**Jamaica Facts and Culture**

* [Family:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/family.htm) Most Jamaican families are headed by women. Jamaicans adore children. About one-third of Jamaican women have their first child during... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/family.htm)
* [Fashion:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/fashion.htm) Though Jamaican clothing and fashion is not as popular as European and African clothing it is defined by the use of primary... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/fashion.htm)
* [Visiting:](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/visiting.htm) Table manners are Continental style -- the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right... [More](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/visiting.htm)

**Jamaica Facts**

Jamaica stats

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital  | Kingston  |
| Government Type  | constitutional parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm  |
| Currency  | JMD  |
| Population  | 2,909,714  |
| Total Area  | 4,244 Square Miles10,991 Square Kilometers  |
| Location  | Caribbean, island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba  |
| Language  | English, patois English  |

Map of Jamaica



**Jamaica Geography**

**Terrain and geography**

The Island of Jamaica is perhaps best noted for its lush and scenic tropical beauty: the rugged spine of blue-green mountains rising to 7,400 feet; warm, clear Caribbean waters, with exciting underwater reefs; and the picture-postcard north coast, with its white-sand beaches.

Jamaica is the third-largest Caribbean island and lies nearly 600 miles south of Miami, Florida. The island is 146 miles long and 51 miles across at its widest point. Except for narrow coastal plains mainly on the island's south side, the landscape is one of sharp, crested ridges, unique "cockpit" formations, and deep, twisting valleys. Almost half the island is more than 1,000 feet above sea level. Some 50% of the island is used for agriculture, 40% is woodland, and the remaining 10% is divided between mining and urban areas.

Kingston, the capital, is on the southeast coast and has the world's seventh-largest natural harbor. From sea level at city center, the terrain rises to 1,800 feet. Jamaica's 120 rivers flow to the coasts from the central mountain ranges.

**Geography - note**

strategic location between Cayman Trench and Jamaica Channel, the main sea lanes for the Panama Canal

**Jamaica Geography**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Geographic Location  | The Caribbean  |
| Total Area  | 4,244 Square Miles10,991 Square Kilometers  |
| Land Area  | 4,182 Square Miles10,831 Square Kilometers  |
| Water Area  | 62 Square Miles160 Square Kilometers  |
| Irrigated Land  | 97 Square Miles252 Square Kilometers  |
| Coastline  | 635 Miles1,022 Kilometers  |
| Geographic Coordinates  | 18 15 N, 77 30 W  |
| Terrain  | mostly mountains, with narrow, discontinuous coastal plain  |
| Highest Point  | 2,256 Meters  |
| Highest Point Location  | Blue Mountain Peak 2,256 m  |
| Lowest Point Location  | Caribbean Sea 0 m  |
| Natural Resources  | bauxite, gypsum, limestone  |

**Jamaica Weather and Climate**

**Climate and Weather**

Jamaica enjoys a favorable climate. Daily temperatures average 79°F, with an average maximum of 86.5°F and an average minimum of 71.5°F. Temperatures vary depending on elevation, however for all locations, the warmest months are June to August and the coolest months are December to February. Northeast trade winds help maintain a feeling of relative comfort.

Elevation and the island's geography affect temperature and rainfall markedly. Rainfall varies from an annual average of 35 to 200 inches depending on location. Rainfall is generally heaviest during May-June and September-November, though these are not rainy seasons in the tropical sense. Mildew is a problem during these months. December-March are the driest months. Relative humidity in Kingston ranges from about 70-85%.

Jamaica is in the earthquake and hurricane belts, but has not had a disastrous earthquake since 1907, though there are usually a few tremors every year. In September 2004, the island was struck by Hurricane Ivan, the first since Hurricane Gilbert devastated much of the island in 1988. The main force of the storm affected the entire island, especially the southern coastal areas, and caused widespread damage, mainly to crops and vegetation, coastal properties, utilities, and roofs.

Jamaica has over 600 insect species as well as 250 bird species-25 of which belong only to Jamaica. About 120 species of butterflies, including the world's largest (with a 6 inch wingspan), are also found here. The island is especially noted for its fireflies, otherwise known as blinkies or peeny-waullies.

A profusion of flowering shrubs, trees, and cactuses reflects Jamaica's great variation of climate and topography. Hundreds of imported plants are well established. Pimento, or allspice, is from an indigenous plant, and Jamaica is the world's largest producer. The ortanique, developed in Jamaica, is a cross between an orange and a tangerine. Jamaica also has over 220 species of native orchids, over 500 different ferns, more than 300 mosses, and many fungi.

**Jamaica Environmental Issues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Climate  | Jamaica enjoys a favorable climate. Daily temperatures average 79°F, with an average maximum of 86.5°F and an average minimum of 71.5°F. Temperatures vary depending on elevation, however for all locations, the warmest months are June to August and the coolest months are December to February. Northeast trade winds help maintain a feeling of relative comfort.Elevation and the island's geography affect temperature and rainfall markedly. Rainfall varies from an annual average of 35 to 200 inches depending on location. Rainfall is generally heaviest during May-June and September-November, though these are not rainy seasons in the tropical sense. Mildew is a problem during these months. December-March are the driest months. Relative humidity in Kingston ranges from about 70-85%.Jamaica is in the earthquake and hurricane belts, but has not had a disastrous earthquake since 1907, though there are usually a few tremors every year. In September 2004, the island was struck by Hurricane Ivan, the first since Hurricane Gilbert devastated much of the island in 1988. The main force of the storm affected the entire island, especially the southern coastal areas, and caused widespread damage, mainly to crops and vegetation, coastal properties, utilities, and roofs.Jamaica has over 600 insect species as well as 250 bird species-25 of which belong only to Jamaica. About 120 species of butterflies, including the world's largest (with a 6 inch wingspan), are also found here. The island is especially noted for its fireflies, otherwise known as blinkies or peeny-waullies.A profusion of flowering shrubs, trees, and cactuses reflects Jamaica's great variation of climate and topography. Hundreds of imported plants are well established. Pimento, or allspice, is from an indigenous plant, and Jamaica is the world's largest producer. The ortanique, developed in Jamaica, is a cross between an orange and a tangerine. Jamaica also has over 220 species of native orchids, over 500 different ferns, more than 300 mosses, and many fungi. |
| Terrain  | mostly mountains, with narrow, discontinuous coastal plain  |
| Natural Resources  | bauxite, gypsum, limestone  |
| Natural Hazards  | hurricanes (especially July to November)  |
| Irrigated Land  | 97 Square Miles252 Square Kilometers  |
| Environmental Issues  | heavy rates of deforestation; coastal waters polluted by industrial waste, sewage, and oil spills; damage to coral reefs; air pollution in Kingston results from vehicle emissions  |
| Environment - International Agreements  | party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands signed, but not ratified: none of the selected agreements  |

**Jamaica Population Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Population  | 2,909,714  |
| Population Growth Rate  | 0.7%  |
| Urban Population  | 52%  |
| Population in Major Urban Areas  | KINGSTON (capital) 571,000  |
| Nationality Noun  | Jamaican(s)  |
| Nationality Adjective  | Jamaican  |
| Ethnic Groups  | black 90.9%, East Indian 1.3%, white 0.2%, Chinese 0.2%, mixed 7.3%, other 0.1%  |
| Languages  | English, patois English  |
| Rate of Urbanization- annual rate of change  | 0.51%  |

**Jamaica Medical Information**

Medical care is much more limited than in the United States. Comprehensive but basic emergency medical services are located only in Kingston and Montego Bay, and smaller public hospitals are located in each parish. Emergency medical and ambulance services, and the availability of prescription drugs, are limited in outlying parishes. Ambulance service is limited both in the quality of emergency care and in the availability of vehicles in remote parts of the country. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost $15,000 - $20,000 or more. Doctors and hospitals in Jamaica often require cash payment prior to providing services. The Embassy’s website contains information on medical services and air-ambulance companies. Please alert the American Citizen Services Unit to such cases by calling (876) 702-6000. U.S. citizens travelling to Jamaica are urged to buy medical evacuation insurance prior to their trip.

**Jamaica Health Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Health Expenditures (% of GDP)  | 5.2%  |
| Death Rate/1,000 population  | 6.63  |
| Obesity- adult prevalence rate  | 24.1%  |
| Hospital Bed Density/1,000 population  | 1.8  |
| Physicians Density/1,000 population  | .41  |
| Infant Mortality Rate/1,000 population  | 13.98  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Female/1,000 population  | 13.38  |
| Infant Mortality Rate- Male/1,000 population  | 14.55  |
| Underweight - percent of children under five years  | 3.2%  |
| Total Fertility Rate  | 2.09  |
| Age of Mother's First Birth  | 21.2  |
| Contraceptive prevalance rate (female 15-49)  | 69%  |
| Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births  | 110  |
| HIV Adult Prevalence Rate  | 1.7%  |
| HIV Aids Deaths  | 1,300  |
| HIV Aids People Living With  | 32,000  |
| Drinking Water Source: unimproved  | 6.9%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of rural population improved  | 88.8%  |
| Drinking Water Source - percent of urban population improved  | 97.1%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access: unimproved  | 19.8%  |
| Sanitation Facility Access - percent of urban population improved  | 78.4%  |
| Sanitation Facitlity Access - percent of rural population improved  | 82.2%  |

**Jamaica Crime**

**Crime Information**

Crime, including violent crime, is a serious problem in Jamaica, particularly in Kingston and Montego Bay and other major tourist areas. While the vast majority of crimes occur in impoverished areas, random acts of violence, such as gunfire, may occur anywhere. The primary criminal concern for tourists is becoming a victim of theft. In several cases, armed robberies of U.S. citizens have turned violent when the victims resisted or were slow in handing over valuables. Crime is exacerbated by the fact that police are understaffed and often ineffective. Additionally, there have been frequent allegations of police corruption. Tourists should take all necessary precautions always pay extra attention to their surroundings when traveling, and keep windows up and doors locked while in a vehicle or in their hotel. Travelers should avoid walking alone, exercise special care after dark, and always avoid areas known for high crime rates. Under no circumstances should travelers accept rides from unknown individuals, as this is often a pretext for attempted robbery and/or sexual assault.

Each year the Embassy receives a number of reports of sexual assaults against U.S. citizens, including cases of alleged sexual assaults at tourist resorts, some of which involve resort staff. It is important to realize that sexual assault allegations generally do not receive the same type of law enforcement attention in Jamaica that they would in the United States. Local law also requires the presence of the victim at each stage of the judicial process in order for a case to move forward, and as a result most sexual assault cases languish in the Jamaican courts until they are eventually dismissed. In addition, victims in Jamaica cannot expect the totatility of victim’s assistance that is routinely offered in the United States. This includes hesitation to and/or lack of knowledge of how to perform rape kits, a prosecutorial/interrogation approach to victims on the part of the police and hotels, as well as a lack of counseling for victims. Victims will often have to ask for medication to avoid the transmission of STDs and to reduce the chances of pregnancy.

U.S. citizens traveling in Jamaica should maintain careful watchfulness, avoid secluded places or situations (even within resort properties), go out in groups, and watch out for each other. Don’t be afraid to ask or call out for help if you feel threatened or encounter individuals who make you feel uncomfortable. Report any suspicious activity to the U.S. Embassy, local police and, if appropriate, to the hotel’s management. As a general rule, do not leave valuables unattended or in plain view, including in hotel rooms and on the beach. Take care when carrying high value items such as cameras and expensive cell phones or when wearing expensive jewelry on the street. Women's handbags should be zipped and held close to the body. Men should carry wallets in their front pants pocket. Large amounts of cash should always be handled discreetly.

In the last several years, a number of U.S. visitors have reported being robbed inside their resort hotel rooms while they slept. Particular care is called for when staying at isolated villas and smaller establishments that may have fewer security arrangements. You may wish to ask your villa or small establishment if they have met Jamaica Tourist Board certification standards for safety and security.

The U.S. Embassy advises its staff to avoid inner-city areas of Kingston and other urban centers, such as those listed in the section on Safety and Security, whenever possible. Particular caution is advised after dark and in downtown Kingston and New Kingston. The U.S. Embassy also cautions U.S. citizens not to use public buses, which are often overcrowded and are a frequent venue for crime.

To enhance security in the principal resort areas, the Government of Jamaica has taken a number of steps, including assignment of special police foot and bicycle patrols. Some street vendors, beggars, and taxi drivers in tourist areas aggressively confront and harass tourists to buy their wares or employ their services. If a firm "No, thank you," does not solve the problem, visitors may wish to seek the assistance of a tourist police officer, identified by their white hats, white shirts, and black trousers. These officers are only located at or near tourist areas.

DRUGS:Illegal drug use is prevalent in some tourist areas, leading to numerous U.S. citizen arrests and incarcerations in Jamaica every year. Possession or use of marijuana or other illicit drugs is illegal in Jamaica. U.S. citizens should avoid buying, selling, holding, or taking illegal drugs under any circumstances. There is anecdotal evidence that the use of so-called date rape drugs, such as Rohypnol, has become more common at clubs and private parties. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and other illegal narcotics are especially potent in Jamaica, and their use may lead to severe or even disastrous health consequences.

SCAMS: U.S. citizens are often the target of international financial scams originating in Jamaica. The most prevalent scam in Jamaica is the lottery scam, also known as Advanced Fee Fraud. U.S. citizens receiving calls from Jamaica with claims of winning a prize or lottery should be wary and never send money up front. It is illegal to play a foreign lottery, and if you did not enter a foreign lottery or drawing, then it is not possible to win one. Scammers may also seek to entice victims to travel to Jamaica to “collect their prize.” Such invites can lead to the victim being kidnapped for ransom once in Jamaica.

Additionally, relatives of U.S. citizens visiting Jamaica and U.S. citizens who are prisoners in Jamaica have received telephone calls from people claiming to be Jamaican police officers, other public officials, or medical professionals. The callers usually state that the visitor or prisoner has had trouble and needs financial help. In almost every case these claims are untrue. The caller insists that money should be sent by wire transfer to either themselves or a third party who will assist the visitor or prisoner, but when money is sent, it fails to reach the U.S. citizens in alleged need. U.S. citizens who receive calls such as these should never send money before consulting the embassy for additional information.

The U.S. Embassy has also received reports of extortion attempts originating in Jamaica where the caller threatens the victim if they do not send a sum of money. Another financial scam reported is the ‘ Damsel in Distress ’ where a partner met over the Internet falls into a series of alleged mishaps and requests money with the promise of rewards at a later date, such as an in-person meeting. Contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the Embassy's Consular Section at KingstonACS@state.gov and provide as much detail as possible regarding the nature of the communication. Additional guidance on such crimes is available at the Department of State’s web page on International Financial Scams.

Don’t buy counterfeit and pirated goods, even if they are widely available. Not only are the bootlegs illegal in the United States, if you purchase them you may also be breaking local law.

**Jamaica Penalties for Crime**

**Criminal Penalties**

While you are traveling in Jamaica, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own. In some places, you may be taken in for questioning if you don’t have some form of identification with you. In some places, driving under the influence could land you immediately in jail. These criminal penalties will vary from country to country. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States, and you can be prosecuted under U.S. law if you buy pirated goods. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States. If you break local laws in Jamaica, your U.S. passport won’t help you avoid arrest or prosecution. It’s very important to know what is legal and what is illegal where you are going.

Persons violating Jamaica’s laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Jamaica are can be severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Airport and dock searches at cruise line ports are thorough and people attempting to smuggle illegal drugs are often apprehended. Several U.S. citizens currently incarcerated in Jamaica prisons for drug smuggling say they were arrested for carrying bags that friends or acquaintances asked them to deliver to someone in the United States. In one case, the U.S. arrestee claimed that she express mailed a package for a local taxi driver who claimed not to have his identification with him. U.S. citizens should never accept packages/baggage in such circumstances.

Jamaica has no tolerance for violations of its firearms laws and persons can end up serving years for possession of a firearm. Bringing ammunition into Jamaica is also illegal and can result in heavy fines and/or imprisonment.

Prison conditions in Jamaica differ greatly from prison conditions in the United States. Prisoners are provided only the most basic meals and must rely upon personal funds, family, and friends to supplement their diets, provide clothing, and supply personal care items such as toothpaste and shampoo. Most prisons are very overcrowded. Prisons do not supply bedding to prisoners. Packages shipped from the United States to prisoners are subject to Jamaican import taxes and are undeliverable when the recipient lacks the funds to pay the duties.

If you are arrested in Jamaica, authorities of Jamaica are required to notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of your arrest. If you are concerned the Department of State may not be aware of your situation, perhaps because you are also a Jamaican citizen, you should request the police or prison officials to notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate of your arrest.

**Jamaica Life Expectancy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Life Expectancy At Birth  | 73 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Female  | 75 Years  |
| Life Expectancy At Birth- Male  | 71 Years  |
| Median Age (female)  | 25 Years  |
| Median Age (male)  | 24 Years  |
| Median Age  | 24 Years |

**Jamaica Literacy**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Predominant Language  | English, patois English  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over has ever attended school  |
| Literacy Female  | 91.6%  |
| Literacy Male  | 84.1%  |
| Literacy Total  | 87.9%  |

**Jamaica Education**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Expenditures - percent of GDP  | 6.1%  |
| Literacy - female  | 91.6%  |
| Literacy - male  | 84.1%  |
| Literacy - total population  | 87.9%  |
| Literacy Definition  | age 15 and over has ever attended school  |
| School Life Expectancy - female  | 12 Years  |
| School Life Expectancy - male  | 12 Years  |
| Total School Life Expectancy - (primary to tertiary)  |  |

**Jamaica Government**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capital Name  | Kingston  |
| Country Name  | Jamaica  |
| Government Type  | constitutional parliamentary democracy and a Commonwealth realm  |
| Capital - geographic coordinate  | 18 00 N, 76 48 W  |
| National Holiday  | Independence Day, 6 August (1962)  |
| Constitution  | 6 August 1962  |
| Legal System  | common law system based on the English model  |
| Suffrage  | 18 years of age; universal  |

**Jamaica Government and Politics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Government Executive Branch  | chief of state: Queen ELIZABETH II (since 6 February 1952); represented by Governor General Dr. Patrick L. ALLEN (since 26 February 2009) head of government: Prime Minister Portia SIMPSON MILLER (since 5 January 2012) cabinet: Cabinet is appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister elections: the monarchy is hereditary; governor general appointed by the monarch on the recommendation of the prime minister; following legislative elections, the leader of the majority party or the leader of the majority coalition in the House of Representatives is appointed prime minister by the governor general  |
| Legislative Branch  | bicameral Parliament consists of the Senate (a 21-member body appointed by the governor general on the recommendations of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition; ruling party is allocated 13 seats, and the opposition is allocated 8 seats) and the House of Representatives (63 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)elections: last held on 29 December 2011 (next to be held no later than December 2016)election results: percent of vote by party - PNP 53.3%, JLP 46.6%; seats by party - PNP 42, JLP 21  |
| Judicial Branch  | Supreme Court (judges appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister); Court of Appeal; Privy Council in UK; member of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)  |
| Regions or States  | 14 parishes; Clarendon, Hanover, Kingston, Manchester, Portland, Saint Andrew, Saint Ann, Saint Catherine, Saint Elizabeth, Saint James, Saint Mary, Saint Thomas, Trelawny, Westmorelandnote: for local government purposes, Kingston and Saint Andrew were amalgamated in 1923 into the present single corporate body known as the Kingston and Saint Andrew Corporation  |
| Political Parties and Leaders  | Jamaica Labor Party or JLP [Andrew HOLNESS]; People's National Party or PNP [Portia SIMPSON-MILLER]; National Democratic Movement or NDM [Michael WILLIAMS]  |
| International Law Organization Participation  | has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt  |
| International Organization Participation  | ACP, AOSIS, C, Caricom, CDB, CELAC, FAO, G-15, G-77, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICRM, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAES, MIGA, NAM, OAS, OPANAL, OPCW, Petrocaribe, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO  |
| Politicial Pressure Groups and Leaders  | New Beginnings Movement or NBM; Rastafarians (black religious/racial cultists, pan-Africanists)  |

**Jamaica Economy Data**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| GDP - Gross Domestic Product  | $25,130,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - official exchange rate  | $14,390,000,000 (USD)  |
| GDP - real growth rate  | 0.4%  |
| GDP Per Capita  | $9,000.00 (USD)  |
| GDP by Sector- agriculture  | 6.5%  |
| GDP by Sector- Industry  | 29.4%  |
| GDP by Sector- services  | 64.1%  |
| Population Below Poverty Line  | 16.5%  |
| Inflation Rate  | 13%  |
| Labor Force  | 1,317,000  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- agriculture  | 17%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- industry  | 19%  |
| Labor Force By Occupation- services  | 64%  |
| Unemployment Rate  | 12.9%  |
| Fiscal Year  | 1 April - 31 March  |
| Annual Budget  | $3,611,000,000 (USD)  |
| Budget Surplus or Deficit - percent of GDP  | -1.8%  |
| Public Debt (% of GDP)  | 135%  |
| Taxes and other revenues - percent of GDP  | 26.6%  |
| Major Industries  | tourism, bauxite/alumina, textiles, agro processing, wearing apparel, light manufactures, rum, cement, metal, paper, chemical products, telecommunications  |
| Industrial Growth Rate  | -2%  |
| Agriculture Products  | sugarcane, bananas, coffee, citrus, yams, vegetables, poultry, goats, milk, crustaceans, and mollusks  |
| Currency Code  | Jamaican dollar (JMD)  |
| Child Labor - % of children ages 5-14  | 6%  |
| Child Labor - # of children ages 5-14  | 38,516  |
| Commercial Bank Prime Lending Rate  | 17%  |

**Jamaica Economy**

**Economic Overview**

The Jamaican economy is heavily dependent on services, which now account for 70% of GDP. The country continues to derive most of its foreign exchange from tourism, remittances, and bauxite/alumina. The global economic slowdown, particularly after the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2002, stunted economic growth; the economy rebounded moderately in 2003, with one of the best tourist seasons on record. But the economy faces serious long-term problems: high interest rates; increased foreign competition; a pressured, sometimes sliding, exchange rate; a sizable merchandise trade deficit; large-scale unemployment; and a growing internal debt, the result of government bailouts to ailing sectors of the economy. The ratio of debt to GDP is close to 150%. Inflation, previously a bright spot, is expected to remain in the double digits. Depressed economic conditions have led to increased civil unrest, including gang violence fueled by the drug trade. In 2004, the government faces the difficult prospect of having to achieve fiscal discipline in order to maintain debt payments while simultaneously attacking a serious and growing crime problem that is hampering economic growth.

**Jamaica Exports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Exports  | $1,487,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Exports  | alumina, bauxite, sugar, bananas, rum, coffee, yams, beverages, chemicals, wearing apparel, mineral fuels  |
| Top Export Partners  | US 28.3%, Canada 14.1%, Netherlands 12.2%, UK 12.1%, Norway 8.4%  |

**Jamaica Imports**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Imports  | $5,378,000,000 (USD)  |
| Major Imports  | food and other consumer goods, industrial supplies, fuel, parts and accessories of capital goods, machinery and transport equipment, construction materials  |
| Top Import Partners  | US 44%, Trinidad and Tobago 9.1%, Japan 5.9%, Venezuela 4%  |

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**Jamaica National Anthem Lyrics**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Anthem Lyrics English  | Eternal Father bless our landGuard us with Thy mighty Hand Keep us free from evil powers, Be our light through countless hours. To our Leaders Great Defender, Grant true wisdom from above. Justice, Truth be ours forever, Jamaica, Land we loveJamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica land we love. Teach us true respect for all, Stir response to duty's call, Strengthen us the weak to cherish, Give us vision lest we perish. Knowledge send us Heavenly Father, Grant true wisdom from above. Justice, Truth be ours forever, Jamaica, Land we love. Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica land we love.  |

**Jamaica Interesting Facts**

* A Christmas treat is sorrel, a dark red drink made form soaking sorrel leaves in hot water and adding sugar, ginger, or lime and rum. The sorrel plant blooms only at Christmas time.
* After the birth of a child, some rural Jamaicans bury the placenta and umbilical cord in the ground, then plant a sapling over the spot. The tree is known as the baby's tree or "navel-string" tree.
* Allspice, which tastes like a combination of cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and pepper, is really ground from the seeds of a single plant, the Jamaican pimento.
* Anancy tales are based on a folk hero called Brer Anancy, half-man, half-spider, who lives by his wits.
* "Daddy" Sam Sharpe, a Baptist preacher, led Jamaica's last slave rebellion in Montego Bay during the Christmas of 1831. Although the revolt failed, slavery was finally abolished a few years later.
* Ian Flemming, author of the James Bond series of novels, wrote most of his books at his Jamaican home, called Golden Eye.
* In 1998, Jodi Ann Maxwell, Jamaica's Spelling Bee Champion, was the first non-American to win the US national competition.
* Jamaica's bobsled team is the subject of the comic Walt Disney movie Cool Runnings.
* Jamaican Courtenay Walsh was captain of the West Indies cricket team and has played more matches (500 wickets) than any other bowler in the history of cricket.
* Jamaicans refer to their major crops in terms of gold. Sugar is brown gold, while bananas are green gold and bauxite is red gold. Citrus fruits are sun gold.
* Jamaicans use fruits and vegetables for their healing properties. Papaya helps relieve indigestion, while guava leaves treat diarrhea, and tamarind soothes itchy skin and chicken pox.
* Louise Bennett-Coverley's book of poems, Jamaica Labrish (1966), was the first to be published in the Jamaican dialect . She lives in Toronto.
* Most Jamaicans living abroad try to return to their homeland to celebrate Christmas with their families.
* People descended from the Kromanti tribe in Africa were the largest group in Maroon communities; the Kromanti language is still used in Jamaican Maroon festivals.
* Some Jamaicans hold nine-day wakes for deceased persons. The wake is a time for respecting and honoring the departed soul. For nine nights, relatives and friends share food and sing hymns, thus saying goodbye to the departed one.
* Some women work alone or with children selling fruits, vegetables and snacks. Known as "higglers," these solo, often middle-aged women are able to provide income for their families when the only alternatives are unemployment or difficult domestic work.
* The British imported the mongoose to help eradicate the cane rat in Jamaica. In the process, the mongoose also fed on snakes.
* The colors of Jamaica's flag are symbolic. Black signifies the strength and creativity of the people; gold, the natural wealth and beauty of sunlight; and green, hope and agricultural resources.
* The cottonwood tree is said to be the favorite residence of duppies (ghosts).
* The dogblood herb is taken internally for bruising and hemorrhaging.
* The majority of university students in Jamaica are women. Many women also attend community colleges and business schools.
* The most famous Jamaican bird is the national bird, the indigenous swallow tail hummingbird or "doctor bird." The male has a distinctive tail that splits into two long sections, which stream behind as he flies.
* The Pocomania (also called Pukkumina and Pocco) and the Revival Zion groups are two of Jamaica's cults. Pocomania adherents invoke earthly spirits, while Revivalists worship angels, saints and the Holy Spirit.
* When a child loses a tooth, at night the Rolling Calf comes rattling chains to take the child and their tooth away. They put the tooth in a tin can and shake it hard. The noise keeps the Rolling Calf away.

**Jamaica Lost Tooth Traditions**

In some areas at night, after their tooth falls out, the Rolling Calf comes with rattling chains to take the child and their tooth away. They put the tooth in a tin can and shake it hard. The noise keeps the Rolling Calf away. In other areas they throw the old tooth on top of the roof while singing a song in the hope that they will receive a new one.

**History of Jamaica**

Arawaks from South America had settled in Jamaica prior to Christopher Columbus’ first arrival at the island in 1494. During Spain’s occupation of the island, starting in 1510, the Arawaks were exterminated by disease, slavery, and war. Spain brought the first African slaves to Jamaica in 1517. In 1655, British forces seized the island, and in 1670, Great Britain gained formal possession.

Sugar made Jamaica one of the most valuable possessions in the world for more than 150 years. The British Parliament abolished slavery as of August 1, 1834. After a long period of direct British colonial rule, Jamaica gained a degree of local political control in the late 1930s, and held its first election under full universal adult suffrage in 1944. Jamaica joined nine other U.K. territories in the West Indies Federation in 1958 but withdrew after Jamaican voters rejected membership in 1961. Jamaica gained independence in 1962, remaining a member of the Commonwealth.

Historically, Jamaican emigration has been heavy. Since the United Kingdom restricted emigration in 1967, the major flow has been to the United States and Canada. About 20,000 Jamaicans emigrate to the United States each year; another 200,000 visit annually. New York, Miami, Chicago, and Hartford are among the U.S. cities with a significant Jamaican population. Remittances from the expatriate communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, estimated at up to $800 million per year, make increasingly significant contributions to Jamaica’s economy.

**Jamaica History Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Jamaica Year in History | Jamaica Timeline |
| 1494  | **Christopher Columbus arrived at the island of Jamaica on his second voyage.**Christopher Columbus arrived at the island of Jamaica on his secondvoyage.  |
| 1509  | **Jamaica occupied by the Spaniards**Jamaica occupied by the Spaniards under a license from Columbus’s son; much of the indigenous Arawak community dies off from exposure to European diseases; African slaves brought in to work on the sugar plantations.  |
| 1517  | **Spain brought the first slaves to Jamaica.**Spain brought the first slaves to Jamaica.  |
| 1555  | **Island attacked by French.**Island attacked by French.  |
| 1624  | **Britain begins colonizing the Caribbean.**Britain begins colonizing the Caribbean.  |
| 1640  | **Spanish crown took control of the colony.**Spanish crown took control of the colony.  |
| 1655  | **Jamaica is captured by the British.**Jamaica is captured by the British.  |
| 1656  | **Cromwell issued his famous proclamation in an effort to settle the island.**Cromwell issued his famous proclamation in an effort to settle theisland. Land was granted to British citizens who were willing to settleon the island. Approximately 1,600 immigrants took up the offer andsettled around Port Morant.  |
| 1670  | **Jamaica formally ceded to the British in accordance with the Treaty of Madrid.**Jamaica formally ceded to the British in accordance with the Treaty of Madrid.  |
| 1675  | **1,200 settlers from Suriname came to Jamaica and started sugar planting.**1,200 settlers from Suriname came to Jamaica and started sugar planting.  |
| 1692  | **Port Royal destroyed by violent earthquake.**Port Royal, once the busiest trading center of the British West Indies and infamous for general debauchery, is devastated by an earthquake.  |
| 1739  | **After two major Maroon Wars, signed treaties with the British.**After two major Maroon Wars, signed treaties with the British. In the treaty of 1740 -- given land and rights as free men.Theywere to stop fighting and recapture run-away slaves. Caused a riftbecause not all Maroons believed in returning recaptured slaves toplantations.  |
| 1808  | **The Abolition Bill was passed.**The Abolition Bill was passed.This meant the trading in African slaves was declared to be “utterly abolished, prohibited and declared to be unlawful”.  |
| 1831  | **The Christmas Rebellion**The Christmas Rebellion (also known as the Baptist War) of 1831which began on the Kensington Estate in St. James, was led by SamuelSharpe - a Baptist Deacon. Sam Sharpe is now a National Hero.This was the last great slave rebellion (involving as many as 60,000 of the island’s 300,000 slave population).Itlasted for four months until the rebellion was crushed. The rebelleaders were hanged in Charles Square, Montego Bay, now known as SamSharpe Square.  |
| 1842  | **Calabar College in Kingston was opened.**Calabar College in Kingston was opened.  |
| 1870  | **Banana plantations set up**Banana plantations set up as the sugar cane industry declines in the face of competition from European beet sugar.  |
| 1872  | **Island’s capital moved from Spanish Town to Kingston.**Island’s capital moved from Spanish Town to Kingston.  |
| 1884  | **New constitution marks the initial revival of local autonomy.**New constitution marks the initial revival of local autonomy.  |
| 1907  | **City of Kingston destroyed by earthquake.**City of Kingston destroyed by earthquake.  |
| 1944  | **Universal adult suffrage introduced.**Universal adult suffrage introduced; new constitution providing for a popularly-elected House of Representatives promulgated.  |
| 1958  | **Jamaica becomes a member of the British-sponsored Federation of the West Indies.**Jamaica becomes a member of the British-sponsored Federation of the West Indies.  |
| 1961  | **Jamaica withdraws from the Federation of the West Indies.**Jamaica withdraws from the Federation of the West Indies.  |
| 1962  | **Jamaica becomes independent within the British Commonwealth.**Jamaica becomes independent within the British Commonwealth with Alexander Bustamante of the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) as prime minister.  The British Flag was lowered at midnight August 5, 1962 and the Jamaican Flag was hoisted for the first time. Admitted membership to the United Nations.  |
| 1988  | **Jamaica badly hit by Hurricane Gilbert.**Jamaica badly hit by Hurricane Gilbert.  |
| 1999  | **Government orders the army to patrol the streets of Kingston.**Government orders the army to patrol the streets of Kingston following a massive increase in crime.  |
| 2001  | **Troops restore order**Troops and armored vehicles restore order in the capital, Kingston, after three days of unrest leave at least 27 people dead.  |
| 2004  | **Jean-Bertrand Aristidegets asylum,**Former Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide takes up temporary asylum, prompting an angry response from the new Haitian government.  |
| 2008  | **Death penalty kept**Parliament votes to keep the death penalty, as Jamaica struggles to contain one of the world's highest murder rates.  |
| 2012  | **Mrs Simpson-Miller elected**Upon taking up office, Mrs Simpson-Miller says that 50 years after Jamaica gained its independence from Britain, it is time to become a republic.  |

**Jamaica Meals and Food**

Recipes from Jamaica

* [Rice and Beans - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/rice-and-beans.htm)
* [Ackee and Saltfish - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/ackee-and-saltfish.htm)
* [Banana Fritters - Dessert](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/banana-fritters1.htm)
* [Curried Goat - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/curried-goat.htm)
* [Rice and Peas (Red Beans and Rice) - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/rice-and-peas-red-beans-and-rice.htm)
* [Rundown - Main Dish](http://www.countryreports.org/country/Jamaica/recipe/rundown.htm)

**Jamaica Recipes and Diet**

Jamaica food and meal customs

**Diet**

Ackee and Saltfish is the Jamaican national dish. The fruit of the ackee tree, poisonous until its outer casing has opened, is not consumed widely anywhere but Jamaica.

Jamaicans eat a large breakfast, which usually begins with a hot beverage (coffee, cocoa, tea, or herbal tea), perhaps followed by bammy (cassava bread), green bananas, roasted breadfruit, cornmeal porridge, yam or fried dumplings with salted cod (with or without ackee), herring or mackerel.

At midday Jamaicans eat dinner. The main course is usually chicken or fish, though beef, pork and goat meat are also popular. Common fish dishes are escovitch fish, served with peppers and onions; rundown, which is fish boiled in coconut milk; and various curries, which were introduced by the island's East Indian population. Rice and peas (either gungo or black-eyed, or beans) often accompany main courses

Supper is usually substantial. Meat dishes are accompanied by filling foods such as dumplings, sweet potatoes, yams, green bananas, breadfruit, rice and festival, which are fried flour sticks.

Food in Jamaica



[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/jm/cassava.jpg) 

**Jamaica Languages**

**Languages**

English, patois English

**Jamaica Clothing and Fashion**

Though Jamaican clothing and fashion
is not as popular as European and African clothing it is defined by the
use of primary colors and the popular use of cotton because of the
tropical climate.
Rastafarian colors -- gold, green and red --  are often seen in clothing.

**Dating, Family and Children Jamaica**

**Family and Children**

Most Jamaican families are headed by women. Jamaicans adore children. About one-third of Jamaican women have their first child during adolescence. Women often raise children alone or in extended families; whatever the arrangement, relatives and neighbors are expected to help with child care in Jamaican communities. Most fathers contribute to the support of their children, but often play a smaller role in child-rearing

After the birth of a child, some rural Jamaicans bury the placenta and umbilical cord in the ground, then plant a sapling over the spot. The tree is known as the baby's tree or “navel-string” tree.

**Jamaica Gestures and Greetings**

**Greetings**

Jamaicans commonly use nicknames in casual conversations. They address people by their title (Mr., Mrs., or Miss) and their surname until a personal relationship has developed. Once a friendship has been established, women may hug and kiss on each cheek, starting with the right. Men often pat each other’s shoulder or arm during the greeting process or while conversing.

**Gestures**

To hail a taxi, one keeps the hand down and waves.

**Visiting**

Table manners are Continental style -- the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.

**Cultural Attributes**

Jamaicans are generally outgoing and like to have animated conversations. Good table manners are considered an important social refinement. Jamaicans have a healthy distrust of those in authority and prefer to put their faith in those they know well, such as their extended family and close friends who are treated as if they were family.

**Jamaica Church and Religion**

Religion is fundamental to Jamaican life. Its importance is evident in Jamaican speech, which has many references to Biblical events. The island has the highest number of churches per capita in the world and more than 100 different Christian denominations. On Sundays, churches are filled with large congregations; people dress in their finest clothes and take the day as a time for rest and prayer.

Most Jamaicans are Christians; the largest denominations are the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Brethren and Roman Catholics. Jamaica is also home to Rastafarianism. Central to the religion is the belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie, who was crowned king of Ethiopia in 1930 and claimed his descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Rastas believe that Selassie was chosen to lead the African people (Jahs), who hold a special significance in the Bible and the world. Rastafarianism has no churches or political parties, but it is very visible; followers adopt styles of speech, behavior, diet and dress that distinguish them from “Babylon” (the rest of society).

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. The Government at all levels sought to protect this right in full and did not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. There is no state religion.

Shortly after being sworn into office at the end of March 2006, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller instructed her cabinet to ensure that each government board had a pastor appointed to it. It was clear this initiative was directed at Christians; however, it appeared that religious leaders of all faiths could be eligible for appointment. Some criticized the initiative as an attempt to curry favor with Christians rather than as a practical proposal for effective government. Other critics argued that persons should be appointed to boards based on their expertise rather than their religious affiliation.

The Christian holy days of Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, and Christmas are national holidays.

Parliament may act freely to recognize a religious group; however, registration is not mandatory. Recognized groups receive tax-exempt status and other privileges, such as the right of their clergy to visit members in prison.

Foreign missionaries are subject to no restrictions other than the same immigration controls that govern other foreign visitors.

Religious schools are not subject to any special restrictions, nor do they receive special treatment from the Government. Most religious schools are affiliated with either the Catholic Church or Protestant denominations; there also is at least one Jewish school.

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion.

**Religions in Jamaica**

The following chart illustrates the breakdown of major religions in Jamaica:

Other: 26.0 %Protestant: 62.0 %Pentecostal: 8.0 %Roman Catholic: 4.0 %Highcharts.com

**Jamaica Sport and Recreation**

Jamaica's sports are soccer and cricket and horse racing. Children enjoy watching television, playing electronic games and basketball. Adults like listening to sports broadcasts, music and watching television, and younger Jamaicans especially love dancing.

**Jamaica Recreation Photos**

[](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/jm/jamaicabeach.jpg) [](http://d2z7bzwflv7old.cloudfront.net/cdn_image/maxW_1200/images/photos/jm/jamaicaswim.jpg)