thousand times from members of the Jamaican upper classes, Marley challenged the very ideological foundation that Jamaican society was built on – the notion that one set of people (ie the poor masses of African descent) would be denied their freedom and sense of human worth by a small minority of Jamaica's ruling elite. In one of the song's next verses, Marley exhorts us to 'pay tribute to Trenchtown,' defiantly demanding respect for his hometown, spitting the old paternalism back in the face of his oppressors while at the same time encouraging the ghetto to escape the shackles of 'mental slavery.'

'The stone that the builder refused shall become the head corner stone' (Psalm 118:22) is a line that Bob Marley employed in more than one song. The moral of this parable is that of redemption, the rejected coming back to be the exalted one – the last shall be first. Marley's essential message to the masses was to take pride in where they were from and to realize what they were capable of: greatness, and perhaps even kinship with the divine, Jah Rastafari. This message would resonate around the globe, among people of all walks of life, changing the course of music history forever.

Robert Nesta Marley emerged from a very unlikely place to become one of the truly great musical figures of the 20th century, simultaneously an artistic, political and religious figure of worldwide significance. Acknowledging his singular place in the history of the last century, the international media have given him a number of posthumous honors: in 1999, *Time Magazine* named his album *Exodus* 'album of the century,' while the BBC rated his 'One Love' the song of the millennium. High praise indeed.

Yet as central as Bob Marley was to the development and popularization of Jamaican music and culture, he is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding the impact of Jamaican music on Jamaica and the world. Over the past 50 years Jamaican music has had a massive effect on global culture disproportionate to the country's size and population. Somehow the poorest and most disenfranchised citizens of one small nation have developed institutions and art forms that have influenced the music of countries around the world. How could this be possible? Perhaps a Jamaican proverb gives the best answer: 'Mi likkle but mi talawah' (I may be little, but I am very powerful).

King Jammy's by Beth Lesser covers a period of transition from roots reggae to dancehall. Lesser focuses on King Jammy, the producer and chief architect of the new dancehall sound.

JAMAICAN MUSICAL GENRES

Ska

The birth of ska occurred in Jamaica's recording studios in the early 1960s when musicians altered the American R&B sound with indigenous musical elements drawn from mento, Rastafarian drumming known as *nyahbinghi*, and other Afro-Jamaican religious music. This largely horn-driven sound was created by many of Jamaica's leading jazz musicians, who went on to form ska's most important band, the Skatalites.

Rocksteady

Rocksteady enjoyed wide popularity for only two years after first emerging in 1966. Generally slower and more refined than ska, rocksteady placed more emphasis on the syncopation of the drum and bass, with the horn section taking a back seat. Patterned to a large extent on the US soul singers, rocksteady was an era of great vocal stylists such as Alton Ellis, Ken Booth, John Holt, Slim Smith and Leroy Sibbles, and great harmony groups (The Paragons, The Techniques, the Wailers and the Heptones).

Reggae

While the term is often used to refer to all of Jamaican popular music, reggae first crystallized as a distinct musical genre in 1968. Reggae's leading stars (Desmond Dekker, Jimmy Cliff, Toots and Maytals, Bob Marley and the Wailers, to name just a few) exploded on the international scene in the 1970s. Reggae is most often associated with roots – that is Rastafari-inspired – reggae. However, there are various subgenres of reggae including lovers rock, rockers and dancehall style.

Mento

Mento, a folk song-and-dance form based on a mix of European and African stylistic elements, was Jamaica's first popular music. It was played on a variety of instruments including the banjo, guitar, fiddle, fife and rhumba box. Often confused with Trinidadian calypso, mento was the first Jamaican music released on record.

Lovers Rock

This is a style of reggae created in the UK with a strong emphasis on romantic themes. A high percentage of lovers rock tunes are cover versions of US soul ballads done over a reggae rhythm. These tunes are often part of the 'early warm' part of a dancehall session before the selectors start spinning the hardcore DJ tunes.

Dub

A genre that's based on the studio remix of previously recorded reggae songs, dub rose to popularity in the early 1970s. Often referred to as 'X-ray' music, dub music is known for its bare-bones drum-and-bass rhythm tracks, spacey studio effects like echo and reverb, and the haunting use of vocal snippets. To check it out, look for records from Lee 'Scratch' Perry, King Tubby and the Mad Professor.

Dancehall

Often referred to as ragga in the UK, the genre of dancehall became the dominant form of Jamaican music after Bob Marley's death in 1981. Dancehall was initially seen as a rejection of everything Marley stood for (Rastafari 'culture,' equal rights and justice, acoustic instruments and vocal harmonies), and it has since been stereotyped as a music based primarily on slackness (raw sexuality) and gun lyrics, the glorification of materialism, digital 'riddims' and DJs (rappers). Since the early 1990s, however, dancehall has experienced an on-again-off-again Rasta renaissance with the return of 'conscious' lyricists such as Garnett Silk, Tony Rebel, Luciano, Sizzla and Anthony B.

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: HOMOPHOBIA IN DANCEHALL MUSIC

Since the turn of the millennium, dancehall has ridden a wave of international success, surpassing its first wave of crossover success in the early '90s with Shabba Ranks, Cobra, Super Cat and Patra. But is the music able to sustain this latest flash of worldwide popularity?

One of the biggest obstacles is the controversy over homophobia in dancehall lyrics. Some Jamaican artists (including Buju Banton, Beenie Man, Sizzla and Capleton) have become targets of protests from gay-rights groups, particularly in the UK, where activists, asserting homophobic song lyrics are incitement to murder, have led boycotts of record labels and initiated criminal proceedings.

For the most part, Jamaicans have defended the attitudes expressed against gays and lesbians in dancehall lyrics as a matter of cultural and national sovereignty, while activists both inside and outside Jamaica (including Human Rights Watch) have argued that dancehall promotes violence against homosexuals.

In 2005 a 'ceasefire' was brokered in London between gay-rights organizations, dancehall artists and the record companies that represent them. Under the terms of this agreement groups such as Outrage! would stop protesting against dancehall artists as long they refrained from performing material that could be seen as inciting violence against gays and lesbians. How long this agreement holds or what it means back home in Jamaica, where the rights of homosexuals are not guaranteed by law, remains to be seen.

DANCEHALL CULTURE

Many music critics, writers of guidebooks and compilers of CD box sets have decided that Jamaican music declined after Marley's death – that the 'dancehall era' of the past 25 years is of little merit in comparison to the reggae era of the 1970s. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Nevertheless, many observers of the Jamaican music scene seem to feel that dancehall changed everything. Some consider dancehall to be a degeneration from 'classical' reggae or a mere borrowing from American rap. However, this is to misunderstand the evolution of Jamaican music. Rather than treading the same old paths that have served them well, Jamaican musicians are moving boldly into new terrain, continuously innovating to make a mark in a competitive field.

Remarkably, not even the recent explosion of Jamaican dancehall artists like Shabba Ranks, Shaggy, Beenie Man and Sean Paul onto the world stage has brought dancehall culture itself into focus outside Jamaica. Whether it started in the late 1970s (with the rise of DJs such as The Lone Ranger, Yellowman and Josey Wales) or the mid-1980s (with the advent of digital production techniques and the famous Slang Teng rhythm) is a matter of some debate. However, as a cultural space where social dances were held, dancehall's roots go back to the slavery era. According to Hedley Jones, former president of the Jamaica Federation of Musicians and sound-system pioneer: 'Dancehall has always been with us, because we have always had our clubs, our market places, our booths...where our dances were kept. And these were known as dancehalls.' For example, it was in the dancehall of the 19th century that mento, Jamaica's first popular music, was born. Dancehall is not the decimation of Jamaica's roots music but the roots of the music itself.

Over the past two centuries the power of dancehall has not only endured but grown. It has been the birthing ground for many styles of Jamaican recorded music, including ska, reggae and dub, and has provided a springboard for the careers of the island's aspiring musical artists. After WWII it gave rise to the sound systems, which came to replace live bands as the primary means of musical entertainment for the black, poor Jamaican masses. In turn, the sound systems have been the driving force behind several developments in

The Maytals' 1968 song 'Do the Reggae' was the first record to use the term 'reggae'. Prior to this the music was known as rocksteady.

For an outstanding biography of Bob Marley that captures the Jamaica of his times, check out Timothy White's *Catch a Fire*.

Jamaican popular music such as the rise of a local recording industry and the emergence of DJ (Jamaican rap) music. Jamaican sound-system DJs had much to do with the rise of hip-hop in the US and electronic dance music (such as drum and bass) in the UK. Since the 1960s dancehall has been a particularly important vehicle in Jamaica for the people to express, debate and assert their deepest aspirations.

Dancehall is visible and audible in every aspect of daily life in Jamaica: from roadside cassette vendors and bars and taverns blasting Irie FM, to the nightly news and political rallies. The merits and morality of dancehall are the subject of national debate, and the prime minister has felt the need to defend himself against perceived attacks by dancehall lyricists (such as Anthony B in 'Fire Pon Rome') on more than one occasion.

EXPERIENCING JAMAICAN MUSIC

'I want you to relate to my life, welcome to my country, welcome to my world. This is my music, get involved with it. This song that I sing that you can relate to, so you can be introduced to my world, this is your invitation card. You're welcome to the party.'

Beenie Man, 2001 Grammy winner for reggae

As Beenie Man suggests, there is no better way to get to know Jamaica than through its music. And, not surprisingly, many visitors to the country come with a desire to experience some of the greatest music in the world in its place of origin. Sadly, many go home frustrated, having only heard reggae CDs played at the hotel bar or danced to a hotel band playing watered-down Jamaican classics and American cover tunes. Ironically, it may be easier for you to experience live Jamaican music in your hometown than while on vacation in Jamaica.

There are many reasons why visitors find it hard to find 'the party.' For one, the heart of Jamaica's music scene is in Kingston, which all but the most adventurous tourists avoid. The Jamaican tourist industry does not push Kingston as a tourist destination and thus the city lacks the visitor-friendly infrastructure (like good public transportation and pedestrian-friendly

David Katz's *People Funny Boy: The Genius of Lee 'Scratch' Perry* is the first detailed work on the legendary reggae producer and dub maestro who shaped not only reggae but also global pop music.

International superstar Shaggy got his nickname from the character from *Scooby Doo*...His album *Hotshot* sold 10 million copies worldwide.

HOW TO FIND A STAGE SHOW OR DANCEHALL SESSION

- Listen to the radio to figure out what's going on. IRIE FM (105.1, 107.7) is a good place to start.
- Check the message boards on www.dancehallreggae.com.
- Ask locals where you can find a dancehall session or stage show. Word of mouth is the primary way locals find out 'wha gwaan.'
- Look for posters around town. They may be for sessions two months in the future or past, but they are worth checking out if your timing is just right.
- Once you've found a show, head out late. Sessions rarely get into swing until well past midnight. Take a nap during the day or tank up on some Blue Mountain coffee.
- An alternative to authentic dancehall sessions is to go to nightclub events. Nightclub entertainment features the latest dancehall music and is usually sort of a hybrid between a dancehall dance and a typical North American or European dance-club event. Hot nightclubs include the Asylum and the Quad (p91) in Kingston, or Pier 1 (p196) in Montego Bay.
- Spend some time in Negril: the hotels that dot Seven Mile Beach here frequently have live reggae shows or sound-system events (see p239).

TOP FIVE JAMAICAN MUSIC FAVORITES

Box Sets

- *This is Reggae Music: Golden Era 1960–1975* (Trojan US, 2004)
- *Ska Bonanza: The Studio One Ska Years* (Heartbeat, 1991)
- *Songs of Freedom, Bob Marley* (Island, 1992)
- *Arkology*, Lee 'Scratch' Perry (Island, 1997)
- *The Biggest Dancehall Anthems, 1979-82: The Birth of Dancehall* (Greensleeves, 2002)

Classic Reggae Albums

- *The Harder They Come* soundtrack (Island 1972)
- *King Tubby's Meets Rockers Uptown* (Shanachie, 1976)
- *Blackheart Man*, Bunny Wailer (Island, 1976)
- *Marcus Garvey*, Burning Spear (Island, 1975)
- *The Promised Land*, Dennis Brown (Blood & Fire Records, 2003)

Dancehall Albums

- *Til Shiloh*, Buju Banton (Island, 1995)
- *Da Real Thing*, Sizzla (VP Records, 2002)
- *Where There Is Life*, Luciano (Island, 1995)
- *Still Blazin'*, Capleton (2002)
- *Many Moods of Moses*, Beenie Man (VP Records, 1997)

Films about Jamaican Music

- *The Harder They Come* (1973)
- *Classic Albums: Bob Marley and the Wailers – Catch a Fire* (2000)
- *Rockers* (1978)
- *Dancehall Queen* (1996)
- *Stepping Razor Red X: Peter Tosh Story* (1992)

streets) that would encourage the traveler wanting to get a taste of the music culture. Aside from the Bob Marley Museum (which rarely offers live music), Kingston itself has no equivalent of Beale Street in Memphis or Bourbon Street in New Orleans – and neither does Montego Bay or Negril.

Second, Jamaica has few venues that offer live music on a nightly or weekly basis. Rather than being held at fixed venues, such as nightclubs, most performances are at open-air festivals and one-off stage shows. Again these are hit and miss, so it's best to check with the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB; p283) to time your trip if you really want to see one of these festivals (such as Reggae Sumfest; p18). For the most part, live band music is for export, because Jamaican performers can make more money overseas. This situation unfortunately mirrors one of the fundamental contradictions of a neoplantation economy: local products are made for export and items for local consumption are imported.

Third, local demand for music is high, but the local taste for musical performances is very different from what most tourists have in mind. Rather than live band shows that most foreigners have come to associate

www.dancehallreggae.com has the latest word on the scene and is a great source of info on the next sound-system party.

with reggae music, dancehall events are the most popular type of musical performances in Jamaica. Dancehall 'sessions' are based on sound systems, sophisticated megawatt mobile discos, rather than live bands. In these vibrant, intense performances, the disc jockeys known as 'selectors' are the stars of the scene, like their counterparts in the electronic dance-music scene.

Here's what you need to know: to begin with, dancehall sessions are not held in halls at all, but in open-air spaces that are created when one or more sound systems are set up for a dance. Some of these are permanent with cement walls, but many are just open spaces that are fenced in for the night in schoolyards, beaches and fields. These events are for local fans of the scene, primarily young and poor, and are avoided and even scorned by the Jamaican middle and upper classes. Until recently, the most popular form of dancehall events were sound clashes, head-to-head musical wars between two or more sound systems playing for the bigger crowd reaction. Since the late '90s, 'juggling' dances have become the rage because they have put the focus back on the dancers themselves rather than the antics of the selectors.

You have to have a spirit of adventure if you want to find your way to a sound-system dance. If you are hell-bent on seeing a dancehall, it's recommended that you go in a group and with a 'guide,' a local who you can trust and who knows the dancehall scene. Street dances in Kingston are the most vibrant (and off the hook), but you go at your own risk. Visitors (except for hardcore Japanese fans) are rare and, while on the whole peaceful, sound-systems are not policed events; pickpockets, stabbings and police raids do occasionally occur. For advice on the Kingston sound-system scene, see the 'Block-Rockin' Beats' box on p92.

If you're looking for a stage show or country dance outside Kingston, it's not going to be easy to track down information. There's no *Time Out* guide for dancehalls in Jamaica, and newspapers rarely have ads for upcoming dances. The radio is a good source of information, as are the colorful posters plastered on any vertical surface along Jamaica's roadways. Perhaps the best source of information is to ask locals such as those who work at the hotels where you are staying. The entrance fees to dancehalls are reasonable (between US\$5 and US\$10) while stage shows can range between US\$10 and US\$30. Leave your valuables at home. Most venues don't have bathrooms, have little in the way of security, and can be hard to reach – it's difficult to get public transportation late at night.

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Seven-inch 45 rpm records (the ones with the big hole) are the primary product of Jamaica's record plants and the mainstay of the sound-system dances.

Whaddat (www.whaddat.com) covers the Jamaican entertainment scene from a local perspective. Check out the latest dancehall happenings, interviews with current stars, fashions and photographs.

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