

## Holywell Recreational Park - Jamaica

Holywell Park is one of the hidden natural gems of Jamaica perfect for those interested in eco-tourist attractions.

A three hundred area "park in a park" is the gateway to the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (BJCMNP) and has protected status over all other areas. It is located 3,500 ft above sea-level in the cool Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park. It is the perfect getaway from the hustle and bustle of life. With lush vegetation everywhere the park is often bathed in tropical mist. It is always cool with the fresh fragrance of mountain air. When it is clear you can get a spectacular view of Kingston, Portmore and Port Royal which lie below the mountain. The park was replanted extensively with Caribbean pines after suffering damage from hurricane Gilbert and Ivan.

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Holywell is a 90 minutes drive from Kingston. The Blue Mountain and John Crow Mountains National Park spans 3 parishes in Jamaica. It is Jamaica's only terrestrial national park protecting 1/3 of the island's natural forests. It is home to some of many unique plants including the world's tiniest orchids and also a bamboo plant that flowers once every 33 years. It is also home to many animals including the Giant Swallowtail Butterfly, the largest in the Western hemisphere and the Jamaican Boa the largest snakes in Jamaica. There are also a wide variety of birds in the park Holywell is also home to 10 major rivers. One added attraction is that this is the home to the famous Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee.

### Exhilarating for hiking

There are five scenic trails leading off in different directions through ferny dells, cloud-covered forest and elfin woodlands. The trails provide the visitor with an opportunity to view over 50 different species of trees and shrubs. Among the most used trails are the Oatley Mountain Trail, 1.5 hours long, which is marked with educational signs and leads through the forest to a river whose cool waters will titillate the bather.

For the seasoned hiker, a walk along the Waterfall Shelter Trail leads to the Cascade, Jamaica's second highest waterfall, which plunges majestically from the North Slope some 4,363 feet above sea level. Dare to take a dip in its invigoratingly pulsating spray! This uphill trek is about 45 minutes to one hour long.

The Fairy Glade Trail whisks you off along a 45-minute pathway through bountiful bowers of ginger lilies. To enhance your experience, certified tour guides are available for all trails.

If you want to double your scenic pleasure and physical workout, you can start your hike from the New Castle Training Depot, a 17th-century army camp located about three miles from Holywell. It's easy going along with almost flat gradient of paved road that is lined with an array of colorful impatiens.

If you're daring, you can bring your own tent and camp out under starlit skies. Make sure you pack warm gear as temperatures can dive as low as 14° C (57° F).

There are a few "watering holes" for a great swim. Be warned that the water is cold. We recommend you check in with park ranger if you are going to hike especially if it is during rainy season. Be sure to pack the proper hiking gear including hiking boots. There are also covered gazeboes and picnic tables perfect for group outing, relaxation, cook-out and/or just observing nature. There are several signs explaining the flora in the park

On site accommodations include 3 self-contained cabins and camping tents connected by easy nature trails to the ranger station and picnic area. On weekends the cabins are normally full. Book in advance through the JCDT. The rustic cabins sleep 4-6 people and have kitchenettes and hot and cold water. The view of Kingston from the balcony will make up for the rustic interior.

There is a special area in the park for children to play called the Kids Discovery Zone.  
For more information contact:

JCDT/Green Jamaica  
(876) 920-8278/9  
(876) 960-2848/9  
Email: [Jamaicaconservation@gmail.com](mailto:Jamaicaconservation@gmail.com)

Website: <http://www.greenjamaica.org.jm>