

'Tis The Season To Be Jammin' In Jamaica

The holiday season in Jamaica is an unforgettable escape defined by breathtaking sunsets, tranquil beaches, thrilling adventures and exciting cultural festivities. Season your winter getaway with the island's traditional cuisine and a dash of colorful, upbeat festivals that commemorate the destination's unique and rich heritage.

"There's no better destination than Jamaica to unwind and reconnect with friends and family during the holidays," said John Lynch, Jamaica's Director of Tourism. "Visitors can revel with friendly locals in the lively activities, indulge in some of the island's signature holiday dishes, and truly discover the distinctive culture and unbridled spirit of Jamaica."

Authentic Jamaican Holiday Cuisine

Dining in Jamaica over the holidays is an unforgettably festive experience filled with treats. A traditional dinner is likely to include the following specialties:

- Roast ham, chicken, oxtail or curried goat, accompanied by a sweet yam called yampi.
- Jamaican fruitcake, made with fruits that are marinated for months in rum or port, with a final dousing at the Christmas table.
- Sorrel wine, created from the red fruit of the sorrel plant fermented to a sweetened, red-colored drink spiced with ginger, cloves and pimento, and laced with white rum.

Jamaican Holiday Traditions

Among Jamaica's best-known celebrations of Christmas are Grand Market and Jonkonnu. The Grand Market (or Gran' Market) is a community fair that features food, street dancing, crafts and music. Markets all over the island are set up with vendor stalls selling small toys, balloons, and a huge range of delicious sweets, including pinda (an African word for peanut) cakes, grater cakes and peppermint sticks.

Traditionally on Christmas Eve, some markets are decorated with streamers, balloons and large accordion-style bells. Local residents dress up in colorful costumes, including bright hats purchased at the Grand Market. This fun event is an irresistible magnet, drawing residents to town for a celebration that continues all day and night.

Jonkonnu is a traditional Christmas celebration in which revelers parade through the streets dressed in dazzling masquerade, continuing a custom brought over from Africa by slaves who were transplanted to Jamaica. Jonkonnu bands include a mix of traditional and modern characters, varying across the island. They include: Cow Head or Horse Head, King, Queen (wearing a veil), Devil, Pitchy-Patchy, Red Indians, Belly Woman (a character dressed to look enormously pregnant), and Policeman, a mock officer of the law to keep the motley crew and crowd in check.