

10 things that make you Jamaican

The month of October is being celebrated as National Heritage Month, and every Jamaican should take time out to appreciate our Jamaican history and remember those who helped to create it. It is a time when we reminisce on the fundamental building blocks of our culture; the time we take to face our past.

Our heritage is a combination of everything that makes us Jamaican; our achievements and struggles, as well as our inherited traditional monuments and way of life. Here is a list of the top 10 things that make one Jamaican. This list may not fit every Jamaican, but we are sure that there will be a lot of agreement among our readers.

10 For one to be Jamaican you must either have been born in Jamaica, have Jamaican parent(s) or legally obtain Jamaican citizenship. These days everybody wants to call themselves Jamaican. Internationally, we have observed people wearing dreadlocks or heard greetings in obviously false Jamaican accents. If you do not fall into any of the three categories mentioned, you are not Jamaican.

9 You must be interested in national sport teams. Even if you do not play a sport, you must be interested in one, whether it be watching the Reggae Boys or other local teams play football, or watching the Sunshine Girls trample first-world countries in netball. Watching Chris Gayle 'lick a six', knocking pot covers as Jamaicans dominate world-class athletic meets or any other sport our citizens may be involved in.

8 You must be familiar with dear old 'Brother Anansi' and 'Big Boy'. Every Jamaican enjoys a good old 'Brother Anansi' story, especially listening to one being told by the late great Louise Bennett-Coverley, the world-famous Jamaican poet. As Jamaicans, we love a good story, especially one that helps us to connect with events of the past and present. Every Jamaican must know the seven national heroes, the national anthem, the 14 parishes and the three counties. One of the first things we learn in school (after the alphabet) is our national anthem. We also learn about our national heroes, and our school teachers ensure that we know our 14 parishes and their capitals, as well as the counties they're in.

6 One very important feature of being Jamaican is "standing out" wherever we go in the world. As Jamaicans, we bring our culture with us though we eventually adopt the culture of the foreign nation. We never forget our own. Jamaicans are known for being creative and innovative, using our culture to make ends meet. When we go abroad we crochet clothes and bags, we do hair, open Jamaican restaurants, and entertain people with Jamaican music and other interesting things. We know that Brand Jamaica is very powerful, and we make use of it.

5 Once you are Jamaican you are definitely accustomed to eating rice and peas on Sunday. Whether it is with chicken, curried goat or mackerel, whatever your preference of protein maybe, on Sunday you must have it with rice and peas.

4 You must be able to speak patois. Apart from having the Jamaican accent and being able to use the British English in formal settings, every Jamaican must be able to speak 'Jamaican' (with the exception of perhaps those who left our shores before they were able to speak). The Jamaican patois is a very important part of being Jamaican; it is an informal tool used in expression through music, drama, spoken or written word. And even if you cannot speak it you must at least be able to understand it.

3 You must enjoy at least one Jamaican authentic meal recipe. Ackee and saltfish with breadfruit; mackerel run down; jerk chicken; curried goat and chicken; beef patties; coconut drops and gizzadas are some of the items on the list. You may not like all of them but as a Jamaican you should enjoy most of them, made with spices and foods from the Jamaican soil and by talented Jamaican hands.

2 If you are someone who does not know how to have a good time, you should check your birth certificate; you may not be Jamaican. All Jamaicans know how to have fun. There are so many things on our island to enjoy. We can go to the beach, to restaurants, watch Jamaican plays, visit museums, and here in Jamaica sporting events and parties 'cyaan dun'. There must be an aspect of our culture that you enjoy.

1 To be truly Jamaican you must first be proud to be Jamaican. Although as a nation we face many problems, our achievements far outweigh our downfalls. There are times when we are extremely proud to be Jamaican but there are other times when we are not so proud. However, we understand that Jamaica is a little country with a big name, full of great people with the ability to do great things. We excel in every area we put our name to and even when we are not successful we always manage to leave an indelible mark everywhere we go. Thus, true Jamaicans are proud to be Jamaican and are empowered to see us move forward, together as one nation. It does not matter your race or class, Jamaica is made up of Chinese, Indians, Blacks, Caucasians, Hindus, Christians, Muslims; you name it we have it. Our togetherness and cultural diversity is also a characteristic of our Jamaican nation as our motto says we are Out Of Many One People. As Jamaicans, it is our duty to preserve, dig up, display and recreate our traditional elements both tangible and intangibles in an effort to preserve our unique status of being Jamaican.