

# NEGRIL & THE SOUTH COAST



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## NEGRIL

Until the 1960s, Negril was a sleepy fishing village, without even a road connecting it to the rest of the Island. The first road came around 1960, and soon after Negril was discovered by hippies as an off-the-beaten track Caribbean paradise. The 70's brought large resorts and the boom was on.

The days when Negril Jamaica was a hippie hideaway are long gone. Upscale resorts dot the Long Bay and the Seven Mile Negril Beach is now invariably packed with sunbathers. Nevertheless, compared to the resort towns of Montego Bay or Ocho Rios, Negril offers an unrestrained, more laid-back vacation experience. Think of Negril as two places, the one where you can dig your toes into seven miles of soft, silky sand and the one where you might leap into the warm Caribbean Sea from a sculpted coral cliff.



Watching the sunset from beachside or cliffside is a daily ritual. Cameras click, couples kiss, and applause may rival that of a reggae concert. Popular hangouts atop the cliffs include Rick's Café, Rockhouse, The Sands at The Caves and the restaurant Xtabi.

There is not much Negril sightseeing in terms of museums or historic structures, but the area is remarkably rich in natural beauty. The Negril Environmental Protection Area contains the mangrove swamps of the Great Morass, idyllic beaches like Bloody Bay, the Negril Hills, and several Islands in the coastal waters. Negril sightseeing is perhaps best under the water. A fragile coral



reef surrounds the shoreline; it presents some great opportunities for scuba diving. The reef can also be viewed on glass bottom boat tours. Snorkeling is also popular off Negril Beach. Other popular water activities include deep-sea fishing and renting a jet ski or sailboat.

Hotels come in four fabulous flavours: beachside all-inclusive, beachside boutique, cliffside and apartment style - each of them, as mandated in Negril, no taller than the highest palm tree.

Savvy shoppers cash in on savings by purchasing duty-free jewelry, watches and perfumes, while several crafts markets fill a shopper's day with entertainment and activity.

### Negril - The Capital of Casual!

## THE SOUTH COAST

While Negril gets the crowds, the South Coast of Jamaica has only recently begun to attract visitors. The Arawaks once lived in sylvan simplicity along these shores. Early Spanish settlers came here searching for gold; today's traveller comes looking for the untrammelled sands of its secluded beaches. Fishermen still sell their catch at colorful local markets, and the prices, as they say here, are "the way they used to be" in Jamaica. Think of this as the undiscovered Jamaica.

The South Coast can be reached in less than two hours from the Montego Bay airport and about one hour from Negril. It stretches southeast from Savanna-la-Mar, with an untouched coastline past Whitehouse, Black River and Treasure Beach to Alligator Pond and beyond.

The area attracts an adventure-oriented visitor who doesn't want an all-inclusive hotel. It's a sleepy place devoid of duty-free stores and the hustle and bustle of the north coast.

The beaches here are equal to those of Montego Bay or Ocho Rios. Restaurants, for the most part, are of the sort you'd have found along the roadside in Jamaica in the 1950s - and some of them are still charging near 1950s prices. Local lifestyles too, remain mostly unchanged by time.

Local adventures are plentiful on the South Coast. Among the most popular is a boat tour up the Black River, once a major logging conduit. Another favorite is the trip to the Y. S. Falls, where seven spectacular cascades



tumble over rocks in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, just north of the town of Middle Quarters. Make sure not to miss the Appleton Estate Rum Tour.

Places to stay from Bluefields Bay, southward to Whitehouse range from seaside villas and guesthouses to all-inclusive resorts. Wooden verandas and gingerbread trim characterize the Georgian and Victorian architecture of the seaside accommodations on Black River's High Street. Staying in funky and trendy Treasure Beach - the South Coast's tourism hub - puts the area's main attractions within easy reach.



Roadside vendors turn fast food into culinary wonders. At Scott's Cove along the border of St. Elizabeth and Westmoreland parishes, vendors have perfected the art of cooking tasty fresh fish, lobster and bammy (a pancake made of cassava). No trip to the South Coast would be complete without a stop at Little Ochie at Alligator Pond.

### South Coast - Off The Beaten Track!

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