

# Negril & West Coast



In the 1970s, Negril lured hippies with its offbeat beach-life to a countercultural Shangri-la where anything goes. To some extent anything still goes here, but the innocence left long ago.

To be sure, the gorgeous 11km-long swath of sand that is Long Beach is still kissed by the serene waters into which the sun melts every evening in a riot of color that will transfix even the most jaded. And the easily accessible coral reefs offer some of the best diving in the Caribbean. At night, rustic beachside music clubs keep the reggae beat going without the watered-down-for-tourist schmaltz that so often mars the hotspots of Montego Bay and Ocho Rios.

Yet these undeniable attractions have done just that – attract. In the last three decades, Negril has exploded as a tourist venue, and today the beach can barely be seen from Norman Manley Blvd for the intervening phalanx of beachside resorts. And with tourism comes the local hustle – you’re very likely to watch the sunset in the cloying company of a ganja dealer or an aspiring tour-guide-cum-escort.

The less-developed West End lies on the cliffs slightly to the south of Long Beach. Here smaller, more characterful hotels mingle with intimate jerk shacks and lively bars, and it’s much easier to mix with locals without the perpetual sense of just being seen as an extension of your wallet. The sunset’s just as magnificent from the cliffs, and you’ll probably get a better idea of what Negril was like 40 years ago.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Long Bay** Hang loose or party hearty on this 11km stretch of beach, whose fiery sunsets never fail to live up to their hype (p238)
- **Abba Jahnehoy’s Garden** Take to the hills for some meditation and learn about Rastafarianism at this tranquil retreat and garden (p224)
- **Scuba Diving** Plumb the grottoes and reefs off Negril for some of the best diving on the island (p227)
- **Great Morass** Walk among towering palms through verdant wetlands filled with bird life (p224)
- **Roaring River Park** Disappear into the country at one of Jamaica’s most scenic and atmospheric caves (p244)



■ AREA: 3217 SQ KM

■ NEGRIL DEC AVERAGE HIGH TEMPERATURE: 28°C

## HISTORY

The Spanish called Negril’s bay and adjacent headland Punta Negrilla (Dark Point), referring to the black conger eels that used to proliferate in the local rivers. During the colonial era pirates favored Negril’s two bays to provide safe anchorage during plundering forays. During the War of 1812 between Britain and the US Bloody Bay was the point of assembly and departure for the British naval armada’s ill-fated expedition to storm New Orleans. Bloody Bay was also used by 19th-century whalers who butchered their catch here (hence the name). When a road was finally constructed to Negril in 1959, the area slowly began to attract vacationers – as well as a coterie of hippies – but it wasn’t until the late 1970s, when the first resorts opened, that Negril began to stake its claim as Jamaica’s coolest party destination.

## CLIMATE

Negril has Jamaica’s lowest rainfall and driest climate. The sun shines strongly 350 days a year on average but there is always the possibility of brief afternoon showers.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Nearly all international air passengers fly into Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, 81km from Negril. From there you can arrange for a private minivan or taxi, or take public transportation in the form of a minibus or route taxi.

## NEGRIL

### pop 4400

Negril, 81km west of Montego Bay, is the vortex around which Jamaica’s fun-in-the-sun vacation life whirls. You’ll soon find yourself falling in love with Negril’s insouciance and its scintillating 11km-long beach sliding gently into calm waters reflecting a palette of light blues and greens. Coral reefs lie just offshore, and you’ll want your camera close by to record the consistently peach-colored sunsets that get more applause than the live reggae concerts.

Tourism is Negril’s only industry. But despite phenomenal growth in recent decades, Negril can be as laid-back as anywhere else in Jamaica and there’s an easygoing rapport between visitors and locals.

Once upon a time – in the mid-1970s, to be exact – Negril was still an off-the-beaten-track nirvana to the budget-minded, beach-loving crowd. It was a ‘far-out’ setting where you could drool over sunsets of hallucinogenic intensity that had nothing to do with the ‘magic’ mushrooms that still show up in omelettes and teas.

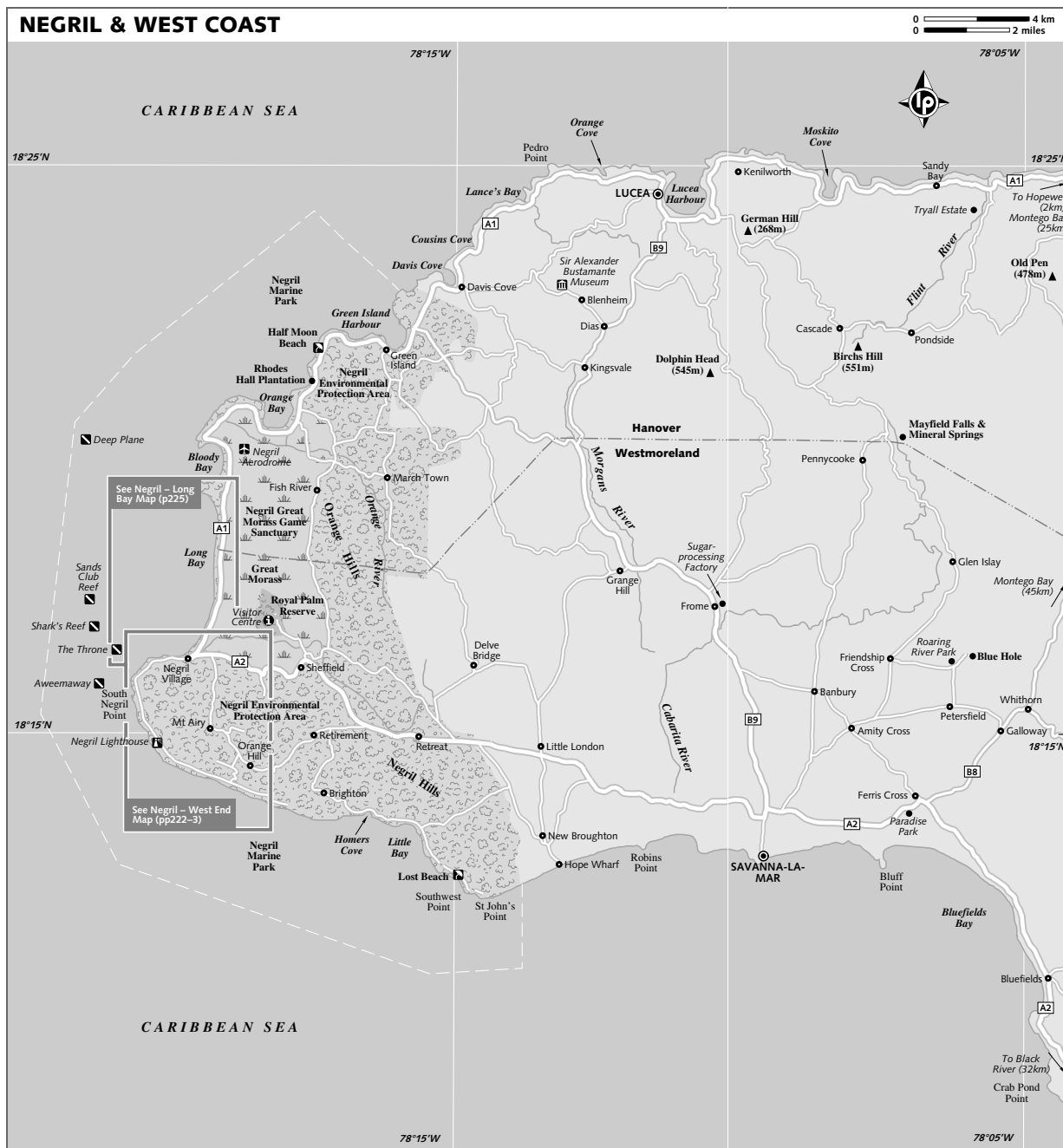
Negril’s innocence is long gone. The red-eyed hippies have been joined by neatly groomed youths who whiz about on rented motor scooters, often with a local lass or dreadlocked ‘Rent-a-Rasta’ (p284) clinging tightly behind. Today the area is roughly divided into two distinct areas with dissimilar personalities. Long Bay and its extended white-sand beach is brash and touristy while the West End, with its small boutique hotels and counterculture credentials, suggests a former flower child who now carries a laptop and platinum credit card.

In spite of Negril’s perhaps predictable evolution from a remote, sensual Eden to a big-money resort, the place remains Jamaica’s best destination for Dionysian revelry. Let your hair down, sample the local pleasures and let Jamaica happen around you.

## HISTORY

Only in 1959 was a road cut to Negril, launching the development of what was then a tiny fishing village. Electricity and telephones came later. The sleepy beachfront village soon became a popular holiday spot for Jamaicans. About the same time, hippies and backpackers from abroad began to appear. They roomed with local families or slept on the beach, partook of ganja and magic mushrooms, and generally gave Negril its laid-back reputation. In 1977 the first major resort – Negril Beach Village (later renamed Hedonism II) – opened its doors to a relatively affluent crowd seeking an uninhibited Club Med–style vacation. Tales of Hedonism’s toga parties and midnight nude volleyball games helped launch Negril to fame. By the mid-1980s Negril was in the throes of a full-scale tourism boom that continues today. (The early days of tourism in Negril are regaled in *Banana Shout*, a humorous novel by local hotelier Mark Conklin concerning the escapades of an American draft dodger who moves to Negril.)

This let-it-all-hang-out tradition still overflows during the March to April spring break when US college kids swarm for wet T-shirt



contests, drinking competitions and general party time.

Nonetheless, the resort has developed an active and environmentally conscious spirit under the guidance of expat residents, resulting in the creation of the Negril Marine Park within the Negril Environmental Protection Area. The park encompasses the shoreline, mangroves, offshore waters and coral reefs, and is divided into eight recreational zones. In 2001 the Chamber of Commerce adopted an environmental 'green' standard for hotels to adhere to. Recent projects include a new recycling center – a rarity in Jamaica.

## ORIENTATION

Negril is divided in two by the South Negril River, with Long Bay to the north and West End to the south. The apex is Negril Village, which lies immediately south of the river and is centered on a small roundabout from which Norman Manley Blvd leads north, West End Rd leads west, and Sheffield Rd goes east and becomes the A2, leading to Savanna-la-Mar, 30km away.

Long Bay and its blindingly white beach fringed by palms stretches north from the South Negril River. Water-sports concessions line the beach. By night this section comes to life with the blast of reggae from disco bars.

Long Bay is paralleled by Norman Manley Blvd, a two-lane highway about 100m inland from the beach. The road is lined with hotels, restaurants and food shacks for almost its entire length, except for a 1km section toward its northern end that has been set aside as Long Bay Beach Park, popular for nude bathing.

Long Bay is anchored to the north by the low rocky headland of Rutland Point. Beyond is a deeply scalloped cove, Bloody Bay, rimmed by a beautiful beach. Negril's upscale all-inclusive resorts are located here or on the north end of Long Bay.

Negril Village consists of some shopping plazas and a handful of banks and other commercial ventures, plus a few houses and shacks dispersed among the forested hills known as Red Ground.

A rocky limestone plateau rises south of the South Negril River and extends southward for several kilometers. The area is known as the West End or 'the Rock.' The coral clifftop is indented with coves good for swimming in crystal-clear azure waters, providing a dramatic setting for dozens of small hotels and

### 'CALICO' JACK'S LAST STAND

Before you park yourself on the sand, consider the plight of 'Calico' Jack Rackham, a pirate who dallied a little too long on the beach. In 1720 'Calico' Jack, so named for his fondness for calico underwear, and his buccaneers paused in Bloody Bay after a particularly satisfying plundering spree. He and his band of merry men got a little too merry on the local rum, and in the course of their beach party were taken unaware by the British navy, which overwhelmed them after a struggle worthy of the bay's name.

After the battle, the British were shocked to find that two of 'Calico' Jack's cohorts were actually women: Mary Read and Anne Bonney, who had been his mistress. Rackham was executed and his body suspended in an iron suit on what is now called Rackham Cay, at the harbor entrance at Port Royal, as an example to other pirates. The lives of Read and Bonney were spared because they claimed to be pregnant.

restaurants built atop the rock face. It was the setting for scenes from the movies *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *Papillon* and *Dr No*.

West End Rd snakes south along the cliff top (be careful walking – the road is narrow, with many blind corners and fast-moving vehicles). About 1km south, the road is renamed Lighthouse Rd and leads past Negril Lighthouse, beyond which its name changes again to Ocean Dr. Ocean Dr runs through scrubland for 3km to the junction with William Hogg Blvd, which runs inland over the Negril Hills, meeting up with Whitehall Rd and then dropping down to Sheffield Rd.

## INFORMATION

### Bookstores

**Top Spot** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4542; Sunshine Village, West End Rd) Well stocked with international publications.

### Emergency

**Fire emergency** (☎ 110, 957-4242)

**Medical emergency** (☎ 110)

**Police emergency** (☎ 119)

**Police station** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4268; Sheffield Rd)

### Internet Access

There are dozens of internet cafés; many also offer internet-based international calls.

**Blue Water Internet** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 884-6030; West End Rd; per 20min US\$1.50; ☎ 8am-11pm) Very hi-tech equipment, this cafe also serves delicious ice cream.

**Café Taino** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9813; www.cafetaino.com; Norman Manley Blvd; per 30min US\$1.75) Internet access and international phone calls.

**Easy Rock Internet Café** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0816; West End Rd; per hr US\$4) Offering an amiable café atmosphere; you can plug in your laptop and make international calls.

**Mi Yard** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4442; www.miyard.com; West End Rd; per 30min US\$1.75; ☎ 24hr) Mi Yard also hosts a lively Negril bulletin board on its website.

**Sunshine Internet Center** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4236; Sunshine Village, West End Rd; per hr US\$4) A businesslike alternative with card readers and disk burning.

### Internet Resources

**Chamber of Commerce** (www.negrilchamberofcommerce.com) Good information about community projects and green initiatives.

**Negril** (www.negril.com) Commercial site with numerous listings.

**Negril Jamaica** (www.negriljamaica.com) Operated by the Negril Resort Association.

**Negril Today** (www.negriltoday.com) Features reviews of hotels, restaurants and activities.

**Negril Message Board** (www.negril-message-board.com) A popular online meeting place.

### Laundry

**Fresh 'n' Nice Laundromat** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9494; Shop 1, Plaza de Negril)

**West End Cleaners** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0160) Behind Scotiabank.

### Libraries

**Library** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4917; West End Rd; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 1-5pm Thu)

### Medical Services

The nearest hospitals are in Savanna-la-Mar and Lucea.

**Long Bay Medical & Wellness Center** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9028; Norman Manley Blvd) General practice. Oya Ozcan (☎ 440-7071) is based here and does physical therapy and massage. She also speaks German.

**Negril Beach Medical Center** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4888; Norman Manley Blvd; ☎ 9am-5pm, doctors on call 24hr) Has a lab open 9:30am to 2pm Tuesday and Friday.

**Negril Health Centre** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4926; Sheffield Rd; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri) Government-operated.

**Negril Pharmacy** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4076; Plaza de Negril)

**Ocean View Pharmacy** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9599; King's Plaza, West End Rd)

### Money

Banks are open 9am to 2pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4pm Friday. There's an ATM on the north side of Plaza de Negril. While many hotels offer currency exchange, you'll get better rates at banks or a private enterprise. Avoid the black-market currency-exchange touts that hang out around Negril Square.

**Scotiabank** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4236; West End Rd) Northwest of Plaza de Negril; offers currency exchange and ATMs.

**Timetrend** (Map p225; ☎ 995-3242; Norman Manley Blvd) Private currency-exchange business.

**National Commercial Bank** (NCB; Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4117; Sunshine Village, West End Rd)

**Western Union** (Map pp222-3; Hi Lo Supermarket, Sunshine Village, West End Rd)

### Post

**Airpak Express** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5051; Negril Aerodrome) Handles UPS service.

**FedEx** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5533; Negril Aerodrome)

**Post office** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9654; West End Rd) Between A Fi Wi Plaza and King's Plaza.

### Telephone

There are public phones at the main craft market and at Plaza de Negril. Several internet cafés now offer internet-based international calls. Hotels charge roughly US\$2.50 for three minutes to the USA or Western Europe and US\$0.50 per minute locally.

**Cable & Wireless office** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 888-957-9700; shop 27, Plaza de Negril; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Public phones and WorldTalk cards.

### Tourist Offices

**Jamaica Tourist Board** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4803, 957-9314; Times Square Plaza, Norman Manley Blvd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Dispenses local maps and events information.

**Negril Chamber of Commerce** (NCC; Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4067; www.negrilchamberofcommerce.com; Sunshine Village, West End Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Publishes an annual *Negril Guide*. You can pick it up at hotels or at the NCC office west of the post office.

**Negril Marine Park Office** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3735) Behind the Negril Crafts Market at the south end of Norman Manley Blvd; can provide information on the marine park.

### Travel Agencies

**Advanced Travel Service** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4057; upstairs, Plaza de Negril)

**Caribic Vacations** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3309; Norman Manley Blvd)

**National Travel Service** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4343; Sunshine Village, West End Rd)

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

There are no particular problems in Negril that can't be encountered elsewhere in Jamaica, although in Negril they are multiplied, so a few reminders are in order. For more information on any of the subjects below, see p278.

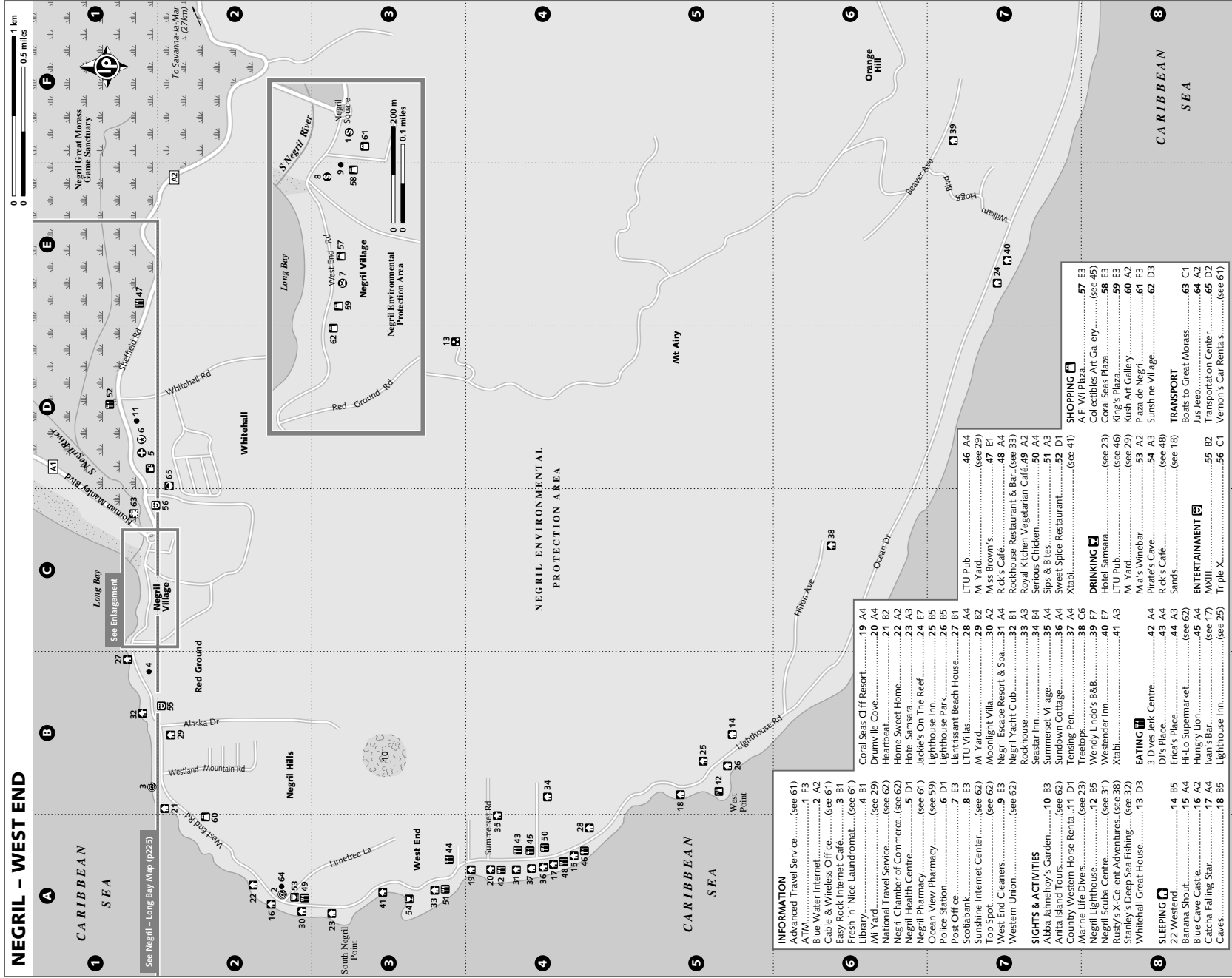
The hustlers who work the beach for a living will definitely want to establish a relationship with you, and you can expect to be endlessly offered everything from drugs to the hustlers themselves. Usually – but alas not always – you can shake them off with a firm 'not interested' or 'maybe on the way back,' if you know you're not passing back that way. Tourist police now patrol the beach but, by law, all Jamaican beaches must permit public access so the hustlers are free to roam. Some hotels post security guards on the beach but they're not always that effective.

Though ganja is smoked in plain view in Negril, undercover police agents are present and rarely a week goes by without one or more visitors being arrested. Tourists have been reported as suffering harmful side effects from ganja, especially from ganja cakes. This is also true of hallucinogenic wild mushrooms. Apparently drinking alcohol while on mushrooms can induce a 'bad trip' – and the same term may end up describing your vacation.

Prostitution is an established part of the local scene and short-term holiday liaisons are a staple. Female visitors should expect to hear a constant litany of well-honed lines enticing you to sample some 'Jamaican steel.'

Opportunistic theft occurs, especially of items left on the beach, as does burglary in budget and midrange properties. There have even been reports of tourists being robbed at gunpoint in their hotels; never open your hotel door to strangers without first ascertaining their identity. At night take a taxi rather than walk the dimly lit roads.

There are no sidewalks alongside West End Rd, so be careful when walking the road; traffic whips past pell-mell.



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 Jus Jeep... 64 A2  
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 Vernon's Car Rentals... (see 61)

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Triple X... 56 C1  
 Triple X... (see 25)

## SIGHTS

### Beaches

**Seven Mile Beach** (Map p225) – sometimes called Negril Beach – was initially touted on tourism posters as ‘seven miles of nothing but you and the sea.’ But the once-peaceful place that drew all those blissed-out sensualists in the early 1970s is now only a happy memory. As before, topless sunbathers lie half submerged on lounge chairs in the gentle surf, and the sweet smell of ganja smoke still perfumes the breeze, but otherwise the beach has changed in nearly every way. Today it’s a much livelier place with scores of restaurants, bars and nightspots and every conceivable water sport on offer. The swaying palms, clear waters and nearby coral reefs mean that the beach is still beautiful to behold – some contend that it’s the most beautiful in the Caribbean – but if you’re looking for solitude, look elsewhere.

More peaceful and far less crowded is **Long Bay Beach Park** (Map p225), north of Seven Mile Beach, where you’ll find more sugary sand and picnic tables plus changing rooms.

Another splendid option is **Bloody Bay Beach** (Map p225), with no facilities and few people, save for a few savvy travelers and a smattering of locals enjoying some repose away from the hubbub. There’s a jerk shack selling snacks and drinks.

If you prefer your water fun doled out in a theme-park, the 2-hectare **Kool Runnings Water Park** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5400; www.koolrunnings.com; Norman Manley Blvd; adult/child US\$28/19; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) offers 10 different rides, ranging from the 15m drop of the Jamaica Bobsled to the tranquil Rio Bueno Lazy River ride. Food is available at three restaurants, and children can be easily distracted at Captain Mikie’s Coconut Island.

## Negril Hills

This range of low-lying hills rises inland of Negril’s West End. The raised limestone upland is wild and smothered in brush. Tiny hamlets sprinkle the single road that provides access from Negril: Whitehall Rd leads south from Sheffield Rd to the hamlet of Orange Hill, swings east through the hills via the town of Retirement, and eventually links to the A2 for Savanna-la-Mar.

Seemingly a world away from the Negril strip, **Abba Jahnehoy’s Garden** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 371-4050, 578-9578) is a three-story meditation and

learning center that is poised on a hill, and offers a splendid panoramic view extending down to the sea. Solar powered and surrounded by a vegetable and root garden, the octagonal building is the work of Janhoi Jaja. He’s a gracious Rasta who is more than happy to discuss the ins and outs of Rastafarianism, or reggae or Negril’s development or the finer points of numerology (or all of the above) over bowls of his excellent homemade soup that is made from his garden’s produce. Getting there is half the fun, as the garden’s located at the end of a series of unmarked dirt roads: either take the Westland Mountain Rd to the top and then ask, or give Janhoi himself a call.

The only other site of note in the hills is **Whitehall Great House** (Map pp222-3), in ruins following a fire in 1985. The surrounding plantation grounds provide a stage for horseback rides. Don’t be fooled into paying US\$5 for a tour by the locals who hang out and attempt to attach themselves as self-described ‘guides.’

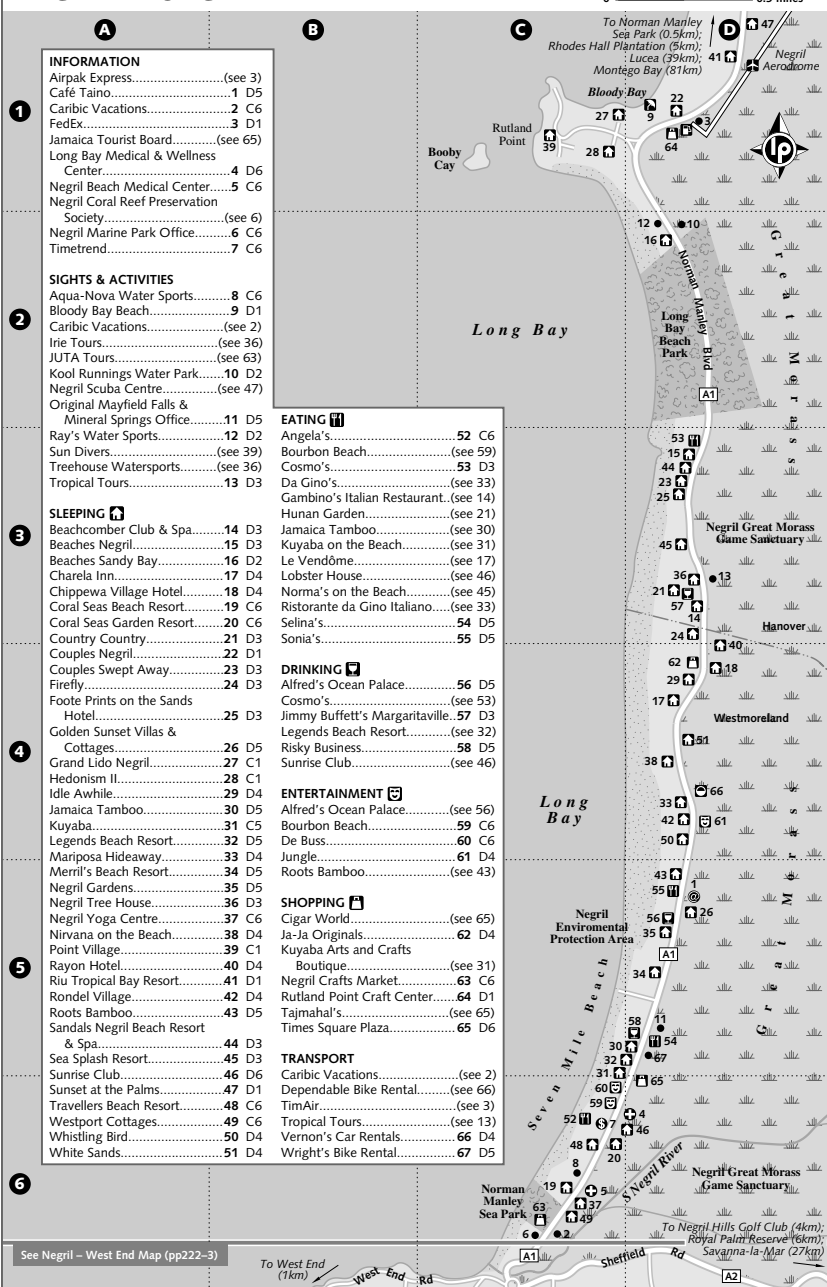
## Great Morass

This virtually impenetrable 3km-wide swamp of mangroves stretches 16km from the South Negril River to Orange Bay. The swamp is the island’s second-largest freshwater wetland system and forms a refuge for endangered waterfowl. American crocodiles still cling to life here and are occasionally seen at the mouth of the Orange River.

The Great Morass acts like a giant sponge filtering the waters flowing down to the ocean from the hills east of Negril, and is thereby a source of much-needed fresh water. Drainage channels cut into the swamp have lowered the water levels, and sewage and other pollutants have seeped into the region’s shallow water table, making their way to sea where they have poisoned the coral reefs and depleted fish stocks.

The easiest way to get a sense of the Great Morass is at the **Royal Palm Reserve** (Map pp218-19; ☎ 957-3115; www.royalpalmreserve.com; adult/child US\$10/5; ☎ 9am-6pm). Wooden boardwalks make a 1.5km loop around the reserve. Three distinct swamp forest types are present – the royal palm forest, buttonwood forest and bull thatch forest. They’re all home to butterflies galore as well as doctorbirds, herons, egrets, endangered black parakeets, Jamaican woodpeckers and countless other birds. Two

## NEGRIL – LONG BAY



### NEGRIL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREA

This protected wilderness zone extends from Green Island on the north coast to St John's Point (south of Negril) and inland to Fish River village and Orange Hills. It also includes a marine park extending out to sea. The intention is to protect the entire Negril watershed (the area drained by the Orange, Fish, Newfound, North Negril and South Negril Rivers), including the Great Morass swampland and all land areas that drain into the Caribbean between Green Island and St John's Point.

The Negril Environmental Protection Area (NEPA) was declared in November 1997, incorporating the Negril Marine Park and embracing uplands, morass, shoreline, offshore lagoon and reefs. The NEPA plan establishes guidelines for tourism growth, moratoriums on further cutting or draining of mangrove or wetland areas, the establishment of 'fish management zones', sewage systems for outlying communities and the reforestation of deforested areas. It also encourages hotels to maintain their beaches through the Blue Flag Award which they can be awarded if they meet the Blue Flag environmental outfit's strict criteria for water and beach quality as well as environmental management ([www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org)).

observation towers provide views over the tangled mangroves.

If you are driving, take Sheffield Rd east of the roundabout for 10 minutes and turn left after the golf course. Otherwise, local tour operators (p228) run trips to the reserve. To explore the Great Morass outside the Royal Palm Reserve, negotiate with villagers who have boats moored along the South Negril River (just north-east of Negril Village), or with fishermen at Norman Manley Sea Park, at the north end of Bloody Bay. It costs approximately US\$35 for two hours.

### Other Sights

**Booby Cay** (Map p225) is a small coral island 1km offshore from Rutland Point, which was used as a South Seas setting in the Walt Disney movie *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The island is named for the sea-birds – 'boobies' in local parlance – that make their nests here. Water-sports concessionaires can arrange boats for about US\$25 roundtrip.

The gleaming white, 20m-tall **Negril Lighthouse** (Map pp222-3; West End Rd; admission free; ☀ 9am-sunset), 5km south of Negril Village, illuminates the westernmost point of Jamaica, at 18° 15' north, 78° 23' west. The lighthouse, erected in 1894 with a prism made in Paris and originally powered by kerosene, is now solar powered and flashes every two seconds. Wilson Johnson, the superintendent, will gladly lead the way up the 103 stairs for a bird's-eye view of the coast.

### ACTIVITIES

#### Bicycling

The intense traffic along Norman Manley Blvd and West End Rd makes cycling a dicey proposition in town. The best place to ride is along Ocean Dr or in the Negril Hills, south-east of Negril.

**Rusty's X-Cellent Adventures** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0155; [rustynegril@hotmail.com](mailto:rustynegril@hotmail.com); Treetops, Hilton Ave; tours per person without/with bike rental US\$25/35) offers high-quality two- to four-hour mountain-bike tours into the Negril Hills. Exciting single-track routes follow goat paths to high ridges with awesome views; your guide provides casual instruction and commentary along the way. All equipment – bikes, helmets, water and accessories – is included. Tours begin and end at Treetops, where gnarly bikers can also find lodging. Reservations are required.

#### Golf

**Negril Hills Golf Club** (☎ 957-4638; [www.negrilhillsclub.com](http://www.negrilhillsclub.com); Sheffield Rd; green fee US\$58, club/cart rental US\$18/35, caddy US\$14; ⌚ 7:30am-4pm) An 18-hole par-72 course that borders the Great Morass, about 5km east of Negril. If you plop your ball in the water, forget it – the crocodiles will probably get to it first! Facilities here include a clubhouse, pro shop and restaurant.

#### Horseback Riding

**Country Western Horse Rental** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 955-7910; Sheffield Rd; rides US\$50; ⌚ 8am-5pm) is next to the police station. The route follows the coast and then continues into the Negril Hills.

**Rhodes Hall Plantation** (☎ 957-6883; [rhodes@cwjamaica.com](http://rhodes@cwjamaica.com); 2-hr rides incl hotel transfers US\$50-60), 5km

north of Negril at Green Island, offers rides through banana plantations and up into the hills; see p241.

### Sailing & Cruising

Several companies offer two- and three-hour excursions. Tours can be booked at most hotels. Most trips include snorkeling and plenty of booze, but don't mix the two!

**Wild Thing Watersports** (☎ 957-9930; [www.wildthingwatersportsnegril.com](http://www.wildthingwatersportsnegril.com)) Day cruises on a 45ft catamaran go to Rhodes Hall (US\$85; Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and Half Moon Bay (US\$60, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday). There are also daily sunset cruises to Rick's Café (US\$50). You'll find the boat at Chances restaurant on Negril Beach.

**Island Charters** (☎ 957-6163) Two party boats, *Sunsplash* and *Sunsation*, with adults-only cruises and fun cruises for kids.

Glass-bottom boat rides are a great way to see the fish life and coral if you don't want to get wet. There are several to choose from on Long Bay beach, including **Best Boat Reef Tours** (☎ 957-3357).

**Stanley's Deep Sea Fishing** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0667; [www.stanleysdeepsaefishing.com](http://www.stanleysdeepsaefishing.com); Negril Yacht Club) offers whale- and dolphin-watching cruises.

### Scuba Diving

Negril offers extensive offshore reefs and cliffs with grottoes, shallow reefs perfect for novice divers and mid-depth reefs right off the main beach at Long Bay. Clusters of dwarf tube sponges are a noteworthy feature. The West End offers caves and tunnels; its overhangs are popular for night dives. Hawksbill turtles are still quite common here.

Visibility often exceeds 30m and seas are dependably calm. Most dives are in 10m to 23m of water. (For more general scuba-diving information, see p53.)

There are several sites here that will be of interest for prospective divers. **Aweemaway** is a shallow reef area south of the Throne, and has tame stingrays. **Deep Plane** is the remains of a Cessna airplane lying at 21m underwater. Corals and sponges have taken up residence in and around the plane, attracting an abundance of fish, and nurse sharks hang out at a nearby overhang. **Sands Club Reef** lies in 10m of water in the middle of Long Bay. From here, a drift dive to **Shark's Reef** leads through tunnels and overhangs with huge sponges and gorgonian corals. **The Throne** is a 15m-wide cave with

massive sponges, plentiful soft corals, nurse sharks, octopuses, barracuda and stingrays.

Most all-inclusive resorts have scuba facilities. The following are among the companies offering PADI certification and introductory 'resort courses'.

**Marine Life Divers** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-3245; [www.mldiversnegril.com](http://www.mldiversnegril.com); Hotel Samsara, West End Rd; 1/2-tank dive US\$40/70) English- and German-speaking instructors.

**Negril Scuba Centre** ([www.negrilscuba.com](http://www.negrilscuba.com); 1/2-tank dive US\$40/70) Mariner's Negril Beach Club (☎ 957-4425, 957-9641; Norman Manley Blvd); Negril Escape Resort & Spa (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0392; West End Rd); Sunset at the Palms (Map p225; ☎ 383-9533; Bloody Bay Beach).

**Sun Divers** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4503; [www.sundiversnegril.com](http://www.sundiversnegril.com); Point Village; 1/2-tank dive US\$40/70) Many trips led by the charismatic Ansel Clarke.

### Snorkeling

Snorkeling is especially good at the southern end of Long Bay and off the West End. Expect to pay about US\$5 an hour for masks and fins from concession stands on the beach. Most of the scuba-diving providers offer snorkeling tours (about US\$25).

### Sport Fishing

The waters off Negril – teeming with tuna, blue marlin, wahoo and sailfish – provide some excellent action for sport-fishing enthusiasts. **Stanley's Deep Sea Fishing** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0667; [www.stanleysdeepsaefishing.com](http://www.stanleysdeepsaefishing.com); Negril Yacht Club) offers custom fishing-trip charters (US\$400/600/800 per half/three-quarter/full day for up to four people; for additional passengers add US\$50/75/100 per head).

For a more offbeat experience, head out into the briny with a local fisherman; ask around by the bridge over South Negril River, or talk to the fishermen near North Negril River.

### Water Sports

The waters off Negril are usually mirror-calm – ideal for all kinds of water sports. Numerous concessions along the beach rent jet skis (about US\$40 for 30 minutes), plus sea kayaks, sailboards and Sunfish (about US\$20 per hour). They also offer waterskiing (US\$25 for 30 minutes), glass-bottom boat rides (US\$15) and banana-boat rides (using an inflatable banana-shaped raft towed by a speedboat; US\$15).

Parasailing on Long Bay is offered by **Ray's Water Sports** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4349; [www.rayswatersportsnegril.com](http://www.rayswatersportsnegril.com)) at the north end of Long Bay,

### THE FRAGILE CORAL REEFS

Negril's offshore reefs have been severely damaged by the resort boom and human tinkering with the Great Morass. The percentage of live coral cover is now so low that further coral loss could seriously threaten the functioning of the entire ecosystem.

Reef restoration is an important part of the NEPA project (see the boxed text, p226). But nothing can be done to bring back the marine turtles that once favored the beach for nesting.

The **Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society** (NCRPS; ☎ 957-3735; <http://negril.com/nrcps>), located next to the Negril Crafts Market on Norman Manley Blvd, has established a code of conduct for snorkelers and scuba divers, including the following guidelines:

- Never touch corals; even slight contact can harm them.
- Select points of entry and exit to avoid walking on corals.
- Maintain a comfortable distance from the reef, so as to avoid contact.
- Stay horizontal in the water while you're near or above the reef.
- Move slowly and deliberately in the water – relax as you swim and take your time.
- Take nothing living or dead out of the water, except recent garbage which does not have living organisms on it.
- Never touch, handle or feed marine life except under expert guidance and following locally established guidelines.

**Aqua-Nova Water Sports** (p225; ☎ 957-4323; [www.negril.com/aquaa](http://www.negril.com/aquaa); Norman Manley Blvd) at Mariner's Beach Club and **Treehouse Watersports** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4893; Negril Tree House, Norman Manley Blvd).

### TOURS

Several tour operators offer a standard fare of excursions to the Black River Morass and Appleton Rum Estate (about US\$85) to the east in St Elizabeth parish, Mayfield Falls (US\$65) and Roaring River (US\$60).

**Anita Island Tours** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9946; Sunshine Village, West End Rd)

**Caribic Vacations** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3309; [caribicvacations.com](http://caribicvacations.com); Norman Manley Blvd) The largest operator. Also has tours to the Royal Palm Reserve.

**Clive's Transport Service** (☎ 956-2615; [www.dives.transportservicejamaica.com](http://www.dives.transportservicejamaica.com)) Offers reliable, comfortable tours islandwide and airport transfers (one to three people US\$50) in a nine-passenger minivan.

**Irie Tours** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3806; Negril Tree House, Norman Manley Blvd)

**JUTA Tours** (Map p225; Jamaican Union of Travelers Association; ☎ 957-9197; Negril Crafts Market, Norman Manley Blvd)

**Tropical Tours** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4110; [tropical@cwjamaica.com](http://tropical@cwjamaica.com); Norman Manley Blvd)

### FESTIVALS & EVENTS

#### January

**Jamaica Sprint Triathlon** (☎ 957-4061) Held at the Couples Swept Away resort's sports complex.

#### February

**Jamaica Beachfest** Starting in late February and now spanning six weeks to early April is Negril's famous spring-break celebration, featuring live music and plenty of booze. **Unleash the Tiger** (☎ 957-4005; The Jungle) A big concert in observance of Jamaican Carnival.

#### March & April

**Negril Ice Cream and Chocolate Festival** (☎ 957-3454) Easter Sunday and Monday.

**Negril Music Festival** (☎ 968-9356) Three-day reggae and calypso festival in March.

#### August & September

**Epicurean Escape** (☎ 518-5006; Grand Lido Negril) Seminars and tastings for foodies, from jerk to champagne.

#### December

**Reggae Marathon & Half-Marathon** (☎ 922-8677; [www.reggaemarathon.com](http://www.reggaemarathon.com)) Both a full- and a half-marathon with a musical soundtrack staged on Norman Manley Blvd.

### SLEEPING

In Negril more than any other resort town in Jamaica, travelers are spoiled for choice when it comes to accommodations. With rooms for all budgets – including a bountiful selection of quality economical choices – your pleasurable task is to pick the one that best suits your sensibilities. The large number of one-of-a-kind independent hotels has some visitors moving

from place to place over the course of their vacations, just for the fun of it.

In general beach properties are more expensive than hotels of equivalent standard in the West End. Unless otherwise noted, all 'Long Bay' beach hotels are on Norman Manley Blvd, and all 'West End' hotels are on the coast road, variously called West End Rd, Lighthouse Rd and Ocean Dr.

The hotels recommended here are listed by price range. Rates quoted are for winter (high season) unless otherwise noted. Summer (low season) rates can be 20% to 60% lower.

### Long Bay

#### BUDGET

**Westport Cottages** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4736, 307-5466; s/d US\$15/20) This offbeat place with a communal vibe on the roundabout end of Long Bay is extremely popular with the backpacking crowd. Owner Joseph Mathews says it's approved for 'smoke-friendly heartical people.' Joseph has 17 very rustic, somewhat stuffy huts with mosquito nets and fans. The well-kept bathrooms and cold showers are outside. Newer rooms to the rear are preferable. A communal kitchen is available, and bicycles (US\$5 per day) and snorkeling equipment (free!) are provided. Airport transfers are offered at a bargain (US\$5).

**Roots Bamboo** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4479; [www.rootsbamboo.com](http://www.rootsbamboo.com); camping per person US\$10, r US\$30; d with porch & shower US\$55, with air-con US\$70; ☼) This is a popular beachside option with 26 well-kept cabins right on the beach. Some have showers; others share a communal shower block with campers. There's a small beachside bar and restaurant with pool tables. If it's peace and solitude you seek, try another place; here there are regularly scheduled live reggae concerts and a perpetual party atmosphere.

**Golden Sunset Villas & Cottages** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4241, 957-9703; [www.thegoldensunset.com](http://www.thegoldensunset.com); s US\$35-75, d US\$45-86; ☼) Another longtime favorite of the budget crowd. It has 21 rustic cottages and 'economy' rooms with fan and cold water only, 'standard' rooms with hot water and fan, and 'superior' rooms with air-con and TV. All rooms share kitchenettes.

**Negril Yoga Centre** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4397; [www.negrilyoga.com](http://www.negrilyoga.com); d US\$46-75; ☼) The eight rustic yet atmospheric rooms and cottages – most with fridges and fans – surround an open-air, wood-floored, thatched yoga center set in a garden. Options range from a two-story,

Thai-style wooden cabin to an adobe farmer's cottage; all are pleasingly if modestly furnished. The staff make their own yogurt, cheese and sprouts, and cook meals on request. Naturally, yoga classes are offered (guests/visitors US\$10/15), as are massages (US\$60). There's a communal kitchen. This is a good option for women traveling alone and families with children.

**Travellers Beach Resort** (☎ 957-9308; [www.travellersresorts.com](http://www.travellersresorts.com); s US\$51-55, d US\$94-127, ste US\$190; ☎ ☼ ☼ ☼) Although overrun during spring break, Travellers is a real bargain the rest of the year. The 60-room family-owned resort features 14 bungalows, two suites and 39 simple rooms. There's a small water grotto and fish tanks in the lobby with a snapping turtle. The bar is lively and the beach restaurant serves excellent jerk chicken.

#### MIDRANGE

**Chippewa Village Hotel** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4676; [chippewavillageresort.com](http://chippewavillageresort.com); cottage d US\$55, studio US\$80, 1-2-/3-bedroom US\$140/180/200; ☼) This cheerful choice offers three octagonal studio units with screened porches and lofty ceilings and six one- to three-bedroom apartments. They are all rustic, rough-hewn affairs oozing a warm ambience, epitomized by American Southwest decor, throw rugs and tasteful fabrics. A small swimming pool under a shade canopy is inset in a wooden sundeck. There's a small restaurant and bar, with American home cooking (for guests only), plus a Jacuzzi, steam room and a viewing tower overlooking the Great Morass.

**Sunrise Club** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4293; [www.sunriseclub.com](http://www.sunriseclub.com); s/d US\$70/98, meal plans per person US\$22-38; ☎ ☼ ☼) Easing back onto the Great Morass, this gracious getaway is enhanced by its intimate aesthetic, with earth colors, natural hardwoods and creative architectural touches in American Southwest style. It has 15 rooms: older rooms to the rear are simply furnished but have neat bathrooms, while newer rooms feature blue mahoe furnishings. All have screened windows, fans and cable TV. It has a hip bar with a cosmopolitan clientele, and its outstanding Lobster House restaurant serves great breakfasts propelled by divine espresso.

**Kuyaba** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4318; [www.kuyaba.com](http://www.kuyaba.com); cottage US\$77, r US\$97, honeymoon ste US\$106) With considerable style, this tasteful family-run hotel offers six quaint rustic wooden cabins with filigree trim, done up in bright Caribbean

colors. There are also three deluxe rooms and a suite with king-sized bed upstairs in a handsome stone-and-timber house tastefully decorated with terra-cotta floors. The ecoconscious owners are gourmants and run the splendid Kuyaba on the Beach restaurant, attached to the property. There's also a well-stocked gift store and live music 7pm to 9pm nightly.

**White Sands** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4291; www.whitesandsjamaica.com; r US\$69-108, studio/villa US\$138/540; 🏠 🚿 🚿) Providing good bang for the buck, this attractive property offers simple yet elegant one-bedroom octagonal units with varied amenities, and an excellent four-bedroom, four-bathroom villa that sleeps eight people and has its own pool. There's also a pleasant, well-maintained garden and a parrot who recites dub poetry.

**Mariposa Hideaway** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4918; www.mariposahideaway.com; r US\$80-140, 2-bedroom apt US\$150; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This Italian-run hotel is a twee place. In addition to rooms there are excellent studios with kitchenettes, and a family-size apartment, all with cable TV and fridge. A great bonus here is the Ristorante da Gino Italiano, where the grappa starts flowing before noon.

**Rayon Hotel** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9166; www.rayonhotels.com; r US\$100-120, ste US\$140; 🏠 🚿 🚿 🚿) This spiffy complex opposite the beach is a well-run operation that covers all the bases. The superior rooms have four-poster beds, cathedral ceilings with fans and private balconies; there are also suites with full kitchens. Facilities include a beauty salon offering massage, a pool bar and a tennis court.

**Jamaica Bamboo** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4282; www.jamaicatamboonegril.com; r US\$95, 1-1/2-bedroom cottage US\$125; 🏠 🚿 🚿) Featuring modestly furnished hardwood structures and a happening beachside bar and restaurant, this recently updated option has 22 rooms with balconies, two simple one-bedroom cottages plus a two-bedroom cottage with kitchenette.

**Sea Splash Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 876-957-4041, 800-254-2786; www.seasplash.com; r US\$120-156, ste US\$180-204; 🏠 🚿 🚿) At this elegant resort the suites are tastefully appointed, each with large balcony, fully equipped kitchenette, screened-off bedroom and plenty of amenities. There is a handsome beach bar, and guests gain access to the facilities at the nearby Couples Swept Away resort. Sea Splash is also home to Norma's on the Beach (p236), one of the best restaurants in Negril.

**Merril's Beach Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4751; www.merrilsbeach.com; per person gardenside tr/d/s US\$60/75/90, per person beachside tr/d/s US\$ 88/103/124; 🏠 🚿 🚿) A short distance from Negril Gardens, this attractive place has 28 rooms in a two-story unit in lush landscaped grounds. All rooms have verandas. It offers water sports and a beach bar, and is popular with European tour groups. The beach here has been accorded the prestigious Blue Flag award for Merrill's attention to the environment.

**Coral Seas Beach Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9226, in the USA ☎ 800-223-6510; www.coralseasnegril.com; r US\$90-120, studio US\$125, apt US\$95-140; 🏠 🚿) This well-run option is a sequestered beachside place in a garden of bamboo and hibiscus. You can choose from rooms with verandas, fully equipped apartments, two honeymoon suites or cliff-top units. The pool has a bar. Coral Seas Garden Resort, a sister property, is across the street and has rooms of a similar standard and price.

**Legends Beach Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3834; www.visitnegril.com/legends; d US\$110-125, tr US\$125-140; 🏠 🚿 🚿 🚿) This beachfront resort offers 49 gleaming white rooms with basic furnishings that include ceiling fans, two double beds and balconies or verandas. Higher-priced rooms face the beach. There are two pools plus a lively restaurant and sports bar; reggae shows are staged on Tuesday and Friday night.

**our pick Rondel Village** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4413; www.rondelvillage.com; d US\$95-150, 1-1/2-bedroom villa US\$210/245; 🏠 🚿 🚿) Highly affable and efficient hotel whose Green Globe Certification attests to its commitment to preserving the environment. Graced by walkways lined with an array of indigenous fruit trees, the family-owned Village offers well-appointed studios and beachfront rooms clustered around a small pool and Jacuzzi. You can also choose octagonal one- and two-bedroom villas that sleep up to six and feature marble floors, French doors, satellite TV, DVD and CD players, fully equipped kitchenettes and Jacuzzi. It has a seafood restaurant and a popular bar, Irie on the Beach.

#### TOP END

**Country Country** (Map p225; ☎ 876-957-4273; www.countrynegril.com; cottages US\$165-185; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This color-crazy charmer has that mellow Negril vibe down cold. On offer are 14 air-con wooden cottages with gingerbread trim and fretwork; pastels dominate and lend a chic warmth.

Some have king-sized beds and separate sitting areas.

**Idle Awhile** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9566, 877-243-5352; www.idleawhile.com; r US\$190, ste US\$230-305; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This exquisite boutique hotel is highly recommended for its eight airy, delightfully appointed rooms and five suites with contemporary vogue and tropical decor. There's a wireless network, and guests are allowed free access to Couples Swept Away's sport complex (p232). Snacks, seafood, Jamaican dishes and fresh juices are served beachside beneath umbrellas.

**Firefly** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4358; www.jamaicalink.com; studio/cottage US\$137/175, ste US\$180-200, apt US\$176-255; 🏠 🚿 🚿) A refined choice where nudists dwell in style, Firefly offers four handsome, all-hardwood cottages, plus one-bedroom studios, apartments and penthouse suites. Each is different but all have kitchenettes and verandas. There's a Jacuzzi, and guests get free access to Couples Swept Away's facilities.

**Beachcomber Club & Spa** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4170; www.beachcomberclub.com; r US\$150-175, 1-bedroom apt US\$220, 2-bedroom apt US\$350-375; 🏠 🚿 🚿) Operating with crisp efficiency, this handsome 45-room hotel has an open-air beachside restaurant, Gambino's, plus a nightly entertainment schedule, tennis and water sports. All rooms are well furnished, with ceiling fans, telephone and satellite TV; suites and apartments have kitchenettes.

**Footprints on the Sands Hotel** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4300; www.footprintsotel.com; s US\$135-145, d US\$165; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This family-run hotel on the beach offers 30 rooms, studios (with kitchenettes) and some two-bedroom apartments with TV, telephone and safe. Some have ceiling fans and most have balconies. Facilities include an onsite restaurant and bar, Jacuzzi, tour desk, water sports and excursions.

**Negril Tree House** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4287; www.negril-treehouse.com; r US\$150-170, ste US\$275-350; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This unpretentious resort is a favorite for its 16 octagonal bungalows and oceanfront villas nudging pleasingly up to the beach. Each has a TV and a safe. More elegant one- and two-bedroom suites each feature kitchenette, king-sized bed and a Murphy bed in the lounge, which opens onto a wide veranda. The beachside bar is popular. Water sports are offered, and the resort has a tour desk, gift store, masseuse and manicurist.

**Charela Inn** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4277; www.charela.com; s US\$155-186, d US\$174-212, tr US\$218; 🏠 🚿 🚿 🚿)

Run by a Jamaican-French couple, Daniel and Sylvie, this engaging spot resembles a Spanish hacienda and surrounds a courtyard. The 49 rooms feature contemporary decor with lots of hardwood, plus ceiling fans, hair-dryers, telephones and balconies or patios. The onsite Le Vendôme restaurant is one of the finest on Negril.

**Nirvana on the Beach** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4314, in the USA 716-789-5955; www.nirvananegril.com; d cottage US\$190-205, ste US\$210-225) The place to stay if you're seeking meditation, with one-, two- and three-bedroom cottages set in Zen-like tropical gardens. Each all-hardwood cabin has a king-sized bed, dining room, kitchen and screened wraparound windows. Meals prepared on request.

**Whistling Bird** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4403, in the USA 303-442-0722; www.negriljamaica.com/whistlingbird; s/d/tr US\$140/210/315, all-inclusive per person per day from US\$125; 🏠 🚿 🚿) Similar to Nirvana, this family-run place has 24 rooms in bungalows and cottages with wood-accented decor and wicker furniture. Each is equipped with phone and cable TV. It's low-key and a great place to relax beneath shady bamboo. It has a restaurant and beach bar.

**Negril Gardens** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4408, in the USA 305-284-1300, in the UK 0207-259-1840; www.negrilgardens.com; gardenside s/d/tr US\$126/142/173, beachside s/d/tr US\$147/163/184; 🏠 🚿 🚿) This conscientious resort proudly displays its Green Globe certification, offering 65 nicely appointed rooms in gaily colored two-story cottages with balconies. Garden-view rooms are situated across the road.

#### ALL-INCLUSIVES

Prices quoted below are for three nights, all-inclusive double occupancy during the high season (December 15 to April 15); low-season rates can be considerably lower. Rates presented are guidelines; they vary considerably depending on the source of booking, season and current specials. See p275 for general information about all-inclusive resorts in Jamaica.

**Point Village** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5170; www.pointvillage.com; d US\$960-1020 ste US\$1110-1380; 🏠 🚿 🚿) A family-friendly hotel at Rutland Point, with 175 recently refurbished one- to three-bedroom suites with kitchens in Mediterranean-style limestone villas scattered through 6 hectares. The hotel's wave-pounded shoreline holds pocket-sized beaches (one for nudists)



and cooling pools cut into the coral. Water sports, picnic trips to Booby Cay and guided bicycle rides are included.

**Sunset at the Palms** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5350; www.sunsetatthepalms.com; d US\$1500-2100, ste US\$1275-1800; ☎ ☎) An ecoconscious resort with heaps of jungle atmosphere. It has 86 all-hardwood, Thai-style cabins raised on stilts amid lush grounds full of croaking tree frogs. Interior decor features leather sofas and Chinese rugs. Superior rooms have TV; all rooms have safes. Facilities include a fitness center and tennis court plus games room, Jacuzzi, swim-up bar and romantic restaurant serving top-notch cuisine. A path leads to the beach.

**Sandals Negril Beach Resort & Spa** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5216; www.sandals.com; d US\$1000-1250; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A tasteful couples-only resort, this 8-hectare deluxe property sprawls over wide lawns trimmed to perfection. At its node is a huge pool with swim-up bar abuzz with happy guests. There are 227 rooms in six categories, including exquisite honeymoon suites in gracious cottages with Edwardian decoration, plus villa-suites with loft bedrooms and marble bathrooms.

**Hedonism II** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5070; www.superclubs.com/brand\_hedonism; d US\$925-1975; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Famous for its risqué attitude and weekly lingerie parties (and notorious for its sheer tackiness), this adults-only resort has 280 rooms and suites with mirrored ceilings. Sadly, the strange retro decor is somewhat of a turn-off. There are two fine beaches – one for nudes and the other for ‘prudes,’ a rock-climbing wall, ice-skating rink and, of course, a disco (inset with glass-bottomed Jacuzzi in the roof). Guests include many more single males than females; a third female in a group stays free.

**Riu Tropical Bay Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5900; www.riu.com; d US\$1464-1794; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This 420-room behemoth offers good value for the budget-minded crowd. Room decor is tastefully contemporary, featuring Caribbean pastels. The rooms have satellite TV, in-room safes and minibars. The resort features a nude beach section, a full array of water sports, fitness center and spa, tennis courts, volleyball courts, disco and a selection of restaurants and entertainment.

**Couples Swept Away** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4061; www.couples.com; d US\$1600-2150; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A magnificent all-inclusive, adults-only resort that boasts the island’s best-equipped sports

and fitness facility. Pathways coil through an 8-hectare botanical rush-hour of ferns and heliconias to the 134 suites, which are housed in 26 two-story villas and boast terra-cotta tile floors, deep-red hardwoods and vast louvered windows. Free golf at Negril Hills Golf Club is included.

**Couples Negril** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5960; www.couples.com; d US\$1550-2950; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This attractive property boasts classy contemporary decor that the company terms ‘Negril Chic.’ The lobby opens over a wide pool at the heart of the 7-hectare resort. The 216 rooms are pleasingly hip, appointed with richly colored fabrics, iridescent curtains, dark bamboo and oh-so-chic furniture. The suites have a vast bathroom with Jacuzzi and his-and-hers sinks. The beach on Bloody Bay has been accorded the prestigious Blue Flag award for its environmentally sound upkeep.

**Beaches Sandy Bay** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5100; www.beaches.com; d US\$1650-1850; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Another spiffy property, this family-friendly option on about 3 hectares includes 130 attractive rooms in three-story accommodations blocks and villas. On offer are also suites and one-bedroom villas. Children and teens are offered a games room and organized activities, including beach volleyball.

**Grand Lido Negril** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5010; www.grandlido.com; d US\$1780-2900; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Boasting Mediterranean flair, this sprawling property is the flagship of the SuperClubs chain. The 210 spacious, tastefully furnished suites and split-level junior suites (some with whirlpool) with mezzanine bedrooms are spread through 9 hectares of gardens, which feature nine bars, including three 24-hour bars with Jacuzzis. Take your pick of several restaurants. A full range of water sports is offered, as are cruises aboard *M/Y Zien*, a 147ft motor yacht that was a wedding gift to Prince Rainer and Grace Kelly from Aristotle Onassis.

**Beaches Negril** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9270; www.beaches.com; d US\$2000-2750, ste US\$2940-6390; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Another impressive Sandals all-inclusive resort, this one caters to families, singles and couples. It loosely resembles a castle, with thick limestone walls, wrought-iron furniture and lanterns. It has 215 rooms, including 39 junior suite buildings in quasi-Spanish hacienda style. It has a gigantic pool and plenty of facilities for kids. Guests get access to Sandals Negril (left).

## West End BUDGET

**Treetops** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0155, 866-4592; tobynegril@hotmail.com; Hilton Ave; dm US\$15, d US\$45; ☎) This special house – some might call it a castle – is the creation of Rusty Jones of Rusty’s X-Cellent Adventures, Negril’s premier mountain-biking haven. As such, you can expect to find muddy, gnarly bikers and other agreeable sorts bunking here. There are four rooms with double beds and one with bunks; each is fan-cooled and equipped with mosquito netting with screened windows. Hammocks abound. There’s a communal kitchen and a truly rad roof deck with sweeping views over the Negril Hills. A housekeeper comes daily and can cook meals on request.

**Lighthouse Park** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0252; sef@cwjamaica.com; cabins/cottages US\$45/120) This old favorite south of the lighthouse suffered a body blow from Hurricane Ivan and all of the bamboo-and-thatch cabins succumbed to the elements. With great resilience, the owners have restored the property with two wood-and-concrete cottages with private bathrooms and verandas. There’s also an apartment suite with kitchenette and two rooms. All the accommodations are charming and comfortable, perched on the cliff affording excellent sea views. The place draws rootsy artist types and enjoys frequent repeat customers. Prices are negotiable.

**Lighthouse Inn** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4052; cottages s/d/q US\$35/50/60) Four six-person cottages with kitchenettes, solar-heated water, louvered windows and wicker furniture. It has a free beach shuttle, plus a restaurant offering candlelit dining.

**22 Westend** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 898-6349; d/tr US\$40/55) For a homey experience this friendly and accommodating little guest house near the lighthouse has two bedrooms fan-cooled with cross ventilation, shared bath, alfresco shower and communal kitchen. The live-in owner cooks with organic veggies from the garden. It’s good for groups; each room can hold three people.

**Mi Yard** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4442; www.miyard.com; s/d/tr US\$50/60/70; ☎ ☎) With 24/7 internet access and yummy meals served till all hours, this agreeable little place offers four simple, clean, albeit somewhat dark, tiled rooms – two have air-con – and two no-frills yet charming wooden Caribbean-style cottages with balconies.

**Negril Yacht Club** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9224; www.negrilyacht.com; r US\$55-70) Not really a yacht club, this waterfront hotel offers 16 no-frills rooms with fans and cable TV. The open-air bar features the cheapest beer in town. It’s a little timeworn, but boasts a semi-private beach, an anomaly on the West End.

**Summerset Village** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4409; www.summersetvillage.net; Summerset Rd; r US\$40-50, 1-/2-bedroom cottage US\$40/80, Thatch House US\$200; ☎ ☎) Set about 300m inland on 3 hectares of landscaped grounds, this property offers casual seclusion. In addition to standard rooms, there are 10 air-con ‘superior’ rooms in a condo-style unit; eight rooms in a ‘chateau’; one- and two-bedroom octagonal cottages; and a five-bedroom ‘Thatch House’ with a suite and kitchen, which can also be rented by the room. Summerset offers a shuttle to the beach. There’s a restaurant and bar.

**LTU Villas** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0382; www.negril.com/tu/villas; villas with/without air-con US\$65/50; ☎ ☎) A tremendous bargain on the West End with 10 spacious, pleasant rooms with fridges, ceiling fans and cable TV. Each is tastefully furnished with two double beds and comfortable wicker couches and chairs. The upstairs rooms with dark wood cathedral ceilings are preferred. Most guests quickly fall into the habit of taking their meals at LTU Pub (p238).

**Wendy Lindo’s B&B** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 804-2600; wendybbja@hotmail.com; Beaver Ave; d incl breakfast US\$70) Another terrific bargain, this quaint guest house can be found about 9km south of Negril off William Hogg Blvd. Wendy, an expat from the Isles of Scilly, offers three rooms (two share a bath) in her charming house – a little piece of England built atop a coral outcrop with ocean views. Her cottage is full of antiques, cozy couches and porcelain china. The clean, airy rooms have private patios, ceiling fans, screened windows and hot water. Wendy’s husband, John, offers a taxi service and island tours. There is a two-night minimum stay.

## MIDRANGE

**Heartbeat** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4329; www.heartbeatjamaica.com; studio US\$44-95, duplex cottage US\$55-110, house US\$147; ☎ ☎) A peaceful and delightful option on the top of the cliffs with thatched, all-hardwood octagonal cabins on pillars. You can also choose from self-sufficient studio apartments, a house sleeping eight and an attractively priced duplex cottage. They

capture lots of light and have terraces. Some of the units have kitchenettes.

**our pick** **Banana Shout** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0384; www.bananashout.com; 1-1/2-4-person cabins US\$80/150/200; P) Occupying a particularly choice bit of cliff-top turf, these cheerful green and orange cabins perched over the sea are offbeat and homey. Tastefully decorated with Jamaican and Haitian art, each has a ceiling fan, hammocks and kitchenette. Step outside to a dramatic stairway descending to a sea cave with sundeck and freshwater shower. Two of the cabins include loft bedrooms; one can accommodate up to six people.

**Blue Cave Castle** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4845; www.bluecavecastle.com; s/d US\$75/120; P) Providing perhaps the best view of Long Bay from the West End, this atmospheric, all-stone concoction attracts nudists, travel junkies and free thinkers. The 14 bedrooms are cave-like, but in a good way. Each is equipped with a CD player, ceiling fan and refrigerator; tower rooms open to the sea and superior rooms include air-con and cable TV. Stairs from the castle lead down to a blue cave.

**Seastar Inn** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0553; www.seastarinn.com; s/d US\$69/129; P) This peaceful modern place is run by a charming Canadian-Jamaican couple. It offers deluxe studio apartments with satellite TV, coffeemakers and safes. It has a restaurant and swim-up bar in the lush garden, plus a free beach shuttle and bicycles for rent (US\$8/30 per hour/day). Cell phones are provided for guests and rates include breakfast.

**Sundown Cottage** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 361-1401, 990-9125; cottage US\$80) This beguiling cottage adjacent to Tensing Pen is an ideal private spot for the couple seeking to get a groove on. A veritable home away from home, the fan-cooled one-bedroom nest has a kitchenette and sundeck, and a cheerful ambience colored by pastels. Tremendous value.

**Moonlight Villa** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4838; www.moonlightvilla.com; s/d/tr US\$80/100/120; P) This unheralded gem offers bright, spacious, exceedingly pleasant rooms with wide doors opening to glorious sea views. Each has cable TV, coffeemaker, ceiling fan, and a double and single bed. From a wide sunny veranda a stairway descends to the sea.

**Xtabi** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0120; www.xtabi-negril.com; r US\$83-90, cottages US\$210, extra person US\$25; P) This chic and casual hotel bills itself as 'the meeting place of the gods.'

Its clientele is decidedly human, but the setting is truly divine. You can choose from rooms, simple garden cottages or quaint octagonal seafront bungalows perched atop the cliff. They're pleasingly appointed, if nothing fancy. The bar is lively and the restaurant appealing. It has sunning platforms built into the cliff. Children under the age of 15 are free. Massage is offered (US\$40 per hour).

**Home Sweet Home** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4478, in the USA 800-925-7418; www.homesweethomeeresort.com; r US\$110, ste US\$175-\$250, penthouse US\$225; ☎) Yet another cliffhanger with 12 rooms plus two suites, all with private balconies, fans and private showers. It features a cliff-top bar and restaurant, a Jacuzzi and multi-tiered sun-decks overlooking the teal-blue waters.

**Hotel Samsara** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4395; www.negrilhotels.com/samsara; r US\$85-95, pillar house US\$110; ☎) This popular option offers 50 modestly furnished rooms (some with air-con) and cottages, plus charming huts on stone pillars near the water's edge. A PADI scuba-diving center with multilingual dive masters is also on site (see p227). The bar hosts a daily sunset happy hour and occasional live concerts on the sundeck. An all-inclusive plan is available.

**Coral Seas Cliff Resort** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-3147, www.coralseasnegril.com; s/d US\$70/60, studio s/d US\$70/80; ☎) These elegant villas with nicely furnished rooms and cable TV have less personality than their West End counterparts, but overall it's a well-run operation offering a high degree of comfort. The airy restaurant and bar are in well-tended grounds.

**Drumville Cove** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4369; www.negril.com/dcmain; r with/without air-con US\$75/65, cabin US\$75; ☎) Its 14 rooms are cramped but clean and romantic, and the property is dramatically landscaped. There are also three cozy cabins, each with four beds (two in a loft) and a kitchenette. Drumville also boasts two pools, one saltwater.

**Westender Inn** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4991; www.westenderinn.com; r/ste/villa US\$69/99/119; P) Near the junction with William Hogg Blvd, this old-timer has been given a welcome refurbishing. It offers 13 clean, well-appointed self-catering units set in handsome grounds. Rooms are adequately appointed and have patios with hammocks. A suite has a kitchenette, TV and Jacuzzi. There's a small beach as well as a bar and restaurant.

## TOP END

**Catcha Falling Star** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0390; www.catchajamaica.com; 1-1/2-bedroom cottage US\$135/250; P) In the inimitable West End style, these pleasant fan-cooled cottages – including several with two bedrooms – sit on the cliffs. Each is named for an astrological sign and comes with microwave oven, fridge, bar and double beds draped in mosquito netting. Breakfast is delivered to your veranda and is included in the rates; other meals by request. A tiered cliff affords easy access to the sea, where clothing-optional bathing can be enjoyed in a private cove. Popular masseuse Oya Oezcan offers her services here (US\$70 per hour).

**Rockhouse** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4373; www.rockhousehotel.com; r/studio/villa US\$150/175/325; P) One of the West End's most beautiful and well-run hotels, with 13 thatched rondavels (two are 'premium villas') of pine and stone, plus 15 studios dramatically clinging to the cliffside above a small cove. Decor is basic yet romantic, with net-draped poster beds and strong Caribbean colors. Each cabin has a ceiling fan, refrigerator, safe, minibar, alfresco shower and wraparound veranda. Catwalks lead over the rocks to an open-sided, multi-level dining pavilion (with one of the best restaurants around; p238) overhanging the ocean. A dramatically designed pool sits atop the cliffs. Spa services, massage (US\$70 per hour) and daily yoga classes (US\$20) are offered. In the lounge there's a projection screen where Jamaican films are frequently shown.

**Negril Escape Resort & Spa** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0392; www.negrilescapes.com; s US\$170-290, d US\$180-300, tr US\$220-340, ste US\$ 490-580; P) The 10 spacious cottages here are named and decorated with a different 'ethnic' theme: Romancing the Kasbah, with its Arabian-style pillows and terra-cotta accents, suggests Morocco; the paper lanterns and bamboo blinds of Oriental Express hint at the Far East; Atlantis features mermaids on its murals. A hopping bar and an onsite branch of the Negril Scuba Centre round out the property.

**Tensing Pen** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0387; www.tensingpen.com; cottages US\$295-539, per week US\$960-3060) Among the more acclaimed places is this tranquil, reclusive option with 12 thatched cottages on a hectare of land. Most are 'pillar houses' – an architectural style that has come to be associated with the West End – perched above the coral cliffs in natural gardens. All have exquisite bamboo and hardwood details,

though otherwise rooms differ markedly in decor. Each cottage is equipped with a fridge. Guests take meals – perhaps Negril's best cuisine – in an extravagant structure inspired by the architecture of South African hunting lodges. Continental breakfast is included in the rates.

**Llantrissant Beach House** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4259, 305-321-7458, in the USA 800-331-6951; www.beachcliff.com; 1-11 people US\$530-600; P) One of the more charming options, this century-old two-story, four-bedroom home rests on a point near the roundabout. The vintage house – simply yet exquisitely furnished, with ceiling fans and louvered windows – comes fully staffed and includes satellite TV, stereo and fax access. A tennis court and two private beaches enhance the experience. Rates are calculated based on overall occupancy.

**Jackie's on the Reef** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4997, in the USA 718-469-2785; www.jackiesonthereef.com; r or cottage per person US\$175; ☎) This tranquil option is 11 km south of the Negril roundabout, just north of the intersection with William Hogg Blvd. It operates as a New Age haven focusing on spiritual renewal. A natural stone 'temple' is divided into four rooms, each with two handmade wooden beds and an outdoor shower and bathroom enclosed within your own private backyard. Massages are given on a veranda, and meditation, tai chi and spa treatments are offered. There's a small cooling pool set in the reef top. The facility is more rustic than the rates might suggest. Rates include breakfast, dinner and exercise class. Day packages (lunch and massage) are offered to nonguests.

**our pick** **Caves** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0269, in the USA 800-688-7678, in the UK 0800-688-76781; www.thecavesresort.com; 3 nights all-inclusive cottage US\$1995-2085; P) Perhaps the finest boutique hotel in Jamaica, and one beloved of the Hollywood elite (some of whom are helicoptered in), the Caves offers 10 handcrafted, individually styled one- and two-bedroom wood-and-thatch cottages set in lush gardens above the cave-riddled cliffs. Rooms feature exquisite hand-carved furniture, batik fabrics, one-of-a-kind art, CD player with CDs, plus ceiling fans and mosquito nets over the king- or queen-sized beds. Many have exquisite outside showers. Paths wind down to a free-form Jacuzzi studding the rock face, and then to a cave with molded benches where you can meditate to the reverberations of the waves

(or have dinner if you order a day in advance). There's also a sauna, plus an Aveda spa. Rates include all meals and self-service bar.

## EATING

Negril has more eclectic dining options than anywhere else in Jamaica. A surplus of rustic eateries along Long Bay and on the coast road around West End offer budget snacks and meals. Some food stands have no access to running water – take all commonsense health precautions. Unless otherwise noted, all 'Long Bay' restaurants are on Norman Manley Blvd and all 'West End' eateries are on the coast road, variously West End Rd, Lighthouse Rd and Ocean Dr.

Local delicacies (besides hallucinogenic mushroom omelettes and ganja muffins) include crab pickled in red peppers. Easier to find is pasta, pizza and plenty of good vegetarian (I-tal) fare.

A fully stocked grocery store in Negril Village is the **Hi-Lo Supermarket** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4546), to the rear of Sunshine Village. Small grocery stalls dot Norman Manley Blvd; the best of several small groceries along West End Rd is **DJ's Place** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0943).

## Long Bay BUDGET

**Sonia's** (Map p225; mains US\$4-12; ☎ 5:30am until 'anytime') Serving Miss Sonia's unique patties with fillings ranging from ackee and veggies to chicken and lobster.

**Bourbon Beach** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4405; mains US\$2-7) Though it's best known for its live reggae concerts, those in the know swear by its jerk chicken. The sauce is thick and paste-like, and well complemented by a Red Stripe as you wait for a show.

**Selina's** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9519; mains US\$5-12; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An outstanding breakfast spot that enjoys many repeat customers for the callaloo and cheese omelettes, banana pancakes, killer smoothies and hand-roasted coffee. The lunch menu features salads and burgers, though the *pièce de résistance* is the cheese-and-vegetable quesadilla. Sundays see a jazz band that draws a mixed crowd of locals and visitors.

## MIDRANGE

**Our pick! Lobster House** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4293; Sunrise Club; mains US\$8-22; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Renowned for its pink gnocchi in a parme-

san cream and its signature lobster dishes, this congenial outdoor spot's brick oven has brought it the status of best pizzeria in town – if you need proof, try the Queen Aragosta pizza with lobster tails. Many, however, come for a cup of what is arguably the best espresso on the island, made from the proprietor's vintage 1961 Faema espresso machine.

**Cosmo's** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4784; mains US\$5-18; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A steadfast beach favorite with three thatched bars and dining areas near Long Bay Beach Park. Conch is the specialty here, whether steamed, curried or anchoring a hearty soup. Your host, Cosmo Brown, is also universally saluted for the pot of curried goat or oxtail that is perpetually simmering on the back burner.

**Jamaica Tamboo** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4282; mains US\$6-24; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Near Kuyaba, this is a bamboo-and-thatch two-story restaurant (lit by brass lanterns at night) with a varied menu that includes a breakfast of 'pigs in a blanket' (pancakes and sausage) and a fruit platter with ice cream. It also has snack foods such as deep-fried lobster niblets, sandwiches and pizzas.

**Da Gino's** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4918; Mariposa Hideaway; mains US\$14-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Host Gino Travaini proudly serves fresh pasta and homemade bread plus delectable Italian fare in a secluded beachside garden setting with four open pavilions. Specialties include seafood linguine, scaloppini and lobster. Reservations recommended.

**Angela's** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9793; Bar-B-Barn Hotel; mains US\$8-14; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This upstairs restaurant with a veranda overlooking a slice of the beach features excellent Italian food from a menu divided into pizza, pasta, salad, chicken and fish. Among the highlights are the pollo marsala, jerk salmon and lobster *fra diavolo*.

**Hunan Garden** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4369; Country Country; mains US\$6-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) For a filling meal, head to this candlelit option serving a wide selection of Chinese dishes such as sliced duck with ginger and scallion. Call ahead for takeout.

## TOP END

**Norma's on the Beach** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4041; Sea Splash Resort; mains US\$13-28; ☎ dinner) The Negril branch of Norma Shirley's celebrated Jamaican culinary empire, this Norma's seems to have escaped the hype surrounding her Kingston

flagship. The 'new world Caribbean' food at this stylish beach restaurant is just as adventurous. Expect to find the likes of lobster, Cornish game hen, jerk chicken and pasta as well as tricolored 'rasta pasta.' Lunches are more burger and tuna-melt oriented.

**Le Vendôme** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4648; Charela Inn; mains US\$30-42; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This formal French restaurant is living proof that gourmet cuisine can also be healthful. Take your table on the terra-cotta terrace with a pleasant garden view and choose from classic French dishes like *duck à l'orange* and escargots Burgundy style, or regional creations like baked snapper, all prepared with locally grown vegetables and spices. There's a daily five-course gourmet dinner (US\$26 to US\$39) – or curried goat if you prefer Jamaican fare.

**Gambino's Italian Restaurant** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4170; Beachcomber Club & Spa; mains US\$10-25; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This highly ranked restaurant spread across a capacious deck on the sand serves a wide range of pasta and other Italian classics, many seasoned with Jamaican spices. The fettuccine with lobster is good enough to distract you from the noise drifting over from Margaritaville next door.

**Kuyaba on the Beach** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4318; Kuyaba; mains US\$18-30; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The name means 'Celebrate!' in the Arawak language, which is exactly what happens here each evening at sunset. This perennial beach favorite is well loved for its thatched open-air restaurant and heaps of ambience. The lunch menu features burgers, kebabs and gourmet sandwiches, plus superb pepper shrimp. For dinner the changing menu offers a wide range of pasta dishes, a great pepper steak, or the Cuban crab and pumpkin cakes with papaya mustard.

## West End BUDGET

**Sweet Spice Restaurant** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4621; Sheffield Rd; mains US\$3-16; ☎ lunch & dinner) This unassuming bright-blue clapboard house is a favorite among several authentic Jamaican restaurants in Sheffield Rd that are frequented by locals. Portions are heaped, prices are inexpensive and the food authentic. The menu includes curried goat and fish, conch steak and pepper steak. No alcohol is served but there are plenty of fruit juices.

**Royal Kitchen Vegetarian Café** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 775-0386; mains US\$4-7; ☎ breakfast, lunch & din-

ner) This welcoming roadside I-tal eatery is popular with local Rastafarians and those who come to collect their pearls of wisdom. The fare – strictly vegetarian – is served on simple tables where you are sure to make friends with inquisitive passersby. The juices are especially good.

**Serious Chicken** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 464-2720; mains US\$2-6; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Aptly named, this friendly roadside spot is devoted to the bird, serving it up in salads, stews, curries and barbecue dishes in a thatched hut. You can't go wrong here, and if you stick around at night you're bound to be invited to join a game of dominoes.

**Sips & Bites** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0188; mains US\$4-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Sun-Fri) This large, welcoming open-air restaurant serves classic Jamaican fare including oxtail, curried goat, brown stew lobster and conch steaks. Wash it down with the day's special natural juice. Starting bright and early, hearty Jamaican breakfasts are served.

**Our pick! 3 Dives Jerk Centre** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0845; quarter/half chicken US\$4/7; ☎ noon-midnight) It's no small tribute to 3 Dives that its jerk overshadow its reputation for lengthy waits (sometimes over an hour). Fortunately, the chefs are more than happy to let you peek into the kitchen, where there's bound to be a pile of super-hot Scotch bonnet peppers threatening to spontaneously combust, and you can sip cheap Red Stripe on the cliffs at the end of a small garden. This is also the site of the annual Negril Jerk Festival (p18).

**Mi Yard** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4442; mains US\$2-7; ☎ 24hr) This economical choice provides a good breakfast spot with omelettes, ackee and saltfish and other hearty fare. Later in the day – and all night long – the classic Jamaican menu features fish and chips, brown-stewed fish and fried chicken. Dine in the garden or on a shady patio.

**Erica's Place** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 889-3109; mains US\$2.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner) This simple shack noted for its lobster has a long history of serving good, cheap Jamaican fare. The stewed chicken is highly recommended.

**Miss Brown's** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9217; Sheffield Rd; mains US\$4-28; ☎ 6:30am-midnight) Two kilometers east of the roundabout, this place serves 'mushroom daiquiris,' mushroom omelettes and mushroom tea. Be warned – *they're hallucinogenic*. It also serves well-priced standard Jamaican dishes.

**MIDRANGE**

**Lighthouse Inn** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4052; mains US\$10-20; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Aka 'Busha's Place,' this recommended eatery features splendid appetizers such as mozzarella with tomatoes, goat cheese and olives. Meals are prepared with a European touch and include an excellent seafood fondue, lobster in curry, and red snapper stuffed with callaloo. The lively tropical decor is enhanced by candlelight.

**LTU Pub** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0382; mains US\$9-18; 🍴 7:30am-midnight) Providing a perfect setting for a sunset dinner, this small clifftop open-air bar and restaurant features an eclectic menu with Jamaican dishes, delicious creations like chicken with callaloo and cream, an array of steaks and burgers, and quite possibly the only schnitzel in town. Just south of Rick's Café, it's a favorite haunt of expats and their local friends.

**Xtabi** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0120; mains US\$8-24; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Offering a marvelous cliff-face setting that you will want to explore before and after your meal, this well-established restaurant features a varied and reasonably priced menu mixing seafood and Jamaican and continental dishes. Try the lobster Benedict or the conch burger.

**Rick's Café** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0380; mains US\$20-30; 🍴 lunch & dinner) You'll join the touristy throng at this ever-popular West End institution. The somewhat pricey menu features steaks, fresh seafood and Cajun fare. The loud music precludes an intimate meal, but if you're in the mood for a party – or a dip in the pool between courses – this place fits the bill. While you eat, local divers try to outdo each other from the 10m-tall cliffs.

**TOP END**

**Rockhouse Restaurant & Bar** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4373; mains US\$15-30; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Lamplit at night, this pricey yet relaxed spot boasts outstanding nouvelle Jamaican treats such as vegetable tempura with lime and ginger, specialty pastas and daily specials like watermelon spare ribs and blackened mahi-mahi with mango chutney. At the very least, you should stop by for a sinful bananas Foster.

**Ivan's Bar** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0390; Catcha Falling Star; mains US\$10-32; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Although the service can be a little bewildering, there's no doubt about the food at Catcha Falling Star's restaurant overlooking the sea. Papaya Ahoy is an excellent 'boat' of papaya filled with

shrimp or snapper drizzled in a coconut sauce. Coconut pimento chicken and Caribbean crab cakes also hit the spot.

**our pick Hungry Lion** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4486; mains US\$12-30; 🍴 dinner) Renovated in late 2007, this brightly painted spot serves intricate fare from a changing menu of mostly fish and vegetarian dishes, like a vegetarian shepherd's pie or quesadillas stuffed with shrimp and cheese. The alfresco rooftop dining room is tastefully decorated with earth tones and original art. The music is trancelike, and the bar serves an extensive menu of cocktails and juices.

**DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT**

Negril gives Kingston a run for its money when it comes to the after-hours pursuits of cocktails, dancing and, best of all, white-hot live reggae music. There are dozens of bars, one big nightclub and several venues on the beach where live acts keep things throbbing well into the night. Things *really* hop during rabble-rousing spring break.

**Bars**

The booze starts flowing each evening along Long Bay in time to toast the setting sun, when many bars offer happy-hour incentives to lure you in. In the West End, bars are lively in the early evening before petering out as the beach bars take over.

**LONG BAY**

**Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4467), the most ostentatious of the beach bars, sustains a spring-break vibe all year long. There are big-screen TVs, a basketball court, trampolines in the sea, volleyball, swing hammocks and multiple bars with entertainment. It hosts wet T-shirt contests and the like, and has nightly specials, including karaoke on Sunday.

Most of the bars along the beach are, quite frankly, interchangeable, offering boozers front-row deck chairs for the sunset and barstools for the evening. **Alfred's Ocean Palace** (Map p225; ☎ 967-4735), **Cosmo's** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4330), **Legends Beach Resort** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3834) and **Risky Business** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3918) compete with Margaritaville with satellite TVs, pool tables and beach parties. All the above fence off their beach sections at night and charge a cover for entry.

**Sunrise Club** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4293), at the hotel of that name, has a cool bar if you want to

escape the beach mayhem. All the live-music venues listed below are also terrific bars, even when there are no acts on stage.

**WEST END**

**Rick's Café** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0380) A little pricey and the reggae cover band really lays on the schmaltz, yet this two-story restaurant, with sun deck, rope swing and cliff diving platform still has its kitschy charm. To be sure, it *is* shamelessly touristy (it's been a *long* time since the Rolling Stones have stopped by), but the party-hearty vibe makes Rick's the proper spot from which to launch a big night out.

**Sands** (Map pp222-3) Even if you can't afford to stay at Caves, you can still join sunset cocktails. Sadly, only guests are allowed to stay after 7:30pm.

**Pirate's Cave** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0925) Another great hot spot for sunset, Pirate's starts off a little more mellow than the nearby hotel bars but attracts more locals and gathers strength as the evening progresses.

**LTU Pub** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0382) A friendly and comfortable clifftop haunt centered on a small yet lively tiki bar: the perfect place to strike up a conversation at sunset or enjoy a Bloody Mary before noon.

**Mi Yard** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4442; 🍴 24hr) Popular with locals, this place draws a late-night crowd into the wee hours, when you can swig shots of white rum and slap down dominoes with locals.

**Mia's Winebar** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0694) This newcomer eschews the local focus on cocktails and beer (of course, you can get those too) and offers free internet access with each glass.

**Nightclubs**

**Jungle** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4005; admission US\$10; 🍴 Wed-Sun) A happening disco and the only one you'll find outside of an all-inclusive resort. It's not the most urbane place, with its tacky decor, but the DJs *definitely* know what they're doing; during the high season guest talent from Miami and New York regularly takes command of the turntables. The best nights are Thursday, when women enter free before midnight, and Saturday. There's not much action before midnight.

**Triple-X** (Sheffield Rd; admission US\$5; 🍴 daily) is the go-go club of choice in Negril.

Nonguests can obtain passes (US\$25-50) for entry to the discos in the following upscale all-inclusive resorts: Sandals Negril, Hedonism

II, Couples, Beaches Negril and Grand Lido. Once inside the gates you can booze and party to your heart's content without having to shell out another cent.

**Live Music**

Negril's reggae concerts are legendary, with live performances every night in peak season, when there's sure to be some big talent in town. Several venues offer weekly jams, with a rotation system so they all get a piece of the action. The really big-name acts usually perform at **MXIII** (Map pp222-3; West End Rd) and **Hotel Samsara** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4395).

You will also find sound-system jams where the DJs ('selectors') play shatteringly loud music – usually dancehall with some Euro-disco – on speakers the size of railroad boxcars. The most popular jams are in the Negril Hills, near Little Bay.

Information about upcoming events is posted on streetside poles.

The following venues stage free reggae concerts.

**Bourbon Beach** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4405; 🍴 Tue, Fri & Sun) The best spot for live reggae on Long Bay, Bourbon Beach occasionally hosts big-name acts. Cover US\$5 to US\$10.

**Alfred's Ocean Palace** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4669; 🍴 Tue, Fri & Sun) This Negril institution is one of the oldest beach bars. Shows begin around 10pm and continue deep into the night. Cover US\$4.

**Roots Bamboo** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4479; 🍴 Wed & Sun) With a rotating roster of musicians anchored by a rock-solid 'riddim' section, the house Hurricane Band shows tourists a thing or two about roots music here each Wednesday. Sundays see a free jazz show. Cover US\$5 to US\$10.

**De Buss** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4405; 🍴 Mon, Thu & Sat) The house band here is well loved and draws a sizable crowd.

**Risky Business** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4735; 🍴 Mon, Thu & Sat) This place goes all out during spring break. Occasionally, jazz is featured on Wednesday night. Cover US\$12.

**SHOPPING**

Locals hawk carvings, woven caps, hammocks, jewelry, macramé bikinis, T-shirts and crafts on the beach and along West End Rd. Competition is fierce. Haggling is part of the fun. Don't be hustled into a purchase you don't want.

There are three main crafts centers: **Rutland Point Craft Centre** (Map p225; Norman Manley Blvd) opposite Couples Negril, the **Negril Crafts Market** (Map p225; Norman Manley Blvd) just north of Plaza

de Negril and **A Fi Wi Plaza** (Map pp222-3; Negril Village, West End Rd).

**Times Square Plaza** (Map p225; ☎ 957-9263; Norman Manley Blvd), **Plaza de Negril** (Map pp222-3), **Coral Seas Plaza** (Map pp222-3) and **Sunshine Village** (Map pp222-3; West End Rd) have good souvenir shops. Times Square Plaza has duty-free and jewelry stores, including **Tajmahal's** (Map p225; ☎ 675-4579), and it has **Cigar World** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3299), selling Cuban cigars.

**Kush Art Gallery** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0728; West End Rd) sells Wassi Art pottery and other quality crafts, as does the **Kuyaba Arts and Crafts Boutique** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4318; Kuyaba, Norman Manley Blvd) at the Kuyaba hotel. **Collectibles Art Gallery** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4486; The Hungry Lion, West End Rd) and **Ja-Ja Originals** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4326; Coco La Palm Hotel, Norman Manley Blvd) are traditional galleries showing original painting and sculpture by noted local artists.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Negril Aerodrome** (☎ 957-5016), at Bloody Bay about 11km north of Negril Village, is served by the domestic charter company **TimAir** (Map p225; ☎ 957-5374; www.timair.net), an 'air taxi' service offering on-demand charter flights for small groups going to Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, Port Antonio and Kingston. Fares start at US\$66 per person between Negril and Montego Bay. See p292 for more details on domestic charter service.

Dozens of minibuses and route taxis run between Negril and Montego Bay. The 1½-hour journey costs about US\$5, and you may need to change vehicles in Lucea. Minibuses and route taxis also leave for Negril from Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay (the price is negotiable, but expect to pay about US\$10). Alternatively, buses operated by tour companies make the run for around US\$35.

In Negril, buses bound for Montego Bay (US\$3), Savanna-la-Mar (US\$3) and Kingston (US\$12, about four hours) depart from the **transportation center** (Map pp222-3; Sheffield Rd), 1km east of the roundabout. There's an **inspector's office** (☎ 7am-6pm) inside the gate, where you can ask for the departure point of the bus you're seeking.

The tour companies **Caribic Vacations** (Map p225; ☎ 957-3309) and **Tropical Tours** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4110) offer minibus transfers between Montego Bay airport and Negril (about US\$35 each way).

A licensed taxi between Montego Bay and Negril will cost about US\$60. In MoBay, call the **Jamaica Union of Travelers Association** (JUTA; ☎ 979-0778).

## GETTING AROUND

Negril stretches along more than 16km of shoreline, and it can be a withering walk. At some stage you'll most likely need transportation. Upscale resorts at the north end of Long Bay have shuttles to the village, and several hotels on the West End run shuttles to the beach.

There's no scheduled bus service between the airstrip and hotels. A taxi costs about US\$15 for a journey between the airport and Negril Village or to any point in between.

Minibuses and route taxis cruise Norman Manley Blvd and West End Rd. You can flag them down anywhere. The fare between any two points should never be more than US\$1 to US\$2.

Local car-rental companies include **Jus Jeep** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-0094; West End Rd) and **Vernon's Car Rentals** (Plaza de Negril Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-4522; Norman Manley Blvd Map p225; ☎ 957-4354).

More than a dozen places along Norman Manley Blvd and West End Rd rent motorcycles (US\$40 to US\$50 per day), scooters (US\$25 to US\$35) and bicycles (US\$10). For bicycle rentals, try **Wright's Bike Rental** (Map p225; ☎ 957-4908; Norman Manley Blvd) or **Negril Yacht Club** (Map pp222-3; ☎ 957-9224; West End Rd). The latter also offers scooter rentals, as does **Dependable Bike Rental** (Map p225; Vernon's Car Rentals, Norman Manley Blvd; ☎ 957-4354).

Tourist taxis display a red license plate. Fares are regulated by the government (about US\$2 per 3km) but few drivers use meters. Negotiate your fare before stepping into the cab. Your hotel will call a cab for you, or you can order taxis from **JUTA** (☎ 957-9197). There are taxi stands at the Negril Crafts Market and in front of Coral Seas Plaza.

## NEGRIL TO TRYALL

Northeast from Negril, the new A1 expressway leads to Tryall and on to Montego Bay. The only town of note is Lucea and the main draw in the area is Mayfield Falls.

## GREEN ISLAND HARBOUR

Immediately north of Negril, the A1 swings around a wide expanse of swampland – the Great Morass. After 16km you pass the

shores of a deep cove – Green Island Harbour – where pirogues line the thin, gray-sand shore. Minibuses and route taxis going between Negril and Lucea stop in Green Island Harbour.

**Half Moon Beach** (☎ 957-6467; admission US\$5; ☎ 8am-10pm) is a beautiful, hassle-free stretch of sand beloved by locals and families. Part of the Negril Marine Park, there are healthy reefs just offshore and no motorized watercraft. Nudism is permitted.

**Rhodes Hall Plantation** (☎ 957-6334), 3km southwest of Green Island Harbour, is a picturesque, 220-hectare fruit-and-coconut plantation with several thatched bars and a restaurant backing a small but attractive beach where hot mineral springs bubble up. Follow the beach west and you may see crocodiles at the mouth of the river. Horseback riding is offered (US\$50/60 per one/two hours).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Half Moon Beach** (☎ 957-6467; camping US\$10, cabins from US\$50) Offers camping and five simple but spacious wooden cabins with bare-bones furnishings. The thatched restaurant serves sandwiches, burgers and simple Jamaican snacks (mains US\$3 to US\$5).

**Rhodes Hall Plantation** (☎ 957-6334; www.rhodesresort.com; 2-person/family cottage US\$95/330; ☎ ) Has two handsome beachfront cottages with private bath with hot water, plus kitchen.

You can eat cheaply at the roadside jerk stalls at Green Island Harbour.

## BLenheim

This tiny hamlet, 6km inland of Davis Cove, is important as the birthplace of national hero Alexander Bustamante, the island's first prime minister. 'Busta' is honored with a memorial ceremony each August 6. The rustic three-room wooden shack where Bustamante was born has been reconstructed as the **Sir Alexander Bustamante Museum** (☎ 922-1287; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm). It includes memorabilia telling of the hero's life. It has public toilets and a picnic area to the rear.

## LUCEA

pop 7500

'Lucy,' as the town is commonly known, is built around a harbor ringed by hills on three sides. Forty kilometers equidistant from Negril and Montego Bay, Lucea is small enough for visitors to walk everywhere.

The once-bustling port abounds in old limestone-and-timber structures in 'Caribbean vernacular' style, with gingerbread wood trim, clapboard frontages and wide verandas. The oldest dates to the mid-1700s. Lucea has appeared in several films, including *Cool Runnings* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The **Hanover Historical Society** (☎ 956-2584; Watson Taylor Dr) is active in the town's preservation.

In a yellow house about 100m east of the Texaco gas station in the center of town, the well-known artist Lloyd Hoffstead has a **gallery** (☎ 956-2241; Seaview Dr; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri), which displays his paintings and sculptures.

## Information

**Hanover Parish Library** (☎ 956-2205; Internet access per 30min US\$1) West of downtown.

**Lucea Hospital** (☎ 956-2233, 956-3836) On the headland behind Hanover Parish Church, with an emergency department.

**National Commercial Bank** (☎ 956-2348; Main St)

**Police station** (☎ 956-2222; Sir Alexander Bustamante Sq, Watson Taylor Dr)

**Scotiabank** (☎ 956-2553) Faces the roundabout in the center of town.

## Sights

**Sir Alexander Bustamante Square** is centered on a small fountain fronting the handsome courthouse. Note the vintage 1932 fire engine beside the courthouse.

The town's restored **courthouse** (☎ 956-2280; Watson Taylor Dr) has limestone balustrades and a clapboard upper story topped by a clock tower supported by Corinthian columns. The clock was sent to Lucea in 1817 by mistake – it was actually intended for the Caribbean island of St Lucia. It has supposedly worked without a hitch ever since.

On the east side of the square is **Cleveland Stanhope market**, which bustles on Saturdays. A walk north up the main frontage road curls past some of Lucea's finest historical houses, many in a state of near decrepitude, and deposits you atop the headland with a fine view east over Lucea Harbour. At the hillcrest is **Hanover Parish Church**, established in 1725. It's architecturally uninspired but has several interesting monuments; a Jewish section of the walled cemetery recalls the days when Lucea had a vibrant Jewish community.

A side road that begins 200m west of the church leads to the **Hanover Museum** (☎ 956-2584; admission US\$2; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Thu, 8:30am-

4pm Fri), a tiny affair housed in an old police barracks. Exhibits include prisoners' stocks, a wooden bathtub and a miscellany of pots, lead weights and measures. It also has a tiny gift shop, toilets and a snack bar.

On the headland beyond the church is **Rusea High School**, a venerable Georgian-style red-brick building constructed in 1843 as an army barracks. The overgrown remains of **Fort Charlotte** overlook the channel a short distance beyond Rusea High School. It's named after Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III of England. The octagonal fortress still boasts cannons in its embrasures.

### Sleeping & Eating

**West Palm Hotel** (☎ 956-2321; Fort Charlotte St; r with/without air-con US\$35/30; 🚻) A musty old wooden building behind Hanover Parish Church that has 23 simple rooms with basic furnishings and private bathrooms with hot water. It has a modest bar and restaurant.

**Global Villa Guest House** (☎ 956-2916; globalvilla@hotmail.com; r US\$50-60; 🚻) Eight kilometers west of town on the A1, it offers 10 nicely furnished, clean rooms with louvered windows and tiled floors. There's a good restaurant serving hearty Jamaican fare.

**Tommy's Restaurant** (☎ 956-3106; Main St; mains US\$2-10; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Between the town square and Hanover Parish Church, this is an ever-popular place that serves healthy natural foods, including tofu dishes, steamed fish and natural juices.

**Vital Ital** (☎ 956-2218; Seaview Dr; mains US\$3-5; 🍳 9am-'whenever') East of town beside the harbor, a vivaciously decorated shack serving 'culture cooked foods' like tofu and gluten, stewed greens and peas and a refreshing tonic of sorrel and ginger.

### Getting There & Away

Buses, minibuses and route taxis arrive and depart Lucea from the open ground opposite the market. Lucea is a midway terminus for public vehicles traveling between Montego Bay and Negril, and you may need to change vehicles here. A bus between Lucea and MoBay or Negril costs about US\$3. A minibus or route taxi costs about US\$5.

### MAYFIELD FALLS

The Dolphin Head Mountains rise inland of Moskito Cove and are known for their cascades. The grandest of these are at Mayfield,

near Pennycooke, about 16km south of Moskito Cove (6km east of Lucea). Here, a series of 21 falls and pools beckons you to take a refreshing dip in any of the delightful swimming holes, which are shaded by glades of bamboo. You can even swim through a cave.

**Original Mayfield Falls & Mineral Springs** (☎ 957-4864; www.mayfieldfalls.com; admission US\$10, with lunch US\$25) is a working tropical farm and tour attraction. To reach the cascades you'll cross a bamboo-and-log bridge then follow the sun-dappled river course, clambering over river stones. You can learn about ackee, breadfruits and other Jamaican fruits, vegetables and flowers, and even join in traditional African music and dance during show time (2:30pm Tuesday and Friday). You can book a tour (per person US\$65) at the office in Negril on Norman Manley Blvd, or through many local hotels; the price includes transportation, lunch and refreshment.

### Getting There & Away

From the A1, take the road inland from Moskito Cove via Cascade. The route is signed, but there are several turnoffs and the route is quite complex; you should ask your way to be sure. You can also reach Mayfield Falls from Tryall or Hopewell via Pondsides, or by turning north at Savanna-la-Mar and taking the Banbury or Amity Cross routes (about 24km) along a road that is deplorably potholed.

**Caribic Vacations** (in Montego Bay ☎ 953-9896, in Negril 957-3309) offers excursions (US\$65).

## NEGRIL TO SAVANNA-LA-MAR

Tourism has been slow to develop along the southern shore of Westmoreland, a parish dependent on the sugar industry, with gritty Savanna-la-Mar the only town of any import.

Roads fan out from Savanna-la-Mar through the Westmoreland Plains. This flat, mountain-rimmed area, planted almost entirely in sugarcane, is drained by the Cabarita River, which feeds swamplands at its lower reaches. The fishing is good, and a few crocodiles may still live in more secluded swampy areas, alongside an endemic

fish – the 'God-a-me' – that can live out of water in moist, shady spots. The river is navigable by small boat for 19km.

Several beaches with active fishing communities provide an insight into Jamaican life.

### LITTLE BAY & AROUND

Southeast of Retirement, a badly eroded side road loops down to **Homers Cove** (locals call it 'Brighton Beach') and, immediately east, Little Bay, with handsome beaches and peaceful bathing. Little Bay is imbued with the kind of laid-back feel that pervaded Negril before the onset of commercialization. It's a great place to commune with Rastas and other Jamaicans who live by a carefree axiom in ramshackle homes, dependent on fishing and their entrepreneurial wits. The area is popular for reggae and dancehall sound systems that lure the local crowd from miles around.

Bob Marley used to hang out here in the 1970s. **Bob Marley's house** still stands beside **Bob Marley's Spring**, where he bathed; it's now a private house.

A mangrove swamp extends east of Little Bay, beyond which lies the fishing community of **Hope Wharf** and a long sliver of white sand called **Lost Beach**. Crocodiles and marine turtles can be found here. Dolphins and humpback whales frequent the waters offshore year-round.

The annual **Uncle Sam's Donkey Derby** is held on Little Bay beach the first Sunday in February.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Garden Park** (☎ 867-2897; per tent US\$10, cabin with shared/private bathroom US\$20/25) Also known as Uncle Sam's, this little budget heaven on the cliffs of Little Bay offers camping amid shady almond trees as well as rustic cabins and communal showers and toilets. Its atmospheric eatery – a gaily decorated bamboo bar festooned with girly posters, crab shells and other miscellany – serves 'dapper' soup and other simple fisherfolk fare. Uncle Sam's also puts on sound-system events. Full-moon parties are held in the Bat Cave, when a cavern is lit up with hundreds of candles, the reggae is cranked up and everyone parties down.

**Romie's Ocean View** (☎ 442-3721; info@RomiesOceanView.com; Homers Cove; cottage US\$30) Simple yet charming wooden cottages with verandas and bathrooms with solar-heated

water. Bicycle and snorkel-gear rentals are offered, as are guided excursions. Jamaican meals (US\$3 to US\$5) are served.

**Lost Beach Resort** (☎ 640-1111, in the USA 800-626-5678; www.lostbeach.com; cabin US\$59, 1-bedroom apt US\$99-129, 2-bedroom apt US\$129-149, 3-bedroom apt US\$149-179; 📞 🚻 🍳 🍷) With a wide, sandy beach, this quiet hotel is good for families who want a more peaceful environment than Negril can offer. The modern hotel features exotic hardwood furnishings in 14 spacious one- to three-bedroom suites with kitchenettes. Two thatch-and-wood beach cabins have loft bedrooms and kitchenettes. There is a large sundeck, kids' playground, Jacuzzi and a huge library with pool table. Rates depend on the season.

### FROME

Frome lies at the heart of Jamaica's foremost sugar estate, in the center of a rich alluvial plain. The area is dominated by the **Frome sugar-processing factory** (☎ 955-6080), on the B9 north of Savanna-la-Mar and south of the town of Grange Hill. Constructed in 1938, the factory became the setting for a violent nationwide labor dispute. During the Depression of the 1930s many small factories were bought out by the West Indies Sugar Company. Unemployed workers from all over the island converged here seeking work. Although workers were promised a dollar a day, the men who were hired received only 15 cents a day and women only 10 cents. Workers went on strike for higher pay, passions ran high and violence erupted. When the crowds rioted and set fire to the cane fields, the police responded by firing into the crowd, killing four people. The whole island exploded in violent clashes. The situation was defused when labor activist Alexander Bustamante mediated the dispute. His efforts gave rise to the island's first mass labor unions and the first organized political party, under his leadership (see p31).

A **monument** at a crossroads north of the factory gates reads: 'To Labour leader Alexander Bustamante and the Workers for their courageous fight in 1938. On behalf of the Working People of Jamaica.'

Free tours of the factory can be arranged by reservation.

Frome also boasts two attractive churches, including **St Barnabas Anglican Church**, in a vaguely Teutonic style.

## ROARING RIVER & BLUE HOLE

If you're looking for a brief escape from the fun-in-the-sun ethos of Negril, spend an hour or two down the caves at **Roaring River Park** (cave tours adult/child US\$15/8; ☎ 8am-5pm). This natural beauty spot contains mineral waters that gush up from the ground in a meadow full of water hyacinths and water lilies. A stone aqueduct takes off some of the water, which runs turquoise-jade. Steps lead up a cliff face gashed by the mouth of a subterranean passage lit by electric lanterns (you can enter the caves only with guides from the cooperative). Inside, a path with handrails leads down to chambers full of stalagmites and stalactites. Take your swimming gear to sit in the mineral spring that percolates up inside the cave, or in the 'bottomless' blue hole outside the cave. Harmless fruit bats roost in the recesses.

As you arrive an official guide will meet you to show the way to the ticket office, and then around the gardens and cave; ignore the touts who congregate outside posing as tour guides. It has secure parking, a reception lounge, changing rooms, playground and crafts shops. A restaurant serves cheap Jamaican fare, as does Chill Out View, on a hill overlooking the burbling spring.

The lane then continues beyond Roaring River for about 1km uphill through the village to **Blue Hole Gardens** (☎ 918-1341; www.jamaicaescapes.com/bluehole; admission US\$8), a beautiful sinkhole that is surrounded by a landscaped garden full of ginger torch and heliconia on the private property of a Rasta called Esau. Entry is overpriced, but grants a chance for a cool dip with the fish in the turquoise waters. The source of the Roaring River is about 400m further up the road, where the water foams up from beneath a matting of foliage.

This is also a quintessential counterculture lifestyle retreat that offers two very rustic but charming **cottages** (US\$40-80) set in gardens at the edge of the tumbling brook (the 'waterhouse' cabin sits *over* the stream). Bamboo-enclosed toilets and showers are alfresco. Here you can also rent 'Esau's Mountain Retreat,' which is a separate cabin in the hills with fully equipped kitchen. Camping is US\$10.

Also here is **Lovers Café** (mains US\$3-8), which is known for its veggie feast, 1-tal dishes, fruit juices and herbal teas.

## Getting There & Away

Roaring River is at Shrewsbury Estate, about 2km north of the main crossroads in Petersfield (8km northeast of Savanna-la-Mar). You can catch a bus in Savanna-la-Mar as far as Petersfield. From there it's a hot walk or rough ride down the potholed road through the cane fields. Route taxis and coasters also run to Roaring River from Petersfield (US\$1).

Organized tours to Roaring River are offered by companies in Negril (around US\$75).

## FERRIS CROSS & PARADISE PARK

Ferris Cross is a major crossroads hamlet on the A2, 8km east of Savanna-la-Mar. Here the A2 turns southeast and follows the coast to Black River and the south coast. Another road – the B8 – leads northeast to Galloway, where it begins a steep climb to Whithorn and Montego Bay.

About a mile west of Ferris Cross, **Paradise Park** (☎ 955-2675; admission US\$5; ☎ 9am-4:30 Mon-Sat) is an 800-hectare farm, where you can ride horses along the sand (US\$30 per hour) and swim in a local creek.

## SAVANNA-LA-MAR

pop 20,000

Savanna-la-Mar is the largest town in western Jamaica and the capital of Westmoreland parish. 'Sav,' as it is locally known, offers few attractions.

Sav is virtually a one-street town. Its axis is 2km-long Great George St. It was founded around 1730 and grew modestly as a sugar-shipping port during the colonial era. It has an unremarkable history except where Mother Nature is concerned, as numerous hurricanes have swept the town.

## Information

**National Commercial Bank** (☎ 955-2623; Great George St)

**Police station** (☎ 918-1865; Great George St) Near the courthouse.

**Post office** (☎ 955-9295; Great George St)

**Savanna-la-Mar Hospital** (☎ 955-2133; ☎ emergency service 24hr) On the A2 on the northeast side of town.

**Scotiabank** (☎ 955-2601; Great George St)

## Sights

The English colonialists never completed the **Savanna-la-Mar Fort** at the foot of Great George St. Parts of it collapsed into the swamps within a few years of being built. Its innards

form a small cove where locals swim. A bustling daily market, specializing in vegetables and local fish, can be found by the fort.

The most interesting building is the **court-house**, built in 1925 at the junction of Great George and Rose Sts, where there's a fountain made of cast iron, inscribed with the words, 'Keep the pavements dry.'

**St George's Parish Church**, opposite, was built in 1905. It's uninspired, but has a stately pipe organ that was dedicated in 1914.

At the north end of town by the roundabout known as Hendon Circle is the very handsome **Manning's School**, built in 1738 and named after a Westmoreland planter, Thomas Manning.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Lochiel Guest House** (☎ 955-9344; Sheffield Rd; r US\$20-30) On the A2, 2km east of town, this is another old stone-and-timber, two-story great house that looks delightful from the outside. Inside it's a bit run down, though some of its 14 rooms are appealing. All have utilitarian furniture and hot water in private

bathrooms. Eight rooms in a modern annex offer better decor.

**J's Jerk Centre** (☎ 918-0159; 10 Rose St; mains US\$3-5; ☎ lunch & dinner) A tiny outdoor place serving great jerk chicken and festival (a fried biscuit shaped like a sausage) plus steamed fish.

**Hammond's Pastry** (☎ 955-2870; 18 Great George St; mains US\$1.50-5) Serves patties, pastries and the best traditional coco-bread around.

**Old Fort Club Restaurant** (☎ 955-3362; mains US\$1.50-7) In the fort at the foot of Great George St. Serves Jamaican staples such as curried goat.

You can buy fresh fish and produce from the market at the base of Great George St, but the sanitary conditions aren't great.

## Getting There & Away

Buses, minibuses and route taxis operate frequently along the A2/B8 between Montego Bay (US\$3) and Negril (US\$3). Public vehicles also depart on a regular basis from the Beckford St transportation center in Kingston (US\$10, three hours).

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