

INFORMATION CONCERNING JAMAICA

- **Jamaica**-an island in the western Caribbean located about 90 miles south of Cuba.
- **Population**- about 3.5 million people (over 1.5 million living in the capital city)
- **Capital**- Kingston
- **Industry**- Tourism, bananas, coffee, bauxite, sugar
- **Minimum wage earned**- JA\$7500/ week (appx. US \$50)
- **Weather**-The average daytime temperature is around 85 degrees year around. The hurricane season is from June 1- November 30. The main rainy season is between October-March.
- **Language**- English is the language of commerce and is taught and spoken in schools. There is a national dialect called “patois” (patwa) which is derived from French, Dutch, West African and the English languages.
- **Jamaica** received her independence from Britain in August, 1962. She is recognized as a Commonwealth country, and citizens are Commonwealth Citizens.
- **Government**- Jamaica’s political system is a democratic system patterned after the British model. There are 3 political parties: PNP (People’s National Party), JLP (Jamaican Labor Party) and the NDM (National Democratic Movement) The JLP is currently holding power. Elections must be held within 5 years of the last election. There are no term limits for any elected officials.
- **Immigration requirements**- U.S. citizens are required to travel with a valid passport. Return tickets are necessary. For stays longer than 6 months, work permits or permanent residency is required. Citizens of other countries should check with a Jamaican Embassy or Consulate, or a travel agency for entry requirements.

INFORMATION GENERAL CULTURAL

- **Time**-There is no Daylight Savings Time in Jamaica. Jamaicans operate under an “unspoken” time concept.....9:00 means ANYTIME after 8:59 and before 10:00. For example, if church is scheduled to begin at 9:00, it is not uncommon for it to actually start at 9:15, 9:30 or later. For this reason, there are generally no appointments in business....everything is operated under “first-come, first-served.”
- **Harassment**- Due to the poor economic situations of many people in Jamaica, and the competition for the valued ‘tourist dollar’, there is often what is perceived by many to be harassment of visitors. You will find people who are trying to sell their goods or services have a hard time accepting “NO” as an answer. Most will be persistent in trying to get you to buy souvenirs, hard drugs, sex, exchange money, take their taxi, or have ladies get their hair braided. In recent years, tourist police have tried to show a presence in tourist areas to help eliminate tourist harassment. Please deal with vendors kindly, but firmly.
- **Roads**-Jamaicans drive on the left side of the road. Tourists are allowed to drive with their foreign licenses for up to 3 months. Road conditions are generally poor, with there being an abundance of potholes and narrow, winding roads. There is only one speed.....faster than the car in front of you!
- The only rule of the road is: You MUST overtake (pass) the car in front of you! If you have a tendency towards car-sickness, please make the necessary preparations before coming.
- **Medications & Medical facilities**- If you are taking any prescription medications, please ensure that you have enough with you for your stay. It is also helpful to bring a current copy of your prescription, should your medication get lost or stolen during your stay. There are very good physicians in the Ocho Rios area (about 15 minutes from us), although the hospitals will not be to the standard of those found in the US or Canada.
- A signed medical release form is REQUIRED for all persons coming. No vaccinations are required by law, although we recommend having a current tetanus booster and checking with your local health care centers for any immunizations they suggest for international travel. Knowing your blood type is necessary. Please bring basic first-aid items and insect repellent (musk oil works quite well here).

- **Food-** There is a vast variety of foods found in Jamaica, especially fruits and vegetables. Jamaica is well known for ‘jerk’ pork and chicken (meat seasoned and bar-b-qued in a special way). There are other traditional Jamaican dishes, such as rice & peas, curried goat, ackee and saltfish (the national dish). The cooking has Asian/Indian/African influences and is quite delicious. Since we are close to a tourist area, many of the grocery stores carry American and British imported foods which are generally expensive, but available. If you have special “junk” foods that you love or can’t do without, plan to bring them with you, (and some extra for us!!!) Nothing will be served to you that is not safe to eat and that is not eaten by our own family. Rice is a main staple....be prepared to eat a lot of it, along with boiled green bananas, and boiled and fried dumplings. (flour and water) Special ‘cuts’ of meat are very expensive, as is hamburger. Most meat dishes will not be boneless. We ask that everyone try the local food when served, barring any food allergies. We think most of you will leave having some new favorite Jamaican dishes. Safe drinking water will be supplied to you, so there is no need to bring bottled water with you, unless you prefer your own brand.
- **Tourist Activities-** You will have scheduled time available for you to shop and sightsee while here in Jamaica. Some local attractions are: Dunn’s River Falls- a 2 mile waterfall that can be climbed starting at sea level. (entry fee \$25 US) Dolphin Cove- you can see, touch, and/or swim with the dolphins (from \$30-\$125) All water sports are available- pari-sailing, snorkeling, glass-bottom boat rides, jet-skiing, scuba-diving (costs from \$10-upwards depending on activity) There are also heli-tours and some eco-tourism attractions in our area (entry fees vary) The beaches are public, and most entry fees are in the \$5 range. (*prices may change without prior notice*)
- **Dress-** Please take note of our requested dress code:

Any activity associated with the church: (Worship services, Evangelism)

Ladies- dresses/skirts, blouses

Men- Long pants, nice jeans, casual shirts (ties, belts for Sunday morning)

VBS, camp/retreat or other outdoor activities

Ladies and gentlemen- jeans, t-shirts, shorts of modest length (both men and women)

Work clothes

Ladies & Men- modest shorts, pants, t-shirts (please no spaghetti straps, ladies)

Shopping/sightseeing

Ladies & Men- modest shorts, casual attire

Shoes- comfortable walking shoes, sandals

Swimwear- Ladies & Men- **MODEST!!!**

- **Religious information-** There are over 270 different religious denominations operating in Jamaica. Jamaica is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for having the most churches per square mile worldwide. In spite of that statistic, the moral standards in Jamaica are quite low. Jamaica has one of the highest murder rates per capita in the world, and ranks in the top 30 for having the most politically corrupt governments. Jamaica is quickly becoming a leading drug trafficking and money laundering country.



Some of the fastest growing religious ‘movements’ in Jamaica are:

Seventh-Day Adventists

New Age

Mormonism

Islam

Rastafarianism

- **Our church affiliation**- We belong to the Independent Christian Church/Churches of Christ movement. We use instruments in our worship services. We believe and teach the following steps for salvation:

Hearing of God's word: (Romans 10:14, 17)

Believing: (John 3:16, Hebrews 11:6, I John 5:1)

Confession: (Romans 10:9, 10; I John 1:19)

Repentance: (Acts 2:38; II Peter 3:9)

Baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit: (Acts 2:38, Matthew 28:19; Romans 6)

Continue to live a Godly life: (I Peter 2:9, John 15:5)

We offer participation in the communion service to every believer each Sunday. Tithes and offerings are collected each Sunday morning. Our worship services are structured similarly to those in North American churches, although generally a bit 'livelier' with singing and dancing. Our services are sometimes viewed as 'charismatic' by people who are accustomed to more traditional worship services.