[Template:Pp-pc1](/wiki/Template:Pp-pc1" \o "Template:Pp-pc1) [Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) [thumb|Jamaica motto on a building at Papin High School in Kingston, Jamaica.](/wiki/File:Jamaica_motto.jpg)

**Jamaica** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)) is an [island country](/wiki/Island_country) situated in the [Caribbean Sea](/wiki/Caribbean_Sea), consisting of the third-largest island of the [Greater Antilles](/wiki/Greater_Antilles). The island, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in area, lies about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) south of [Cuba](/wiki/Cuba), and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) west of [Hispaniola](/wiki/Hispaniola), the island containing the nation-states of [Haiti](/wiki/Haiti) and the [Dominican Republic](/wiki/Dominican_Republic). Jamaica is the fourth-largest island country in the [Caribbean](/wiki/Caribbean), by area.[[1]](#cite_note-1) Previously inhabited by the indigenous [Arawak](/wiki/Arawak) and [Taíno](/wiki/Taíno) peoples, the island came under [Spanish rule](/wiki/Spanish_Empire) following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494. Named [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), it remained a possession of Spain until 1655, when England (later [Great Britain](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain)) conquered the island and renamed it Jamaica. Under British rule, Jamaica became a leading sugar exporter, with its plantation economy highly dependent on slaves imported from Africa, followed later by Chinese and Indian indentured labour. All slaves were fully emancipated in 1838, and independence from the United Kingdom was achieved on 6 August 1962.[[2]](#cite_note-2) With 2.8 million people, Jamaica is the third most populous [Anglophone](/wiki/English-speaking_world) country in the [Americas](/wiki/Americas) (after the United States and Canada), and the fourth most populous country in the Caribbean. [Kingston](/wiki/Kingston,_Jamaica) is the country's capital and largest city, with a population of 937,700.[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4) [Jamaicans](/wiki/Jamaicans) are of predominately African descent, with significant [European](/wiki/European_Jamaicans), [Chinese](/wiki/Chinese_Jamaicans), [Indian](/wiki/Indo-Jamaican), and mixed-race minorities. Due to a high rate of emigration since the 1960s, Jamaica has a [large diaspora](/wiki/Jamaican_diaspora) around the world, particularly in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[[5]](#cite_note-5) Jamaica is a [Commonwealth realm](/wiki/Commonwealth_realm), with [Queen Elizabeth II](/wiki/Elizabeth_II) as [its monarch](/wiki/Monarchy_of_Jamaica) and [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state). Her appointed representative in the country is the [Governor-General of Jamaica](/wiki/Governor-General_of_Jamaica), currently [Sir Patrick Allen](/wiki/Patrick_Allen_(Governor-General)). The [head of government](/wiki/Head_of_government) and [Prime Minister of Jamaica](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Jamaica) is [Andrew Holness](/wiki/Andrew_Holness). Jamaica is a parliamentary [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) with legislative power vested in the bicameral [Parliament of Jamaica](/wiki/Parliament_of_Jamaica), consisting of an appointed Senate and a directly elected House of Representatives.[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9)[thumb|A map of Jamaica](/wiki/File:Jm-map.png)

## Contents

* 1 Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
* 2 History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
  + 2.1 Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
  + 2.2 Spanish rule (1509–1655)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
  + 2.3 British rule (1655–1962)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
  + 2.4 Independence (1962)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
* 3 Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]
  + 3.1 Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]
  + 3.2 Emigration[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]
  + 3.3 Crime[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]
  + 3.4 Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The [indigenous people](/wiki/Indigenous_people), the [Taíno](/wiki/Taíno_people), called it *Xaymaca* in [Arawakan](/wiki/Arawakan_languages),[[10]](#cite_note-10) meaning the "Land of Wood and Water" or the "Land of Springs".<ref name=taino>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Colloquially Jamaicans refer to their home island as the "Rock", whereof further slang names like "Jamrock", "Jamdown" ("Jamdung" in [Jamaican Patois](/wiki/Jamaican_Patois)), or briefly "Ja", have derived.[[11]](#cite_note-11)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

### Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

The [Arawak](/wiki/Arawak) and [Taíno](/wiki/Taíno) indigenous people, originating in [South America](/wiki/South_America), settled on the island between 4000 and 1000 BC.[[12]](#cite_note-12) When [Christopher Columbus](/wiki/Christopher_Columbus) arrived in 1494, there were more than 200 villages ruled by *caciques* (chiefs of villages). The south coast of Jamaica was the most populated, especially around the area now known as Old Harbour.[[12]](#cite_note-12) The Taino still inhabited Jamaica when the English took control of the island in 1655.[[12]](#cite_note-12) The Jamaican National Heritage Trust is attempting to locate and document any evidence of the Taino/[Arawaks](/wiki/Arawaks).[[13]](#cite_note-13)

### Spanish rule (1509–1655)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further)

Christopher Columbus claimed Jamaica for Spain after landing there in 1494. His probable landing point was Dry Harbour, now called [Discovery Bay](/wiki/Discovery_Bay,_Jamaica).,[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Citation needed span](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed_span). [St. Ann's Bay](/wiki/Saint_Ann_Parish,_Jamaica) was named "Saint Gloria" by Columbus, as the first sighting of the land. One and a half kilometres west of St. Ann's Bay is the site of the first Spanish settlement on the island, [Sevilla](/wiki/Sevilla_la_Nueva_(settlement)), which was established in 1509 and abandoned around 1524 because it was deemed unhealthy.[[15]](#cite_note-15) The capital was moved to [Spanish Town](/wiki/Spanish_Town), then called *St. Jago de la Vega*, around 1534 (at present-day St. Catherine).[[16]](#cite_note-16)

### British rule (1655–1962)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

Spanish Town has the oldest [cathedral](/wiki/Cathedral) of the British colonies in the Caribbean.[[16]](#cite_note-16) The Spanish were forcibly evicted by the English at [Ocho Rios](/wiki/Ocho_Rios) in St. Ann. In 1655, the English, led by [Sir William Penn](/wiki/William_Penn_(admiral)) and General [Robert Venables](/wiki/Robert_Venables), took over the last Spanish fort in Jamaica.[[17]](#cite_note-17) The name of Montego Bay, the capital of the parish of St. James, was derived from the Spanish name [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) (or Bay of Lard), alluding to the lard-making industry based on processing the numerous [boars](/wiki/Boars) in the area.[[18]](#cite_note-18)[thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Morgan,Henry.jpg)[Henry Morgan](/wiki/Henry_Morgan) was a famous [Caribbean pirate](/wiki/Piracy_in_the_Caribbean) and privateer; he had first come to the West Indies as an indentured servant, like most of the early English colonists.[[19]](#cite_note-19)

In 1660, the population of Jamaica was about 4,500 white and 1,500 black,[[20]](#cite_note-20) but by as early as the 1670s, black people formed a majority of the population.[[21]](#cite_note-21) Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and then forcible converted to Christianity in Portugal which led to persecution by the Inquisition and many Spanish and Portuguese Jewish refugees. By 1660, Jamaica had become a refuge for Jews in the New World, also attracting those who had been expelled from Spain and Portugal. A settlement of Jews had arrived in 1510, soon after the son of Christopher Columbus settled on the island. Primarily merchants and traders, the Jewish community was forced to live a clandestine life, calling themselves "Portugals". After the British took over rule of Jamaica, the Jews decided the best defense against Spain's regaining control was to encourage making the colony a base for Caribbean pirates. With the pirates installed in [Port Royal](/wiki/Port_Royal), the Spanish would be deterred from attacking. The British leaders agreed with the viability of this strategy to forestall outside aggression.[[22]](#cite_note-22) When the English captured Jamaica in 1655, the Spanish colonists fled after freeing their slaves.[[17]](#cite_note-17) The slaves dispersed into the mountains, joining the [*maroons*](/wiki/Maroon_(people))*,* those who had previously escaped from the Spanish to live with the [Taínos](/wiki/Taínos).[[23]](#cite_note-23) The [Jamaican Maroons](/wiki/Jamaican_Maroons) fought the British during the 18th century.[[23]](#cite_note-23) The name is still used today for their modern descendants. During the centuries of slavery, Maroons established free communities in the mountainous interior of Jamaica, where they maintained their freedom and independence for generations.

During its first 200 years of British rule, Jamaica became one of the world's leading [sugar](/wiki/Sugar)-exporting, slave-dependent nations, producing more than 77,000 tons of sugar annually between 1820 and 1824. After the [abolition of the slave trade](/wiki/Slave_Trade_Act_1807) in 1807,[[24]](#cite_note-24) the British imported Indian and Chinese workers as [indentured servants](/wiki/Indentured_servant) to supplement the labour pool. Many of their descendants continue to reside in Jamaica today.

[thumb|Montpelier Plantation, the property of C. R. Ellis, Esq. M.P., c. 1820](/wiki/File:Hakewill,_A_Picturesque_Tour_of_the_Island_of_Jamaica,_Plate_19.jpg) By the beginning of the 19th century, Jamaica's dependence on slave labour and a plantation economy had resulted in black people outnumbering white people by a ratio of almost 20 to 1. Although the UK had outlawed the importation of slaves, some were still smuggled into the colonies. While planning the abolition of slavery, the British Parliament passed laws to improve conditions for slaves. They banned the use of whips in the field and flogging of women; informed planters that slaves were to be allowed religious instruction, and required a free day during each week when slaves could sell their produce, prohibiting Sunday markets to enable slaves to attend church.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The House of Assembly in Jamaica resented and resisted the new laws. Members (then restricted to European-Jamaicans) claimed that the slaves were content and objected to Parliament's interference in island affairs. Slave owners feared possible revolts if conditions were lightened. Following a series of rebellions on the island and changing attitudes in Great Britain, the British government formally abolished slavery by an 1833 act, beginning in 1834, with full [emancipation](/wiki/Abolitionism_in_the_United_Kingdom) from chattel slavery declared in 1838. The population in 1834 was 371,070, of whom 15,000 were white, 5,000 free black; 40,000 'coloured' or [mixed race](/wiki/Mixed_race); and 311,070 slaves.[[20]](#cite_note-20) In the 19th century, the British established a number of [botanical gardens](/wiki/Botanical_gardens). These included the [Castleton Botanical Gardens](/wiki/Castleton_Botanical_Gardens), developed in 1862 to replace the [Bath Botanical Gardens](/wiki/Bath,_Jamaica) (created in 1779) which was subject to flooding. [Bath Botanical Gardens](/wiki/Bath,_Jamaica) was the site for planting [breadfruit](/wiki/Breadfruit), brought to Jamaica from the Pacific by Captain [William Bligh](/wiki/William_Bligh). It became a staple in island diets. Other gardens were the [Cinchona](/wiki/Cinchona) [Plantation](/wiki/Plantation), founded in 1868, and the [Hope Botanical Gardens](/wiki/Hope_Botanical_Gardens) founded in 1874. In 1872, [Kingston](/wiki/Kingston,_Jamaica) was designated as the island's capital.

In 1945, [Sir Horace Hector Hearne](/wiki/Horace_Hearne) became [Chief Justice](/wiki/Chief_Justice) and Keeper of the Records in Jamaica. He headed the [Supreme Court](/wiki/Supreme_Court), Kingston between 1945 and 1950/1951. He moved to [Kenya](/wiki/Kenya), which had achieved independence, where he was appointed Chief Justice.

### Independence (1962)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Charles_Camilla_Jamaica_2008.jpg)[Prince Charles](/wiki/Prince_Charles) and the [Duchess of Cornwall](/wiki/Duchess_of_Cornwall) during a visit to Jamaica in 2008

Jamaica slowly gained increasing independence from the United Kingdom. In 1958, it became a province in the [Federation of the West Indies](/wiki/Federation_of_the_West_Indies), a federation among the [British West Indies](/wiki/British_West_Indies). Jamaica attained full independence by leaving the federation in 1962.

Strong economic growth, averaging approximately 6% per annum, marked the first ten years of independence under conservative [Jamaica Labour Party](/wiki/Jamaica_Labour_Party) governments; they were led successively by Prime Ministers [Alexander Bustamante](/wiki/Alexander_Bustamante), [Donald Sangster](/wiki/Donald_Sangster) and [Hugh Shearer](/wiki/Hugh_Shearer). The growth was fueled by strong private investments in [bauxite](/wiki/Bauxite)/alumina, [tourism](/wiki/Tourism), the manufacturing industry and, to a lesser extent, the agricultural sector.

The optimism of the first decade was accompanied by a growing sense of inequality, and concern that the benefits of growth were not being shared by the urban poor.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Combined with the effects of a slowdown in the global economy in 1970,[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) the voters elected the PNP ([People's National Party](/wiki/People's_National_Party)) in 1972. They tried to implement more socially equitable policies in education and health, but the economy suffered under their leadership. By 1980, Jamaica's gross national product had declined to some 25% below the 1972 level. Due to rising foreign and local debt, accompanied by large fiscal deficits, the government sought [International Monetary Fund](/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund) (IMF) financing from the United States and others. The international bankers imposed IMF austerity measures (with a greater than 25% interest rate per year).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Economic deterioration continued into the mid-1980s, exacerbated by a number of factors; the first and third largest alumina producers, [Alpart](/wiki/Alpart) and [Alcoa](/wiki/Alcoa), closed, and there was a significant reduction in production by the second largest producer, [Alcan](/wiki/Alcan). In addition, tourism decreased and Reynolds Jamaica Mines, Ltd. left the Jamaican industry.

Independence, however widely celebrated in Jamaica, has in more recent years come into question. In 2011, a survey showed that approximately 60% of Jamaicans would push to once again become a [British territory](/wiki/British_territory), citing years of social and fiscal mismanagement in the country.[[25]](#cite_note-25)

## Government and politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|Inside the](/wiki/File:Parliament.jm.jpg) [Jamaican Parliament](/wiki/Parliament_of_Jamaica)

Jamaica is a [parliamentary democracy](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) and [constitutional monarchy](/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), with [Queen Elizabeth II](/wiki/Elizabeth_II) serving as the [Jamaican monarch](/wiki/Monarchy_of_Jamaica).[[26]](#cite_note-26)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Jamaica is regarded as a [bilingual](/wiki/Bilingual) country, with two major languages in use by the population.[[54]](#cite_note-54) The official language is [Jamaican Standard English](/wiki/Jamaican_English) (JSE) or Standard Jamaican English (SJE), which is "used in all domains of public life", including the government, the legal system, the media, and education.[[55]](#cite_note-55) However, the primary spoken language is an [English-based creole](/wiki/English-based_creole_languages) called [Jamaican Patois](/wiki/Jamaican_Patois) (or Patwa). A 2007 survey by the Jamaican Language Unit found that 17.1 percent of the population were [monolingual](/wiki/Monolingualism) in JSE, 36.5 percent were monolingual in Patois, and 46.4 percent were bilingual, although earlier surveys had pointed to a greater degree of bilinguality (up to 90 percent).[[56]](#cite_note-56) The Jamaican education system has only recently begun to offer formal instruction in Patois, while retaining JSE as the "official language of instruction".[[57]](#cite_note-57) Additionally, some Jamaicans speak one or more of [Jamaican Sign Language](/wiki/Jamaican_Sign_Language), [American Sign Language](/wiki/American_Sign_Language) or the indigenous [Jamaican Country Sign Language](/wiki/Jamaican_Country_Sign_Language) (Konchri Sain).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Both JSL and ASL are rapidly replacing Konchri Sain due to a variety of reasons.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Emigration[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

Many Jamaicans have [emigrated](/wiki/Emigration) to other countries, especially to the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. In the case of the United States, about 20,000 Jamaicans per year are granted permanent residence.[[58]](#cite_note-58) The great number of Jamaicans living abroad has become known as the [Jamaican diaspora](/wiki/Jamaican_diaspora). There has also been emigration of Jamaicans to [Cuba](/wiki/Cuba).[[59]](#cite_note-59) The scale of emigration has been widespread and similar to other Caribbean entities such as [Puerto Rico](/wiki/Puerto_Rico), [Guyana](/wiki/Guyana), and [The Bahamas](/wiki/The_Bahamas). It was estimated in 2004 that up to 2.5 million Jamaicans and Jamaican descendants live abroad.[[60]](#cite_note-60) Concentrations of [expatriate](/wiki/Expatriate) Jamaicans are quite considerable in numerous cities in the United States, including [New York City](/wiki/New_York_City), [Buffalo](/wiki/Buffalo,_New_York), the [Miami](/wiki/South_Florida) metro area, [Atlanta](/wiki/Atlanta,_Georgia), [Chicago](/wiki/Chicago,_Illinois), [Orlando](/wiki/Orlando,_Florida), [Tampa](/wiki/Tampa,_Florida), [Washington, D.C.](/wiki/Washington,_D.C.), [Philadelphia](/wiki/Philadelphia), [Hartford](/wiki/Hartford,_Connecticut), [Providence](/wiki/Providence,_Rhode_Island) and [Los Angeles](/wiki/Los_Angeles,_California). [Jamaicans in the United Kingdom](/wiki/British_Jamaican) number an estimated 800,000 making them by far the country's largest [African-Caribbean group](/wiki/British_African-Caribbean_community). Large-scale migration from Jamaica to the UK occurred primarily in the 1950s and 1960s (when the country was still under British rule). Jamaican communities exist in most large UK cities.<ref name=IOMMapping>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> In Canada, the Jamaican population is centred in [Toronto](/wiki/Toronto), and there are smaller communities in cities such as [Hamilton](/wiki/Hamilton,_Ontario), [Montreal](/wiki/Montreal), [Winnipeg](/wiki/Winnipeg), [Vancouver](/wiki/Vancouver) and [Ottawa](/wiki/Ottawa).

### Crime[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

*See also:* [*Prisons in Jamaica*](/wiki/Prisons_in_Jamaica) *and* [*LGBT rights in Jamaica*](/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Jamaica)

When Jamaica gained independence in 1962, the murder rate was 3.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, one of the lowest in the world. By 2009, the rate was 62 per 100,000 inhabitants, one of the highest in the world.[[61]](#cite_note-61) Montego Freeport in [Montego Bay](/wiki/Montego_Bay) also handles a variety of cargo like (though more limited than) the Port of Kingston, mainly agricultural products.

There are several other ports positioned around the island, including Port Esquivel in [St. Catherine](/wiki/Saint_Catherine_Parish,_Jamaica) ([WINDALCO](/wiki/WINDALCO)), Rocky Point in [Clarendon](/wiki/Clarendon_Parish,_Jamaica), Port Kaiser in [St. Elizabeth](/wiki/Saint_Elizabeth_Parish,_Jamaica), Port Rhoades in Discovery Bay, Reynolds Pier in [Ocho Rios](/wiki/Ocho_Rios), and Boundbrook Port in [Port Antonio](/wiki/Port_Antonio).

To aid the navigation of shipping, Jamaica operates nine lighthouses.

### Energy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Jamaica depends on petroleum imports to satisfy its national energy needs.<ref name=WorldFactbook/> Many test sites have been explored for oil, but no commercially viable quantities have been found.[[104]](#cite_note-104) The most convenient sources of imported oil and motor fuels (diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel) are from [Mexico](/wiki/Mexico) and [Venezuela](/wiki/Venezuela).

Jamaica's electrical power is produced by diesel ([bunker oil](/wiki/Bunker_fuel)) generators located in Old Harbour. Other smaller power stations (most owned by the [Jamaica Public Service Company](http://www.myjpsco.com/) – the island's electricity provider) support the island's electrical grid including the Hunts Bay Power Station, the Bogue Power Station, the Rockfort Power Station and small hydroelectric plants on the White River, Rio Bueno, Morant River, Black River (Maggotty) and Roaring River.[[105]](#cite_note-105) A wind farm, owned by the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica, was established at Wigton, Manchester.[[106]](#cite_note-106) Jamaica has successfully operated a [SLOWPOKE-2 nuclear reactor](/wiki/SLOWPOKE_reactor) of 20 kW capacity since the early 1980s, but there are no plans to expand nuclear power at present.[[107]](#cite_note-107) Jamaica imports approximately [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) of oil energy products per day,[[104]](#cite_note-104) including asphalt and lubrication products. Just 20% of imported fuels are used for road transportation, the rest being used by the bauxite industry, electricity generation, and aviation. 30,000 barrels/day of crude imports are processed into various motor fuels and asphalt by the Petrojam Refinery in Kingston.[[108]](#cite_note-108)