



Jamaica

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Geography



- Jamaica is the largest English-speaking island in the Caribbean and the third largest in the region. With a total land area of 10,991 sq. km (4,442 square miles), the island is 235 km (146 miles) long with widths varying between 35 and 82 km (22 and 51 miles). Situated ninety miles south of Cuba and six hundred miles south of Miami.
- Jamaica is divided into three counties, Cornwall, Middlesex and Surrey. These counties are further subdivided into parishes with Kingston, the smallest of the 14 parishes, as home to the capital city.
- The annual average temperature is 27 degrees Celsius.



History

- Once a Spanish possession known as *Santiago*, in 1655 it came under the rule of England (later Great Britain), and was called Jamaica. It achieved full independence from the United Kingdom on 6 August 1962. With 2.8 million people, it is the third most populous Anglophone country in the Americas, after the United States and Canada. Kingston is the country's largest city and its capital, with a population of 937,700. Jamaica has a large diaspora around the world, due to emigration from the country.

Coat of Arms

The Jamaican coat of arms depicts one male and one female Taino Indian standing on either side of a shield, bearing a red cross with five pineapples. Above the shield, a Jamaican crocodile rests atop the English royal helmet and mantling. Their national motto – "Out of Many, One People", is inscribed in a banner, beneath the shield.



Flag

A diagonal gold cross divides the flag into two black triangles and two green ones. Opposite triangles have the same colours. "Hardships there are, but the land is green and the sun shineth" is the flag's theme. Black represents the strength and creativity of their people; green, their wealth of agricultural resources; and gold, the sunlight over their island and their future hopes.



Heroes

Jamaica has seven National Heroes. They are: Nanny of the Maroons, Samuel Sharpe, Paul Bogle, George William Gordon, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Norman Washington Manley and Sir William Alexander Bustamante. These individuals fought for the social and political freedoms they enjoy today.



Religion is omnipresent in Jamaica – everywhere you go it permeates academic debates, ceremonies, business and political life. They are a predominantly Christian country, with large groups of Baptists, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Other religions, such as Islam and Judaism are also represented on a small scale, adding to the diversity of their nation's heritage.

- Storied past and rich cultural medley has also led to the rise of such religious forms as **Rastafari** and Pocomania (Pukkumina), largely viewed in traditional religious circles as vehicles of rebellion in Colonial times, and against the status quo.

National symbols

- **National Bird** — Red billed Streamertail (aka Doctor Bird)
- **National Flower** — Lignum vitae
- **National Tree** — Blue Mahoe
- **National Fruit** —Ackee
- **National Motto** — "Out of Many, One People."



The People



In Jamaica, smiles beam from faces in hues ranging from rich coffee to condensed milk-sweetened cocoa.

Offering handshakes, hugs and hearty hellos, Jamaicans are naturally warm, friendly and entertaining. Often their humour cannot be contained by simple smiles, and breaks loose into contagious bouts of laughter and gesticulation. They seldom cry, choosing to laugh instead at whatever comes their way. Reggae pulses through their veins, giving people an innate internal rhythm that fuels their abounding energy and creativity. Their complex past, marked by slavery and the struggle for independence, has made people proud, resilient and strong. They refuse to be restrained, choosing instead to break the boundaries of their small island, gaining worldwide recognition in areas like music and sports.



Culture



Though a small nation, Jamaican culture has a strong global presence. The musical genres reggae, ska, mento, rocksteady, dub, and, more recently, dancehall and raggae all originated in the island's vibrant, popular urban recording scene. Jamaica also played an important role in the development of punk rock, through reggae and ska. Reggae has also influenced African rap music, as they share roots as rhythmic, African styles of music. Thumping, infectious and passionate sounds are the trademarks of Reggae, Jamaica's most internationally recognised music and the heartbeat of their people. Internationally known reggae musician [Bob Marley](#) was also Jamaican.

Dance



There is a well-known adage asserting proudly that the heart of the Jamaican people has never ceased to dance.

Shaped by a mixture of European and African influences, Jamaican dance forms have evolved. From the "jonkonnu" steps practiced by slaves at Christmas time, to the post-Emancipation "bruckins", the liberating "ska" of a newly independent nation to the vibrant, sometimes challenging choreography of the dancehall – their heritage in dance reflects the evolution of their cultural identity.

Dancing is a vital part of the Jamaican lifestyle. Whether as a means of enjoyment, entertainment or expression, the ability to move the body freely is essential to their identity as a people.

Art

Jamaica is a natural muse. Their land gleams in technicolor, as lofty Blue Mountains spill onto verdant plains, shimmering sands and turquoise seas. Their people are bold, brash and bubbly, hailing from around the globe to give a spectrum of skin tones, customs and traditions. Their rich history and culture provide a plethora of ideas, images and untold stories.

Jamaican paintings, sculpture and pottery are among the best in the Caribbean. What makes their art extraordinary is its diversity. Their artists work in a variety of styles, modes and forms, ranging from the academic to the self-taught or intuitive, the surrealist and symbolist to the impressionist and social-realist.



A scenic view of a tropical beach. In the foreground, three motorboats are beached on a sandy shore. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and a rocky island with lush green vegetation is visible in the background under a clear blue sky. The text "Thank you for your attention" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Thank you for your attention