

Jamaica Offers A Rich and Diverse Cultural Experience

Visitors to Jamaica looking for their ahh moment of rejuvenation can seek refuge on the pristine shores of Jamaica's white sand beaches.

Jamaica is one of the most popular destinations in the Caribbean and for good reason – its resorts continue to rank amongst the best for their service, amenities, and range of activities and there is easy access to the island from major gateways. Beyond its luxurious shores, however, are endless opportunities to gain an up close and personal glimpse into Jamaica's rich and diverse cultural heritage. "Tourists looking for a glimpse into the history of the people of Jamaica can easily find it throughout the island," said Paul Pennicook, Jamaica's Director of Tourism. "Our museums offer a well curated look at the island's historical influences while our restaurants, art galleries and entertainment spots showcase how our history has evolved. From the heartbeat of the nation's capital, to the diverse offerings of our various resort regions, we encourage visitors to explore the island, meet the people and soak up Jamaica's rich cultural heritage." From Jamaica's capital city, Kingston to the resort capital of Montego Bay, there's a wide array of activities to be experienced by all. Below is a sampling of things to do and see: Kingston Bob Marley Museum: Opened in 1986, Bob Marley's former Kingston residence and studio is one of the city's most-visited attractions. It features the incredible mural "The Journey of Bob Marley Superstar," by Everal Brown, and has a collection of Marley's memorabilia depicting the life and career of the late reggae superstar. bobmarleymuseum.com Trench Town Culture Yard: The former home of Bob Marley and his friend and mentor Vincent "Tata" Ford. Trench Town Culture Yard is a community run project and is the first Heritage Tourism Site in the inner city. In March 2006, the Jamaica National Heritage Trust designated it a National Heritage Site. The Trench Town Culture Yard is run by a management board comprising members from inside and outside the community. Devon House: The restored colonial home built in 1881 by George Stiebel, Jamaica's first black millionaire, is a national monument. A guided tour shows off interesting antiques and shares the storied past of this elegant white two storey Georgian-style Great House. It contains one of the world's finest collections of antique mahogany furniture. End the tour with the famous Devon House ice cream treat, which has been voted the fourth-best place in the world to eat ice cream by National Geographic. devonhousejamaica.com National Gallery of Jamaica: Jamaica has given birth to a number of great artists possessing intuitive, interpretive and traditional artistic acumen. The National Gallery of Jamaica is home to Jamaica's most important art collection showcasing the development of Jamaican art, from Taíno artifacts to Spanish and British colonial art to contemporary works. natgalja.org.jm Montego Bay Travelers to the island can also learn about Rastafari culture by visiting the Rastafari Indigenous Village in Montego Bay. At the village, visitors can experience the culture, language, music, dress, spirit and lifestyle of Jamaica's Rastafarians. Visitors will also learn about the self-sustaining and eco-friendly habits of the Rastafari people. The village is interactive and includes a tour of medicinal herbal gardens, art and craft and musical experience through drum rhythms and ancient chants. www.RastaVillage.com Montego Bay Cultural Centre: One of the newest and most exciting additions to the tourism capital is the Montego Bay Cultural Centre. Located in the heart of the historic Sam Sharpe Square, it houses a museum and an art gallery—both western branches of Jamaica's National Museum and National Art Gallery in Kingston. The Centre opened in 2014 and features an informative display of Jamaica's complete history and timeline, as well as period artifacts from the Taíno days to the slavery period and postmodern Jamaica. South Coast Tourists interested in exploring Jamaica's Maroon heritage can visit Accompong on Kojo Day, January 6. The maroon settlement of Accompong is perched high in the mountains of St. Elizabeth in western Jamaica, bordering the northern parishes of St. James and Trelawny. The village offers an educational and entertainment package to persons who visit Accompong daily to hear the history and learn about the continued work of the Maroons. During the 18th century, the Maroons, carved out a significant area of influence. The origins of the Maroons date back to 1655 around the time when Tainos and Africans who were freed by the Spanish took to remote parts of the island for refuge from the English invasion and to establish settlements. The Maroons used various strategies to maintain their freedom and undermine the constant threat which the English posed. They established settlements in remote parts of the island where it was hilly and densely vegetated. The Maroons have been divided into two groupings based on their location, windward and leeward. The Windward Maroons were those located in the East of the island, while the Leeward Maroons were those occupying the Western part of the island. In addition to Accompong, other areas occupied by Maroons include Trelawny Town in St. James, Moore and Charles Town in Portland, Nanny Town in St. Thomas and Scotts Hall in St. Mary.