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THE GENIUS OF GOLF IN JAMAICA

The draw of the Jamaican golf scene is as powerful as the slice of a champion's swing. The greens offer an exciting diversity of challenge that keeps the pros coming back again and again, while novices hone their skills on some of the world's most scenic courses. Sophistication and elegance make the clubhouses popular gathering spots, and well-stocked pro shops can meet just about every need.

Montego Bay is the natural focal point for any golfer who visits Jamaica, and the region has become a mecca for the sport in recent years, offering a mix of established, longtime favorites and a few new ones. The other resort areas island-wide also offer quality golf experiences.

Cinnamon Hill Golf Course

Set on the site of a former sugar plantation, the Cinnamon Hill Golf Course at the Rose Hall Resort & Country Club features challenging holes and breathtaking views across the Caribbean Sea. The fairways are laden with water hazards, and dramatic changes in elevation define many of the holes. Designed by Robert von Hagge and Rick Baril, this 18-hole, par-71 course runs 6,637 yards (6,069 meters) and is a re-design of the Three Palms Ocean Course. Cinnamon Hill ranks among the most exceptional and enjoyable in the entire Caribbean.

The front nine is dominated by sweeping Caribbean trade winds and open fairways. The par-four fifth hole is indisputably the most beautiful of the entire course, and one of the most challenging. It plays 453 yards (414 meters) downhill with a dogleg left, banking at the water's edge. The green is protected by a few knolls on the left, with a thin strip of beach and the sea to the right.

Historic ruins line many of the greens, including a huge stone aqueduct adjacent to the par-four 405-yard (370-meter) seventh, an uphill drive with the wind from behind. The back nine turns away from the sea into winding hills, where it encounters dense foliage that sometimes encroaches upon the fairways, forcing some golfers to resort to a long iron rather than miscalculating with the driver. The 458-yard (419-meter) seventeenth has an elevated tee shot that must clear a wide ravine and a small jungle grove to the right. The green is framed by several large stone pillars, which once supported the plantation's aqueduct system.

Contact the resort at (876) 953-2650 for the resort, which can direct callers to the Cinnamon Hill Golf Shop. More information about the hotel and the course is available at www.wyndham-jamaica.com.

White Witch Golf Club

The White Witch Golf Club is named for the legendary ghost of Annie Palmer, the "White Witch" of Rose Hall, who ruled the Rose Hall plantation until 1831 and is alleged to have murdered three husbands. White Witch seems to have been etched out of the lush vegetation, challenging players to clear deep gorges and gauge the number of breaks in each green.

The par-71 White Witch course is another von Hagge/Baril creation, stretching 6,710 yards (6,136 meters) through 600 acres of Rose Hall. The vision required

to create this course was quite extraordinary, considering the mix of jungle groves, steep inclines and rocky ravines that define the terrain.

Despite all of the twists and turns incorporated into the design, an astonishing 16 out of 18 holes feature stunning ocean views framed by glorious flora.

Opened in August 2000, the White Witch is owned and operated by the Ritz Carlton Rose Hall Golf & Spa Resort in Montego Bay. Tel: (876) 518-0174;

http://www.ritzcarlton.com/resorts/rose_hall_jamaica/golf.

Half Moon Golf Club

Just down the road is the Half Moon Golf Course. Opened in 1961, this Robert Trent Jones, Sr. masterpiece is widely regarded not only as one of the finest courses in the Caribbean, but in the entire world. Half Moon is a long par-72 championship course that stretches 7,119 yards (6,506 meters), relatively flat and distinguished by deep, wide fairways. More than half of its holes face Caribbean trade winds, making club selection and caddy-reliance important considerations.

Like White Witch and Cinnamon Hill, Half Moon is also laid out at the foot of undulating green hills in Montego Bay. Tall palm trees dominate the sidelines on most of the fairways and several lakes are interspersed throughout the course, leaving players additional obstacles to overcome before reaching the putting surfaces.

Half Moon also features the David Leadbetter Golf Academy, offering instruction in the finer aspects of the game. Tel: (876) 953-2615; www.halfmoon-resort.com.

The 6,221-yard (5,688-meter), par-72 ***Tryall Golf Club*** is the former home of the Johnnie Walker World Championship and remains one of the best courses in the Caribbean. Tel: (876) 956-5660; www.tryallclub.com.

SuperClubs Golf Club, Runaway Bay and **SuperClubs Golf Club, Ironshore** are the two SuperClubs Resorts courses in Jamaica. Runaway Bay, built by British Naval Commander John Harris in 1960, is a par-72 championship course that has been home to major events, including the Jamaica Open and the World Cup of Golf Qualifier. Also a par-72 course, Ironshore stretches 6,633 yards (6,065 meters) and was built in 1972 by Robert Moote. Tel: (877) GO SUPER; www.superclubs.com; SuperClubs also operates a nine-hole, par-three course at **Grand Lido Braco** in Negril called the **Village Green**.

Negril Hills Golf Club, built by Robert Simmons in 1994, is a par-72 course running 6,333 yards (5,791 meters) and celebrated for its breathtaking setting in the tropical Jamaican flora. It features elevated tees, numerous water hazards and fast greens. Tel: (876) 957-4638; www.negrilhillsgolfclub.com.

Sandals Golf & Country Club is the resort company's redesign of the Upton Golf Club purchased in 1992. Running 6,204-yards (5,672 meters), this par-71 course is located in Ocho Rios and considered one of the elite golf facilities in Jamaica. Tel: (876) 975-0119; www.sandals.com/general/golf.cfm.

Caymanas Golf Club is a par-72 championship course open since 1957 and is situated between Kingston and the Blue Mountains. Tel: (876) 922-3388; www.caymanasgolfclub.com.

The **Manchester Club** in Mandeville is the oldest course in the Caribbean. This nine-hole, par-35 course stretches 2,865 yards (2,620 meters) and has 18 different tee boxes, allowing golfers to play a full round. Jamaica's annual mid-island, 72-hole championship is played here. Tel: (876) 962-2403.

Constant Spring Golf Club is an 18-hole, par-72 course that measures 6,560 yards (5,998 meters), making it a rather short course with distinctively narrow fairways. Located in Kingston, Constant Spring was built in 1910 by Stanley Thompson, a mentor of Robert Trent Jones. Tel: (876) 924-1610.

Currently closed for development, the par-72 **San San Golf & Country Club** course in Port Antonio runs 6,200 yards (5,669 meters). Tel: (876) 993-9345.

Jamaica hosts several major tournaments throughout the year, including the Rose Hall Classic in October at Cinnamon Hill and Half Moon. Additionally, Jamaica hosted the 2004 Celebrity Players Tour, attracting big names in sports and entertainment to play for serious prize money, with proceeds benefiting the SOS Children's Village in St. James, Jamaica. This popular tournament will be played again in Jamaica in 2005.

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