

A Deeper Look into Jamaica: Exploring the Profile of a Popular Tourist Destination

Kendrick Hill

Professor _____

Eng _____

2 May 2020

While I have not personally traveled to this Jamaica, some of my family members have and it gave them a different perspective of not only just Jamaica, but popular tourist areas in general. My decision to research this country was solidified based on a brief conversation my sister told me about. Her husband told one of the local workers that a lot of people dreamed of visiting Jamaica and the local replied, "That's crazy because we always dream of going to America." That conversation along opened their eyes, and mine as well, to realize that there is life outside of the beautiful beaches and resorts that a lot of people do not see and that it takes those locals to upkeep and provide the luxury that people visit their countries to see.

Jamaica is an island in the West Indies that sits in the middle of the Caribbean Sea. Its neighboring countries, Haiti and Cuba, are located only 90 and 100 miles away, respectively. In relation to the United States, this popular tourist destination is only 557 miles from Miami, the bottom of the continent, and 1,721 miles from the middle of the United States, still only making it a little over a three hour flight if traveling nonstop. Once arriving, visitors will notice a very tropical climate with temperatures average between 70-80 degrees. Unlike the Bahamas, another popular tourist destination for Americans, Jamaica is typically not in the heart of the hurricane alley so the most this country usually has to worry about is severe thunderstorms with its peak season being between June and September.

As of 2019, Jamaica has a population of a little over 2.9 million; however, it is still quite a dense country due to the average amount of people per kilometer, which is around 265. In Figure 1, you will notice that the population has become very unstable. "Jamaica is currently seeing a decline in the 0-14 age group with an increase in the working age and retired population, the fastest growing segment, which is typical for developing countries" (World Population Review, 2019).

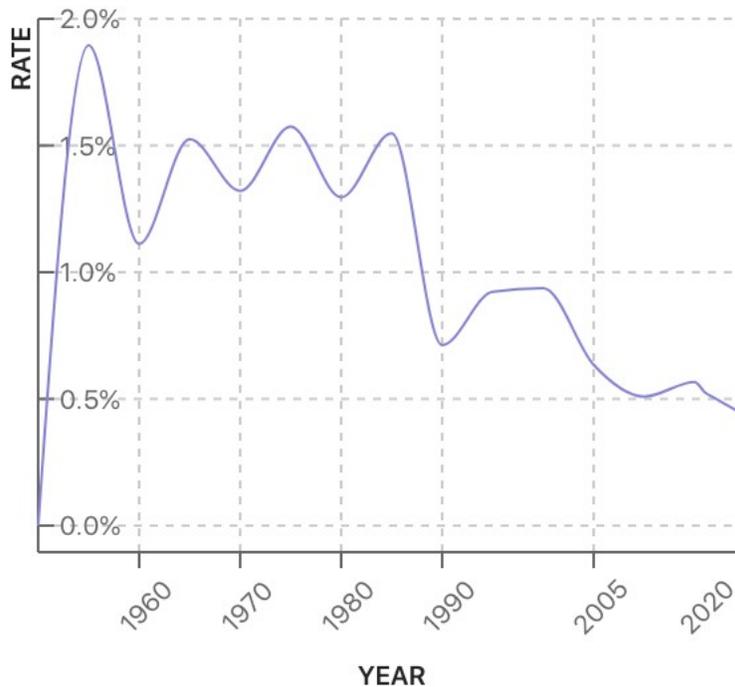
Figure 1

The Decline

Population

Jamaica Growth Rate

in Jamaica's



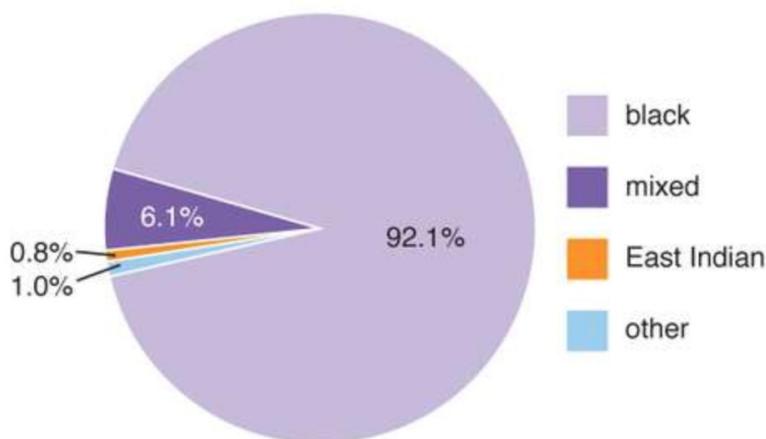
Note: This chart displays the significant decline in Jamaica's population from around 1955 to present day, showing a rapid decline from 1985 to 1990. (World Population Review, 2019)

The website went on to say that the population is projected to continue to decline with one of the contribution factors being the expected birth rate continuing to be under two children per woman.

Most of Jamaica's citizens are descendants of African slaves with only a small percentage of its citizens having ancestry from the United Kingdom, India, China, the Middle East, Portugal, and Germany. Figure 2 shows the exact percentage breakdown. The official

language is English, but Jamaican Creole, which is the use of the English vocabulary and

Ethnic composition (2011)



© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.



Jamaica: Ethnic composition

Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

grammar with other dialects, is also spoken throughout the country.

Figure 2

Percentages of Demographic Breakdowns in Jamaica

Note: This chart explains the demographic breakdown of Jamaica in 2011, which was the last time a census was held. (Ferguson, Black, Bryan, Buisseret, 2020)

Depending on when arriving to this country, a tourist might experience holiday season. While they celebrate some of the same holidays as the United States, some of their exclusive holidays include Emancipation Day, which marked the end of slavery in the British Empire, and

Independence Day, celebrated on the first Monday in August and celebrates Jamaica's independence from the United Kingdom, which replaced the previously highly celebrated.

“Today, we celebrate independence massively annually as part of the new combined Emancipation (emancipation and independence) celebrations” (Gayle, unknown). The other exclusive holiday that they celebrate is National Heroes' Day. “The celebration is geared towards honoring and lauding the efforts of our 6 heroes and 1 heroine. They challenged the institutions of slavery, colonialism and dependency thereby changing the course of our history” (Gayle, unknown). During this time, award ceremonies are held and others who have made contributions to the Jamaican society are also honored.

If looking for places to visit, a few points of interest involves traveling to Kingston, Port Antonio, Ocho Rios, or Montego Bay. Visitors who have a taste in reggae music would possibly want to visit Kingston, home of the famous Bob Marley. There you will be able to travel to his various museums and historical sites. Visitors who are more in touch with nature may find interest in visiting Port Antonio, where they can visit the Blue Mountain National Park. With plenty to see including waterfalls, rainforests, and exotic plants and animals, its most popular activity is hiking the Blue Mountain Peak which is Jamaica's highest peak, standing at 2,256 meters, almost a mile and a half, high. Someone who likes to live on edge may want to visit one of the many waterfalls Jamaica has to offer with the most popular being Dunn's River Falls located in Ocho Rios where you can climb to the top and watch as the water falls into the sea. A historian may want to visit Rose Hall Great House located in Montego Bay. This is an old plantation house which was ruled by Annie Palmer, also known as the “White Witch”. Tourists “can choose between a day tour or a spooky candlelit evening tour topped off with tales of ghost sightings” (Gastings, unknown).

After a lot of traveling and site seeing, everyone can agree that time must be put aside for eating and hopefully enjoying a taste of some local cuisines. Some of the most popular foods are ackee and saltfish, which is Jamaica's national dish, jerk (chicken/pork/fish), which, although popular in other countries, originated in Jamaica, and curry (goat/mutton/chicken), which is actually a South Asian dish with a Caribbean twist. While eating, or even just out and about, it is imperative and respectful to adhere to the local customs and courtesies. It is proper to wait until invited and instructed where to sit before you or your party take a seat. "When in doubt, watch what others are doing and emulate their behaviour" (Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd., 2020). Once dinner is complete, you may want to leave a tip, but unlike the United States, it is actually uncustomary to tip. If so, it is advised to do it discretely as some workers can actually lose their job for accepting tips.

Depending on how long you are at your destination or how much you frequent a particular restaurant or place, you may try to befriend a local. When it comes to holding a conversation with locals, you are to address them with their proper title followed by their last name until you have developed a personal relationship with them and have been given an invitation to address them by their first name.

It is always useful to understand the political system anytime you travel to a new destination. In Jamaica, it is based on a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system and contains two parties, the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). "The PNP, founded in 1938 as a democratic socialist party, leans more to the left than the more centrist and conservative JLP" (Ferguson, Black, Bryan, Buisseret, 2020). The prime minister is the top government position, followed by the British monarch, although they have no real authority outside of appointing a Jamaican governor-general. "The principal policy-making body

is the cabinet, which consists of the prime minister and at least 11 other ministers” (Ferguson, Black, Bryan, Buisseret, 2020).

While women are still at the tail end as opposed to men when it comes to holding political positions, they have served in the House of Representatives, Senate, and cabinet. “In 2006, Portia Simpson Miller became the first female president of the PNP and the first woman to serve as prime minister” (Ferguson, Black, Bryan, Buisseret, 2020).

As for the education system, “many schools, especially high schools, were originally established and are still governed by religious bodies, although they are now largely financed by the government” (Trines, 2019). Due to the strict government budget, there were limited resources to invest in education, causing it to take financial bearing on various households due to additional costs such as uniforms, fees, materials, etc. Due to the inability to afford such fees, many students, mainly in secondary and higher education, eventually drop to get a job and help provide for their families. Noticing the steady increase in drop outs caused the government to increase funding and alleviate mandatory school fees. Figure 3 contains various charts regarding the education system of Jamaica.

Figure 3

Education in Jamaica

WENR World Education News + Reviews

EDUCATION IN JAMAICA

QUICK FACTS

- Population:** 2.7 million (2018, Statistical Institute of Jamaica)
- Compulsory Education:** Completion of grade 6 (age 12)
- Language of Instruction:** English (Jamaican Creole may also be used in schools)
- Academic Year:** August/September - July

JAMAICAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

Year	Total	Graduate	Non-degree	Undergraduate
2016/2017	2,797	25%	12%	61%
2017/2018	2,785	24%	11%	64%

Source: Institute of International Education

GRADING SCALE & WES CONVERSION

Grade	WES Conversion
I	A
II	B+
III	B
IV	C+
V	C
VI	F

WES DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Required Documents

- Secondary Education: Final examination results (CSEC, CAPE) – sent by the Caribbean Examinations Council
- Higher Education: Photocopy of degree certificate – submitted by the applicant; Academic transcript – sent by the institution attended
- For completed doctoral programs – a written statement confirming the award of the degree sent by the institution attended

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Note: Not all awards or study patterns are included.

```

    graph TD
      EE[Elementary Education] --> LSE[Lower Secondary Education 3]
      LSE --> SSE[Senior Secondary Education 2]
      SSE --> CSEC[Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate Examination CSEC]
      CSEC --> SF[Sixth Form 2]
      CSEC --> TVET[TVET 0.5 to 4]
      SF --> B3[Bachelor 3]
      SF --> A2[Associate 2]
      B3 --> B4[Bachelor 4]
      A2 --> B4
      B4 --> M1to2[Master 1 to 2]
      M1to2 --> D3to5[Doctorate 3 to 5]
    
```

Source: World Education Services

wenr.wes.org

Note: This collage of charts gives an overview of the education system in Jamaica. The academic year is from August/September to July. It also contains the educational tree to understand the process of going from elementary education to obtaining a doctorate degree, if that is the chosen route.

It never hurts to learn the history of a place you are traveling to, even if just the basics. Some basic historical information about Jamaica is that it was captured by the British in 1655, led by Admiral Sir William Penn and General Robert Venables. Slavery was abolished in 1834, but slaves did not receive unrestricted freedom until August 1, 1838. Jamaica became independent and a member of the British Commonwealth in 1962, shortly after Alexander Bustamante became the country’s first prime minister.

As with anytime and anywhere you travel, the most important thing is to be safe, especially when away from your stay as trafficking is a major issue. “Sex trafficking of

Jamaican women and children, including boys, reportedly occurs on streets and in nightclubs, bars, massage parlours, hotels, and private homes, including in resort towns” (Clark, Writer, 2019). The places mentioned are common for travelers to visit, making them easy target areas. Although it may seem like a cliché, it is never advised to go anywhere alone. Using the “buddy system” is always recommended. With social media being so popular in modern society, traffickers oftentimes used it to lure their victims so it is also important, at any time, whether at home or visiting, to make sure you know who are communicating with on such platforms.

Prior to conducting this research, I did not have many biases or assumptions as I like to just learn information for what it is. However, one stereotype that I found was inaccurate was that all Jamaicans wore their hair in locs when that is not the case. It was also interesting learning about the Rastafarian religion. While I did not develop sensitivity towards Jamaicans, I was able to learn about their life behind tourist areas and some of the struggles they go through, which is the same for people in various areas of the United States. It was quite interesting to learn the similarities and differences between the two countries, especially its “development”. Both countries were said to first be discovered by Christopher Columbus, which has become an ongoing debate to more and more people conducting research, and were a land Africans were brought to to become slaves. The main thing I can take away from this research is that these tourist areas are real homes to locals and they do not have as much money as one may think.

Resources

Clarke, P., Writer, G., 2019. Human Trafficking a Major Concern for All Countries. Retrieved from <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20190513/human-trafficking-major-concern-all-countries>

Commisceo Global Consulting Ltd. (2020, January 1) Afghanistan- Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette. Retrieved from <https://commisceo-global.com/resources/country-guides/afghanistan-guide>

Ferguson, J., Black, C., Bryan, P., Buisseret, D. (2020). Jamaica. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jamaica>

Gayle, W. Unknown. Jamaican Holidays and Their Significance. Retrieved from https://www.my-island-jamaica.com/jamaican_holidays.html

Hastings, K. Unknown. 16 Top-Rated Tourist Attractions in Jamaica. Retrieved from <https://www.planetware.com/tourist-attractions/jamaica-jam.htm>

Morrow, K. (2020). 44 Irresistible Foods & Drinks You Must Try When In Jamaica. Retrieved from <https://www.beaches.com/blog/jamaica-food-drinks/>

Trines, S. (2019). Education in Jamaica. Retrieved from <https://wenr.wes.org/2019/09/education-in-jamaica>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/jamaica-population/>