



Jamaica Fast Facts

Population:

2,713,130 (July 2004 est.)

Capital:

Kingston

Currency:

Jamaican dollar (JMD)

Religion(s):

Protestant 61.3%, Roman Catholic 4%, other including some spiritual cults 34.7%

Language(s):

English (official), Patois (English-based creole)

Major Events:

Independence Day, (August 6, 1962) - celebrated on 1st Monday in August
 Carnival - week after Easter
 National Heroes Day - 3rd Monday in October
 Bob Marley's Birthday - February 6th

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IIEPassport Focus... JAMAICA



Jamaica at a Glance...

Jamaica

While Jamaica is traditionally pictured as a Caribbean paradise, the island also has a rich cultural heritage to offer to willing students. Jamaica's civilization began with the Carib and Arawak Indians long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494. After Columbus, the island became a Spanish colony, and after 1655, a British colony. Under the British it became famous for its wealthy sugar plantations, which required the importation of an extensive number of slaves from Africa. (Over 90% of Jamaica's current-day population is of African descent.) With the emancipation of the slaves in 1938, the plantations then began to utilize indentured labor from India and China. Jamaica gained freedom from the United Kingdom in August of 1962, but remains a member of the British Commonwealth.



Today, the island's economy is heavily dominated by services, with industries such as tourism and bauxite mining contributing a significant proportion of the country's income. Sugar remains important to the economy, as does the rum that is a byproduct. Jamaica's Blue Mountain coffee is also famous worldwide.

Jamaica has inherited an interesting legacy from its complex roots, stemming from African, Caribbean, American, and European influences. Perhaps one of the best expressions of Jamaica's culture is in Reggae music. Bob Marley received one of Jamaica's highest honors, the Order of Merit for his cultural contributions to Jamaica and his efforts in bringing peace between different points of view. In his music, Marley consistently sought to be a voice raised against racism, oppression, and injustice. Jamaica today is still struggling against high unemployment, poverty and debt, and music provides an outlet through which Jamaicans can express their struggles yet see beyond them to the promises of the future. Jamaica's African heritage has also contributed to Afro-inspired spiritual beliefs and practices, including the Jamaican-born Rastafarianism.

The higher education system in Jamaica consists of a variety of universities, colleges, vocational centers, and teacher-training colleges. The biggest and best-known institution is the University of the West Indies, which is an international institution and serves the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean. UWI began as a College of the University of London in 1948, and achieved full university status in 1962. Today UWI serves as the region's premier educational institution and offers undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs near Kingston, Jamaica's thriving capital and cultural center. The school places a strong emphasis on Caribbean issues, which makes it an ideal location for international students with an interest in Caribbean society and Jamaica's efforts toward development in the contemporary world as the leader of the Caribbean community.

From the paradise of its Caribbean atmosphere to the complexities of its Reggae music and rich artistic and cultural heritage and its modern-day development efforts, Jamaica has much to teach a willing student.

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IIEPassport is the study abroad search engine. Find study abroad programs in Jamaica and Cuba!

Cuba

IIEPassport had planned to present Cuba as its Country of the Month for November. However, recent regulations make it difficult or impossible for most students to study there. The U.S. has a strict embargo on business transactions between the U.S. and Cuba, which places restrictions on travel, including educational travel, by U.S. citizens. These regulations have recently been expanded, so that most short-term programs of less than 10 weeks and programs that are not specifically for credit at a U.S. institution are no longer able to operate.

Currently, colleges and universities can be licensed by the U.S. government to authorize travel related to structured academic programs lasting at least 10 weeks as part of a course of study offered by the U.S. institution. However, you must be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program at that licensed institution in order to take part in the programs. If you are interested in studying in Cuba, make sure that the institution you are enrolled in has a current license to sponsor academic travel. For more information you can go to http://www.iiepassport.org/html/cuba_regs.html.

Cuba is the largest and yet least commercialized island in the Caribbean. Students interested in political science will be hard-pressed to find a location that offers greater contrasts to most of the world's current governments. It is also a fascinating and unusual environment in which to study Spanish language and Latin American culture. People also go there to study a range of other topics including art, history, social sciences, philosophy, the environment, and ecology.

There is much to learn if you are willing and able to take advantage of the special opportunity to travel to Cuba that is provided by authorized academic programs.

Online Resources

Embassy of Jamaica:
<http://www.emjamusa.org/>

University of the West Indies:
<http://www.mona.uwi.edu/>

Lonely Planet:
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

World InfoZone:
<http://www.worldinfozone.com>

CIA Factbook:
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>