

welcome to Jamaica



Jah's Garden

Ask any Jamaican in a cold suburb of Toronto or New York or London what they miss about their island, and the answer is inevitably the island itself, the great green garden and natural landscape that constitutes one of the most beautiful islands of the Caribbean. Jamaica's lovely landscape begins with crystalline waters flowing over gardens of coral, lapping onto sand as soft as yellow butter, as dark as ash and white as rice, then rising past red soil and lush banana groves into sheer mountains. This is powerfully beautiful country, captivating to the eyes and soul, and as such, the subject of many Jamaican poems, songs and deep wells of nostalgia. Jamaican culture

can be a daunting subject for foreigners to understand, but ultimately it's a matter of appreciating this land and how its cyclical rhythms set the pace of so much island life.

Diving, Spelunking & Cycling

Jamaica cries out to be explored, be it underwater, on hikes, river-bound with a raft, underground with a lamp on your head, or on the road by car or bicycle. You are welcome to spend the entirety of your trip on the beach or in a jerk shack, and we wouldn't blame you for following that instinct. But if you access the Jamaican outdoors you'll be seeing sides of this island many tourists miss. We want to stress: outdoor activities



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Jamaica packs in extremes. Flat beaches twinned to green mountains; relaxed resorts and ghettos; sweet reggae and slack dancehall. It's a complicated national soundtrack and it's impossible not to dance to it.

(left) The azure waters and rocky beach at Bluefields (p216).
(below) Rastafarian local.



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in Jamaica hardly require you to be as fit as Usain Bolt. There's no physical effort involved when you raft (someone else poles), and even folks in moderate health can accomplish the country's most famous hike: to Blue Mountain peak, to see the sunset and, if you're lucky, Cuba in the distance.

Island Riddims & Recipes

More than any other island in the Caribbean, Jamaica has one foot (and sometimes, it feels, one foot and four toes) planted in West Africa. When you hear the lyricism of the local patois language, or feel the drumbeat behind young men singing along to dancehall, or see the way women sip cups

of peanut porridge in the morning, it's hard not to be struck by how strong the bond between the Old and the New World is. Yet this *is* still the New World, and the ways it has evolved from Africa are as interesting as its connections to the mother continent. From the evolution of African folk music into reggae, or the shifting of African spice rubs into delicious jerk, it's rewarding to see how the Jamaican cultural story retains its original voice whilst adapting it to the setting – and of course, rhythms – of the Caribbean.