



Travelers Info

Time Zone

For North Americans, Jamaica is on Eastern Standard Time, for those observing GMT they are -5 in the winter and -6 hours in the Summer (based on British Winter and Summer times. Jamaica does not observe Daylight Savings Time.)

Climate

Ranges from an average of 77F January to March, 79F in April, 80F in May, 82F June to August, 81F in September & October, 79F in November and 78F in December.

Water

Drinking water is purified and generally safe to drink. If you're out and about and unsure or just want to be on the safe side, then bottled mineral water is available.

Communications

All the usual services are available telephones (land and cell/mobile), fax, internet, TV (national and cable), radio, telex.

Electrical

110 volts is standard (some Hotels use 220 volts).

Clothing

Light tropical clothing can be worn through out the year. Shorts and swim wear for water activities; a t-shirt is also useful for preventing sunburn when in the water. Evenings can be slightly cooler especially in mountainous areas and in the winter months so a light jacket or cardigan will be useful, as will good walking boots if hiking.

Insect Repellant

Useful for evenings at the beach, by water or in wooded areas.

Holidays 2008

Like all countries Jamaica enjoys its fair share of public holidays. This year they fall on the following dates; New Year's Day (January 1); Ash Wednesday (February 6th); Good Friday (March 21st); Easter Monday (March 24th); Labour Day (May 23rd); Emancipation Day (August 1st); Independence Day (August 6th); National Heroes Day (October 20th); Christmas Day (December 25th); Boxing Day (December 26th).

Car Rentals

In Jamaica we drive on the LEFT. The speed limit is 50kph (30mph) in the towns and populated areas, and 80kph(50mph) on the highways. To rent a vehicle visitors may use a valid drivers` license for up to 3 months and must be at least 25 years old. Most car rental agencies request that you post a bond to meet insurance regulations with cash, a major credit card, or travelers` cheques.

Sports

Jamaica has everything from horseback riding, Golf (13 Championship courses), tennis, deep sea fishing, scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing & surfing, diving, horse racing and polo, to yacht clubs.

Before you go

Traveler's Insurance

This is essential when traveling anywhere, you really need to make sure you're covered. This is particularly important in cases of theft or in case you need medical attention.

Vaccinations

Currently no vaccinations required unless you have visited the following countries (or areas) in the 6 weeks prior to your trip; Belize, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, South America, Sudan, Trinidad & Tobago, Zaire. As the situation changes all the time please make sure you check with your local Health Care provider for definitive advice on this issue.

Vaccinations (continued)

UK Health - www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice

US Health - www.travel.state.gov

Entry Requirements

UK, Commonwealth citizens, US and Canadian citizens do not need visas. All other nationalities do. However, as things can change at a moments notice we strongly recommend that you check with your nearest Jamaican Consulate or Jamaican Tourist Board Office before making your arrangements. All visitors must have a valid return or onward journey ticket in their possession at the time of entry into Jamaica. We cannot stress this last point enough, people can be refused entry if they don't comply with this requirement.

Medical Facilities

There are Drug Stores (Pharmacies) island wide selling international brand name pharmaceuticals. But some drugs you may be able to buy off the shelf at home, may require a prescription in Jamaica. So its best to take your favourite off the shelf products with you, and of course a good supply of any essential prescription medication. There are lots of Clinics and Hospitals, many Hotels either have a Nurse or Doctor on call or will refer you to a practioner.

Money, Banking & Shopping

Currency

The Jamaican Dollar (JA\$) is the official currency. The rate fluctuates for the current rate check (<http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/caribbean/jamaica/currency.htm>) US Dollars are also widely accepted and in resorts prices are often quoted in both Jamaican and US Dollars. For a currency converter, please see www.xe.com/ucc

Banking

There are branches of Commercial Banks all over the island. Hours are generally Mon to Thurs 9am to 2pm and Fri 9am to 4pm, hours vary slightly for different Banks. There are lots of Foreign Exchange Bureaus too, often with slightly longer opening hours.

Credit Cards

All major cards are accepted (MasterCard & Visa more widely). Few banks and bureaus will give cash advances on credit cards; you'll frequently be referred to the nearest ATM.

Money Transfer Services

There are lots of Western Union Bureaus all over the island. So if you run short of cash ask your nearest and dearest to wire some money over, you'll need ID such as a passport or a Drivers Licence (photo id ones only) before you can claim your cash. They tend to keep normal opening hours - Monday to Saturday, 9am to 5pm, though times may vary slightly from place to place.

Shopping

Arts and crafts, clothing, ornaments, bags, gold and silver jewelry, Rum, Liquers, Blue Mountain Coffee, Perfumes, the lot. Montego Bay and Ocho Rios both have a number of Duty Free shops. In major resort areas there are dedicated Arts and Crafts markets selling a wide range of goods. These can be fun but also a nerve racking experience as you'll be surrounded by lots of traders who all want you to come and see their goods for which you'll get 'a special price'. You're expected to barter or haggle over the price a little. A good rule of thumb is to try to agree a price that's about 75% of the original price quoted. Experts (you'll need a lot of patience and time to achieve this elevated status) may be able to get bigger reductions. A word of warning, don't haggle if you're not really interested in buying, as it's considered rude.

Tipping

If you've received good service do feel free to tip (10 to 15%). A lot of people are on low incomes and tips are appreciated.