

Get your groove back in Jamaica

Haunted colonial mansions, triathlons and motivational theme parks — not things you think of when you think of Jamaica? Think again, mon. Jamaica is fast becoming the health and activity capital of the Caribbean. Feel like you need to recharge rather than merely relax?

With direct flights on JetBlue launching in January and locals that welcome you with open arms, you'll be getting your groove back in no time.

Why go:

The tourist season in Jamaica doesn't really get under way until mid-December, and deals at resorts and activity centers abound (as do quiet, empty beaches if you've worn yourself out). Recent infrastructure improvements have made the country more accessible than ever, and the weather hovers near 85 degrees with clear skies year-round — so your itinerary should rarely suffer from a rainout.

It's my first time. What should I do there?

The Jamaica Tourist Board is one of the friendliest you'll ever encounter (www.visitjamaica.com). And what you'll likely discover about Montego Bay is that its combination of beachside resorts, stunning old colonial homes, championship golf courses, bobsledding (a fun, nature-tour twist on the Jamaican Olympic legacy), and kayaking make it a particularly great area if you're looking to both challenge yourself and unwind.

I've been before. What should I see?

If you're craving a new adventure in a mind-blowing setting, Derek Evans runs one of the best-kept secrets in Jamaica — his motivational, family-run theme park, H&Evans Scent Experience. At 2,000 feet in the hills of St. Ann's, H&Evans Scent includes paintball, team-building games, authentic home-cooked Jamaican food prepared by Derek's wife, and the longest zip lines in Jamaica (www.hevansscent.com).

Quick facts

Best place to grab a drink: Float up to the bar on the Lazy River at Rose Hall Resort and get a pina colada to go while letting the soothing, man-made current whisk you along in your inner tube.

A local dish to check out: No restaurant in Jamaica is without spicy jerk chicken and the melt-in-your-mouth “rice and peas” enhanced with coconut milk. And the doughy fried “festival” is like a mini unsweetened doughnut.

Cost: You can score hotel rates for as low as \$99 a night at the Rose Hall Resort — almost cheaper than a night out in Boston! Many all-inclusive deals include unlimited meals, drinks and boating.

Where to stay: Winston Churchill stayed in the Jamaica Inn, a 47-suite oasis outside of Ocho Rios, which boasts private verandas with ocean views, no televisions, and a library (www.jamaicainn.com).