

## Spur Tree – Not for the fainthearted

Spur Tree, a mountainous region lying between the parishes of Manchester and St Elizabeth, seems to have been named in honour of the gigantic cotton trees that used to grow in the area, throwing out huge buttresses or spurs, hence "Spur Tree";.

The descent from the hills of Manchester to the plains of St Elizabeth is not for the fainthearted. The hill rises at a breathtaking 304 metres per half mile as it crosses the Don Figueroa Mountains that dominate the topography of the two parishes. In the old days, travellers would dread the mighty spur tree hill – this long and tedious crossing now takes 15 minutes, but used to take as much as five hours! To make the steep climb over the hill, carriages would have to be pulled by draught mules or oxen. Many travellers would exchange their carriages for a strong Jamaican pony, accustomed to the terrain. Today, trucks, buses and regular passenger vehicles make the journey comfortable and easy for some (not the driver!) to appreciate the stunning views of the plains of St Elizabeth and, on a clear day, the Caribbean Sea. Local Flavour Dotted along the hillside are jerk stops where you can take in the view (while stationary!), while indulging in a few cold drinks, delicious jerk chicken, pork or sausage. Be sure to try the Spur Tree specialty, curried goat and rice. The Hillside Jerk Centre is a favourite local stop. At the summit of the hill, thick clouds of heavily spiced aromatic smoke waft from the jerk pit, enticing even the hurried to pause and appreciate the good food, the good company and the fantastic view! Warning! The zig-zagging steep road is an accident hotspot. If you are driving here then please drive carefully, staying well within the speed limit. If you want to admire the view then stop the car at one of the many restaurants along the way - you can treat yourself to some chicken whilst you're there!