

# Welcome to Jamaica

*Jamaica has long been a jewel in the Caribbean tourism industry crown, but there's far more to discover than just beaches and all-inclusive resorts.*

## Jah's Garden

Ask any expat Jamaican what they miss about their island, and the answer is inevitably the landscape itself, that great green garden that constitutes one of the most beautiful islands of the Caribbean. Jamaica begins with crystalline waters flowing over gardens of coral, lapping onto soft sandy beaches, then rising past red soil and lush banana groves into sheer mountains. This is a powerfully beautiful country, captivating to the eyes and soul. 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.

## Adventure Playground

Jamaica cries out to be explored – underwater, on hikes, river-bound with a raft, underground with a lamp strapped to your head, or on the road by car or bicycle. Getting away from the (admittedly beautiful) beaches allows you to see sides of the island that many tourists miss. We want to stress: outdoor activities 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 through the lush mountains to the top of Blue Mountain Peak.

## Island Riddims

With Bob Marley, Jamaica gifted us the first global superstar from the developing world. But he didn't spring from nowhere – this tiny island has musical roots that reach back to the folk songs of West Africa and forward to the electronic beats of contemporary dancehall. Simply put, Jamaica is a musical powerhouse, a fact reflected not just in the bass of the omnipresent sound systems, but in the lyricism of the patois language and the gospel sounds from the island's many churches. Music is life in Jamaica, and you'll soon find yourself swaying along with it.

## Caribbean Flavors

Like many aspects of Jamaica culture, the food is a creole, born somewhere between the Old and New Worlds. African spice rubs have evolved into delicious jerk, while yam, rice and plantain form the basis of rich stews and the fish that abound in local waters. Throw in the astounding array of tropical fruits that seem to drip from the trees, washed down with a shot of rum, and you can see (and taste) how the Jamaican cultural story retains its original voice while adapting to the setting – and of course rhythms – of the Caribbean.



## Why I Love Jamaica

By Paul Clammer, Author

Before visiting Jamaica, I hadn't realized my preconceptions of the country were firmly out of date – somewhere between the troubles of the 1970s and Bob Marley's last LP. Touching down for the first time, the scales fell from my eyes. I've rarely been to a country so viscerally alive (Kingston dancehall street parties have to be experienced to be believed) and so achingly beautiful: just how many waterfalls hidden in rainforests can one country have? Smooth like rum and hot like a spicy plate of jerk, Jamaica ensnared me instantly. The media might call it dangerous, but the worst crime you're likely to encounter is having your heart stolen.

**For more about our authors, see page 224**

Above: Rastafarian reggae artist