



**FAST FACTS**

**Destination** Jamaica  
**Peak season** Dec–Apr  
**Currency** Jamaican Dollar (£1 = 133JMD)  
**Time difference** -5 hrs GMT  
**Flight time** 9–10 hours  
**Weblinks**  
[visitjamaica.com](http://visitjamaica.com)  
[chukkacaribbean.com](http://chukkacaribbean.com)  
[rainforesttrams.com](http://rainforesttrams.com)  
[dolphincovejamaica.com](http://dolphincovejamaica.com)

# JAMAICA

## The spice of life

Jamaica may be renowned for its sleepy, Caribbean cool, but *Sport* discovers that the paradise island now offers enough rousing adventure activities – like zip-lining through rainforests and hand-feeding sharks – to wake you up quicker than a Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee



➔ The word 'Jamaica' has a deliciously soothing effect on the frazzled minds of stressed-out city folk. It instantly evokes scenes of tropical tranquility, bronzed holidaymakers lounging on sugary sands or mellow locals jammin' in open air bars to the lulling rhythm of reggae and the crisp clink of sweating bottles of Red Stripe. Given Jamaica's famously laid-back charm, it is fitting that even the country's Olympic sprint king Usain Bolt broke the world record with his shoelace undone.

The relaxed vibe of Jamaica, which is located 90 miles south of Cuba, is well known, but the island now offers some stereotype-busting adventure activities that promise to sprinkle a little Jamaican jerk spice over your holiday.

The energetic north-coast resort of Montego Bay is an ideal base from which to explore Jamaica's stunning coastland. Petrolheads can strap themselves into an 800cc dune buggy and roar through the historic sugar cane country around the old Blue Hole cane estate, eating up dirt



tracks and exploding through rivers in a cloud of angry, hissing steam. For a more natural approach, take a horseback ride, which concludes with a bracing dip (along with your horse) in the Caribbean Sea. We recommend sporting a white linen shirt for the full English dandy effect.

**BIRD'S-EYE VIEW**

Further east in Ocho Rios, in the lush garden parish of Saint Ann, soak up spectacular coastal views by taking the Sky Explorer chairlift high above the rainforest canopy to the 700ft peak of Mystic Mountain. Up here you can tackle the zip-line tour, which includes a dizzying 170m traverse and one surprise vertical drop. In honour of the Jamaican bobsled team made famous by the 1993 movie *Cool Runnings*, you can also make the eyeball-popping journey down a 1,000m bobsled track in the middle of the rainforest.

At the nearby Dolphin Cove, let your missus frolick with dolphins while you face the shark programme, which lets you snorkle with, feed and hold – yes,

hold – a shark. After signing a form acknowledging that "I accept sharks are dangerous", you'll be troubled. By the time fish blood has been poured into a pool stalked by menacing shadows (the largest shark is the 8ft Diablo) and the *Jaws* theme tune stabs out over the tannoy, you might wish you'd stuck with the dolphins.

Of course, just because you like adventure, you don't want to sleep in a tent. So set up 'base camp' at the luxury resort of Half Moon in Montego Bay, with its colonial whitewashed cottages, par-72 golf course, 51 swimming pools and exquisite restaurants – the traditional ackee and saltfish is a must-try – or the delectably dozy Jamica Inn near Ocho Rios, whose private beach, secluded suites and total absence of TVs will ensure a truly peaceful stay. Now that truly sounds like Jamaica. ☺

**MARK BAILEY**

*Ten nights with Virgin Holidays (inc. return Virgin Atlantic flights from Gatwick, 7 nights at Half Moon and 3 nights at Jamaica Inn, with transfers) starts from £1,669. Visit [www.virginholidays.co.uk](http://virginholidays.co.uk) or call 0844 557 3859*

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