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Jamaica

Official Name: Jamaica

LAST UPDATED: JUNE 29, 2016

Embassy Messages

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Quick Facts

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PASSPORT VALIDITY:
Must be valid at the time of entry and exit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VACCINATIONS:
None required |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:
One page required for a Jamaican entry stamp. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:
\$10,000 USD |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:
Only for a stay exceeding 90 days. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:
None |

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Embassies and Consulates

U.S. Embassy Kingston**142 Old Hope Road****Kingston 6****Jamaica, West Indies****Telephone:** +(876) 702-6000**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** +(876) 702-6000**Fax:** +(876) 702-6018KingstonACS@state.gov**CONSULATES****U.S. Consular Agent - Montego Bay****Whitter Village, Ironshore****Unit EU-1 (across from Burger King)****Montego Bay, Jamaica****Telephone:** +(876) 953-0620**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica: +(876) 702-6000**Fax:** +(876) 953-3898

Public Hours are M-F, from 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

MobayACS@state.gov**Destination Description**

See the Department of State's [Fact Sheet for Jamaica](#) for information on U.S. - Jamaica relations.

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

Generally, all U.S. citizens are required to present a valid U.S. passport when traveling to Jamaica, as well as proof of anticipated departure from Jamaica. Those traveling to Jamaica on a cruise may use another [Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative](#) (WHTI) compliant document. However, we strongly recommend visitors obtain a passport before travel in case of an unforeseen emergency that requires a cruise passenger to disembark and return by air. U.S. travelers coming for tourism will not need a visa for travel up to 90 days. All other travelers will need a visa and/or work permit.

Exit Information:

Your departure tax is regularly included in the airfare. You won't be charged an exit tax on your way out.

Further Information:

Up-to-date information on Jamaican visas: Visit the [Passport, Immigration, & Citizenship Agency of Jamaica](#) website or the [Embassy of Jamaica](#) website.

HIV/AIDS restrictions: The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Jamaica.

Dual nationality, international child abduction issues: See links on our website, [dual nationality](#), [prevention of international child abduction](#).

Customs Information: See link on our website, [Customs Information page](#).

CRIME: Violent crime is a serious problem throughout Jamaica, particularly in Kingston and Montego Bay. Violence and shootings occur regularly in certain areas of Kingston and Montego Bay. The Regional Security Office of the U.S. Embassy restricts travel by U.S. government personnel to certain urban areas of Jamaica, including but not limited to:

- Kingston – Downtown Kingston, including Mountain View, Trench Town, Tivoli Gardens, and Arnett Gardens; Standpipe, Grants Pen, and Cassava Piece.
- Montego Bay - Flankers, Canterbury, Norwood, Rose Heights, Clavers Street, and Hart Street.
- Spanish Town

Notes for your safety:

- Sudden demonstrations are rare but can occur, during which demonstrators often construct roadblocks or otherwise block streets.
- Nightclubs and other places of entertainment often are not compliant with U.S. fire safety regulations.
- Gated resorts are generally safe, but even within resorts visitors have been robbed inside their rooms while they slept.
- Sexual assaults occur with alarming frequency, including at all-inclusive resorts. (See further notes below.)
- Jamaica's police force is understaffed and has limited resources. Tourist police are on duty in some resort towns and can be identified by their white hats, white shirts, and black trousers.

Best Practices:

- Avoid inner-city areas of Kingston and other urban centers, especially after dark.
- Do not accept rides from unknown individuals, including operators of unmarked taxis, as this is often a pretext for attempted robbery and/or sexual assault.
- Avoid public buses.
- Avoid walking alone, and exercise special care after dark.
- If staying in a villa or small establishment, ask if they have met Jamaica Tourist Board certification standards for safety and security.
- See the State Department publication, "[traveling safely abroad](#)," for additional useful advice on security while traveling.

Sexual Assault: The U.S. Embassy received more than a dozen reports of sexual assaults against American visitors to Jamaica in a twelve-month period. Most of these took place at all-inclusive resorts; most were allegedly perpetrated by resort staff.

Notes for your safety:

- Resort staff members are prohibited against fraternization and intimacy with guests. Any employee behavior contradicting this policy should be rebuffed and reported to hotel management and to the U.S. Embassy.
- There have been reports of use of date rape drugs at private parties and resorts.
- If you are victim of a sexual assault, contact the police and the Embassy as soon as possible. In a hotel, management should assist you with these communications.
- While we have seen a recent effort by Jamaican officials to improve their response to sexual assault cases, sexual assault victims in Jamaica should not

expect the totality of assistance routinely offered in the United States. Law enforcement shortcomings exist in collection of evidence. Rape kits sometimes are not available. Hotel management and police may project a prosecutorial/interrogation position in questioning victims. Counseling is unlikely to be offered to victims.

- Victims often have to ask for medication to avoid transmission of STDs and to reduce the chances of pregnancy.
- Prosecution of a rape case moves forward very slowly, and defense attorneys press aggressively for dismissal. Jamaican law may require the victim to return to Jamaica at some stages of the judicial process. The government of Jamaica should finance such witness travel, but often such support is slow or unavailable.

Best Practices:

- In a resort, avoid secluded places or situations. Try to always be accompanied by someone you know, even on visits to the rest room.
- Many guests drink to excess in all-inclusive resorts, sometimes leading to unpredictable behavior.
- Security outside of the resort area is unpredictable, especially at night. Do not leave resort property with someone you have just met.
- Shout for help immediately if you feel threatened or encounter individuals who make you feel uncomfortable.
- Report any suspicious activity, including excessive friendliness by hotel employees, to hotel management, the U.S. Embassy, and, as appropriate, local police.

Drugs: Marijuana use is widespread in Jamaica. Recent legislation has made its possession a civil offense rather than a criminal one.

- While its use is widely tolerated, possession of two ounces or less of marijuana is still illegal, and may result in a fine (not an arrest).
- Possession of more than two ounces of marijuana or possession or use of any amount of other illicit drugs remains illegal in Jamaica and may lead to arrest and prosecution.
- Any attempt to carry marijuana out of the country may lead to a serious charge of drug trafficking.

Financial Scams: Serious financial scams originate in Jamaica, often targeting U.S. citizens. The State Department and the FBI maintain webpages with details about the extent of the problem – connect to [Department of State](#) and the [FBI](#) _pages for more information.

The most notorious Jamaican scam is referred to as the “Lotto Scam,” sometimes called “Advance Fee Fraud.” The victim is led to believe that a Jamaican lottery prize will be released after payment of “fees.”

Notes for your safety:

- You did NOT win a lottery that you do not recall having entered. The person on the telephone is lying. Just hang up.
- Never send money to someone who calls to inform you that you have won the lottery in Jamaica.
- Do not travel to Jamaica to “collect a prize.” Victims have been subjected to kidnapping, extortion, or robbery.

Other scams:

- Be very cautious about sending money to help a traveler claiming to be in trouble. When in doubt, contact your local police department for advice and assistance.
- Be wary of promises to protect a loved one from harm, or to help the loved one out of trouble, in exchange for money. That's extortion – contact your local police department.
- Romantic interest is often feigned to attract money from a would-be lover, especially via internet communication. When in doubt, contact your local police department.

If you are being targeted for financial scams, you will need to file a report with your local police department.

General notes for victims of crime: U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault and violent crime should first contact the police and then the U.S. Embassy for assistance.

Report crimes to the local police at 119 (the local equivalent of "911" in the U.S.) and contact the U.S. Embassy at +1-876-702-6000.

Remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime. The Embassy can assist you in the following ways:

- help you find appropriate medical care
- assist you in reporting a crime to the police
- contact relatives or friends with your written consent
- explain the local criminal justice process in general terms
- provide a list of local attorneys
- provide our information on [victim's compensation programs in the U.S.](#)
- provide an emergency loan for repatriation to the United States and/or limited medical support in cases of destitution
- help you find accommodation and arrange flights home
- replace a stolen or lost passport

See our webpage on [help for U.S. victims of crime overseas](#)

Domestic Violence: U.S. citizen victims of domestic violence may contact the Embassy for assistance.

For further information:

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Call us in Washington at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for [Worldwide Caution](#), Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts.
- Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) .
- See [traveling safely abroad](#) for useful travel tips.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

Criminal Penalties: You are subject to Jamaican laws while you are here. If you violate local laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned.

Furthermore, some laws are also prosecutable in the U.S., regardless of local law. For examples, see our website on [crimes against minors abroad](#) and the [Department of Justice](#) website.

Arrest Notification: If you are arrested or detained, ask police or prison officials to notify the U.S. Embassy immediately. See our [webpage](#) for further information.

Common reasons for arrest include:

- Drug smuggling.
- Carrying ammunition and firearms into Jamaica. (Even a single bullet inadvertently loose in a carry-on bag will lead to arrest.)
- Carrying mace, pepper spray and knives into Jamaica without authorization.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants.
- Possession of more than two ounces of marijuana or any quantity of other illicit drugs.

Prison conditions in Jamaica differ greatly from prison conditions in the United States.

- Prisons provide only basic meals.
- Prisons do not supply clothing, personal care items, or bedding.
- Packages shipped to prisoners are subject to Jamaican import taxes and are undeliverable when the recipient cannot pay the duties.

Firearms: You are strictly forbidden to import or possess firearms in Jamaica without the prior authorization of the Firearms Licensing Authority of Jamaica.

- A Conceal Carry Permit in the state you reside does not allow you to bring a firearm or ammunition into Jamaica.
- If you travel with one or more firearms, firearm components & parts and/or ammunition to Jamaica you will be arrested and referred to the local courts for prosecution which will result in a substantial fine and/or incarceration for an unspecified amount of time.

Faith-Based Travelers: See the [Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report](#).

LGBTI Travelers: Negative attitudes towards LGBTI issues are widespread in Jamaica. Many Jamaicans see homosexuality as contrary to their religious beliefs. Although there is increasing public discourse about LGBTI rights, there are continuous reports of serious human rights abuses against LGBTI individuals, including the following:

- Assault
- "Corrective rape" of women accused of being lesbians
- Arbitrary detention
- Mob attacks
- Stabbings
- Harassment of LGBTI patients by hospital and prison staff.

- Blackmail

Jamaican law contains specific prohibitions on “acts of gross indecency” – generally interpreted as any kind of physical intimacy – between persons of the same sex, in public or in private, and provides punishment of up to 10 years in prison. There is also an “anti-buggery” law that specifically prohibits even consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men.

See our [LGBTI Travel Information](#) page and section 6 of our [Human Rights Report](#) for further details.

Travelers Who Require Accessibility Assistance: While some of the country’s all-inclusive resorts meet U.S. standards, most transportation, entertainment, and even medical facility options are not designed to accommodate visitors who are physically challenged. You may wish to consult websites and blogs that focus on accessible travel for practical information and first-hand accounts of traveling in Jamaica.

Students: See our [Students Abroad](#) page and [FBI travel tips](#) .

Travelers: As noted elsewhere, sexual assaults against female tourists occur with alarming frequency at resorts in Jamaica. See our “Best Practices” on ways to avoid sexual assault in the Safety and Security section of this publication. You should also see the State Department’s travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

Special Circumstances: You cannot bring fresh fruits, vegetables, or uncooked meats into or out of Jamaica. Such items may be confiscated by customs officials. You may not bring a pet into Jamaica from the United States, regardless of its inoculation history.

Jamaica, like all Caribbean countries, can be affected by hurricanes. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30 each year. General information on hurricane preparedness is available via the Internet from the [U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) .

Health

Quality medical care is limited in Jamaica and neither public nor private facilities offer the health standards maintained in the United States. Comprehensive but basic emergency medical services are located only in Kingston and Montego Bay, and smaller public hospitals are located in each parish.

Prescription Drugs: The availability of prescription drugs is very limited in outlying parishes. Epi-Pens are not sold anywhere on the island.

Ambulances and Emergency Care: Ambulance service is limited both in the provision of emergency care and in the availability of vehicles. Ambulance services in the cities can be slow due to traffic congestion and the general state of roads, and ambulance services are rare in rural areas.

Public Health Facilities: Public health facilities do not meet United States standards. They are required by law to provide medical assistance in emergency situations, but specialized tests and treatment are offered only on a fee-for-service basis. Hospitals are not equipped to handle multiple patients with ventilators.

Private Health Facilities: Private hospitals generally appear more modern than public facilities. They are also far more expensive and U.S. citizens have reported that they have been subject to the following practices:

- Payment is required up front for care, even in emergency situations, and patients have been turned away for lack of ability to pay.
- Without proof of acceptable insurance or cash sufficient to pay expected fees, a patient will be turned away from a private facility.
- Fees are often exorbitant. Health-care facilities near beach resorts in particular have been known to extend care only after collecting a sizeable cash deposit.

The Embassy's website contains information on [medical services and air-ambulance companies](#). Please alert the American Citizen Services Unit to such cases by calling (876) 702-6000.

The Embassy cannot and will not pay your medical bills. As noted above, U.S. Medicare does not apply overseas.

Medical Insurance: Make sure your health insurance plan provides coverage overseas. Most care providers overseas only accept cash payments. See our webpage for more [information on insurance providers for overseas coverage](#).

We STRONGLY recommend [travelers insurance](#) (see our webpage) to cover medical evacuation.

You should carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription.

The following are health concerns in Jamaica:

- Diarrhea
- Dengue, Zika, and other mosquito-borne illnesses (See [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) for current precautions.)
- H1NI – We encourage you to have your flu shot before coming to Jamaica.
- Ciguatera Poisoning
- Marine hazards including jellyfish, coral and sea urchins.

- HIV/AIDS

Zika Virus: Zika virus is a mosquito-borne illness that can be spread from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby as well as through sexual contact. The CDC has concluded that the Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects in some fetuses and babies born to infected mothers. For additional information about Zika, including travel advisories, visit the [CDC website](#) .

Vaccinations: Be up-to-date on all [vaccinations](#) recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Further health information:

- [World Health Organization](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)

You can find detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions on the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) website](#) . For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization website](#) , which contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#) .

For information on suggested immunizations for Jamaica, please refer to the [CDC's website for travelers to Jamaica](#) .

Travel & Transportation

Road Conditions and Safety: Cars are driven on the left side of the road in Jamaica. Here are some notes for your safety:

- Night time driving is extremely hazardous due to poor lighting and unpredictable pavement.
- Heavy rains can make roads impassable and dangerous.
- Many roads suffer from ill repair, inadequate signage, large potholes and poor traffic markings. There is a lack of pedestrian crosswalks.
- Pedestrians and animals share the roadways with vehicles.
- There have been reports of carjackings, including of rental cars.
- Only two highways are comparable to U.S. standards, T1 which connects Spanish Town (near Kingston) to May Pen and Highway 2000 which connects Spanish Town to Mammee Bay.
- Driving habits range from aggressive speeding and sudden stops by taxis in the middle of the road to over-polite drivers who suddenly stop to allow a car to pull in front of them. All can lead to accidents.
- Official emergency response can be slow. In practice, assistance given in emergency situations is generally by fellow motorists.

Traffic Laws:

- Traffic circles ("roundabouts") are often poorly marked and require traffic to move in a clockwise direction. Motorists entering a roundabout must yield to those already in it.
- Drivers and front-seat passengers are required to wear seat belts.
- Motorcycle riders are required to wear helmets.

Public Transportation: U.S. government personnel are prohibited from using public buses.

- Official public transportation vehicles have red license plates.
- Private vehicles, NOT licensed for public transportation, have white license plates with blue letters/numbers.
- Public buses are often overcrowded, and are frequently a venue for crime. There are reports of private buses, acting as public transport, driving erratically leading to injury and death for both riders and pedestrians.
- You should only use licensed taxicabs having red-and-white PP license plates or taxis recommended by your hotel.
- Do not accept rides from strangers.

See our [Road Safety page](#) for more information. We also suggest that you visit the website of Jamaica's [national tourist office](#) .

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Jamaica's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of air carrier operations in Jamaica. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#) .

Please see [Fact Sheet](#) for this country.

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

U.S. Embassy Kingston
142 Old Hope Road
Kingston 6
Jamaica, West Indies

- Telephone
+(876) 702-6000
- Emergency After-Hours
Telephone
+(876) 702-6000
- Fax
+(876) 702-6018
- Email
KingstonACS@state.gov
- [U.S. Embassy Kingston](#)

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