

If you love ganja, nature and a great beach, off to Jamaica you go. You won't be hearing about a great resort in this article. Jamaica has so much more to offer than just a beach and room service. It is an island full of magic, culture and beautiful people. When you stray off the beaten path and discover the small towns and hidden gems you will find you're falling in love with Jah's land. Sounds of ita! reggae music coming from every radio and every small child singing Bob Marley melodies, the trees swiftly moving with the ocean breeze and the sweet scent of fine herb everywhere you go.

You can get to Jamaica for about \$400-\$500 CAD tax included from anywhere in North America. If you were to pick up a local Caribbean community newspaper or looked one up on the net, you will find many sweet deals. Flying to Montego Bay, is much cheaper than flying to Kingston. When getting off the plane you will be overwhelmed by how many people want to help you. Three points of advice: 1. Do not carry anyone else's luggage 2. Always make sure you have an address for a hotel, you will not be allowed into the island without an address. 3. Don't let the Taxi drivers bleed you dry within the first five minutes.

Negril: Pot Mecca with a seven-mile beach

Negril, can be reached either by taking a taxi alone, it should cost you about \$40 USD or \$1200 Jamaican try to get Jamaican money and not American. Or you can do it the way everybody else does it. In Jamaica there are no buses only route taxis. A route taxi is either a station wagon or a small van, which will load up as many people as possible, it goes from point A to point B for fairly cheap or then you have to switch again. It's not always the most comfortable but it's authentic. To get from the airport to Negril you will need to take 3 route taxis, one from the airport to Montego Bay, the second from there to a small town called Lucea, which has a great little market and interesting architecture. The last route taxi will be to Negril, in total this should cost you \$250-\$350 Jamaican.

When you finally reach Negril, don't be surprised that everyone has weed to sell you. Every dread on the beach has the best weed or hash, and it all comes from the Blue Mountains or is high grade. Don't be ashamed to not talk to anyone and say no thanks. A stick of weed should be \$5 USD. You probably came to Negril for the beach, but there is also a beautiful side to Negril that is called the Cliffside. On the Cliffside you can find many affordable accommodations. It is quiet and serene, overlooking the Caribbean from a beautiful cliff range. If you do choose to stay on the beach you can set up a tent at a little hotel called the Roots Bamboo for about \$20USD a night/ per couple. It is quite the party; there is always something going on, reggae music on the beach and lots of restaurants. But again be ware of Negril it is a tourist town and people are depending on your dollars, so don't expect it to be quiet on the beach. Just outside of Negril, in a small town called Belmont, you will find the Peter Tosh Memorial, you can visit his grave on his mothers property if you're lucky you may meet the feisty lady, there is also a little museum where you can checkout some Tosh History. If you keep going south and around the edge of the Island you will find the small quiet town of Treasure Beach, it is far calmer than Negril, but still has a beautiful sunset, great weed and a fabulous beach. Ask to be taken to Floyds Bar, it's a great little place built in the midst of the ocean, but you

have to take a boat there, from Floyds grab a boat to the Black River and check out some great birds, trees and little alligators. A great place to relax and truly take it easy.

If serenity is what you want a few recommendations can be made. Jamaica is full of gorgeous countryside and unique people. One of my personal favourite places to stay is in a little tiny town on the north coast called Robins Bay. The River Lodge (Tel: 995-3003) is a magical 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Fort, it is hard to find but totally worth the search. The town has a great little Rasta Community and doesn't get a lot of tourism. There is no beach, but there are lots of waterfalls, river streams and birds. From there you can make the trip through the mountains and make it to the Blue Mountains, the highest point in Jamaica. You will have to be dropped off in a little town called Mavis Bank, where you can get really great cheap coffee (Blue mountain coffee is some of the best in the world). You will have to call in advance to a magnificent hostel called Whitfield Hall (Tel: 927-0986); it is an old coffee plantation that is still in operation, with all of the original furniture, books and piano. From Mavis Bank you will be picked up by an old Land rover and taken almost to the peak of the mountain (make sure you tell them you want meals or bring your own). It is quite a bit cooler than the rest of Jamaica so bring a sweater, pants and some hiking boots. The hike to the peak is killer and beautiful all at the same time; I recommend a few joints to get you going. The hike is lush with tropical plants, birds and clouds, I gave up one kilometre away from the peak but you can see Cuba from there.

Jamaica, it is a full on experience if you explore this magical Island. Enjoy the people, endless reggae rhythms and its amazing and plentiful cannabis freedom. Just keep in mind that marijuana is not legal by any means, it is an herb that is engraved into the culture of the people, and it's just a normal part of life. The way marijuana should be.