

Yah man...this is one cool—and hot—place to relax and play. If you only read one thing to prepare, read and take this *Inside Scoop* with your documents. It's packed with tips for delightful days and cool nights.

Maritime Travel's Inside Scoop

JAMAICA

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey



travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different there and knowing this is a point of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales to tell •



packing list on overleaf

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience helps turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- advance seats & upgrades
- booking excursions ahead, especially dolphin swims
- insurance coverage
- Kids Club services.

Maritime Travel
We Know Travel Best.

Although it has a laid-back atmosphere, there's a lot to do in Jamaica. It boasts spectacular sunsets, tropical landscaping and breathtaking beaches. Some helpful tips:

- Plan a transition day before and after—if an airline changes a flight, you'll benefit by slowing down.
- Be realistic: we know you want value for money in balancing choices and amenities but no matter what your budget, aim to relax and enjoy. Special requests are requests only. Unless you've paid for an oceanview suite, these are premium (why upgrade fees apply).
- Jamaica enjoys a tropical climate, high temperatures and humid conditions year-round. Average temperatures range from 67-89F/19-32C with two rainy seasons, September-November and May-June. Most times, the short tropical showers give a welcome break from the heat.
- Electrical service is 110 volts/50 cycles standard and electrical appliances use two-pronged flat plugs (such as used in Canada). Some hotels have 220volts.
- Jamaica enjoys good telephone service. Internet access is available at hotels, parish libraries and Internet cafés. Contact your provider for cell/phone card use and security features.
- We strongly recommend Maritime Travel cancellation/interruption and medical insurance.
- The currency is the Jamaican Dollar (JMD); change money at licensed cambio centres and commercial banks, close to all resort areas. Most ATM's take major credit cards; log the dates you'll be away with your company. Banks change traveller's cheques with photo ID.
- The language is English and 'patois' Locals tend to drop the 'r' at the end of words and often add or subtract 'h,' as in, at your 'otel', 'heverybody' says 'ello'. 'Dem' is versatile: it's used for women or men and can also make words plural.
- Travel with a positive attitude—with extra security, having patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Pack strategically

The world is overrun with black bags: put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. Check the dress code for your resort—while some are relaxed, some à la carte restaurants require less casual clothes. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery (you might want to leave precious jewels at home); over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers with a list, dosage and your doctor's phone number (syringes/needles for personal medical use with caps in original containers). Pack most liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml (3.4 oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available at the start of airport screening), then place the bag in the tray provided. You may take baby formula, food or milk if a child aged 2 and under is travelling. Items regular travellers pack in carry-on: pen/notebook, battery alarm clock, disinfectant hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg).



Permitted in carry-on: cell phones, laptops, portable music players, disposable razors, umbrellas, canes and nail clippers. Items you can't take on include knives (an obvious no-no), corkscrews and sports gear such as golf clubs, baseball bats, racquets and pool cues. Check with your airline.

If you love to snorkel, bring your gear as some resorts limit equipment time (and sometimes gear is not as clean or as new as you might like). Most hotels provide hair dryers. Walkie-talkies can help your family stay connected within a resort (remember the batteries).

In addition to normal customs restrictions, Jamaica restricts material on divination, magic and cultism/the supernatural.

What to do...what to do...

- Negril Beach is 7 miles of serenity and water sports, such as river rafting, scuba diving, waterskiing, jet skis/parasailing, rock climbing and even circus workshops with trapeze, juggling and trampoline lessons.
- At the west end of the island, visit the Riverwalk with hidden caverns and waterfalls, lush rainforest and colorful coral reefs. Stroll through dense forest, portage rivers and creeks, and swim remote waterfalls.
- Island Village in Ocho Rios is set among tropical trees and waterways. Village Green is an open space with a stage for live performances with a reggae museum, Internet café, restaurants (including Margaritaville with a waterslide/pool/beach trampolines), arcade, casino and shopping... (continued...)

Your airline

As your plane might be coming in from elsewhere and delayed, confirm your flight prior to departure. Transport Canada can prohibit items as security risks www.catsa-acsta.gc.ca: "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**" Airline staff are on duty some 3 hours prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1 hour before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. Many airlines have reciprocal "code-shares."

Air Canada 1-888-247-2262
Air Transat 1-877-872-6728
WestJet 1-800-538-5696

Baggage: Size/weight restrictions for checked and carry-on varies: check with the airline. **Entry & Departure:** ask your counsellor for updated advisories on passports and required documentation. Departure tax is \$27 US cash, sometimes charged in your airfare—ask your counsellor.



Packing checklist

See www.maritimetravel.ca/tools.asp?PageID=617

- a valid passport for each person
- copies: passport, travellers cheques, ID, cancellation/medical insurance
- itinerary/contact info to home contact
- if a solo parent, notarized letter from other parent allowing trip
- credit cards/cash, fanny pack for these & passports
- medication e.g. for Montezuma's Revenge
- prescriptions, glasses
- mosquito/bug repellent, after bite topical
- toiletries, personal hygiene, face cloth
- laundry soap, facial tissues, ear plugs
- hat, sweater/jacket, swimsuit/coverup
- books, magazines, travel games
- notebook/pens, flip flops, first aid kit
- for kids; a few favourite toys
- women: dressy outfit; men: shirt/dress pants & jacket
- sandals, comfy shoes, water shoes if going to climb the falls
- pants with zip off legs to shorts
- camera, extra film or memory card
- binoculars, sunglasses, sunscreen
- address list for postcards/emails
- sports equipment, flashlight/batteries
- Your sense of adventure & humour!**

Canadian citizens: In an emergency, the Consulate/High Commission is in Kingston, 3 West Kings House Rd (Waterloo doors), 876-926-1500. You can also call Foreign Affairs (collect if needed) at 613-996-8885 or email sos@international.gc.ca. See www.canadainternational.gc.ca/jamaica-jamaique.

(...continued)

- Swim with dolphins in Dolphin Cove, a 4-acre tropical retreat in Ocho Rios. Three programs allow differing levels of interaction: touch, encounter and swim (reservations are essential). Guests can also sample local fruit or enjoy a buffet on a terrace while watching the dolphins.
- Near Falmouth, swim at night in the Blue Lagoon and take a boat trip in the glistening waters or float on a river raft (with rum punch in hand)
- Walk up Mayfield Falls (alternative to Dunn's Falls), an hour away from Montego bay/Negril.
- Check out pottery or rum factory tours, and take a Port Royal/Fort Charles walking tour.
- Jamaica is in the Eastern Time Zone (think Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa time, with nicer winter weather...) and does not observe Daylight Savings Time.
- See www.visitjamaica.com.

When you arrive

After clearing customs, if on a charter (confirm with your counsellor), meet your rep outside the baggage area; s/he will show you to the bus for your hotel. Others might say they can drive you and you'll be reimbursed—this is not true. Locals might be aggressive in helping with bags—if you don't want help, politely say so. Before you get on, check luggage to ensure it's secure and loaded on the bus.

Locals know Red Stripe fans can't wait: they sell this beer to tourists, packed in ice bags for the hot and often long ride to the hotel (bottles don't have twist tops; you'll be a bus hero if you pack an opener.) While a refreshing introduction to a country, buses don't have washrooms and go over bumpy roads, but will pull to the side of the road—this might not be so inconvenient for men...The bus may drop off other travellers—it's a great way to see other resorts!

You'll be advised of the time/place for your orientation meeting—don't miss it. The tour rep works part-time at your hotel (and other resorts) during posted hours. Since others are leaving, rooms are often not ready when you arrive, but start on the fun. If you've packed a swimsuit in your carry-on or can shed clothes, head to the pool or beach: the front desk will hold bags. If something is broken or unacceptable in your room, notify the front desk.

Most hotels exchange money, some merchants require photo ID for credit cards; take your passport to cash travellers cheques. Put a record of serial numbers with a copy of your passport's ID page in your in-room safe or hotel's safety deposit box.

The international language of courtesy

Delays and cancellations are all part of travelling. Indeed a slower pace of life is guaranteed in Jamaica: enjoy it! All countries have customs and although paying, you're a guest in their country. Tread lightly—on holiday we're all more casual, but littering and cigarette butts are unwelcome everywhere. Although you're on vacation, the locals are not. Avoid wearing beach attire around town, especially on Sunday and take off hats in restaurants to show respect. When you brush your teeth, don't run the water until rinsing. It's natural to be curious about working conditions in other countries, e.g., how much a bartender makes: resort staff are friendly but if you have questions of a personal nature, ask the tour rep. Most staff work very long hours—a smile, patience and a kind word are always welcome.

When you leave

Do a room sweep for belongings. Although there's usually a noon check-out, you may be able to pay a late fee or pack what's needed for a few hours and check your luggage at the hotel. Before you purchase any wooden items, check for worm holes: if so, your item will be confiscated and destroyed at customs. Don't buy or accept anything suspect or that may be taken from you at customs: plants, meat/animal products or endangered species parts. Do not purchase or use drugs: The Jamaican Tourist Board warns, "Incarceration is not a pleasant way to extend your holiday—you really don't get much sightseeing done from behind the bars of a prison!"

See I Declare, <http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/publications/pub/bsf5056-eng.html>.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at 1-888-551-1181.

Deposits are non-refundable & non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. For details, see your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

When you're there

Enjoy local food and drink, but in moderation; sun and alcohol don't mix. Avoid uncooked food and food from street vendors. Avoid street animals (rabies). Drink bottled/purified water and wash your hands often. Ice at the resorts is safe but check with the tour rep. Many travellers go to the beach early to "reserve" beach chairs with towels; don't leave valuables or swap chairs already taken. Beach towels are at the hotels; to reduce loss, a deposit is sometimes charged and returned on your departure. Some beaches are restricted at night for security; avoid them at dusk due to bugs. Water is a precious commodity: when people leave the beach to get ready for dinner, expect reduced water pressure/hot water; just return earlier to get ready. If approached to buy items or services (often on beaches) and you're not interested, be politely firm. Avoid timeshare sales: there's no "free lunch." If you book a tour, make sure you can handle it: don't book Advanced Scuba if you can't swim. For local nightlife, go with others and return to your resort.

Maritime Travel
We Know Travel Best.

www.maritimetravel.ca