

## **Jamaica**

### **Facts and Statistics**

**Location:** Caribbean, island in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba

**Capital:** Kingston

**Population:** 2,713,130 (July 2004 est.)

**Ethnic Make-up:** black 90.9%, East Indian 1.3%, white 0.2%, Chinese 0.2%, mixed 7.3%, other 0.1%

**Religions:** Protestant 61.3% (Church of God 21.2%, Baptist 8.8%, Anglican 5.5%, Seventh-Day Adventist 9%, Pentecostal 7.6%, Methodist 2.7%, United Church 2.7%, Brethren 1.1%, Jehovah's Witness 1.6%, Moravian 1.1%), Roman Catholic 4%, other including some spiritual cults 34.7%.

### **The Language**

English (official), Creole. English is the official language of Jamaica. However, Patois (Creole), a combination of English and some African languages, is spoken in rural areas and is used increasingly in urban areas. Most Jamaicans can speak or understand Patois, but it is not a written language. Jamaican speech, even in English, has a distinctive rhythmic and melodic quality.

### **Jamaican Society & Culture**

#### **The Family**

- . The Jamaican family includes a close-knit web of aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents.
- . Families are close and provide both emotional and economic support to its members.
- . The family is the most important group a person belongs to, and as such, it the group with whom a person spends most of his/her time developing and maintaining cordial relations.

#### **Trust**

- . Jamaicans have a healthy distrust of those in authority and prefer to put their faith in those they know well, such as their extended family and close friends who are treated as if they were family.
- . This can be seen in the fact that many still prefer to form a "partner" with friends and family rather than go to a bank to secure a loan. A partner is a financial arrangement between friends and neighbors. Each person in the group agrees to contribute a set amount into the partner for a specific number of weeks. Accumulated funds are used to make down payments for large purchases such as buying a house or a business.
- . The basic requirement of the partner is trust. To become a member of the elite group, a person must be recommended by a friend or relative.

#### **Religion**

- . Religion is fundamental to Jamaican life, which can be seen in the references to Biblical events in everyday speech.
- . The island has the highest number of churches per capita in the world and more than 100 different Christian denominations. Most Jamaicans are Christians; the largest denominations are the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Brethren and Roman Catholics.
- . Christmas is typically observed by various denominations with Communion services, candlelight ceremonies, concerts, all-night prayer meetings and the singing of Christmas carols.

#### **Rastafarianism**

. Rastafarians believe they are one of the lost tribes of Israel who were sold into slavery and taken to Babylon (Jamaica) and that they must return to Zion, which they hold to be Ethiopia.

. The movement does not have organized congregations, it does not have a paid clergy, and it doesn't have a written doctrine.

. There are three types of Rastafarians in Jamaica:

1. Members of the Bobo Shanti order wear long robes and tightly wrapped turbans. They function like an independent nation within Jamaica with their own constitution. Their lifestyle closely emulates those of the Old Testament Jewish Mosaic Law, which includes the observation of the Sabbath from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday, hygiene laws, and special greetings among themselves.

2. Members of the Nyahbinghi sect focus mainly on Emperor Haile Selassie and they proclaim that he is the incarnation of the Supreme deity. They push for their repatriation to Ethiopia, from where they believe all black people came. Ethiopia plays a major role in this sect. 3. The Twelve Tribes was founded in 1968 by Dr. Vernon 'Prophet Gad ' Carrington and is the most liberal of the Rastafarian orders. Members are allowed to worship in a church of their choosing or within the privacy of their house. They consider themselves the direct descendants of the 12 Sons of David.