
Soak away your cares in Jamaica's mineral springs

To a weary Roman soldier, few pleasures compared to the warm waters of Baden. Lapping against aching muscles and tender wounds, the mineral spring was welcome therapy after battle.

Historians of the time swore by the curative power of this ancient Swiss spa, but they would have been astounded by what flowed up from the volcanic rocks in Jamaica. Gushing from mountainsides or pooling in grasslands, Jamaica's mineral baths rival some of the best in the world.

The Bath of St Thomas the Apostle in St Thomas was the first group of springs to be recognised for its curative properties on the island. A runaway slave discovered the Bath Fountain on the east bank of the Sulphur River at the turn of the 18th century. Tradition says that the waters quickly healed ulcers that had plagued him for years. Confident his find was enough to overcome the wrath of his master, he returned to the plantation with a miraculous tale. Hot and cold springs flow into Bath, which is slightly radioactive and high in sulphur and lime.

Hidden gems

Another popular bath is the Rockfort Mineral Bath, at the foot of Long Mountain in Kingston. The springs were first observed after a powerful earthquake in 1907, and are believed to be a result of that natural event. Rockfort is more radioactive than Bath and slightly saline. The bath is a mixture of water from the mountains and the nearby Caribbean Sea.

Often off the traditional tourist trail, Jamaica's mineral springs are true hidden gems. Rustic, picturesque and unpretentious, many are unnamed and known only to the surrounding villages. Visiting these springs is sometimes reminiscent of a pioneering expedition into virgin territory, but the reward at the end of the adventure is well worth the effort. If tradition is anything to go by, our springs will slash your doctor's bill in half; at the very least, they will ease away your stress and give you a touch of Jamaica's natural balm.

MILK RIVER HOTEL AND SPA
Milk River District, Clarendon
Tel: (876) 610-7746/7

BATH FOUNTAIN HOTEL
Bath, St Thomas
Tel: (876) 703-4154

ROCKFORT MINERAL BATH
Rockfort, Kingston
Tel: (876) 938-6551