

# JAMAICA

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## NEGRIL

At the western tip of the island, an hour and 10 minutes by car from Montego Bay, Negril is a favorite resort area known for its natural beauty, with a seven-mile ribbon of white-sand beach and perfect conditions for swimming and snorkeling. Grotto-lined cliffs stretch to the old Negril Lighthouse, built in 1894. The ambience is relaxed; the mood is laid-back; the fashion is casual. Clothing optional sunbathing is permitted on select beaches here.

### **Sporting Pursuits**

Trekking on horseback to the romantic ruins of Whitehall Great House is fun. Boat rides may lead to Booby Cay, where the rare blue-footed booby bird breeds (and scenes for Walt Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* were filmed). Golf greens and tennis courts are on-site at the Negril Hills Golf Club, just south of town.

For the adventurous, there's sea kayaking and mountain biking along the coast, and facilities here are excellent for sailing and parasailing. Canoe trips go deep into the mysterious Negril Great Morass, a protected natural area where tall palms form a tranquil forest in the Royal Palm Reserve and exotic birds and crocodiles flourish.

With its remarkable coral reefs and calm, clear waters, Negril is a diver's paradise. The Negril Scuba Centre is one of the oldest dive operations in Jamaica and offers Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certification; several excellent local companies offer numerous additional water sports, including leisurely catamaran cruises.

Shopping enthusiasts will not be disappointed, with a busy craft market to explore and great duty-free shopping opportunities.

### **Into the Sunset**

According to legend, pirate Calico Jack Rackham and his followers were captured near Negril Harbour (called *Bloody Bay* for its history as a whaling port) after consuming vast quantities of rum. An additional distraction may well have been the blaze of orange and purple that makes the sunset at the end of every day a cause for celebration. Sunset cruises now drop anchor at several popular viewing spots.

Rick's Café is a big favorite, and pre-sunset entertainment here includes daredevil dives by local athletes from the 30-foot (nine-meter) cliff top towering beside this local hot spot. Rick's also offers dinner (Jamaican/Continental) in an open-air setting. Additional restaurants in the area include Café au Lait (French/Jamaican), Cosmos (seafood) and Sweet Spice (traditional Jamaican).

Negril also has one of Jamaica's liveliest music scenes, offering a wide range of options that includes: festive calypso beach barbecues; all-night dancing at DeBuss, Alfred's Ocean Palace and other local clubs; and lots of outdoor concerts.

### **Short Excursions**

This part of the island is known for its outstanding architecture, with wonderful examples of Georgian houses. On the road between Negril and Montego Bay, the town of Lucea is an interesting stop-off point. The capital of Hanover Parish, it's one of the island's earliest settlements and includes Fort Charlotte, a British stronghold built in 1756, and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century clock tower that still keeps perfect time and has been tended by the same family for more than a century.

In the opposite direction, the southwest coast beckons with quiet Savanna-La-Mar, the *plain on the sea*, a sugar port for more than two centuries. Further inland, the source of the Roaring River, near the old sugar town of Frome, lies hidden in a cliffside cave beyond a scenic natural swimming pool called the Blue Hole.

### **Accommodations**

None of Negril's hotels is taller than the average palm tree—the result of local efforts to limit development and protect natural resources, including the area's spectacular offshore reefs. Many have been positioned for maximum sunset viewing.

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