

Jamaican Talk

So much more than a means of communication, our language emerged as the expression of a people torn from their roots and oppressed.

It was as much a part of them as the dark hue of their skin - their way of communicating the exclusion of others.

Centuries later what we have is not a language of defeat and depression but a colourful lingo spoken by a people with a gift for vivid imagery, ridicule and irony, down-to-earth humour and bawdy cuss-words. A creative intermingling of words which that their roots in the English of the colonisers and the African tongues of the majority.

A lot of it is quite easy to adapt to. Jamaicans tend to drop the "r" at the end of words, so that dollar becomes "dolla", and water becomes "wata". Double "t's" within words sometimes become double "k's", changing little to "likkle", and bottle to "bokkle". We often add or subtract "h" at will so that when you "harrive" at your "otel", "heverybody" will tell you "ello".

For simplicity, men and women alike become "im" or "dem". "Dem" is quite a versatile word. It also acts as a modifier to pluralise everything, so "yuh new fren dem" will accompany you to the "place dem" that you need to visit. Jamaicans also have an interesting system of adding words - your "frock tail" may "hitch up" under your "foot bottom" causing you to "drop dung" and hurt your "neck back".

Many words and phrases are unique to Jamaica. When in Jamaica you "nyam" (eat) your "bickle" (food) and "labrish" (gossip) with friends. "Jam" (hang out) on the beach with your "likkle boonoonoonus" (someone you love) or "bush-out" (dress up), "touch di road" (leave your house) and "go sport" (socialise). In the market you're sure to get "brawta" (a little extra) with any purchase. Enjoy "Ital stew" (salt-free, Rastafarian vegetarian dish) and a good "reasoning" (discussion) with your Jamaican "Idren" (friends). "Skank" (Rock to Reggae music) at a local "dance" (street party) and drink a "stripe…well cold" (very cold Red Stripe beer).

And at the end of it all? "It sweet fi talk." [visitjamaica.com](http://www.visitjamaica.com)