



**Jamaica:
The Land
We Love**



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Written By: Naomi Dyon
Series Editor: Gail Elliot, Gerontologist and
Dementia Specialist DementiAbility
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Jamaica is a beautiful island in the Caribbean Sea. There are mountains, lush green hills that are ideal for farming and beautiful beaches that attract many tourists.

Tourism and farming are the most important industries in Jamaica.

Many types of crops are grown in Jamaica. The chief crops are sugarcane, bananas, coffee, pimento and yams.

Jamaicans are known for their unique and delicious cuisine. Popular dishes include rice and peas, fried dumplings, plantain and jerk chicken. Curry goat may be served on Sundays or for very special occasions.

Ackee and saltfish is the national dish of Jamaica. To prepare salt cod, boil it with ackee, onions, scotch bonnet peppers, tomatoes and spices. It can be garnished with bacon and pimentos and is usually served alongside breadfruit, festival, hard dough bread, dumplings, plantain or boiled green bananas. It can be served at breakfast or dinner.

In Jamaica, most people live in the city. The capital city is Kingston. 90% of the population is of African descent, but Jamaica is also home to many immigrants from China, India, Germany and Syria. Many have come to find work on the island. Jamaica's motto is ``Out of many . . . one people``.

Many people in Jamaica have strong spiritual beliefs. There are many different religions in Jamaica including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islamic. Some people are followers of the Rastafarian faith. This Christian based faith grew out of the civil rights movement in the 1930's.

Rastafarians believe that Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia from 1916 till 1974, was their saviour. Rasta men wear their hair in dreadlocks, believing that hair should not be cut. They may also wear clothing in red, green and gold—the colours of the Ethiopian flag.

Christopher Columbus was the first European to visit Jamaica in 1494. Columbus called Jamaica "the fairest island that eyes have beheld."

Jamaica is a beautiful island with a very tragic history.

Shortly after European contact, Jamaica became a Spanish Colony. The indigenous people of Jamaica were enslaved. The Spanish then brought in slaves from Africa, and ruled the island until 1655 when the British seized it. There were many slave uprisings and slavery was finally abolished in Jamaica in 1838. Jamaica became an independent nation in 1962.

The official language of Jamaica is English, spoken in the usual fashion with a Jamaican accent, but, the everyday language is called Patois. This musical dialect is a combination of English, Spanish, Portuguese and African phrases, along with a good dose of Jamaican slang.

There have been many famous people from Jamaica. Louise Bennett-Coverly, also known as Miss Lou, was a poet, writer and teacher. She is best known for her poem “Dah Dah Light”. The poem was adapted into a song “Day-O” or “The Banana Boat Song” by Harry Belafonte. The song became one of the biggest hits of the 1950`s.

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Miss Lou was also an activist. She wrote about the difficulties Jamaican people experienced when they left their home country and moved to places like England and Canada.

Have you ever moved to a new country? What were some of the challenges you faced?

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Did you know that Jamaica is home to some incredible athletes? Cricket is the national sport in Jamaica. Track and field is also very popular. The world's fastest man, Hussain Bolt, and the world's fastest woman Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, are both from Jamaica.

When people think of Jamaica, they often think of reggae music. Reggae music combines influences from rhythm and blues, jazz, calypso, Latin and African music to produce a unique new sound. One of the most famous reggae musicians was Bob Marley. His songs were both political and spiritual, as they encouraged people to fight for their freedom. Bob Marley had many hits with songs like “No Woman No Cry”, “Redemption Song” and “I Shot the Sheriff.”

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Jamaica is home to many unique plants and animals. Jamaica's national bird is The Streamertail Hummingbird or Doctor Bird. It has long tail feathers and a red beak. Jamaica is also home to the world's largest butterfly, the Homerus Swallowtail. This butterfly has a wingspan of 6 inches—bigger than many birds!

Jamaica is a fascinating country with unique music, culture, history and cuisine.

Would you like to travel to Jamaica sometime? What other countries would you like to visit or learn more about?

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Thank you for taking the time to
read this story.