

Kingston & Around



As Jamaica's one true city, Kingston is something of an island within the island. Its pace and pulse are alien to the rest of Jamaica, for which it's the governmental, commercial and cultural hub. Most Jamaicans avoid it unless they absolutely have to come here; visitors plotting their island vacation generally give it a pass unless they happen to be flying in.

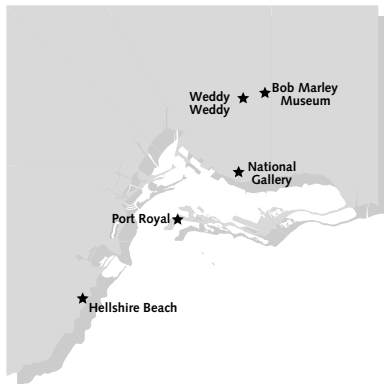
Give the capital more than a once over, however, and you're likely to be hooked. Despite its seemingly intractable social problems and sometimes intimidating street culture, Kingston sucks you in. Justly proud for having been the launching pad for some of the world's most electrifying music, the city by no means trades on its past reputation; its spirited clubs, bustling record stores and riotous street-system parties attest to the fact that the beat is still alive and bumping. The capital's cosmopolitan make-up ensures its galleries and restaurants pass muster with world travelers.

From Kingston, it's an easy journey to Port Royal, the ruined former pirate stronghold once known for its 'wickedness.' In the days before sugar was king, Jamaica's fortunes hinged on the seafaring adventures of Port Royal's residents. It all came crashing down in 1692 when a massive earthquake caused most of the town to sink into the sea.

Heading west, St Catherine and Clarendon parishes were once the island's wealthiest, and sugar remains the mainstay. The least visited part of Jamaica, it warrants a day trip for its historic importance as the locus of its first capital, St Jago de la Vega, now called Spanish Town.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Bob Marley Museum** Delve into the life of Jamaica's most revered contemporary hero at his former home and studio (p79)
- **National Gallery** Appreciate the singular vision of Jamaican artists at this internationally acclaimed museum (p72)
- **Weddy Weddy** Get into the groove at this riotous sound-system party, which rattles the windows of Burlington Ave every Wednesday (p92)
- **Port Royal** Retrace the steps of Blackbeard and Henry Morgan at the former pirate capital of the world (p97)
- **Hellshire Beach** Chill out at this atmospheric collection of seaside shacks, where fried fish has been elevated to the status of haute cuisine (p103)



■ AREA: 750 SQ KM

■ KINGSTON DEC AVERAGE HIGH TEMPERATURE: 31°C

KINGSTON

pop 750,000

Its reputation preceding it like a police siren, Kingston deters most visitors. The crime, traffic, crowds and shantytowns of the capital are simply too volatile to mix into the average vacationer's dream Jamaican cocktail. Few have the time (or inclination) to explore the city long enough to disprove the image.

To be sure, Kingston can be squalid, intimidating and, in places, extremely dangerous, but with some street smarts and an open mind, any visitor will be rewarded with a firm acquaintance of a city as unbridled and unique to the island as it is to the Caribbean and indeed the world. Ground zero for the reggae for which the island made its mark, the capital is about as far from the brochures for pampered resort life as it gets.

Kingston divides neatly into downtown and uptown, and outsiders will find it easy to plan their days by taking their pick of each. Having taken the hit from the 1907 earthquake, downtown is in a state of decay that almost screams 'perpetual.' Yet it still manages to boast a scenic waterfront, Jamaica's greatest art museum and most of Kingston's historic buildings, complemented by a frenetic street-life – most notably on King St or the Parade around William Grant Park, where street preachers and mixtape hawkers vie for the attentions of a bustling humanity.

Not 6km (yet a world) away, uptown holds the city's hotels, restaurants and night-life, largely confined to the pocket of New Kingston. In addition to two of the city's most essential sights, the Bob Marley Museum and Devon House, the capital's diplomatic and commercial status assures uptown a definite cosmopolitan suaveness – not to mention security.

Sadly, security *does* require mention – the threat of crime in Kingston can never be dismissed. Pockets of the west Kingston shantytowns are as dangerous as any place on the planet, and their volatility can spill over onto the downtown streets after dark. Be sure to follow safety directives (p71), ask your hotel for guidance and keep your wits about you. If you do, a week spent in Kingston repays the curious mind the way few legs of a Jamaican trip can.

HISTORY

On May 10, 1655, an English fleet bearing 7000 men sailed into Kingston Harbour and, after desultory resistance from the Spanish defenders at Passage Fort, captured Jamaica for Oliver Cromwell. For several decades the site of the future city was used for rearing pigs. When an earthquake leveled Port Royal in 1692 (p98), survivors struggled across the bay and pitched camp with the swine. A town plan was drawn up on a grid pattern, centered on an open square.

Though it was devastated repeatedly by earthquakes and hurricanes, the port city prospered throughout the 18th century, becoming one of the most important trading centers in the Western Hemisphere and an important transshipment point for slaves destined for the Spanish colonies.

As the city expanded, the wealthier merchants moved up to the cooler heights of Liguanea, where they built more expansive homes. In 1755, Governor Admiral Charles Knowles bowed to political pressure and transferred his government's offices to Kingston. His successor revoked the act, however, and it wasn't until 1872 that the capital was officially transferred.

In 1907 a violent earthquake leveled much of the city, killing 800 people and rendering tens of thousands homeless. The aftermath witnessed a transformation – modern buildings replaced the ruins and damaged edifices were given new life. This urban evolution reached its zenith in the 1960s, when the Urban Development Corporation reclaimed the waterfront, and several historic landmarks, including Victoria Market, were razed to make way for a complex of gleaming new structures, including the Bank of Jamaica and the Jamaica Conference Centre.

About this time, Kingston's nascent music industry was beginning to gather steam, lending international stature and fame to the city. This, in turn, fostered the growth of New Kingston, an uptown area of multistory office blocks and banks, restaurants, shops and hotels developed in the 1960s on the site of the Knutsford Park racecourse.

The boom years of the 1960s lured the rural poor, swelling the slums and shantytowns that had arisen in the preceding years. Unemployment soared, and with it came crime. The fractious 1970s spawned politically sponsored criminal enterprises whose

trigger-happy networks still plague the city. Commerce began to leave downtown for New Kingston, and the middle class began to edge away as well. That exodus began a period of decline from which the downtown has yet to recover.

Despite ongoing inner-city strife, hoteliers and the Jamaica Tourist Board are pushing to dispel the city's negative image and to resurrect its tourist industry. They have long talked up plans to bring cruise ships and tourists back to Kingston. Development of a free port has been proposed, as has a restoration of the historic downtown and Port Royal. Meanwhile, efforts to beautify uptown have flowered with the 2003 opening of Emancipation Park (p77), a welcoming and spacious public swath of green that immediately became a daily gathering place for visitors and residents alike.

ORIENTATION

Overlooking the seventh-largest natural harbor in the world (and the largest in the Caribbean), the capital fans out from the waterfront and rises gently toward the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

The wooded, steep-faced ridge of Long Mountain rises up to the east, with Dallas Mountain, a spur of the Blue Mountains, rising further east, parallel and higher. The city of Kingston is hemmed in to the northeast by Jack's Hill, to the north by Stony Hill and bound to the northwest by Red Hills.

The historic downtown just north of the waterfront forms the city center. Ocean Blvd, Port Royal St and Harbour St parallel the waterfront. King St, the main thoroughfare, leads north from the waterfront to the Parade, surrounding a bustling square at the heart of the historic district.

From here, E Queen St runs east to the Norman Manley International Airport and Port Royal. W Queen St runs west for four blocks, then diverges and becomes Spanish Town Rd, which cuts northwest (toward Spanish Town) through Tivoli Gardens and the industrial estates of southwest Kingston, an altogether depressing drive lined with slums and shantytowns.

A dual carriageway east of the junction of Port Royal St and South Camp Rd runs past the General Penitentiary, and links

downtown with the Palisadoes and Norman Manley International Airport.

Both Marescaux Rd and Slipe Rd lead north from downtown to uptown. The two arteries meet at Cross Roads, which is a major junction forming the unofficial boundary with the neighborhood of New Kingston, uptown's heart, immediately to the north. Knutsford Blvd, the main north-to-south artery, bisects New Kingston. Half Way Tree Rd leads northwest from Cross Roads, turning into Constant Spring Rd, which leads to Manor Park and Stony Hill.

Northeast of New Kingston, the middle-class residential area of Liguanea lies up Hope Rd from Half Way Tree Rd. Hope Rd ascends gradually past Mona Heights to Papine, the gateway to the Blue Mountains and the University of West Indies campus at Mona.

Maps

You can get free copies of the JTB's *Discover Jamaica* map from the JTB headquarters (p71). It features a detailed 1:34,000 scale street map of Kingston.

INFORMATION

The following information covers the main outlets for traveler services (such as banks, post offices and telephone centers). The websites **Go Kingston** (www.go-kingston.com) and **Jamaica Travel Guide** (<http://jamaicatravelpages.com/kingston-travel-guide>) are good starting points for general information.

Bookstores

The following city bookstores are relatively well stocked:

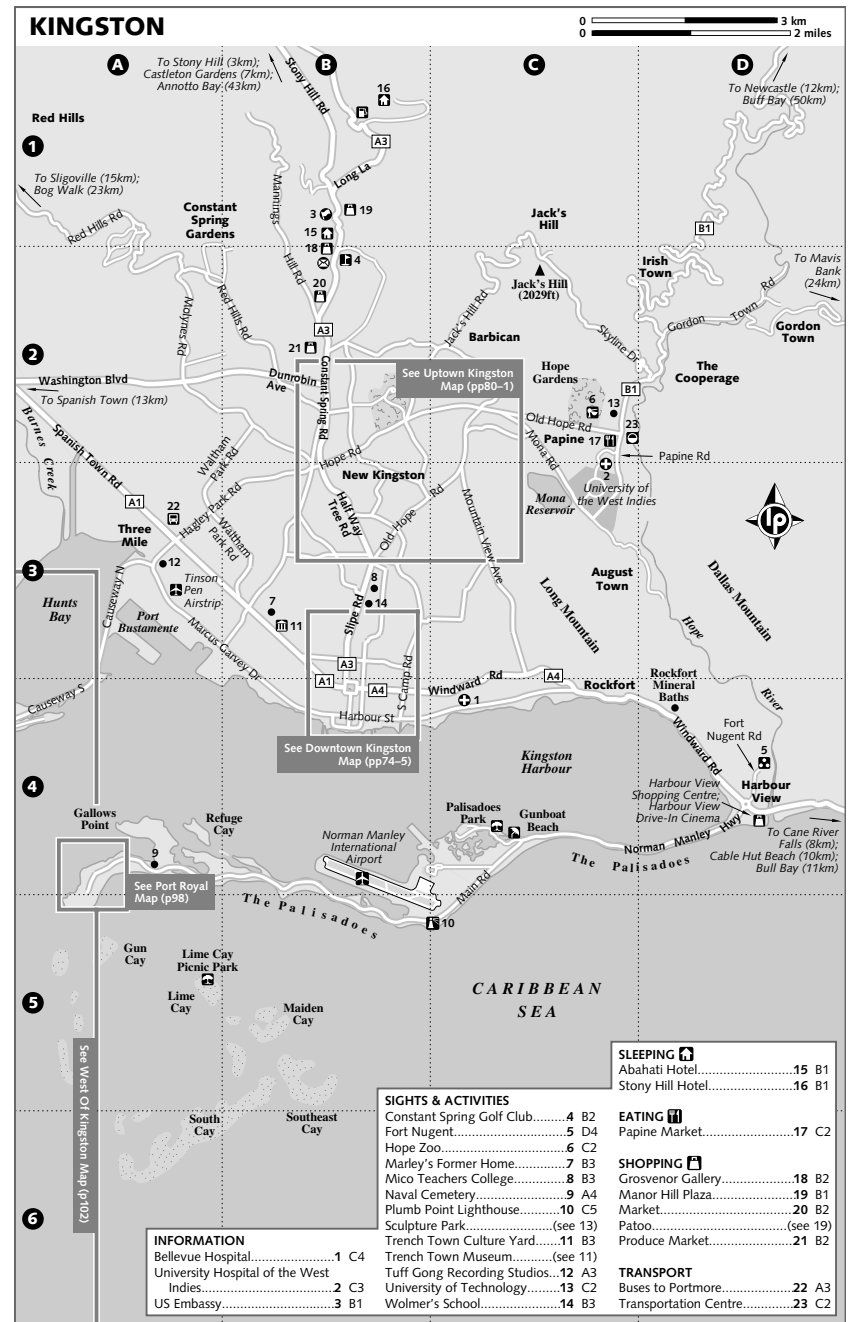
Bookland (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-4035; 53 Knutsford Blvd) Stock includes a strong selection of titles on Jamaica and the Caribbean, including guidebooks.

Kingston Bookshop (☎ 978-0615; Liguanea Post Mall, 115 Hope Rd) Offers a reasonable selection of general interest and foreign books.

Sangsters Downtown (Map pp74-5; ☎ 967-1930; 33 King St); Uptown (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3518; shop 20, Sovereign Centre, 106 Hope Rd) Literature, general interest and reference books.

Cultural Centers

British Council (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-6915; 28 Trafalgar Rd) Promotes everything British and hosts soirées and cultural events.



KINGSTON IN...

Two Days

Visit the **Bob Marley Museum** (p79) to see where Jamaica's favorite son rested his natty dreads and the **National Gallery** (p72) for a crash course in Jamaican art; tour beautiful colonial manse **Devon House** (p78); and take in a meal to remember at the **Red Bones Blues Café** (p89) or the terrace scene at **Up on the Roof** restaurant (p89). After a nap, hit Knutsford Blvd for some sweaty after-hours excitement at **Asylum** (p91) or **Quad** (p91).

Four Days

To the two-day itinerary, add on a morning jaunt to **Port Royal** (p97) for a peek into Jamaica's pirate past, and then catch a boat to the tiny, uninhabited island of **Lime Cay** (p101) for sun worship and snorkeling. Back in Kingston, soak in some history on a downtown **walking tour** (p82) and see what influenced the young Bob Marley at the **Trench Town Culture Yard & Village** (p76) or what his son Ziggy's up to at **Tuff Gong Recording Studios** (p77). If you're here on a Wednesday, be sure to take in a **Weddy Weddy** (p92) sound-system party.

One Week

Add on day trips to some of the fascinating destinations around Kingston. Possibilities include an outing to **Hellshire Beach Recreation Area** (p103) to see how the locals take in the sea and sand; an excursion to **Spanish Town** (p103), Jamaica's capital for over 300 years, for intimations of the city's former glory; a quick spree into the Blue Mountains for Sunday brunch at **Strawberry Hill** (p114) and a visit to the **Old Tavern Coffee Estate** (p116) for a quick pick-me-up before returning to the city.

Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-5726; 3 Phoenix Ave) Contact the commission for a list of Jamaican cultural centers.

Emergency

Emergency (☎ 119)

Police Headquarters (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-9321; 11 East Queen St); Half Way Tree (Map pp80-1; 142 Maxfield Ave); Cross Roads (Map pp80-1; Brentford Rd) A complete listing of police departments and branches is given in the emergency numbers page at the front of the Jamaican telephone directory.

Ambucare Ambulance Service (☎ 978-2327) Private service.

St John Ambulance (☎ 926-7656) Free ambulance services in Kingston.

Internet Access

Most upscale hotels catering to business travelers provide in-room dial-up or wireless internet access, and have business centers offering internet service to both guests and nonguests; prices tend to be outrageous. These are some cheaper alternatives:

Café What's On (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4490; Devon House, 26 Hope Rd; per 30 min US\$2; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-10pm Sat, 4-10pm Sun) A pleasant place to log on, with occasional live music and café food (see p91).

Innovative Superstore (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3512; Sovereign Centre, 106 Hope Rd; per 30 min US\$2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Overly air-conditioned but efficient.

Kingston and St Andrew Parish Library (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3315; 2 Tom Redcam Ave; per 30 min US\$1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) The cheapest option, though not the quietest.

Laundry

Any hotel will wash laundry but the prices may clean out your wallet. Do-it-yourselfers can head to:

Express Laundromat (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-4319; 30 Lady Musgrave Rd; per load US\$1.50)

Quick Wash Coin Laundry (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920-2713; 1 Union Sq; per load US\$1.50) Self-service laundry.

Left Luggage

There are no rental lockers at the Norman Manley International Airport, or anywhere else for that matter, as theft is too great a problem. Some hotels permit guests to store luggage with the concierge for up to a week or so at no extra charge.

Libraries

Jamaican National Heritage Trust (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-1287; www.jnht.com; Headquarters House,

79 Duke St) Maintains archives on the island's architectural history.

Kingston and St Andrew Parish Library (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3315; 2 Tom Redcam Ave; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Also here is the headquarters of the Jamaica Library Service (☎ 926-3310).

National Library of Jamaica (Map pp74-5; ☎ 967-1526; Institute of Jamaica, 12 East St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, to 4pm Fri) Incorporates the Caribbean's largest repository of audiovisual aids, books, maps, charts, paintings and documents on West Indian history.

Media

Daily Gleaner (www.jamaica-gleaner.com) Jamaica's dominant newspaper since 1834.

Jamaica Observer (www.jamaicaobserver.com) A boisterous alternative.

Medical Services

Bellevue Hospital (Map p69; ☎ 759-4081; 161 Windward Rd) Public hospital, 24-hour emergency ward.

Harpport Pharmacy (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-7720; 144 Harbour St)

Kingston Public Hospital (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-0210; North St) Public hospital with emergency department.

Moodies Pharmacy (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-4174; New Kingston Shopping Centre, 30 Dominica Dr)

University Hospital of the West Indies (Map p69; ☎ 927-1620; UWI campus, Mona) The best, most up-to-date public hospital with 24-hour emergency department.

Woman's Centre of Jamaica (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-9038, 929-2997; 42 Trafalgar Rd) Offers crisis counseling for women.

Money

Uptown, you'll find more than a dozen banks along Knutsford Blvd, and there are dozens more elsewhere. Most have foreign-exchange counters as well as 24-hour ATMs. Banking hours are 9am to 2pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to noon and 3pm to 5pm Friday.

National Commercial Bank (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-3940; 54 King St) A centralized foreign-exchange department; see the yellow pages in the telephone directory for branches throughout Kingston.

Scotiabank (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-1000; cnr Duke & Port Royal Sts) Its main foreign-exchange center, immediately east of the Jamaica Conference Centre.

Western Union (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2454, 888-991-2056; 7 Hillcrest Ave) Has about 20 agencies throughout Kingston.

Post

FedEx (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920-1186; 75 Knutsford Blvd; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Has offices throughout Kingston.

DHL (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920-0010; 60 Knutsford Blvd; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-1pm Sat)

Half Way Tree Post Office (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6803; 90 Half Way Tree Rd; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) A better option than the main post office.

Main post office (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-2120; 13 King St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Gets crowded. There's a speedier option in the Liguanea Post Mall at 115 Hope Rd (same hours).

Telephone

You can make international calls and send faxes from most hotels. You'll find plenty of public call centers around town. International call centers are located off the Half Way Tree roundabout. Alternatively, you can use a Cable & Wireless World Talk card from any call box or your hotel room.

In the past, Cable & Wireless ran call centers throughout Jamaica, but most have closed in recent years.

Toilets

Public restrooms in Kingston, including these, are unsavory places, best avoided.

Kingston Mall (Map pp74-5; Orange St; US\$0.35) Near the harbor.

Nelson Mandela Park (Map pp80-1; Constant Spring Rd, Half Way Tree)

Tourist Information

Jamaica Information Service (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3740; 58A Half Way Tree Rd) Offers statistical, governmental and general information on the island.

Jamaica Tourist Board Uptown (Map pp80-1; JTB; ☎ 929-9200; fax 929-9375; 64 Knutsford Blvd); Norman Manley International Airport (Map p69; ☎ 924-8024; arrivals hall) This uptown office offers maps, brochures and advice for accommodations, much of which is within walking distance.

Travel Agencies

Grace Kennedy Travel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-6290; fax 968-8418; 1 St Lucia Ave)

Praise Travel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-0215; 9 Cecelio Ave)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Owing to internationally publicized periods of social strife that engulf Kingston every now and again, the city has a reputation as a dangerous destination. In truth, visitors to the city can enjoy its sights and sounds in reasonable safety as long as a few commonsense guidelines are followed.

It's true that Kingston has a notoriously high murder rate, but most take place in the ghettos and are drug related or the product of violence between politically affiliated gangs. New Kingston and upscale residential areas such as Liguanea and Mona are generally safe for walking, as are most main roads and downtown (though it's certainly *not* an area to be wandering alone at night).

Avoid Kingston entirely during periods of tension, such as elections, when localized violence can spontaneously erupt. If you're in the town when street violence erupts, absolutely avoid downtown and adhere to any curfews that police may impose.

Stick to the main streets – if in doubt ask your hotel concierge or manager to point out the trouble areas. Have the front desk call you a taxi from a service known to them, rather than flagging down the first driver to pass. Avoid West Kingston (especially Trench Town, Jones Town, Greenwich Town and Tivoli), particularly west of the Parade, downtown.

Foreigners, especially white tourists, will stand out from the crowd. Fortunately, visitors to Kingston are not hassled by hustlers and touts to anywhere near the degree they are in the north-coast resorts.

SIGHTS

Downtown

NATIONAL GALLERY OF JAMAICA

The superlative collection of Jamaican art housed by the **National Gallery** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-1561, www.galleryjamaica.com; Roy West Bldg, 12 Ocean Blvd; admission US\$1.50; 🕒 10am-4:30pm Tue-Thu, to 4pm Fri, to 3pm Sat) is quite simply the finest on the island and should on no account be missed. In addition to offering an intrinsically Jamaican take on international artistic trends, the collection attests to the vitality of the country's artistic heritage as well as its present.

The core of the permanent collection is presented on the 1st floor in 10 galleries representing the Jamaica School, organized chronologically spanning the years 1922 to the present. The first rooms are mainly devoted to the sculptures of Edna Manley and the spectacularly vibrant 'intuitive' paintings (p40), notably the dark landscapes of John Dunkley, the poignant portraiture of Albert Huie and the village life scenes of David Pottinger. Later galleries chart the course of 'Jamaican art for Jamaicans' up to the recent past, including abstract religious works by

Carl Abrahams, decidedly surrealist exercises by Colin Garland, ethereal assemblages by David Boxer, Barrington Watson's realist forays and many other works that animate various aspects of Jamaica's national culture.

Elsewhere, the various collections and the presentation spaces of the gallery include the AD Scott Collection of Jamaican art, the Cecil Baugh gallery of ceramics, the Edna Manley Memorial Collection, and the imminently enjoyable Larry Wirth Collection, a unique and cohesive assemblage of works by visionary artist, revivalist bishop and community leader Mallica 'Kapo' Reynolds.

Excellent **guided tours** (☎ reservations 922-1561; admission US\$13) are offered, providing illuminating background to the works on show; advance reservations are suggested. An annual National Exhibition is held from December through to spring as a showcase for the best of recent Jamaican art.

AFRICAN-CARIBBEAN HERITAGE CENTRE

Presided over by the Institute of Jamaica, the **Heritage Centre** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-4793; www.instituteofjamaica.org.jm; Orange St; 🕒 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Thu, to 3:30pm Fri) houses a library and a small yet informative gallery that is dedicated to the history of the Middle Passage and a sociocultural exploration of the African diaspora. It is also home to the Memory Bank, an engrossing oral-history archive created to preserve Jamaica's rich folkloric traditions. The center also stages cultural events from lectures and symposia to readings and dance performance.

THE PARADE

The streets surrounding William Grant Park at the bustling heart of the downtown mayhem are known as the **Parade**. The gleaming white edifice facing the park's southeast corner is **Kingston Parish Church** (Map pp74-5; South Pde), today serving a much reduced congregation of true Kingstonians – those 'born under the clock' (within earshot of its bell). The original church was destroyed in the 1907 earthquake and was replaced (in concrete) by the existing building. Note the tomb dating to 1699, the year the original church was built. Admiral Benbow, the commander of the Royal Navy in the West Indies at the turn of the 18th century, lies beneath a tombstone near the High Altar. Marble plaques commemorate soldiers of the West Indian regiments who

died of fever or other hardships during colonial wars.

The **South Parade**, packed with street vendors' stalls, is known as 'Ben Dung Plaza' because passersby have to bend down to buy from hawkers whose goods are displayed on the ground. The place is clamorous, and stores blast reggae music loud enough to drive away even the most determined visitor (locals seem inured).

At the northwest corner of William Grant Park – where public hangings took place in colonial days – the structure with a pink, turreted facade is **Bramwell Booth Memorial Hall** (Map pp74-5; North Pde), the headquarters of the Salvation Army, built in 1933. At the time of writing, the 1911 **Ward Theatre** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-0453; North Pde) was undergoing renovation, and tours of its interior were expected once it is restored. For now, you can admire the sky-blue facade with white trim.

Coke Memorial Hall (Map pp74-5; East Pde) faces the eastern side of William Grant Park. This crenellated building has an austere redbrick facade in the dour Methodist tradition. The structure dates from 1840, but was remodeled in 1907 after sustaining severe damage in the earthquake.

WILLIAM GRANT PARK

Between North and South Pde is **William Grant Park**, which originally hosted a fortress erected in 1694 with guns pointing down King St toward the harbor. The fort was torn down and a garden, Victoria Park, laid out in 1870, with a life-size statue of Queen Victoria at its center. She has since been replaced by a bust of Sir Alexander Bustamante; Her Majesty's statue now stands on the east side of the park. The park was renamed in 1977 to honor Black Nationalist and labor leader Sir William Grant (1894-1977), who preached his Garveyite message of African redemption here. At the center of the park is a whimsical four-tiered fountain.

HEADQUARTERS HOUSE

This trim little **townhouse-turned-museum** (Map pp74-5; 79 Duke St; admission free; 🕒 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) is one block north and two east of North Pde. The brick-and-timber house was originally known as Hibbert House, named after Thomas Hibbert, reportedly one of four members of the Assembly who in 1755 engaged in a bet to build the finest house and thereby win

the attention of a much-sought-after beauty. It seems he lost the bet. In 1872, when the capital was moved from Spanish Town to Kingston, the house became the seat of the Jamaican legislature and remained so until 1960, when Gordon House was built across the street.

Since 1983, Headquarters House has hosted the **Jamaican National Heritage Trust** (☎ 922-1287; admission free), which has its offices in the former bedrooms and in an extension. Visitors are welcome to roam the rest of the building, including the former debating chamber on the ground floor, holding portraits of Jamaica's national heroes. Upstairs is a lookout tower of the type commonly built by the wealthy merchants of yesteryear to spy incoming vessels. The basement is an Aladdin's cave brimful with art and offbeat relics.

GORDON HOUSE

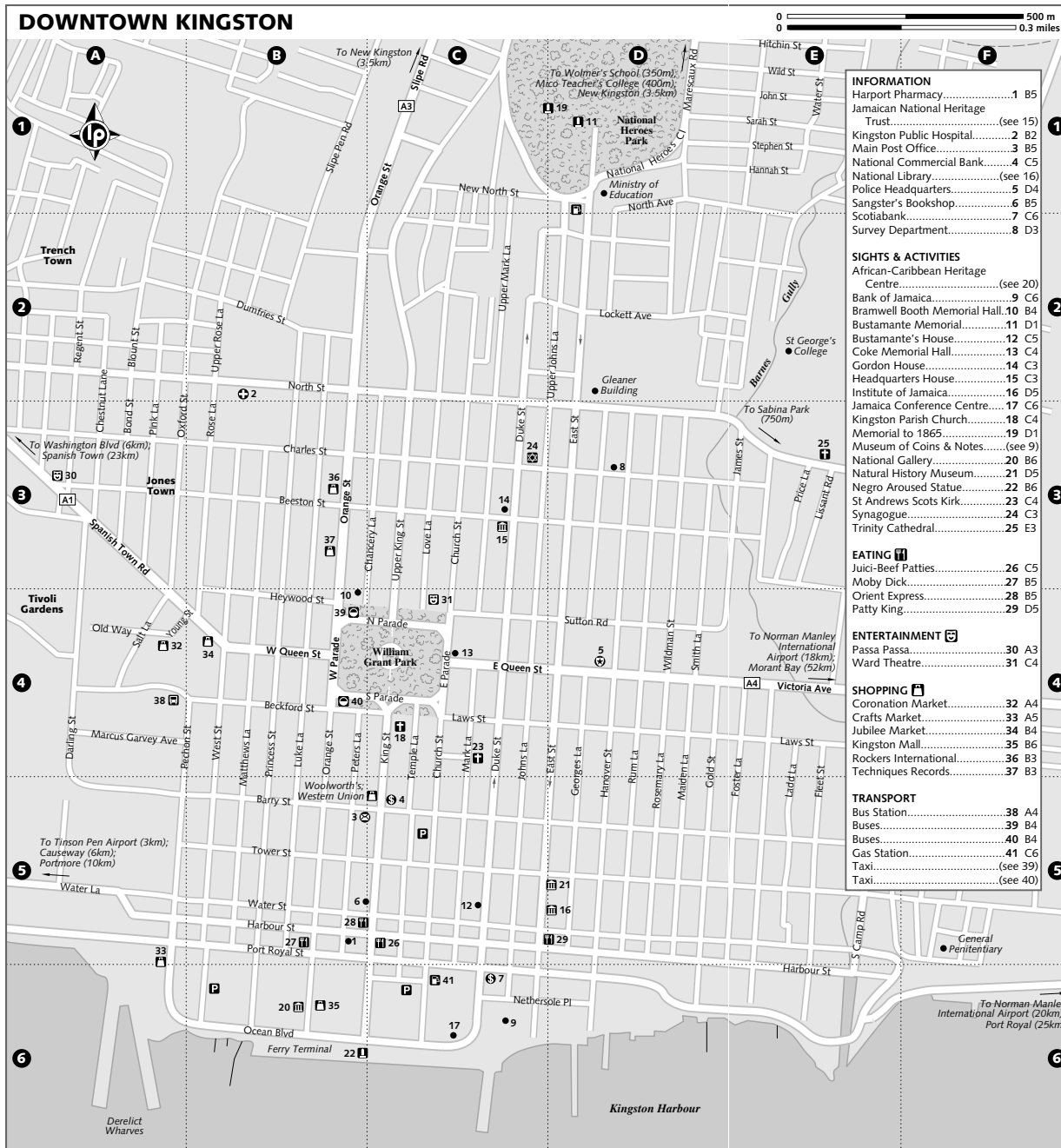
Jamaica's parliament meets at **Gordon House** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-0200; cnr Duke & Beeston Sts; admission to public galleries free), immediately north of Headquarters House. The rather plain brick-and-concrete building was constructed in 1960 and named after national hero the Right Excellent George William Gordon (1820-65); see the boxed text, p29.

You can visit Gordon House by prior arrangement to watch how the Jamaican parliament conducts business. The legislature has a single chamber, where the House of Representatives and the Senate meet at different times – the former at 2pm on Tuesday (and sometimes, during pressing business, on Wednesday at the same hour), and the latter at 10am on Friday. When the legislature is not in session, the marshal sometimes lets visitors in at his discretion.

JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

Jamaica's only **synagogue** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-5931; cnr Duke & Charles Sts), home to the United Congregation of the Israelites, is an attractive building dating from 1912 (its predecessor was toppled by the 1907 earthquake).

The place is worth a visit for its fine mahogany staircase and gallery. Sand muffles your footsteps as you roam – a symbolic memorial to the days of the Inquisition, when Jews fleeing persecution in Spain were forced to practice their faith in Jamaica in secret. The synagogue is usually locked, though if you call in advance you can often arrange



for the caretaker to open up on request for a small donation.

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA

Toward the south end of East St, the **Institute of Jamaica** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-0620; fax 922-1147; www.instituteofjamaica.org.jm; 10-16 East St; adult/child US\$2/1; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Thu, to 3:30pm Fri) is the nation's small-scale equivalent of the British Museum or Smithsonian. The institute hosts permanent and visiting exhibitions, and features a lecture hall, plus the **National Library** with Jamaican newspapers and texts dating back more than two centuries.

Also here is a **Natural History Museum** (admission US\$0.30), accessed by a separate entrance around the corner on Tower St. The dowdy collection offers an array of stuffed birds and a herbarium, rounded out by an eclectic miscellany playing a historical note.

NATIONAL HEROES PARK

The 30-hectare oval-shaped **National Heroes Park** (Map pp74-5; East St) was the Kingston Racecourse. Today its north end is a forlorn wasteland grazed by goats. At the park's southern end, however, National Heroes Circle contains some intriguing statues and memorials. The **tomb of Sir Alexander Bustamante** is a flat marble slab beneath an arch. More interesting is the **Memorial to 1865**, commemorating the Morant Bay Rebellion with a rock on a pedestal flanked by bronze busts of Abraham Lincoln and a black slave with a sword.

Marcus Garvey is also buried here, as is ex-premier Norman Manley, whose body was flown here from England in 1964 and reinterred with state honors. The **Manley Monument**, honoring his son Michael, was dedicated here in March 2002. Nearby is the final resting place of the beloved 'Crown Prince of Reggae,' Dennis Brown, who died in 1999.

National Heroes Park was a dangerous destination in the recent past, but a squad of armed soldiers and a couple of Jamaica Defense Force sentries in full ceremonial dress have made the site safe.

WOLMER'S SCHOOL & MICO TEACHERS COLLEGE

At the northern end of National Heroes Park you'll find **Wolmer's School** (Map p69; ☎ 922-5316; National Heroes Circle), a venerable educational establishment founded in 1729 at the bequest

of a Swiss-German goldsmith. It has produced many notable figures, including prime ministers and governor generals.

The impressive wooden colonial structures north of Wolmer's School house one of the oldest teacher-training colleges in the world, **Mico Teachers College** (Map p69; ☎ 929-5260; 1 Marescaux Rd). The original funds to establish the institution were bequest in a bizarre set of circumstances. In 1670, a nephew of Lady Mico refused at the eleventh hour to marry one of her six nieces. The unused dowry was invested, with a portion being set aside as ransom to liberate Christian captives from Barbary pirates. A century and a half later, as piracy waned, the considerable accumulated assets were used to establish the Mico Colleges with a mission to educate former slaves after emancipation. The impressive main building dates from 1909. There's a **museum** (admission US\$1.75; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) chronicling the history of the institution.

OTHER SIGHTS

The **Bank of Jamaica** (Map pp74-5; Nethersole Pl), the national mint and treasury at the east end of Ocean Blvd, is fronted by a tall concrete statue of Noel 'Crab' Nethersole (minister of finance from 1955 to 1969). Inside the bank building you'll find a small **Museum of Coins and Notes** (☎ 922-0750; www.boj.org.jm; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) displaying Jamaican currency through the centuries.

The **Jamaica Conference Centre** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-9160; 14-20 Duke St; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) was built in 1982 as the venue for meetings of the UN International Seabed Authority. It's worth popping inside for a free guided tour, not least to admire the intriguing wicker-basket and bamboo ceilings and walls.

The **Negro Aroused statue** (Map pp74-5; King St) is actually a replica; the original is in the National Gallery. This bronze statue depicting a crouched black man breaking free from bondage is the work of Jamaica's foremost sculptor, the late Edna Manley.

King St retains many of its beautiful old buildings, with wide sidewalks shaded by colonnades. Note the decorative carvings and long Corinthian columns at the **National Commercial Bank building** (Map pp74-5; cnr King & Harbour Sts).

The octagonal Georgian brick structure of **St Andrew's Scots Kirk** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-1818; 43A Duke St, entrance on Mark's Lane) serves the United

Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. It was built from 1813 to 1819 by a group of prominent Scottish merchants and is surrounded by a gallery supported by Corinthian pillars. Note the white-on-blue St Andrew cross in the stained-glass window. You'll be amply rewarded if you visit during a service, when its acclaimed choir, the St Andrew Singers, performs.

Although you can't go inside and there's no plaque to mark it, hardcore fans of Jamaica's first president can pay tribute to **Alexander Bustamante's House** (Map pp74-5; 1A Duke St), at the southern end of Duke St near the corner of Water Lane. This is the site of the national hero's former office.

Trinity Cathedral (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-3335; 1 George Eddy Dr) Open only for services (5:30am weekdays, 8:30am Sun) or if you call ahead for the caretaker to let you in, this dilapidated church is noted largely for having been the site of Norman Manley's funeral (attended by such dignitaries as Fidel Castro) as well as a small wall of mosaics dating back to Spanish times.

West of Downtown

TRENCH TOWN CULTURE YARD & VILLAGE Trench Town, which began life as a much-prized housing project erected by the British in the 1930s, is widely credited as the birthplace of ska, rocksteady and reggae music. The neighborhood has been immortalized in the gritty narratives of numerous reggae songs, not the least of which is Bob Marley's *No Woman No Cry*, the poignant Trench Town anthem penned by Vincent 'Tata' Ford in a tiny bedroom at what is now the **Trench Town Museum** (Map p69; ☎ 948-1455; 6-10 Lower First St; entrance US\$10 to the yard & museum, with a guided neighborhood tour US\$15; ☎ no set hr). In the days before superstardom, Bob and Rita Marley were frequent visitors and for a time even kept a small bedroom here.

The museum is stocked with Wailers memorabilia, including Marley's first guitar, some poignant photographs from his time here and nyahbinghi drums. There's a rusted-out carcass of a VW bus that belonged to Bob Marley and the Wailers in the 1960s. Also on site is the **Trench Town Development Association** (TTDA; ☎ 757-6739, 922-8462), opened in February 1999 in the presence of England's Prince Charles. The TTDA, which exists to unify and serve the people of Trench Town by promoting social justice, self-reliance and human dignity

THE YARDS

The ghetto areas of West Kingston are still, as Bob Marley observed during his song of that name, concrete jungles. Acre upon acre of these festering tenements spread out west from the Parade, where much of the city's population growth in recent decades has been concentrated. These areas include Trench Town, Jones Town and sterile housing projects – or 'yards' – such as Majesty Pen and Tivoli Gardens, which were conceived as 'model communities' by ex-premier Edward Seaga while he was minister of welfare and development in the 1960s.

The region was once a calm residential zone. Alas, during the strife of the 1970s the middle classes debunked and moved to the safety of the suburbs. The poor masses filled the void, and conditions rapidly deteriorated, drawing hoodlums, cutthroats and other predatory elements, called 'yardies.' The situation was exacerbated by opposing political parties currying favor among the ghetto constituencies by patronizing gang leaders or 'dons,' who in turn encouraged their gangs to recruit voters and intimidate political opponents at election time.

It's easy to tell which party rules behind the stockades. Upfront, no-nonsense wall murals act as territorial markers that tell the tale of a city at war with itself.

The ghettos are no-go zones for out-of-towners (even people from neighboring areas dare not enter the 'opposition's' turf).

The **People's Action for Community Transformation** (Map pp80-1; PACT; ☎ 920-0334; fax 960-7208; www.jamaica-kidz.com/pact/; 2-6 Grenada Cres) is a coalition of 26 community-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that work to improve life and community relationships in Kingston's inner city. The organization welcomes donations and will be happy to recommend guides.

through community-based development, is singularly responsible for transforming Bob Marley's former home into a community-based heritage site. The **Culture Yard**, which features a large mural of the man, is one block off Marcus Garvey Dr. It is safe to visit, but don't go wandering elsewhere around Trench Town on your own. To visit, contact the Trench Town Development Association.

Marley's former home (Map p69; 19 Second St) is in a depressing slum 'yard,' nearby, but only visit with a guide from the TTDA.

TUFF GONG RECORDING STUDIOS

Tuff Gong Records – named for its founder, Bob 'Tuff Gong' Marley – is one of the Caribbean's largest and most influential studios (Map p69; ☎ 937-4216; admission US\$2; www.tuffgong.com; 220 Marcus Garvey Dr). Initially established on Orange St, the enterprise then took up residence at 56 Hope Rd at what is now the Bob Marley Museum before returning to downtown Kingston at its present site. Bob Marley's early mixing board traveled with the studio and is still in use today as the studio continues to turn out hit records, not the least of which are those by his son Ziggy, the studio's current chief. It's a commercial venture with a remastering plant and remixing studio, but visitors are welcome to a 45-minute

tour provided you call first to make sure the studio are not in use. A gift store sells CDs and singles, plus T-shirts, tapes, crafts and a miscellany of Marley mementos.

Uptown EMANCIPATION PARK

Finally unveiled in 2002 after decades of planning, the spacious **Emancipation Park** (Map pp80-1; Knutsford Blvd) has become the pride of New Kingston. This wide open space, carved from the dense urban jungle, has a jogging track, stately fountains and, winningly, reggae music emanating from tiny speakers hidden in the grass. It's a grand place for a promenade, particularly at sunset when the walkways fill with cheerful Kingstonians just liberated from their workplaces.

A controversial focal point – and one that is of great interest to children – is the US\$4.5 million statue *Redemption Song*, by Laura Facey Cooper. Depicting a couple of nude, 3m-tall slaves gazing to the heavens, the epic work sometimes elicits prurient comments by passersby due to certain larger-than-life physical attributes of the figures.

At the north edge of the park is **Putt 'n' Play Mini-Golf Park** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 906-4814; 78 Knutsford Blvd; adult/child US\$4.25/2.50; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Thu, to midnight Fri, 11am-midnight Sat & Sun), an 18-hole

MARLEY'S GHOST

Although Bob Marley (1945–1981) was born and buried in Nine Mile (p175) in St Ann's Parish, it was from Kingston that Jamaica's most famous son made his indelible mark on the global music scene. In many ways, the city still bears his footprint as much as reggae does.

Migrating to the capital in 1955, Bob and his mother (his father, a white superintendent of the crown's lands, had abandoned the family) moved into a 'government yard in Trench Town' similar to the one he would later sing of in *No Woman, No Cry*. Not yet the gang-war zone it would become in the 1970s, Trench Town was a desirable neighborhood as well as fertile soil for the emerging music scene. Bob met Bunny Livingston and Peter Tosh here, and in 1963 they formed the *Wailin' Wailers* and received tutelage from fabled Trench Town vocalist Joe Higgs. The band's first single, *Simmer Down*, reached number one on Jamaica's radio charts.

Success was slow, however, and it wasn't really until the band signed with Island Records in the early '70s (and became Bob Marley and the Wailers) that it began to receive international acclaim with the 1973 albums *Burnin'* and *Catch a Fire*. Unsurprisingly, fame made living in increasingly volatile Trench Town impossible, and in 1975 Marley moved into the house at 56 Hope Rd that is now his museum. The move uptown alienated many back in Trench Town – and also disturbed his affluent new neighbors, who were unused to the trail of Rastafarian visitors and the football matches in the front yard.

Nothing could have prepared them for the night in 1976, when a gang, likely siding with the conservative Jamaica Labour Party, crashed the gates of the Hope Rd home and shot Bob, his wife Rita, and his manager just before a major concert sponsored by the socialist-leaning People's National Party. Remarkably, everyone survived, and Marley even played at the concert, his wounds wrapped in a sling. After the concert, Bob and Rita left the country.

In 1978, Marley made his legendary homecoming at a moment when messages of peace and unity were being all but drowned out by open street warfare. On April 22, a ceasefire was declared between the PNP and the JLP in honor of the One Love Peace concert at the national stadium. With 100,000 people in attendance, including the PNP's Michael Manley and the JLP's Edward Seaga seated in the front row, Marley took to the stage around midnight. During *One Love*, he invited the feuding Manley and Seaga onstage and performed the near-impossible feat of joining their hands together, with his own, in a gesture of unity that probably saved Jamaica from a bloody civil war.

The transformation was not permanent. Before the elections of 1980, almost 800 people were killed when Kingston erupted again in violence, and political gang clashes continue to this day. But Marley's message will never be forgotten.

miniature golf course complete with miniature waterfalls, meandering streams, ponds, sand traps and natural obstacles.

HALF WAY TREE

This neighborhood (Map pp80–1), road junction and major bus terminal is named for a venerable silk cotton (*kapok*) tree that stood here until the 1870s; its shaded base became the site of both a tavern and market. Today, the spot is marked by a **clock tower** sure to tell the correct time every 12 hours. It was erected in 1813 as a memorial to King Edward VII, whose bust sits on the south side of the tower at the junction of Hope, Hagley Park, Constant Spring and Half Way Tree Rds.

Visitors should avoid lingering in and around Nelson Mandela Park, a small land-

scaped park on the northeast side of Half Way Tree.

ST ANDREW PARISH CHURCH

This brick **church** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-9366; cnr Hagley Park & Eastwood Park Rds; ☞ Anglican services 6:30am, 7:30am, 9:45am & 6pm Sun, 9am Tue, 6:30am & 9am Wed) is more popularly known as the 'Half Way Tree Church.' The foundations of the existing church were laid in 1692. The exterior is austere and unremarkable, but the stained-glass windows and organ are definitely worth a peek. Outside, there's a very atmospheric graveyard.

DEVON HOUSE

This **restored home** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-7029; 26 Hope Rd; admission US\$5; ☞ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat) nestles

in landscaped grounds on the northwest side of Hope Rd at its junction with Waterloo Rd. A beautiful ochre-and-white house, it was built in 1881 by George Stiebel, a Jamaican wheelwright who hit paydirt in the gold mines of Venezuela. The millionaire rose to become the first black custos of St Andrew. The government bought and restored the building in 1967 to house the National Gallery of Jamaica, which has since moved to its present location downtown.

Antique lovers will enjoy the visit, whose highlights include some very ornate porcelain chandeliers. Note the *trompe l'oeil* of palms in the entrance foyer. Stiebel even incorporated a game room with whist and cribbage tables, a sewing room, and a gambling room discreetly tucked away in the attic. Admission includes a mandatory guided tour.

The tree-shaded lawns attract couples on weekends. The former carriage house and courtyard are home to two of Jamaica's more famous restaurants, Grog Shoppe (p89) and Norma's on the Terrace (p90), and a few quality shops (see p92).

For Emancipation Day, August 1, Devon House puts on a rousing celebration complete with roots plays, a maypole ritual and, naturally, a booming sound system.

JAMAICA HOUSE

About half a kilometer further up Hope Rd from Devon House on the left, **Jamaica House** (Map pp80–1) is faced by a columned portico and fronted by expansive lawns. Initially built in 1960 as the residence of the prime minister, the building today houses the **prime minister's office**. Visitors are restricted to peering through the fence.

KING'S HOUSE

Hidden amid trees behind Jamaica House is the official residence of the governor-general. It lies at the end of a driveway that begins at the junction of E King's House Rd and Hope Rd.

King's House (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-6424; admission free; ☞ by appointment 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) was initially the home of the Lord Bishop of Jamaica. The original house was badly damaged in the 1907 earthquake. Today's visitors explore the remake, built in 1909 to a new design in reinforced concrete. The dining room contains two particularly impressive

full-length portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

BOB MARLEY MUSEUM

For many, Jamaica means reggae, and reggae means Bob Marley. If this sounds like you, a visit to Kingston definitely means a visit to the reggae superstar's **former home and studio** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-9152; www.bobmarley-foundation.com/museum.html; 56 Hope Rd; adult/child/student US\$8.50/3.50/6.75; ☞ 9:30am-4pm Mon-Sat). The creaky wooden house on Hope Rd where Marley once lived and recorded is the city's most-visited site. Today the house functions as a tourist attraction, museum and shrine, but much remains as it was during Marley's day.

The house is guarded by a sentry of faithful Rasta brethren and sisters and shielded by a vibrantly painted wall festooned with Rastafarian murals. Dominating the forecourt is a gaily colored statue of the musical legend. Some of the guides are overly solemn (focusing with eerie earnestness on the room where Marley survived assassination), but the hour-long tour provides fascinating insights into the life he led after moving uptown. His gold and platinum records (*Exodus*, 1977; *Uprising*, 1980; and *Legend*, 1984) are there on the walls, alongside Rastafarian religious cloaks, Marley's favorite denim stage shirt and the Order of Merit presented by the Jamaican government. One room upstairs is decorated with media clippings about the superstar. Another contains a replica of Marley's original record shop, *Wail'n Soul'm*. Perhaps most powerfully, Marley's simple bedroom has been left as it was, with his star-shaped guitar by the bedside.

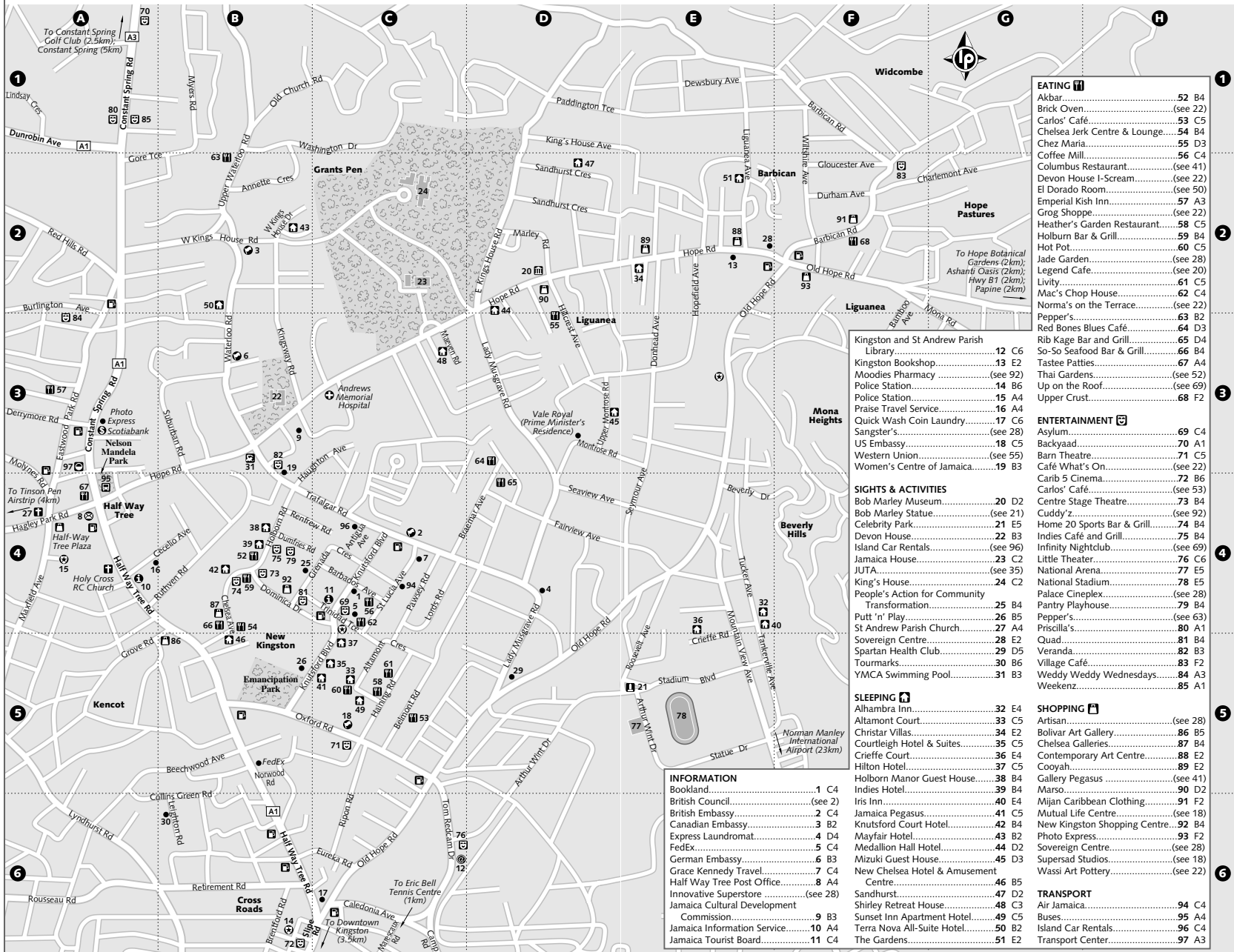
The former recording studio out back is now an exhibition hall and theater, where the tour closes with a fascinating film of his final days. A recently upgraded shopping court offers 'official' Marley products including Bob's Honey, produced by a hive of bees that's been buzzing on the site since the musician adopted them in the mid-1970s.

No cameras or tape recorders are permitted inside.

NATIONAL STADIUM & CELEBRITY PARK

The **stadium** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4970; Arthur Wint Dr), built in 1962 when Jamaica hosted the Commonwealth Games, is the venue for most of Jamaica's sporting events of importance. There's a so-called Celebrity Park on the north

UPTOWN KINGSTON



EATING

- Akbar.....52 B4
- Brick Oven.....(see 22)
- Carlos' Cafe.....53 C5
- Chelsea Jerk Centre & Lounge.....54 B4
- Chez Maria.....55 D3
- Coffee Mill.....56 C4
- Columbus Restaurant.....(see 41)
- Devon House I-Stream.....(see 22)
- El Dorado Room.....(see 50)
- Empireal Kish Inn.....57 A3
- Grog Shoppe.....(see 22)
- Heather's Garden Restaurant.....58 C5
- Holburn Bar & Grill.....59 B4
- Hot Pot.....60 C5
- Jade Garden.....(see 28)
- Legend Cafe.....(see 20)
- Livly.....61 C5
- Mac's Chop House.....62 C4
- Norma's on the Terrace.....(see 22)
- Pepper's.....63 B2
- Red Bones Blues Cafe.....64 D3
- Rib Kage Bar and Grill.....65 D4
- So-So Seafood Bar & Grill.....66 B4
- Taste Patties.....67 A4
- Thai Gardens.....(see 52)
- Up on the Roof.....(see 69)
- Upper Crust.....68 F2

ENTERTAINMENT

- Asylum.....69 C4
- Backyaad.....70 A1
- Barn Theatre.....71 C5
- Cafe What's On.....(see 22)
- Carib 5 Cinema.....72 B6
- Carlos' Cafe.....(see 53)
- Centre Stage Theatre.....73 B4
- Cuddy'z.....(see 92)
- Home 20 Sports Bar & Grill.....74 B4
- Indies Cafe and Grill.....75 B4
- Infinity Nightclub.....(see 69)
- Little Theater.....76 C6
- National Arena.....77 E5
- King's National Stadium.....78 E5
- Palace Cineplex.....(see 28)
- Pantry Playhouse.....79 B4
- Pepper's.....(see 63)
- Priscilla's.....80 A1
- Quad.....81 B4
- Veranda.....82 B3
- Village Cafe.....83 F2
- Weddy Weddy Wednesdays.....84 A3
- Weekenz.....85 A1

Kingston and St Andrew Parish

- Library.....12 C6
- Kingston Bookshop.....13 E2
- Moodies Pharmacy.....(see 92)
- Police Station.....14 B6
- Police Station.....15 A4
- Praise Travel Service.....16 A4
- Quick Wash Coin Laundry.....17 C6
- Sangster's.....(see 28)
- US Embassy.....18 C5
- Western Union.....(see 55)
- Women's Centre of Jamaica.....19 B3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Bob Marley Museum.....20 D2
- Bob Marley Statue.....(see 21)
- Celebrity Park.....21 E5
- Devon House.....22 B3
- Island Car Rentals.....(see 96)
- Jamaica House.....23 C2
- JUTA.....(see 35)
- King's House.....24 C5
- People's Action for Community Transformation.....25 B4
- Putt 'n' Play.....26 B5
- St Andrew Parish Church.....27 A4
- Sovereign Centre.....28 E2
- Spartan Health Club.....29 D5
- Tourmarks.....30 B6
- YMCA Swimming Pool.....31 B3

SLEEPING

- Alhambra Inn.....32 E4
- Altamont Court.....33 C5
- Christar Villas.....34 E2
- Courtleigh Hotel & Suites.....35 C5
- Crieffe Court.....36 E4
- Hilton Hotel.....37 C5
- Holborn Manor Guest House.....38 B4
- Indies Hotel.....39 B4
- Iris Inn.....40 E4
- Jamaica Pegasus.....41 C5
- Knutsford Court Hotel.....42 B4
- Mayfair Hotel.....43 B2
- Medallion Hall Hotel.....44 D2
- Mizuki Guest House.....45 D3
- New Chelsea Hotel & Amusement Centre.....46 B5
- Sandhurst.....47 D2
- Shirley Retreat House.....48 C3
- Sunset Inn Apartment Hotel.....49 C5
- Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel.....50 B2
- The Gardens.....51 E2

INFORMATION

- Bookland.....1 C4
- British Council.....(see 2)
- British Embassy.....2 C4
- Canadian Embassy.....3 B2
- Express Laundromat.....4 D4
- FedEx.....5 C4
- German Embassy.....6 B3
- Grace Kennedy Travel.....7 C4
- Half Way Tree Post Office.....8 A4
- Innovative Superstore.....(see 28)
- Jamaica Cultural Development Commission.....9 B3
- Jamaica Information Service.....10 A4
- Jamaica Tourist Board.....11 C4

SHOPPING

- Artisan.....(see 28)
- Bolivar Art Gallery.....86 B5
- Chelsea Galleries.....87 B4
- Contemporary Art Centre.....88 E2
- Cooyah.....89 E2
- Gallery Pegasus.....(see 41)
- Marso.....90 D2
- Mijan Caribbean Clothing.....91 F2
- Mutual Life Centre.....(see 18)
- New Kingston Shopping Centre.....92 B4
- Photo Express.....93 F2
- Sovereign Centre.....(see 28)
- Supersad Studios.....(see 18)
- Wassi Art Pottery.....(see 22)

TRANSPORT

- Air Jamaica.....94 C4
- Buses.....95 A4
- Island Car Rentals.....96 C4
- Transport Center.....97 A3

side of the stadium, although the only statue at present is the famous one of Bob Marley holding his guitar.

HOPE GARDENS

These 45-acre **gardens** (Map p69; ☎ 927-1257; fax 977-4853; Old Hope Rd; admission free; 🕒 6am-6pm, to 7pm May-Aug), replete with manicured grounds, exotic plants and beautiful flowers, date back to 1881 when the government established an experimental garden on the site of the former Hope Estate. Part of the Hope Aqueduct, built in 1758 to supply the estate, is still in use. The Ministry of Agriculture, which administers the gardens, maintains a research station and nursery, although the gardens have been in steady decline for some decades and are now in a somewhat sad state. This is not to say that a visit is not rewarding; the spacious lawns, towering palms and flower-scented walkways provide a lovely respite from the urban jungle.

Among the attractions are cycads, or 'sago palms,' from the antediluvian era. There's a sunken garden, forest garden, orchid house, greenhouses, a small aquarium, ornamental ponds and a privet-hedge maze.

The frankly pathetic, ironically named **Hope Zoo** (Map p69; ☎ 927-1085; admission US\$0.50; 🕒 10am-5pm) is home to a motley crew of disenchanted monkeys, lions, tropical birds and other unhappy creatures. Visitors are apt to marvel more at the sad state of the surroundings than at the wonders of the animal kingdom.

Hope Gardens is also home to the Ashanti Oasis vegetarian restaurant (pp80-1).

SCULPTURE PARK

This **sculpture garden** (Map p69; ☎ 927-1680; 237 Old Hope Rd), on the grounds of the University of Technology, just north of the University of the West Indies campus, was unveiled in 2000 featuring nine sculptures by acclaimed Caribbean artists. Notable figures include Laura Facey's sculpture of a woman's torso stretched in a yoga position, and Basil Watson's *The Compass*, depicting humanity shaping the environment with the use of technology.

ACTIVITIES

A favorite spot for runners and walkers is the **Palisadoes** (p95), where you can run along the beach or the main road. Alternatively, the well-kept **Emancipation Park** (p77) in New Kingston has a 1.6km track; it's a social place

used by Kingstonians in large numbers at dawn and dusk.

The **YMCA** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-0801; kymca@cw.jamaica.com; 21 Hope Rd) has a swimming pool. The best gym is **Spartan Health Club** (Map p69; ☎ 927-7575; 9 Lady Musgrave Rd; nonmembers US\$15) in uptown Kingston.

Beaches

Kingston is not known for its beaches, but if you can't imagine a week in Jamaica without dipping into the sea there are a few good options. Southwest of town are the lively local favorites, **Hellshire Beach** (p103) and **Fort Clarence** (p103), where legendary weekend reggae concerts are held.

The closest beach to Kingston – and the best place for a cookout – is the lovely **Lime Cay** (p101), a short boat ride from Port Royal.

Golf, Tennis, Squash & Badminton

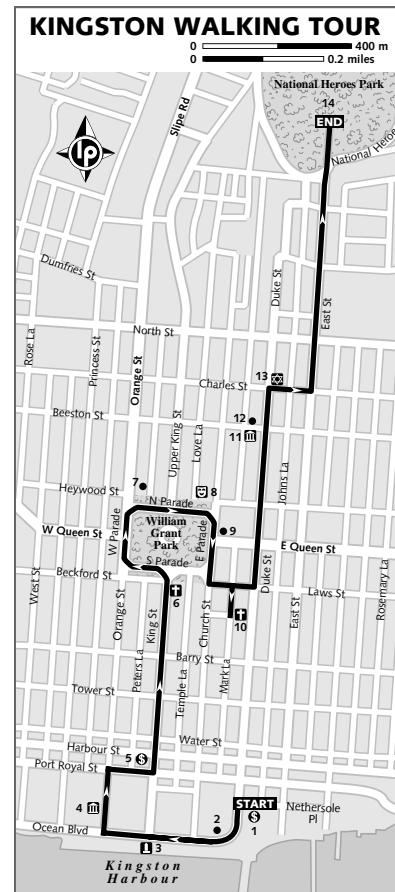
Located at the foot of the Blue Mountains, **Constant Spring Golf Club** (Map p69; ☎ 924-1610; 152 Constant Spring Rd; green fees weekdays/weekends US\$35/41) has a 5665m, par-70 course and boasts a swimming pool, bar, and tennis, squash and badminton courts. Further afield is the **Caymanas Golf & Country Club** (see p106; ☎ 922-3386; green fees weekdays/weekends US\$36/44, cart/club rental US\$22/44), 10km west of Kingston. It also offers tennis, squash, a pool, gym, jogging trails and horseback riding.

WALKING TOUR

A walk downtown is decidedly *not* a walk in the park (although there *are* a couple of fascinating parks here). Giving downtown Kingston a pass altogether would be a mistake, however. Anyone wanting to get a sense of the history and vitality that shape the country, and see firsthand the vital presence of one of the Caribbean's great cities, will want to personally take the pulse of downtown Kingston.

In our experience, an unaccompanied downtown walking tour – in broad daylight, accompanied by commonsense, good fortune and a dash of street savvy – can be enjoyed without incident. If the streets seem too daunting, consider walking with a trusted local or hiring a taxi for the day.

The tour begins on breezy Ocean Blvd, a once-grand harborfront boulevard. Start at the **Bank of Jamaica** (1; p76), the national mint and treasury at the east end of Ocean Blvd. Inside you'll find a small **Museum of Coins and Notes**.



WALK FACTS

Start Ocean Blvd
Finish National Heroes Park
Distance 4km
Duration Two to four hours

Go west half a block along Ocean Blvd to get to the **Jamaica Conference Centre** (2; p76). Continue west past the **Negro Aroused statue** (3; p76) at the foot of King St.

Turn right (north) on Orange St to get to the **National Gallery** (4; p72) and the adjacent **African-Caribbean Heritage Centre** (p72).

Continue north half a block on Orange St, then east on Port Royal St to reach King St,

the main thoroughfare leading from Victoria Pier to the Parade. Along the way you'll pass by the **National Commercial Bank building** (5; p76).

Half a mile up King St you reach the **Parade** (p72) and **Kingston Parish Church** (6; p72). Proceed half a block north on Orange St. At the northwestern corner of the park is **Bramwell Booth Memorial Hall** (7; p73), the headquarters of the Salvation Army.

The impressive sky-blue facade at the park's northeast corner belongs to the **Ward Theatre** (8; p91), dating from 1911. **Coke Memorial Hall** (9; p73) faces the eastern side of William Grant Park.

From the park's southeast corner, Laws St heads east one block to Mark Lane, leading one block south to **St Andrew's Scots Kirk** (10; p76).

Heading north, follow Duke St, paralleling Mark Lane one block further east, to the corner of Beeston St, where you'll encounter **Headquarters House** (11; p73) and **Gordon House** (12; p73). At Duke and Charles Sts is the gleaming white **Synagogue** (13; p73). Continue east to East St, which leads north to **National Heroes Park** (14; p75).

TOURS

Island Car Rentals (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-8861, 929-5875; fax 929-6787; 17 Antigua Ave) offers three popular excursions into the heart of Kingston. Three of the most popular are the Bob Marley Tour (US\$48), which visits landmarks connected to the reggae great; an outing to one-time pirate capital Port Royal (US\$54); and a Jamaica Heritage tour of Kingston cultural and historical landmarks (US\$58). You will be picked up at your hotel. A minimum of two people are required for a tour.

Other tour providers:

JUTA (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-1537; 85 Knutsford Blvd) Tours to Port Royal, Devon House and Spanish Town.

Tourmarks (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-8708; 7 Leighton Rd) Kingston and Port Royal tours, Kingston highlights, and a Hellshire Beach excursion on Sunday.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Carnival

The weeklong **Kingston carnival** (www.jamaica.carnival.com, www.bachanaljamaica.com), held over Easter, is a highlight of the year, although it's lackluster compared to the carnivals of Trinidad or Brazil. It's a big blowout for the Jamaican masses; thousands of costumed

revelers take to the streets, with flags waving and bodies painted. There's live reggae and calypso, of course, but soca is king.

Two carnival camps command the scene: Jamaica Carnival and Bacchanal Jamaica, both of which put on their own gigs. A highlight is **J'Ouvert**, an epic party that begins late at night and continues past dawn. Carnival ends the following Sunday with the **Road March**, when the two camps parade through the streets of New Kingston in carnival costume. The route is long and varies from year to year, but both major carnival groups invariably pass through Half Way Tree at some point. Park yourself anywhere along Waterloo Rd between Hope and South Rds and your vantage point should serve you well. Take some grungy clothes and shoes, as the revelers like to throw paint – and rum – over folks. For both events, don't carry anything you can't afford to lose. This includes mobile phones and expensive wigs.

Other Events

Befitting a Caribbean capital city, Kingston is the site of engaging festivals and events year-round. The events calendar (p17) provides information on the major happenings in Jamaica. Other noteworthy Kingston festivals and events are listed below.

JANUARY

Jamaica School of Dance Concert Season (☎ 926-6129, 922-5988) Features creative, Caribbean-themed dancing at the Little Theater.

FEBRUARY

Carib Cement International Marathon (☎ 928-6231) Attracts top national and international athletes in mid-February.

University of West Indies (UWI) Carnival (☎ 927-1660) Lasting a week in mid-February, it is staged by university students from throughout the Caribbean.

MARCH

Jamaica Music Industry (JAMI) Awards (☎ 960-1320) In the first week of March. Features guest performers from reggae to classical.

Miss Universe Jamaica Beauty Pageant Determines who represents the island in the Miss Universe contest. Held mid-March.

APRIL

Devon House Craft Fair (☎ 929-7029) Quality arts and crafts displays, and Jamaican foods.

MAY

All-Jamaica Tennis Championships (☎ 929-5878) Hosted late May through mid-July at the Eric Bell Tennis Centre.

Jamaica Horticultural Society Show Held in the National Arena; contact JTB offices (p71).

Rukumbe (Institute of Jamaica, ☎ 922-0620) In late May, this annual festival celebrates the sounds of mento, considered to be the forerunner to other Jamaican music forms such as ska, rocksteady and dancehall.

JUNE

Caribbean Fashionweek (☎ 967-1089) Showcasing Caribbean haute couture.

Jamaica Festival (☎ 929-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) Staged by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, this series of performances culminating in early June showcases a broad range of island folklore, drama, music and dance.

Miss Commonwealth Beauty Pageant (☎ 953-9020) Held late in the month, this international beauty pageant is open to the 54 nations of the British Commonwealth.

JULY

International Reggae Day (☎ 929-0693) This on-air, online media festival held in the first week in July shines a spotlight on Jamaica's finest reggae artists.

National Gospel Song Contest Finals (☎ 936-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) Held the last week of July, a spirited competition to name the most outstanding original gospel song of the year.

AUGUST

Augus' Fair & Jamaica Night (☎ 929-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) An annual appreciation of the pleasures of traditional food, crafts and storytelling, held in the first week of August.

Independence Day Festival & Street Parade (☎ 926-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) Also in the first week of August. Features music festivals and a traditional Jonkanoo street parade, live music and modern dances.

Independence Day Parade Civic Ceremony (☎ 929-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) An extravagant dress parade held at historic King's House, full of pomp and pageantry befitting the nation's birthday (August 6).

OCTOBER

Caribbean Heritagefest (☎ 929-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) A two-day event in mid-October at the Jamworld Entertainment Complex at Portmore, southwest of Kingston. It features food and crafts fairs, folk theater, traditional dance and drumming, and musical performances.

DECEMBER

Devon House Christmas Fair (☎ 929-7029) Promotes a colorful display of arts, crafts and culinary delights in the week before Christmas.

Jonkanoo Food Festival (☎ 929-5726; www.jcdc.org.jm) A lavish Christmas brunch attended by the likes of Pitych-Patchy, House Boy, Devil, Policeman, Jack-in-the-green and other usual suspects of the traditional Jonkunu pageant.

SLEEPING

Unlike the tourism boomtowns of the north coast, Kingston's hotels don't pander to tourists. Most lodging options cater instead to the business set with a range of service-oriented options run with crisp efficiency. Most hotels are in uptown, with the classier ones all situated in New Kingston. Pickings are virtually nonexistent downtown; there are a few guesthouses on the edge of downtown, but some might call them, well, hovels. No option in downtown Kingston is listed here.

Uptown BUDGET

Crieffe Court (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-8033; crieffe@cwjamaica.com; 10 Crieffe Rd; r US\$34, studio US\$38-46, 1-/2-bedroom ste US\$55/83; ☎ ☎) This well-kept hotel offers an assortment of spotless, spacious rooms with basic decor, studios with kitchens, and a number of suites. All options have fans and air-con, TV and hot water; upstairs rooms have a balcony. The largest suite includes two bedrooms and 10 bunks, making it a great bargain for larger groups. Potted plants abound, and the small restaurant has a tree growing through the floor.

Sandhurst (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-8244; 70 Sandhurst Cres; s US\$40, d US\$45-50; ☎ ☎ ☎) In a quiet residential neighborhood in Liguanea, this is a favorite option in this price bracket. It verges on the eccentric. The 43 spotlessly kept pale-blue rooms with their black-and-white tile floors, utility furniture and plastic flowers conjure images of Miami in the 1960s. Some have TV and telephone and private veranda. A large dining terrace shaded by mango trees affords views toward the Blue Mountains.

Holborn Manor Guest House (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-3070; holbornmanor@cwjamaica.com; 3 Holborn Rd; s/d/tr US\$55/70/85; ☎ ☎) Next door to Indies Hotel, this friendly guesthouse offers 12 rooms with fans, TV and phones but modest, dowdy furnishings and cold water only. There are a few rooms with air-con, for which you will pay

an additional US\$5. The TV lounge is decked out with crimson crushed-velvet sofas. Rates include a Jamaican breakfast.

New Chelsea Hotel & Amusement Centre (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-5803; chelseaahotelja@yahoo.com, chelseaahotelja@hotmail.com; 5 Chelsea Ave; r US\$60; ☎ ☎) It's a stretch to call this basic option amusing, but it does provide an economical stay in the heart of the action of New Kingston. Older rooms are dark; modern rooms in an annex are slightly better. All feature air-con, hot water and cable TV. A fifth night is free. It has a pool hall and amusement center, plus disco and rooftop bar.

Mayfair Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-1610; www.ja-direct.com/mayfair; 4 W Kings House Close; r US\$58-70, ste s/d US\$88/128; ☎ ☎ ☎) A popular option with Jamaican travelers, this hotel sports a columned portico entrance that hints at grandeur within, but the 32 rooms in eight individual houses are fairly basic, with utility furniture and phone, though all are clean and well lit. Its best feature is the view toward the Blue Mountains. A buffet is hosted poolside on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

MIDRANGE

Indies Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2952, 926-0989; www.indieshotel.com; 5 Holborn Rd; s/d/tr US\$65/70/81; ☎ ☎) Providing perhaps the best value in Kingston, this well-run operation is highly rated for its cheerful ambience and accommodating atmosphere. The 15 spacious rooms each have TV and phone and overlook a garden patio complete with fishpond; take an upstairs room for sunlight. A quality small restaurant serves economical Jamaican and English-style cuisine (here's your chance for great fish and chips).

Shirley Retreat House (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-9208, 946-2678; 7 Maeven Rd; r US\$65-75; ☎ ☎) Operated by the United Church of Jamaica, this option has four simply furnished, well-lit rooms with hardwood floors, pleasant fabrics, fans and private bathrooms with hot water. There's a TV in the lounge (two rooms have small TVs, and one has air-con). Meals are cooked on request.

Sunset Inn Apartment Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-7283; 1A Altamont Cres; studio US\$62-67, r US\$71-79; ☎ ☎) It enjoys an advantageous location in the heart of New Kingston, but, alas, the 11 rooms are dowdy with little light. The studios are small and lack a kitchenette, but the one-bedroom units make amends with small

kitchens and large bathrooms. All have TVs, phones and fans. Take an upper-story room for the breeze.

Medallion Hall Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-5721; medallionhall@cwjamaica.com; 53 Hope Rd; s/d/tr/q US\$71/73/84/97; 🏠) A well-run option close to the Bob Marley Museum, this midrange favorite offers 14 varied rooms with adequate furnishing and cable TV. Hardwoods abound. There's a modest restaurant and English pub. Ask for a top-floor room to catch the breeze.

our pick Mikuzi Guest House (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-4859, 813-0098; www.mikuzijamaica.com; 5 Upper Montrose Rd; r/ste US\$80/125; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Not far from the Bob Marley Museum, this welcoming guesthouse offers 11 comfortable rooms, several with kitchenettes, in a handsome home. All but one basic room (US\$35) have hot water and air-con. The two highest-priced suites are decked out with art and antiques and are more like small apartments. Few restaurants are nearby, however, so if you lack wheels you'll have to hoof it at mealtime.

Iris Inn (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-2909; www.iris-inn.com; jm; 26 Tankerville Ave; 1-2-bedroom US\$80/150; 🏠 🏠) Lurking between the Beverly Hills and the National Stadium, this excellent hotel manages to be off the beaten New Kingston path without straying too far. The one- and two-bedroom options are spacious, with leather couches, cable TV and small kitchens.

Alhambra Inn (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-9072; 1 Tucker Ave; r US\$85-105; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Across from the National Stadium, this is an attractive, two-story property with 20 air-con rooms in Spanish style. It's designed to lure convention business and offers gracious furnishings, cable TV, phones and spacious bathrooms. Upstairs rooms have lofty ceilings and king-size beds. Rates include taxes. Facilities include a restaurant, two bars and a pool in the courtyard.

Charstar Villas (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3933; www.charstarvillashotel.com; 99A Hope Rd; r US\$93, studio US\$125, 2-bedroom ste US\$180-275; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Just east of the Bob Marley Museum, this is the pick of the self-catering options. You can choose from modern, pleasantly furnished studio apartments and one- and two-bedroom suites with satellite TVs, full kitchens and comfy beds. Rates include tax. Upper-story suites tend to get hot. You can cool off in the pool, and there is also a self-service laundry, restaurant and gym. Airport transfer is available on request.

Altamont Court (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4497, 929-5931; www.altamontcourt.com; 1 Altamont Cres; r US\$128, ste

US\$160; 🏠 🏠 🏠) A rather soulless though centrally located mid-size hotel with 55 modern, clean one-bedroom studios and suites – each equipped with phone, cable TV, safe, and basic furnishings. Facilities include the Mango Tree, an attractive restaurant offering complimentary breakfast for guests, and a small pool with bar.

TOP END

Knutsford Court Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-1000; www.knutsfordcourt.com; 16 Chelsea Ave; s US\$105-135, d US\$115-145, ste US\$155-205, townhouse US\$350-360; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) This agreeable, newly refurbished hotel has a garden setting and an understated elegance. The 180 rooms – some with private balconies and work desks – are clean and well appointed, each with phone, in-room safe and cable TV. Rates include continental breakfast, served in the lobby. The Melting Pot Restaurant provides exemplary fare and room service.

Courtleigh Hotel & Suites (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-9000; www.courtleigh.com; 85 Knutsford Blvd; s/d US\$115/125, ste US\$190-200, office ste US\$190, penthouse US\$145-435; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) Next door to the Hilton, this is a splendid contemporary option with deluxe rooms and one-bedroom suites featuring four-poster beds and tasteful mahogany furnishings, plus cable TV, direct-dial phone, hair dryer and a work desk. The suites have kitchenettes. In addition to the 'executive suite' with full office, there's a state-of-the-art business center, a respected restaurant and the Mingles bar. There's a pool bar with live music on Friday, a small gym and a coin-operated laundry. Rates include continental breakfast.

Hilton Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-5430, in the USA & Canada 800-445-8667, in the UK 0845-7581-595; www.hilton.com; 77 Knutsford Blvd; r US\$150-245, ste US\$255-300; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) Strongly oriented toward the business traveler, and boasting contemporary architecture and furnishings and a full complement of facilities, the Hilton has 303 rooms, including 13 suites. The spacious rooms are elegantly furnished and have a small work desk, direct-dial phones, satellite TV and internet access. Other features include a fitness center, boutique, two tennis courts, a cyber center and the Jonkanoo Lounge for night owls.

Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2211, 926-9334, in North America 800-526-2422; 17 Waterloo Rd; ste US\$207-580; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) It's an intimate,

all-suite hotel with among the most beautiful and sophisticated rooms in town. Though the colonial mansion was built in 1924, the 35 spacious junior suites in three two-story wings have a contemporary feel, with tropically vibrant fabrics. King-size beds and cable TV are standard – and thumbs up for the marble bathrooms, some of which have Jacuzzis. Facilities include a 24-hour business center and fitness center. The El Dorado dining room (p89) is supremely elegant, plus there's a patio restaurant and La Fresca poolside bar and grill. Rates include taxes and service charge and breakfast.

Jamaica Pegasus (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3690; www.jamaicapegasus.com; 81 Knutsford Blvd; s/d US\$280/300, ste US\$300-800; 🏠 🏠 🏠 🏠) This glitzy 17-story property has 300 nicely appointed rooms, including 16 suites and three luxury suites. It also offers a panoply of facilities and a selection of restaurants. These include the elegant Columbus for Italian dishes, and a 24-hour Café Deli, where you can get your cup of Blue Mountain coffee during the wee hours. It has a slight edge over the Hilton with its full-service business center and the Royal Club – a more exclusive enclave of rooms and suites catering to business folk. For an unparalleled view, ask for a room facing the mountains.

Around Uptown

BUDGET

Abahati Hotel (Map p69; ☎ /fax 924-2082; 7 Grosvenor Tce; r US\$40; 🏠 🏠) In a reclusive upscale neighborhood in Constant Spring at the base of Stony Hill, the Abahati offers a cool location at 200m elevation. The 12 rooms are carpeted and clean, with lots of light but tired furniture. Some have air-con. Spacious gardens offer a chance to relax. The hotel's highlight is a pleasing restaurant, Pearl's Café.

Stony Hill Hotel (Map p69; ☎ 942-2357; r US\$55-75; 🏠 🏠) Behind the Model-T Ford standing sentry in the forecourt, this rambling, slate-roofed hotel in the hills 8km north of Half Way Tree on the A3, boasts fabulous views over Kingston. An old-world charmer, it has 35 rooms, all with bathrooms with hot water, large windows with views, and an intriguing blend of homey 1960s decor and modern art. Some rooms have air-con and cable TV. There's a bar that's a 1950s time warp. Note: the turnoff is on a dangerous hairpin bend by the Tuxaco gas station.

MIDRANGE

The Gardens (Map p69; ☎ 927-8275; 23 Liguanea Ave; s/d US\$85/160 🏠 🏠 🏠) In a quiet, leafy neighborhood north of the Bob Marley Museum, this wonderful hotel is composed of seven stately townhouses offset by well-tended gardens. The townhouses, which feature large, airy living rooms, can be reserved as double en-suite rooms or shared doubles. One of Kingston's best hotel options.

EATING

As in other matters, Kingston is Jamaica's capital of food; it is here that the national cuisine was born and it is here that it continues to thrive and evolve. Let your taste buds run free!

Most of the notable eateries are found in uptown Kingston, where the culinary adventurer is spoiled for choice. Many offer alfresco dining in the cool evening air and terrific spreads for brunch on Sunday.

Budget

Brick Oven (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-2153; 26 Hope Rd; patties US\$1; 🍷 lunch & dinner) While nearby Norma's and the Grogg Shoppe get all the raves, those in the know swear by the patties served up in this small bakery located just behind Devon House. Pastries and juices are also available at this excellent option for a picnic on the grounds.

Coffee Mill (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-2227; 17 Barbados Ave; pastries US \$1-1.50, sandwiches US \$4-5; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) Sip the best cappuccinos and espressos in Kingston at this intimate café with a small counter and several tables. Pastries and sandwiches are also on offer here.

Livity (Map pp80-1; ☎ 906-5618; 30 Haining Rd; mains US\$2-6; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The best vegetarian option in New Kingston, Livity serves up an array of veggie fajitas, soups, salads and tofu dishes. Service can be a little slow, but if you order one of the outstanding fruit juices – try the mango pineapple or the lemonade – and get an outdoor seat, the wait's easy to bear.

Orient Express (Map pp74-5; ☎ 967-2198; 135 Harbour St; mains US\$2-6; 🍷 lunch Mon-Sat) One of the precious few options for a decent meal downtown, this joint offers a reasonably good Chinese menu.

our pick Ashanti Oasis (☎ 970-2079; Hope Gardens; mains \$2-7; 🍷 lunch & dinner) If an oasis within a garden is hard to envision, check out this

serene spot centered on a small fountain. You'll be rewarded with excellent vegetarian food from a changing I-tal menu featuring hearty soups (the pumpkin is absolutely divine), veggie burgers and combo platters anchored by a variety of tofu offerings. Fresh juices or a glass of the homemade aloe wine are a must.

Imperial Kish Inn (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920-0541; 2 Hillview Ave, off Eastwood Park Rd; mains US\$3-9; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The sign over the bar reading 'Love the Animals' immediately reveals where the place is coming from. The only flesh here – yourself notwithstanding – is that which is pressed in the local greeting, the Jamaican 'yardie' handshake, where friends push their fists together while swiping thumbs. On the menu is gluten brownstew, curry tofu, roast yams and an ongoing dialogue about the intricacies of Rastafari.

Chelsea Jerk Centre (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6322; 7 Chelsea Ave; mains US\$3-10; ☎ 11am-midnight) Legendary for its mouth-searing jerk pork and chicken, this congenial jerk emporium draws the after-work crowd as well as uptown-based visitors grateful for a chance to get off the main drag. The festival dumplings are especially good.

Holburn Bar & Grill (Map pp80-1; ☎ 754-7963; cnr Chelsea Ave & Dominica Dr; mains US\$3.50-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) This breezy 2nd-floor restaurant is a casual affair with a pool table and delicious 'fish in foil' – a whole snapper steamed with veggies and spices.

Legend Café (Map pp80-1; Bob Marley Museum, 56 Hope Rd; mains US\$4-16; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Offering sustenance to visitors to Bob's former home, this café serves up hearty I-tal stew or curried fish. The fruit juices are the star here – including Bob's favorite, carrot and beetroot.

Hot Pot (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-3906; 2 Altamont Tce; mains US\$5-12; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A casual, economical haunt with a small back patio that attracts workers from the nearby hotels, Hot Pot serves unfussy, indisputably delicious Jamaican home-style cooking with dishes such as ackee and saltfish, escovitchéd fish and garlic chicken. Wash it down with a fresh tamarind juice, coconut water or a Red Stripe.

Moby Dick (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-4468; 3 Orange St; mains US\$6-14; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A terrific option for a pre- or post-National Gallery visit, this former sailors' hangout has been popular for its curries and rotis for nearly a

century. The curried goat is truly outstanding, as is the conch version when available. Fortify yourself with one of the fresh juices.

Devon House I-Scream (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-7086; Devon House, 26 Hope Rd; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun & holidays) Behind Devon House, it sells excellent ice cream.

Lots of places sell patties for less than US\$1. **Patty King** (Map pp74-5; cnr Harbour & East Sts) and **Beef Patties** (Map pp74-5; cnr Harbour & King Sts) charge about US\$0.50 for patties. Uptown, try **Taste Patties** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2834; cnr Constant Spring & Hagley Park Rds).

For something quick, there are dozens of fast-food joints around town. Some of the major shopping centers, such as **Sovereign Centre** (Map pp80-1; 106 Hope Rd), have food courts – whole floors dedicated to fast-food outlets. For produce, head to Papine Market at the top end of Hope Rd, where ultrafresh vegetables are trucked in straight from the Blue Mountains, or to the market north of uptown on Constant Spring Rd.

Midrange

Upper Crust (Map pp80-1; ☎ 977-5130; 20 Barbican Rd; pastries US\$1-5, mains US\$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) This open-air pastry shop in Liguanea also serves up an ambitious Jamaican-fusion menu, highlighted by the scrumptious jerk chicken lasagna.

Jade Garden (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3476; Sovereign Centre, 106 Hope Rd; dim sum US\$3-14, Sunday brunch US\$18; ☎ noon-10pm) You'll forget you're eating in a mall once you step into this elegant spot – particularly if you can grab a table with a view of the mountains. Highlighting the à la carte menu are the deep-fried prawns and a sizzling meat combo platter called Subgum War Bar, but the Sunday dim-sum brunch is really the big draw here.

So-So Seafood Bar & Grill (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-2397; 4 Chelsea Ave; mains US\$5-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) A casual place, known for its mellow after-work scene, which settles around the bar and two TV sets or sprawls into its outdoor patio. The seafood menu, divided into conch, shrimp, lobster and fish sections, belies the modesty of the name.

Rib Kage Bar and Grill (☎ 978-6272; 12 Braemar Ave; mains \$5-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) While catching a lot of the spillover from ever-popular Red Bones Blues Café across the street, Rib Kage attracts its own following with its succulent baby-back ribs and an array of southern US

soul food, served in a relaxed, wood-accented setting. Burgers and a selection of fish entrees are also available. The original branch, at 149 Constant Spring Rd, offers outdoor seating.

Pepper's (Map pp80-1; ☎ 969-2421; 31 Upper Waterloo Rd; mains US\$6-14; ☎ 4pm-late) This friendly open-air eatery is a highly popular after-work hangout among Kingstonians. It has picnic tables, plenty of Red Stripe, and seriously good jerk dishes and seafood favorites including grilled lobster and garlic crab. The two bars (p90) are open late.

Thai Gardens (Map pp80-1; 11 Holborn Rd; dishes US\$8-22; ☎ lunch & dinner) This Thai restaurant shares space with Akbar and offers an extensive menu of pad thai and curries that's a little hit-or-miss.

Akbar (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3480; 11 Holborn Rd; mains US\$8-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) Kingston's best Indian restaurant draws crowds for its gracious service, garden graced by a fountain and reasonably priced menu that includes tandoori and vegetarian dishes, complemented by excellent Indian breads. Be sure to insist on extra spiciness, if fire's what you crave. Akbar offers a buffet lunch special (US\$15).

El Dorado Room (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2211; Terra Nova All-Suite Hotel, 17 Waterloo Rd; mains US\$8-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) The European menu has hints of the Caribbean as well as Jamaican favorites such as pepperpot soup and grilled snapper. Bring a sweater for the frigid air-conditioning. The hotel also has a less expensive outdoor restaurant that serves continental fare. A seafood buffet is offered for Wednesday lunch and dinner. A Jamaican buffet lunch is offered weekdays, and a Sunday brunch buffet (US\$21) draws the well-heeled, hungry locals.

Grog Shoppe (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-2098; 26 Hope Rd; mains US\$8-28; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sun) Lodged in an expansive brick building that used to be the servants' quarters for Devon House, this atmospheric choice has the look and feel of a colonial pub. The menu features classic pub lunches, such as corned tongue, and tinkered-with Jamaica favorites such as ackee crepes, baked crab backs and roast suckling pig with rice and peas. It's known for its Sunday brunch (US\$17). There's live music Tuesday to Saturday evenings.

Chez Maria (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-8078; 7 Hillcrest Ave; mains US\$9-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Whether you sit in the garden beneath the mango tree or grab a table on the front terrace, you'll be treated to fine Lebanese cuisine. The mezes, notably

the hummus, are excellent and are complemented by homemade pita bread. A host of shawarms and kebabs awaits if you still have an appetite.

Carlos' Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-4186; 22 Belmont Rd; meals US\$9-18; ☎ 11am-2am) A pleasant, spacious bar (p90) with pasta, surf 'n' turf and stuffed crab backs on offer. Food is served until late.

Heather's Garden Restaurant (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2826, 960-7739; 9 Haining Rd; mains US\$9-24; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Grab a table near the immense mango tree stretching through a hole in the roof and savor moderately priced fare ranging from Jamaican crab backs and Cajun-style blackened fish to cottage pie, charbroiled lamb chops, kebabs and seafood. The bar scene gets increasingly raucous with singles as the evening progresses.

our pick Up on the Roof (☎ 929-8033; 73 Knutsford Blvd; mains US\$9-36; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Thu, dinner Sat) Above the bustle of New Kingston's main drag, this atmospheric rooftop terrace is popular with locals and a terrific starting point before a night on the town. The marlin salad and shrimp with garlic jerk mayo stand out in a menu of Jamaican standards. There's a sporadic calendar of jazz events and poetry readings; on Saturday, the bar mixes cocktails until the last patron leaves.

Columbus Restaurant (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3690; Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, 81 Knutsford Blvd; mains US\$12-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Superlative Italian fare is lovingly prepared in this swanky restaurant popular with business travelers and fashionable Kingstonians. The chefs have a way with pasta – which is to be expected for the price tag – and the gnocchi with wild mushrooms is to die for, but the amaretto cheesecake suggests genius.

Top End

our pick Red Bones Blues Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-8262; 21 Braemar Ave; mains US\$20-40; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, from 7pm Sat) The in-crowd is in at this former colonial house, now a beehive of cultural and culinary activity. Inside, the *shukka-shukka* of martini shakers keeps time with the music, and the walls are beguilingly bedecked with photographs of jazz and blues legends. The food? Stellar dishes include chicken breast stuffed with callaloo and jerked cheddar in a white wine sauce, or the seafood trio of shrimp, mussels and salmon sautéed in a spicy coconut sauce served on a bed of pasta. Opt for patio dining overlooking the gardens or

the handsome bar. Call ahead to snag a table – they're in high demand.

Mac's Chop House (☎ 960-6328; 24-22 Trinidad Tce; mains US \$22-50; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) Perhaps Mac should pay more attention to the chops heralded by its name, as the steaks at this sleek yet intimate spot next door to the Quad nightclub do not justify the New York prices. Nevertheless, the appetizers (notably an unforgettable smoked marlin 'trilogy') and the fish dishes are excellent. The wine list is one of the widest-ranging on the island. Reservations essential.

Norma's on the Terrace (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-5488; 26 Hope Rd; mains US\$22-55; ☺ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, closed public holidays) Although its popularity seems to be on the wane outside the expense-account class, this lovechild of Jamaica's leading food emissary Norma Shirley is Kingston's most celebrated restaurant. The seasonal menu explores Caribbean-fusion food with great finesse. Recent gems include the smoked pork loin in teriyaki sauce, red snapper encrusted in herbs in a thyme-and-caper sauce and an exquisite seafood lasagna. Creative salads and desserts (try the English trifle) are not to be missed. Even if a meal is beyond your budget, it's well worth having a drink on the candlelit terrace.

ENTERTAINMENT

Kingston is the best town in Jamaica for bar-hopping and clubbing. From copasetic watering holes to throbbing nightclubs – with a couple of all-night sound-system street jams thrown into the mix – you'll never want for after-hours action in this town.

Many bars, discos and nightclubs feature regularly scheduled events and theme nights, making it possible to get a groove going every night of the week. Those who dig Latin music – or just need a break from dancehall or reggae – are spoiled for choice, as a number of venues crank out the salsa and merengue throughout the week. Similarly, on Friday evening there are a number of after-work parties where Kingstonians unwind and get their groove going in preparation for a long night of dancing.

If dancehall floats your boat, Kingston comes alive on Wednesday night as Weddy Weddy and Passa Passa fire up the sound systems in two consecutive events that together span 12 hours. Definitely not for the meek or mild-mannered! (See opposite.)

For listings, check **What's On Jamaica** (www.whatsonjamaica.com), which also publishes listings in the Friday *Observer*.

Bars

Red Bones Blues Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-8262; 21 Braemar Ave; ☺ 11-1am Mon-Fri, 7pm-1am Sat) This could easily become your favorite spot in town – it's a hip bar with cool ambience, good conversation and great music. The last Wednesday of the month there's poetry with musical accompaniment, and on Friday there's quality live blues and jazz. An art gallery, open evenings, shows well-chosen local and international talent. And this says nothing of the food (p89).

Indies Café and Grill (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920-5913; 8 Holborn Rd) Dark yet lively sports bar, patronized by young professionals with an enormous screen behind the bar, that gets rambunctious as the night progresses. Karaoke takes over on Thursday. Ignore the food on offer here as the kitchen pays it scant attention.

Cuddy'z (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-0273; New Kingston Shopping Centre) Perhaps the best sports bar in Jamaica, this hip establishment is the creation of the 'Big Man Inna Cricket', Courtney Walsh. TVs in each booth and a lively bleachers section with an oversized screen make this a great place to watch a cricket match. The Heineken Wednesdays are very popular.

Home 20 Sports Bar & Grill (Map pp80-1; no phone; 20 Holborn Rd) Amusingly perched atop a functioning car wash, this welcoming outdoor joint is great for an early drink before heading out for the evening. A small kitchen serves passable fish 'n' chips.

Pepper's (Map pp80-1; ☎ 969-2421; 31 Upper Waterloo Rd) You'll feel like a local after a night at this rousing spot, which gets going early for the after-work crowd and continues hopping well past midnight. On Tuesday night there's wine, cheese and live country music, on Thursday it's karaoke and on Sunday, oldies night.

Carlos' Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-4186; 22 Belmont Rd; ☺ 11am-2am) A pleasant, open-air bar with lively tropical decor, several pool tables, and martini specials on Monday and karaoke on Friday. In the evenings, the softly lit patio is a romantic place.

Veranda (☎ 906-3601; 38 Trafalgar Rd) Small joint with outdoor seating that draws an after-work crowd. They enjoy the large screen TVs, cheap drinks and easy camaraderie.

Priscilla's (Map pp80-1; ☎ 969-9638; 103 Constant Spring Rd) This quiet spot sustains a laid-back vibe and, on special occasions, live music. A great place to meet local Kingstonians.

Backyaad (Map pp80-1; ☎ 755-0132; 126 Constant Spring Rd) Drawing a younger crowd, this night-spot has a *really* loud sound system, fierce dominoes competitions and occasional comedy jams.

Café What's On (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4490; Devon House, 26 Hope Rd) This intimate bar at Devon House has occasional live music and art exhibitions.

Nightclubs

Asylum (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4386; 69 Knutsford Blvd) Still *the* happening scene, Asylum packs in the crowds from Tuesday through Sunday. Tuesday is ladies night, with free admission until 11pm, and on Thursday the inimitable Stone Love sets up its legendary sound system.

Quad (Map pp80-1; ☎ 754-7823; 20-22 Trinidad Tce; admission US\$10) This complex comprises four clubs, each with its own distinct personality. On the main floor is Christopher's Jazz Club, a tasteful jazz bar where the city's movers and shakers gather on a nightly basis. In the basement is Taboo, a so-called 'naughty gentleman's' club with 'exotic' dancers. Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, two clubs open up on the top floor: the Voodoo Lounge, which tends to draw an older, more urbane crowd, and Oxygen, which attracts a twenty-something set always ready to get sweaty until 4am. The US\$10 admission will give you entry into Christopher's, Voodoo Lounge and Oxygen; Note that Taboo charges a separate US\$10 admission.

Infinity Nightclub (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-2285; 61 Knutsford Blvd) Around the corner from Asylum is Infinity, another happening dance club with theme nights.

Weekenz (Map pp80-1; ☎ 755-4415; 80 Constant Spring Rd) This popular hipster haunt has variable moods, poetry on Tuesday, live reggae on Wednesday, dancehall on Thursday, oldies night on Saturday – and always a thriving after-work scene.

Village Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 970-4861; 20 Barbican Rd) Another popular favorite. Thursday evenings feature a fashion show, but the place really gets rocking on Saturday night, when the locally famous DJs mix up a healthy dose of wicked vibes.

Cinema

First-run Hollywood movies can be seen at the five-screen **Carib 5 Cinema** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6106; cnr Slip & Half Way Tree Rds), the two-screen **Palace Cineplex** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3522; Sovereign Centre, 106 Hope Rd) and the single-screen **Island Cinema** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 920 7964; Island Life Shopping Centre, 6 St Lucia Ave).

Red Bones Blue Café (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-8262; 21 Braemar Ave) screens occasional art films in its garden.

Theater

Little Theater (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6129; 4 Tom Redcam Dr) Puts on plays, folk concerts and modern dance throughout the year. The main season is July through August. From December through April, producer Basil Dawkins presents a 'mini-season' of smaller productions.

Ward Theatre (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-0453; North Pde; admission US\$3-8) Home to the National Dance Theater Company, known for its rich repertoire combining Caribbean, African and Western dance styles. The Jamaica Folk Singers and the Little Theater's annual pantomime – a riotous, irreverent social satire – are also staged here.

Pantry Playhouse (Map pp80-1; ☎ 960-9845; 2 Dumfries Rd) Presents comedies and dramas at a New Kingston playhouse year-round.

Watch out for performances by the **University Singers** (☎ 702-3518), who are acclaimed for their repertoire of Caribbean folk and popular music, choral performances, madrigals, jazz, African songs and pantomime. Don't miss the Cari-Folk Singers, who are dedicated to preserving the Jamaican folk genre.

Also look for listings for **Barn Theatre** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-6469; 5 Oxford Rd) and **Centre Stage Theatre** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 968-7529; 18 Dominica Dr).

Stage Shows

Kingston has frequent live stage shows, which are announced on streetside billboards. Top-name artists often perform at the **National Arena** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4970; Arthur Wint Dr).

Sports

Renovated for the 2007 Cricket World Cup **Sabina Park** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 967-0322; South Camp Rd) is *the* place for cricket in Jamaica. The 30,000-seat arena hosted its first test match in 1929 and has been a focal point for the sport ever

BLOCK-ROCKIN' BEATS

Without question, the highpoint of Kingston's nightlife is its free outdoor sound-system parties. A raucous combination of block party, dance club, fashion show and all-out stereo war, sound-system parties can be heard blocks away and go well into the night. Certainly not for the fainthearted or anyone who dislikes dancehall, sound-system dances are, nevertheless, unforgettable cultural experiences and should not be missed.

The best opportunity for visitors to check out a party, and the focus of Kingston's thronging sound-system aficionados, is **Weddy Weddy Wednesdays** (Map pp80-1), presided over by the biggest name in sound-system productions, DJ Stone Love in Burlington Ave in uptown. Generally, the action doesn't start until a little after midnight and once it subsides most of the crowd troops off to the **Passa Passa** sound-system, at the intersection of Spanish Town Rd and Beeston St, which blasts until sunrise. Another popular party is **Uptown Mondays** in Savannah Plaza, which begins around midnight.

Given Kingston's (not altogether unfounded) reputation for crime, sound systems are refreshingly safe events provided you take common-sense precautions and don't flash money or jewelry and leave the cameras at home. The crowd at Weddy Weddy is particularly welcoming, and most Jamaicans are happy to see tourists enjoying so quintessentially Jamaican an experience. Bear in mind, however, that the area around Passa Passa can be rather dodgy, especially if you go home early and leave the crowd behind.

For once-off sound-system parties, look for posters by Stone Love. Another good source is the **Tuff Gong Studios** (p69; ☎ 923-9383, 923-5814; 220 Marcus Garvey Dr).

since. Attending a match – particularly an international test – is a must whether or not you are a fan.

The **National Stadium** (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4970; Arthur Wint Dr) hosts track-and-field events and matches by the Reggae Boyz, Jamaica's football (soccer) team that surprised the world by reaching the World Cup finals in 1998.

Kingston hosts the annual **Carib Cement International Marathon** (☎ 928-6231), held every February.

For information about horse racing near Kingston, see p103.

SHOPPING

From glitzy, modern shopping malls to the enclosed chaos of urban markets, Kingston rewards shoppers of all budgets and inclinations. Everything from colonial antiques to goats is for sale (but generally not from the same vendor).

Downtown, everywhere you turn are street vendors trying to hawk anything they can think of while keeping a wary eye out for officials bent on cracking down on unlicensed peddling. In contrast, several modern shopping malls are concentrated on Constant Spring and Hope Rds, where more-prosperous Kingstonians relish the city's burgeoning consumer culture.

Two of the largest shopping centers are **Sovereign Centre** (Map pp80-1; 106 Hope Rd) and **New Kingston Shopping Mall** (Map pp80-1; Dominica Dr).

Art Galleries

Wassi Art Pottery (Map pp80-1; ☎ 906-5016; Devon House, 26 Hope Rd) This pottery sells marvelous vases, planters, plates, bowls and so on, each hand-painted and signed by the artist.

Bolivar Art Gallery (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-8799; 1D Grove Rd) Works by Jamaica's leading artists are on offer here, but there's also fine books, antiques and maps.

Artisan (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-3514; Sovereign Centre, 106 Hope Rd) The best of Jamaican creative talent is on sale at Artisan.

Patoo (Map p69; ☎ 924-1552; Manor Hill Plaza, 184 Constant Spring Rd) You'll find local treasures (Tortuga puddings laced with rum, Busha Brown sauces, potpourri baskets, ceramic tableware, decorative ornaments and batik sarongs) at Patoo to tempt you.

In addition, the following galleries feature contemporary Jamaican art:

Chelsea Galleries (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-0045; Island Life Centre, 12 Chelsea Ave)

Contemporary Art Centre (Map pp80-1; ☎ 927-9958; 1 Liguanea Ave)

Gallery Pegasus (Map pp80-1; ☎ 926-3690, basement, Jamaica Pegasus hotel, 81 Knutsford Blvd)

Grosvenor Gallery (Map p69; ☎ 924-6684; 1 Grosvenor Tce)

Mutual Life Gallery (Map pp80-1; ☎ 929-4302; Mutual Life Centre, 2 Oxford Rd)

Marso (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-9720; 90 Hope Rd)

Supersad Studios (Map pp80-1; ☎ 740-1632; Mutual Life Centre, 2 Oxford Rd)

Clothing

Mijan Caribbean Clothing (Map pp80-1; ☎ 977-5133; 20 Barbican Rd) Mijan sells quality Jamaican designs.

Cooyah (Map pp80-1; ☎ 978-9215; cooyahdesign@jamweb.net; 96 Hope Rd) This is the place to go for licensed reggae T-shirts and assorted tops and dresses. Cooyah means 'look here' in patois; you should.

Photographic

Photo Express (Map pp80-1; ☎ 977-2679; 130 Old Hope Rd) Fully stocked with film and photography equipment, Photo Express has several branches.

Record Stores

Orange St in downtown Kingston is the best place in all Jamaica to shop for reggae cassettes and CDs. Many of the stores are offshoots of recording studios and pressing plants, so you know that the grooves are still warm. To get you started, check out these:

Rockers International (Map pp74-5; ☎ 922-8015; 135 Orange St)

Techniques Records (Map pp74-5; ☎ 967-4367; 99 Orange St)

Tuff Gong Recording Studios (Map p69; ☎ 923-9383; Marcus Garvey Dr) See p77 for details.

Street Markets & Crafts Stalls

Although it was razed by fire in 2003, the covered **Jubilee Market** (Map pp74-5), which verges on the western end of the Parade, has been rebuilt. Named in honor of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, it's an extremely lively market where seemingly everything's for sale. Be very wary of pickpockets. A bit further west, in the exhilarating pandemonium of **Coronation Market** (Map pp74-5; ☎ Mon-Sat), shoppers come face to face with the dynamic – and sometimes daunting – aspects of life in downtown Kingston. Stall after stall is stocked with every manner of bric-a-brac, from handmade tools to sound-system speakers. In negotiating with the vendors you'll need to penetrate their artful patois. Coronation Market's proximity to

the unpredictable Tivoli Gardens district means that you'll need to choose your friends carefully; many visitors feel more comfortable arriving with a local companion who knows the territory. *Don't* go wandering any further west downtown without a guide who's respected locally. Leave valuables and all but a minimum of money in your hotel safe – and be alert.

Considerably more sedate, the waterfront **Crafts Market** (Map pp74-5; cnr Pechon & Port Royal Sts; ☎ Mon-Sat) resides in an old iron building where you'll find dozens of stalls selling wickerwork, carvings, batiks, straw hats and other crafts – at prices somewhat lower than elsewhere on the island.

Pickpockets have long been known to work the crowds at Kingston's public markets. Watch your wallet!

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Norman Manley International Airport (Map p69; ☎ 924-8452, 888-247-7678), 27km southeast of downtown, handles international flights; see p285 for more details on international services. Domestic flights depart and land at **Tinson Pen Airstrip** (Map p69; Marcus Garvey Dr) in west Kingston; see p292 for details.

Air Jamaica (Map pp80-1; ☎ 800-359-2475; 4 St Lucia Ave) has its headquarters uptown. Air Jamaica and Air Jamaica Express offer daily service to and from Montego Bay and Ocho Rios from Norman Manley International Airport; the latter airline flies also from Tinson Pen. See p292 for more information.

TimAir (☎ 952-2516, 979-1114) provides air taxi services connecting Kingston with Montego Bay, Negril, Ocho Rios, Port Antonio and Mandeville. See also p292.

Car

From the north coast, the main artery leading into Kingston is the busy A3 road, which wends its way into town through the outlying communities of Stony Hill and Constant Springs. Alternatively, the winding, narrow B1 connects Kingston to the north from Buff Bay to Papine, but know in advance that the challenging road scales and plummets from the heights of the Blue Mountains. (Moreover, during the rainy season, landslides often close the road temporarily.)

From the west, Spanish Town Rd enters Kingston at the Six Miles junction. For

uptown Kingston, veer left on Washington Blvd, which changes names to Dunrobin Ave and eventually joins Constant Springs Rd for a straight shot into uptown.

From the east, Windward Rd passes the turnoff for Port Royal and the airport; for New Kingston turn right on Mountain View Ave or South Camp Rd (the latter has helpful 'follow the hummingbird' signs directing the way).

Public Transportation

Buses, minibuses and route taxis run between Kingston and every point on the island. They arrive and depart primarily from the **downtown terminal** (Map pp74-5; Beckford & Pechon Sts) five blocks west of the Parade. Exercise caution, for the terminal adjoins the occasionally volatile district of Trench Town.

A smaller number of buses arrive and depart from the preferable **Half Way Tree junction** (Map pp80-1), where it's a snap to jump a local bus into New Kingston. If you're traveling to Kingston, find out where you will be dropped before boarding a bus. (See p292 for information about Jamaica's bus system.)

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Norman Manley International Airport is located midway along the Palisadoes, 27km southeast of downtown Kingston. The bus stop is opposite the arrivals hall. Bus 98 operates about every 30 minutes between the airport and downtown to West Pde (US\$1). Route taxis operate between the airport and West Pde (US\$1.75).

Disembarking from a bus downtown with luggage can be extremely intimidating. If this is your first visit to Kingston, it's much more sensible to grab a **taxi** (JUTA; ☎ 927-4534, 926-1537) between the airport and New Kingston; this will cost about US\$20. From **Tinson Pen Airstrip** (Map p69; Marcus Garvey Dr) a taxi costs about US\$8 to New Kingston, and a bus to the Parade in downtown is about US\$0.25.

Island Car Rentals (Map p69; ☎ 929-5875; www.islandcarrentals.com; 17 Antigua Ave) has chauffeured transfers on offer.

BUSES FROM KINGSTON

Destination	Cost (one way)	Distance	Duration	Frequency
Montego Bay	US\$8	191km	5hr	6 daily
Ocho Rios	US\$4	87km	3hr	8 daily
Port Antonio	US\$4	9km	3hr	6 daily

Car

Most car-hire companies offer free airport shuttles. Jamaica's largest and most reputable company, **Island Car Rentals** (Map p69; ☎ 929-5875, in the USA 866-978-5335, in Canada 416-628-8885; www.islandcarrentals.com; 17 Antigua Ave) has its main office in New Kingston, plus an outlet at **Norman Manley International Airport** (Map p69; ☎ 924-8075).

Other companies with offices at Manley airport:

Avis (☎ 924-8293; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 759-1793; www.budget.com)

Hertz (☎ 924-8028; www.hertz.com)

Public Transportation

Buses, minibuses and route taxis arrive and depart from the North and South Pdes in downtown, Half Way Tree junction in uptown, and from Papine, at the eastern edge of town off Old Hope Rd.

Kingston's **bus system** (Jamaica Urban Transport Co Ltd; ☎ 749-3196; fares US\$0.35-50; ☎ 5am-10pm) operates a fleet of Mercedes-Benz and Volvo buses, including buses for the disabled. Buses stop only at official stops. For a current schedule, you can telephone the **JUTC** (☎ 888-588-2287).

Taxi

Taxis are numerous in Kingston except when it rains, when demand skyrockets. Use licensed cabs only (they have red PPV license plates). It's best to get your hotel call for a trusted driver, otherwise taxi companies are listed in the yellow pages. Fares from New Kingston to downtown are about US\$10.

AROUND KINGSTON

Whether it's downtown's perpetual slope toward the harbor or the Blue Mountains beckoning from high above uptown, there's something about Kingston's topography that's always tempting the visitor to take a break from its cultural highpoints and nocturnal hotspots. When the pull becomes irresistible, a variety of day trips offer fine counterpoints to your stay in the capital.

Most popular is a visit to Port Royal, a former pirate den of iniquity cut down by an earthquake in 1692, easily combined with a visit to Lime Cay, the best (and closest) swimming spot in the area. Other good seaside options include Hellshire Beach, celebrated for its fish shacks, and Bull Bay, a rapidly growing surfing community. If it's greenery you crave, Castleton Gardens, a half-hour drive north of Kingston, are the finest botanic gardens in Jamaica. Finally, Jamaica's second city and former capital, Spanish Town, is noted for its Georgian architecture as well as the redbrick splendor of St Jago de la Vega, the oldest Anglican cathedral outside of England.

CASTLETON GARDENS

These **gardens** (off Map p6; ☎ 927-1257; admission free; ☎ 7am-5pm, to 6pm in summer), straddling the A3, 27km north of Half Way Tree, are spread over 12 hectares on the banks of the Wag Water River. Many exotic species introduced to Jamaica were first planted here.

The gardens, which rise up the hillside on the west side of the road, date back to 1860, when 400 specimens from Kew Gardens in London were transplanted on the former sugar plantation owned by Lord Castleton. More than 1000 species of natives and exotics are displayed.

There's a picnic area with cafeteria and toilets. The guides are unpaid (they're not allowed to charge), but tips are welcome.

You can camp on the riverbank here for US\$2, and there's a lively little jerk center about 100m north of the gardens.

EAST OF KINGSTON

Watching Long Mountain close in on the sea from downtown Kingston, it's easy to think there's nothing east of Kingston beyond the turnoff to the Palisadoes, home to Norman Manley International Airport and Port Royal. Yet the A4 does manage to squeeze past and make it to St Thomas parish and up into Portland. Before it does, the road brushes through Bull Bay, a gritty town that draws surfers and pilgrims to a fundamentalist Rasta community.

Rockfort Mineral Baths

Providing respite from the urban environment, these **baths** (Map p69; ☎ 938-6551; Windward Rd; public pool adult/child US\$2.50/1.50, private pools from

US\$12; ☎ 7am-5:30pm Tue-Sun), 5km east of downtown Kingston, are fed by a cold spring that made its first appearance following the earthquake of 1907. There's a large public pool – a rarity in Kingston – and 11 private pools of varying sizes, all with whirlpools and wheelchair access. The slightly saline and radioactive water is said to have therapeutic properties. One hour is the maximum allowed in a bath. There's a cafeteria and juice bar, plus changing rooms and lockers. **Massage** (per hr US\$30) is offered.

Adjacent to the baths is Rockfort, an English fort with rusty cannons. It was built in 1694 amid rumors of an imminent invasion by the French. The remains of another fort, **Fort Nugent** (Map p69), stand on the hillside about 1.5km east of Rockfort.

Bus 99B operates from the Parade and Half Way Tree in Kingston and travels along Windward Rd (US\$0.45). You can also take bus 98, which departs from the Parade and passes Rockfort en route to Port Royal, or bus 97 en route to Bull Bay.

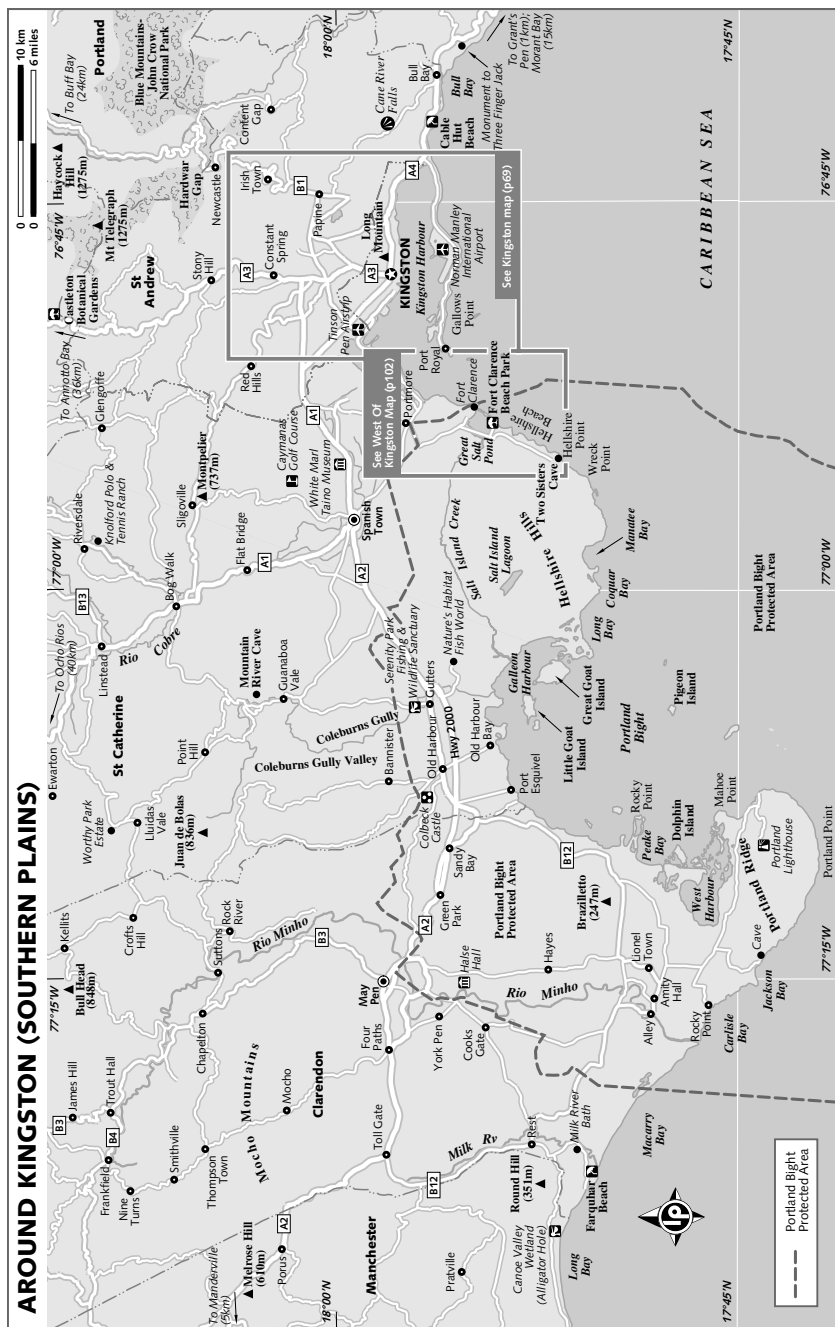
Palisadoes

The **Palisadoes** (Map p69) is a narrow, 16km-long spit that forms a natural breakwater protecting Kingston Harbour. It extends due west from Windward Rd. At the western end, reached via Norman Manley Hwy, lies the historic city of Port Royal, set on a former cay that the Spanish called Cayode Carena, where they careened their ships. The spit earned its name for the defensive palisade that was built across the spit to defend Port Royal from a land-based attack. The Palisadoes is fringed on its harbor side by mangroves that shelter crocodiles and colonies of pelicans and frigate birds.

The 22m-tall, stone-and-cast-iron **Plumb Point Lighthouse** lies midway along the Palisadoes at its elbow. It was built in 1853 and still functions. Despite the lighthouse's presence, in 1997 a freighter ran aground nearby on the windward side of the spit. It is still rusting away.

Bull Bay & Environs

Bull Bay is a small town, 14km east of downtown Kingston, with a reputation for social unrest. The town itself has little to recommend it, but nearby are the pretty, untouristed Cane River Falls, an interesting



Rastafarian encampment, and Jamaica's most notable surf camp.

To get to Bull Bay from Kingston, take a minibus or route taxi from the Parade, or take bus 97 from Half Way Tree or the Parade (US\$0.75).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Near a site where Maroon warriors mounted ambushes against the British, **Cane River Falls** (Map p96) are a popular bathing spot immortalized by Bob Marley in song. Few tourists show up here; if possible it's best to go with a local companion. The falls are 3km west of Bull Bay; the turnoff from the A4 is at Seven Mile, 3km east of the Harbour View roundabout.

Back on the coast, 1.5km west of Bull Bay is **Cable Hut Beach** (Map p96). It's strewn with litter but surfers rave about the waves that roll into shore here.

Beyond Bull Bay, the main road climbs the scrub-covered hill before making a hairpin descent to Grants Pen and St Thomas parish (see p110). Near the summit you'll pass a **monument to Three Finger Jack** (Map p96), one of Jamaica's most legendary folk heroes. The marker was erected by the National Heritage Trust to recall the deeds of Jack Mansong, who in 1780 and 1781 often single-handedly waged a war of terror against the English soldiers and planters who held the slave territory. Strong, brave, and skilled with machete and musket, his bold exploits were equaled only by his chivalry.

Jamaica is continuing to gain stature as a **surfing** destination and Billy 'Mystic' Wilmot a focal point in the island for the sport. Jamnesia has a wide array of boards for rent (US\$20 per day), from short mini-thrusters to a 2.9m-long board. Individual surfing instruction also is available. The famous 'Board Hut' is packed with boards donated by traveling pros and friends of the burgeoning Jamaican surfing scene.

The **Black Sovereign Ethiopian Embassy** (Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress), painted in the Rasta colors of red, gold and green, is the home of the Bobo Ashantis ('Bobbaheads') and sits on Queensbury Ridge above Bull Bay. About 100 fundamentalist Rastafarians live here and make a living from farming or their skills on the street. The government considers them squatters. Guests with a sincere inter-

est in learning about the sect and its beliefs are welcome as long as they respect 'manners and principles.' When you arrive, you are led to a room festooned with portraits of Haile Selassie. Here you're greeted by the head priest, who will give you a spiel rich in clever metaphor that offers a fascinating insight into Rastafarian philosophy. You are welcome to stay overnight or as long as you wish in simply furnished rooms, but you must contribute 'something' and 'come to salvation' through performing duties on 'campus.' Cameras are welcome.

It's a little more than 1km uphill from the bridge on the A4, 20m east of the Red Lion Pub. You'll need a 4WD. There have been persistent warnings of criminal activity in the area, so to be safe you should present yourself at the Bull Bay police station (on the A4) for an escort up the hill.

SLEEPING

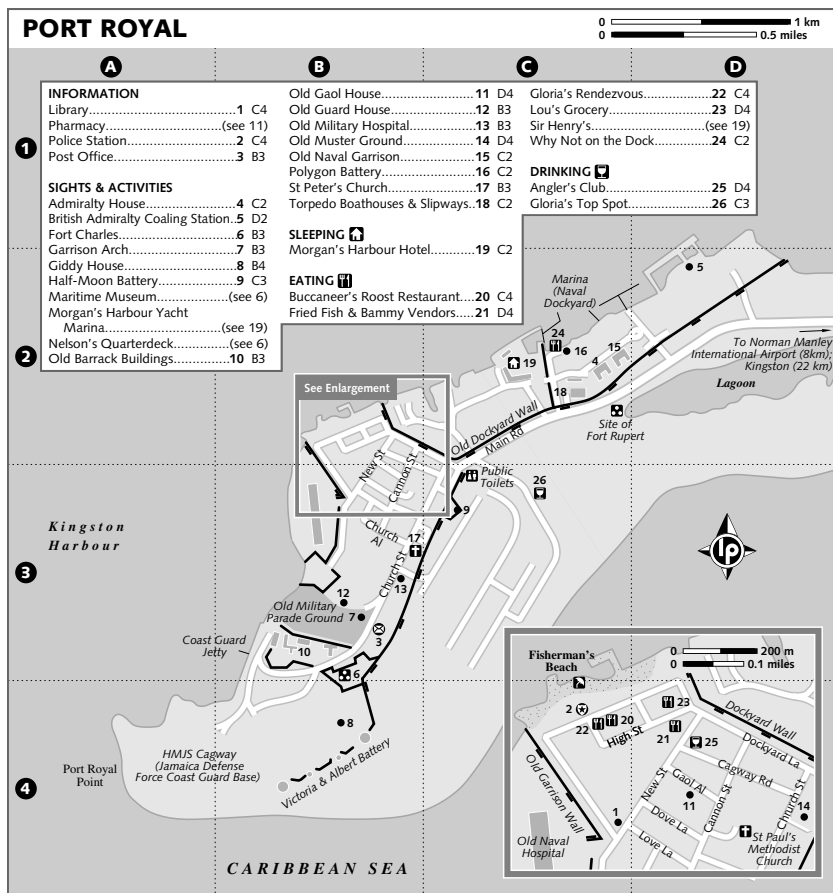
Billy Wilmot, the owner of **Jamnesia Surf Camp** (☎ 750-0103, ☎ 867-2701; Cable Hut Beach; camping per person US\$7.50, with provided tent US\$10, s/d US\$20/30), has done as much as anyone to raise the profile of Jamaican surfing and to introduce the sport to a growing cadre of young hopefuls. The camp offers simple rooms and bathrooms. You can pitch your own tent, or use a provided tent that comes with sleeping mat, pillow, linen, night lamp and flashlight. Six-night lodging packages (camping US\$179, singles/doubles/triples US\$399/721/870) are also offered, including meals and surf shuttle. Jamnesia also offers airport transfers (round-trip US\$70).

During the summer months, Jamnesia hosts a learn-to-surf camp for youngsters who want to learn how to shred.

PORT ROYAL pop 1100

Once the pirate capital of the Caribbean – and for more than 200 years the hub of British naval power in the West Indies – Port Royal today is a dilapidated, ramshackle place of tropical lassitude, replete with important historical buildings collapsing to dust. Today's funky fishing hamlet gives little hint of the town's former flamboyant glory.

The Port Royal Development Project has long touted the tourism potential of Port Royal as a possible marine archaeological attraction, with much lip service given to



plans for a 32-hectare theme park, cruise-ship pier, entertainment center and arcade, Jamaica music museum, and heritage re-enactments including townsfolk in period costumes. However, the massive project shows no signs of getting off the ground.

Visitors can wander the dusty grounds of Fort Charles, St Peter's Church and the naval cemetery. Most tourist sites are open from 9am to 4pm weekdays and 10am to 5pm weekends.

History

The English settled the isolated cay in 1656. They called it 'Cagway' or 'The Point' and built Fort Cromwell (renamed Fort Charles

after the Restoration in 1660). Within two years General William Brayne was able to report that 'there is the faire beginning of a town upon the poynnt of this harbor.'

At the time, England sponsored freelance pirates in their raids against Spanish ships and possessions. Almost as soon as the English had captured Jamaica, buccaneers – organized as the Confederacy of the Brethren of the Coast – established their base at Port Royal. They were alternately welcomed and discouraged by the authorities according to the dictates of England's foreign policy (see p26).

Admirals Lord Nelson and Benbow and Edward 'Blackbeard' Teach once lived here, but of all Port Royal's seafaring visitors the best remembered buccaneer is Henry Morgan,

whose celebrated exploits included a daring raid on Havana in the 1660s.

The lawless buccaneers were also big spenders. The wealth flowing into Port Royal attracted merchants, rum traders, vintners, prostitutes and others seeking a share of the profits. Townsfolk even invested in the expeditions in exchange for a share of the booty.

By 1682 Port Royal was a town of 8000 people. There were fortresses all around, plus two prisons and, ironically given the number of brothels and alehouses, two Anglican churches, a Presbyterian church, a Roman Catholic chapel, a Jewish synagogue and a Quaker meetinghouse.

At noon on Tuesday, June 7, 1692, a great earthquake shook the island, and Port Royal was destroyed. Two-thirds of the town disappeared underwater, where it remains. The massive quake was followed by a huge tidal wave that washed one ship, the *Swan*, into the center of the town, where it rested on the rooftops, providing shelter for those fortunate enough to scramble aboard. More than 2000 people died, many having fallen into great fissures before being 'squeezed to pulp' when a second tremor closed the gaping holes like pincer jaws. Many of the survivors were claimed by the pestilence that followed, caused by the hundreds of unburied corpses.

Official English policy had changed, and sea rovers who would not give up piracy were hounded and hanged at Gallows Point, a promontory at the harbor mouth of Port Royal. The English government had not written off Port Royal, however. The defensive works were repaired in time to repel a French invasion mounted against Jamaica in 1694. Gradually, Port Royal regained its stature as a merchant town and as a center of the turtling industry.

The near-constant state of war between England and Spain, France and Holland throughout the 18th century marked the beginning of Port Royal's 250-year tenure as headquarters of the Royal Navy in the West Indies.

The advent of peace in 1815 spelled the end of Port Royal's naval glory, and a fire that year consumed much of the town. After being struck by one calamity after another, the old port went into decline. In 1838, Jamaica ceased to be a separate naval command. With the development of steam warships in the early 20th century, Port Royal's

demise was sealed. The naval dockyard closed in 1905, and although the defenses were maintained through both world wars, they have since been left to decay.

Orientation & Information

Approaching the town, Norman Manley Hwy runs beside a long brick wall enclosing the old British Admiralty Coaling Station, former Admiralty House, naval garrison quarters and naval dockyard. You enter town through a breach in the old town wall to the main square, or Muster Ground, overlooked by the Half-Moon Battery on the left.

An excellent map, *Port Royal: A Walking Tour*, is included in *Port Royal* by Clinton V Black, which you can buy in the gift store of Morgan's Harbour Hotel (p100).

There are public telephones at Morgan's Harbour Hotel and outside the **police station** (☎ 967-8068; Queen St). The **post office** (☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) is in the old barracks near the fort. There's also a well-stocked **library** (☎ 967-8391; Broad St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat). There are public toilets on the old Muster Ground.

Sights & Activities

Jamaica's latitude and longitude are measured from the flagstaff of **Fort Charles** (☎ 967-8438; adult/child US\$5/2; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed Good Friday, Christmas Day & New Year's Day), a weathered redoubt originally laid in 1655. Among Port Royal's six original forts, only Fort Charles withstood the 1692 earthquake. It was rebuilt in red brick in 1699 and added to several times over the years. It was originally washed by the sea on three sides, but silt gradually built up and it is now firmly landlocked.

At its peak, 104 guns protected the fort. Many cannons still point out from their embrasures.

The marvelous **Maritime Museum** stands in the courtyard and contains a miscellany of things nautical from the heyday of the Royal Navy, plus a fabulous model of the *Jamaica Producer* cargo ship. Nelson lived in the small 'cockpit' while stationed here, and his quarters are replicated. Also of interest is a platform known as Nelson's Quarterdeck. It was here that the young Horatio Nelson was said to keep watch for enemy ships, and once you climb to the top you'll agree that it does offer a splendid vantage point. A plaque on the wall of the King's Battery,

to the right of the main entrance of the museum, commemorates his time here.

A small brick hut, the **Giddy House** (so known because it produces a sense of disorientation to people who enter) sits alone amid scrub-covered, wind-blown sand 100m to the southwest of Fort Charles. The red-brick structure was built in 1888 to house the artillery store. The 1907 earthquake, however, briefly turned the spit to quicksand and one end of the building sank, leaving the store at a lopsided angle.

Next to the Giddy House is a massive gun emplacement and equally mammoth cannon – part of the easternmost casement of the **Victoria & Albert Battery** that lined the shore, linked by tunnels. The cannon keeled over in the 1907 earthquake.

OLD GAOL HOUSE

The only fully restored historical structure in town is the sturdy **Old Gaol House**, made of cut stone on Gaol Alley. It predates the 1692 earthquake, when it served as a women's jail. Today it houses a pharmacy.

ST PETER'S CHURCH

Built in 1725 of red brick, this **church** is handsome within, despite its faux-brick facade of cement. Note the floor paved with original black-and-white tiles, and the beautifully decorated wooden organ loft built in 1743 and shipped to England in 1996 for restoration. The place is replete with memorial plaques. The communion plate kept in the vestry is said to have been donated by Henry Morgan, though experts date it to later times.

Most intriguing is a churchyard tomb of Lewis Galdye, a Frenchman who, according to his tombstone, '...was swallowed up in the Great Earth-quake in the Year 1692 & By the Providence of God was by another Shock thrown into the Sea & Miraculously saved by swimming until a Boat took him up.'

NAVAL DOCKYARD

The old **naval dockyard** lies to the east of Morgan's Harbour Hotel (right). Its perimeter walls still stand, as does the Polygon Battery and torpedo slipways, though most of the buildings within are gone. The old coaling station lies immediately to the east. Most of the famous ships of the Royal Navy – from the 18th century to the age of steam – berthed here.

NAVAL CEMETERY

Less than 1km east of the dockyard, also enclosed by a brick wall, is the intriguing **naval cemetery**, where sailors lie buried beneath shady palms. Alas, the cemetery's most ancient quarter, which contained the grave of the famous buccaneer Sir Henry Morgan, sank beneath the sea in 1692.

DEEP SEA FISHING

Morgan's Harbour Yacht Marina (VHF channel 68, radio call 'Morgan's Harbour') is a full-service facility that rents boats and yachts and offers **deep-sea fishing** (4-/8-hr trip US\$400/650). Fishing trips are also offered from **Why Not on the Dock** (☎ 967-8448; per hr US\$115), nearby to the northwest.

Tours

Tour operators in Kingston offer guided tours to Port Royal for about US\$50; see p83.

Festivals & Events

The **Port Royal Seafood Festival**, held each year on National Heroes Day, the third Monday in October, is a rollicking good time with scores of vendors selling fried fish, bammy and fish or conch soup, and live on-stage entertainment.

Sleeping & Eating

Morgan's Harbour Hotel (☎ 967-8030; www.morgansharbour.com; s/d US\$130/142, ste US\$197-206; 📶 📺) This atmospheric if overpriced hotel stands within the grounds of the old naval dockyard. Sporting the largest marina in the Kingston area and an atmospheric bar, the hotel is a favorite haunt of sea salts, moneyed and otherwise. It has 50 spacious rooms with terracotta tile floors and French doors opening onto balconies. Cable TV is standard, as are firm king-size beds. Facilities include a gift store and restaurant, and a handsome outside bar.

Buccaneer's Roost Restaurant (☎ 967-8053; Queen St) This down-to-earth eatery, serving seafood for under US\$4, is popular with Kingstonians, who spill out onto the street on weekends.

Sir Henry's (Morgan's Harbour Hotel; meals US\$7-25) Offering gratifying panoramic views of Kingston Bay and top-notch seafood, this is Port Royal's most pleasant – and most respectable – restaurant. Lobster dishes figure prominently on the menu, as do Jamaican specialties, salads and sandwiches.

Why Not on the Dock (☎ 967-8448; meals US\$2-7; 📶 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1am Sat & Sun) On a large

deck over the water, this spot serves conch soup, sandwiches and grilled chicken, shrimp and lobster on Friday and Sunday.

On the main square are several economical options serving justifiably famous fried, steamed and escoveitched fish with bammy or rice. The most celebrated is **Gloria's Rendezvous** (5 Queen St; mains US\$7.50-9; 📶 lunch & dinner), serving tremendously delicious local fare and seafood from an open-air kitchen.

Lou's Grocery (High St) has a minimal stock of groceries for a picnic on the waterfront.

Entertainment

Gloria's Top Spot (☎ 967-8220; 15 Foreshore Rd) Around 100m east of the muster ground, this is *the* place to be on a Friday or Saturday night, when local men of all ages – from youths in the latest hip-hop fashion to geezers in yesterday's duds – filter in and warm up at the bar to await the arrival of the women – from young and attired in spandex 'batty riders' to grannies in more conservative garb. By midnight, everyone is dancing to the latest sounds.

Why Not on the Dock (☎ 967-8448) This place draws a younger, more refined crowd on weekends for drinking and dancing.

Gloria's Rendezvous (5 Queen St) A well-loved oldies party is staged here on Sunday night.

Angler's Club (☎ 967-8101; 40 New St) AKA the Fisherman's Tavern, this is a funky watering hole drawing locals who wash in and out, overindulge in white rum, and pick fights while bartenders boogie at the bar. 'There are a few scalawags, but mostly it's harmless stuff,' one bartender said. It has tremendous character on Friday night when a mountain of speakers is built 7m high in the square and ska music reverberates across the harbor.

Morgan's Harbour Hotel (☎ 967-8030; www.morgansharbour.com) Morgan's sometimes has live bands and dancing, and it offers karaoke on Friday night.

Getting There & Away

Bus 98 runs to Port Royal from the Parade in downtown Kingston several times daily (US\$1.25).

A route taxi from the Parade in Kingston costs about US\$1.50; a licensed taxi costs about US\$35 one way. Airport transfers are about US\$15 for the 15-minute taxi ride.

AROUND PORT ROYAL Lime Cay & Environs

The idyllic Lime Cay is one of half a dozen or so uninhabited, sand-rimmed coral cays sprinkled about 3km offshore from Port Royal. It's the perfect spot for sunbathing and snorkeling. Kingstonians flock here on weekends for picnics.

Maiden Cay is a smaller, shadeless option nearby; it's popular with nudists.

En route to Lime Cay, you'll pass what little remains of **Rackham's Cay** (it's rapidly disappearing beneath the waves); it was named for the infamous Jack Rackham, one of scores of pirates hanged here in metal casings after execution. Nearby is **Gun Cay**, named for the cannons that can still be seen, legacies of a British fortification.

You can catch a ride to Lime Cay on motorized boats (called 'canoes') from fishermen in Port Royal (about US\$15 round-trip) and from **Why Not on the Dock** (adult/child US\$8.50/4.25 Mon-Fri, US\$6.50/4.25 Sat & Sun, 4-person minimum).

Morgan's Harbour Yacht Marina offers customers a two-hour tour of the cays (US\$20).

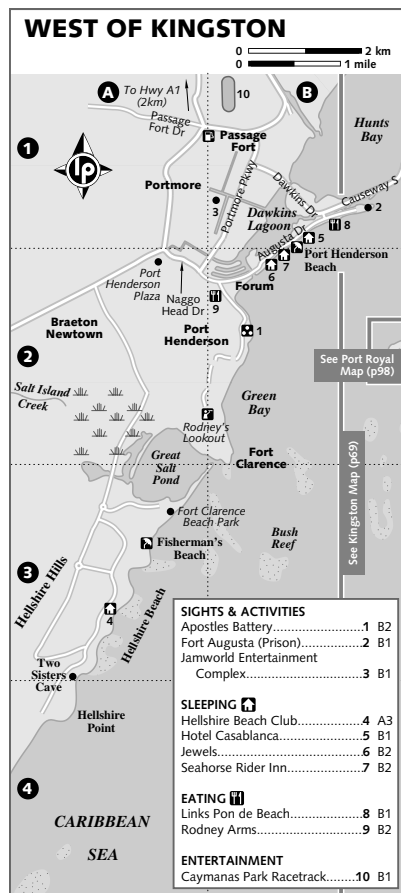
Harbor Mangroves

Bird and nature lovers won't want to miss a visit to the lovely, breeze-swept **mangroves** near Port Royal, providing breeding grounds for pelicans, egrets, frigates and other water-loving seabirds. En route and on request your boatman will pass by Maiden Cay and Lime Cay and within sight of Gun Cay. Voyeurs will want to plan a visit between January and April during the pelican mating season. The trip can be arranged at Morgan's Harbour Yacht Marina or at Why Not on the Dock in Port Royal, and costs about US\$20 per person.

WEST OF KINGSTON

Moving west of the capital, you leave behind the spectacular backdrop of the Blue Mountains for the staggered tedium of commuter traffic. The Nelson Mandela Hwy (A1) connects Kingston to Spanish Town, Jamaica's second largest city, before becoming the A2 and soldiering on to May Pen, the capital of Clarendon Parish and home to Halse Hall, a former plantation. From here, it's a mere 20-minute drive to Milk River Bath, the island's most celebrated mineral spa.

Much closer, a 'Causeway' as well as a controversial six-lane bridge completed in 2006 connect Kingston with the drab commuter



city of Portmore, from which you can reach Hellshire Beach. The J\$60 toll (Jamaican dollars only) for crossing the harbor (via a bridge built at no small cost to the taxpayer) aroused vociferous protests. So unmoved were the authorities that, as of February 2008, there was even talk of increasing the toll.

Portmore pop 150,000

A sprawling residential suburb, Portmore stretches across the plains west of Kingston. Shopping malls, entertainment centers and fast-food joints add color to an otherwise drab environment. The suburb is linked to the capital by the Portmore-Kingston Causeway.

Augusta Dr runs along the breeze-blown harbor shoreline parallel to Port Henderson Beach – the thin strip of sand is terribly littered. At its eastern end is **Fort Augusta**, dating from 1740. The original fort was destroyed when lightning struck the magazine holding 3000 barrels of gunpowder, killing 300 people. The huge crater was filled in and the fort rebuilt. Much decayed, the fort is now a prison.

The **Caribbean Heritagefest** (p84) is held here in mid-October.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

At the west end of the beach (at the southeast corner of Portmore) is **Port Henderson**, a fishing hamlet backed by some fine examples of 18th- and 19th-century architecture, notably **Rodney Arms** (☎ 988-1063; Old Water Police Station, Port Henderson Rd), a restaurant and pub.

About 200m uphill from the Rodney Arms are the ruins of a semicircular gun emplacement replete with cannon, and an old fort and battery – the **Apostles Battery**. It is worth the visit for the views across the harbor, especially at sunset, when Kingston glistens like hammered gold.

SLEEPING

Augusta Dr is lined with hotels that also operate as ‘short-time’ motels, renting rooms for coital convenience (a four-hour minimum usually applies).

Jewels (☎ 988-6785; Port Henderson; r with fan US\$35, r with air-con US\$38-52; 🍷 🍷) This is a gleaming-white hotel with 25 rooms aired by the breezes that channel down the corridors. Rooms are nicely if simply decorated with bright tropical fabrics; upstairs rooms have lofty wooden ceilings.

Hotel Casablanca (☎ 939-6999; 2-4 Port Henderson Rd; r incl breakfast US\$43-55; 🍷) A modern, castlelike structure with 36 rooms with cable TV and phone. It has a restaurant and bar.

EATING

Rodney Arms (☎ 988-1063; Old Water Police Station, Port Henderson Rd; meals US\$12-23; 🍷 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri-Sun) Housed in a beautifully restored Georgian limestone building that was once the Old Water Police Station – where pirates and miscreant marines were detained – this excellent seafood haunt offers crab, a seafood platter, garlic shrimp and other local dishes.

Links Pon De Beach, a beach park at the east end of Port Henderson Beach, serves snack foods and Jamaican fare.

ENTERTAINMENT

Caymanas Park (☎ 939-0848, 988-7258; www.caymanaspark.com; Caymanas Dr; admission US\$0.75-1.25) has horse racing each Wednesday and Saturday as well as public holidays.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Portmore and Port Henderson are reached via the **Causeway** (🚧 closed to westbound traffic 6:30-9am Mon-Fri, closed to eastbound traffic 4:30-7pm Mon-Fri), which begins in Kingston at the southern end of Hagley Park Rd at its junction with Marcus Garvey Dr.

Buses to Portmore (US\$0.75) operate from Half Way Tree, the Parade and Three Mile (at the junction of Hagley Park and Spanish Town Rds). Alternatively, take a minibus or route taxi from the Parade.

Hellshire Beach Recreation Area

White-sand beaches (owned and operated by the Urban Development Council) fringe the eastern Hellshire Hills and are reached via a road that leads south from Portmore via Braetown Newtown to Hellshire Point, 13km south of Braetown.

The road meets the coast at **Great Salt Pond**, a circular bay lined with briny mangrove swamps where snook, mullet, stingrays and crocodiles (‘alligators’) can be seen.

At the southeasternmost point of Great Salt Pond is **Fort Clarence Beach Park** (adult/child US\$3/1.50; 🍷 10am-6pm Fri-Tue), popular with Kingstonians on weekends. It hosts beauty contests and live reggae concerts. It has showers and toilets plus secure parking. A restaurant and bar are open weekends only.

A road to the left of the second, more southerly roundabout leads east to the main beach, called **Fisherman's Beach**, which is the setting of a funky fishing and Rasta ‘village’ with dozens of gaily painted huts and stalls selling beer, jerk, and fried fish and ‘festival’ (fried biscuit or dumpling). It's a boisterous, party-hearty place on weekends. In the morning, fishing pirogues come in with their catch. On any day of the week, though, it's a fascinating visit, a slice of the ‘real’ Jamaica up close. There are toilets and changing rooms.

Hellshire Beach Club (☎ 989-8306; r US\$48; 🍷 🍷) is a modern, handsome, two-story complex

with 60 rooms, all with TV, bathrooms and showers. It has a bar and restaurant. It's popular with beachgoers making out...hence the mirrored ceilings.

The best place to eat is **Prendy's on the Beach**, where you can select your fish or lobster (in season) and instruct them how you want it cooked.

From Kingston, buses go to Hellshire Beach from Half Way Tree and the Parade (US\$0.75, 30 minutes). Minibuses and route taxis (US\$2) run from the Parade.

Portland Bight Protected Area

Created in 1999, this 1876-sq-km **protected area** (PBPA; www.portlandbight.com.jm) comprises Jamaica's largest natural reserve with 210 sq km of dry limestone forest and 83 sq km of wetlands, as well as precious coral reefs (two-thirds of the protected area lies offshore). Its convoluted boundaries extend westward from Kingston Harbour across St Catherine and Clarendon parishes as far as Canoe Valley Wetland (p109), on the border with Manchester parish.

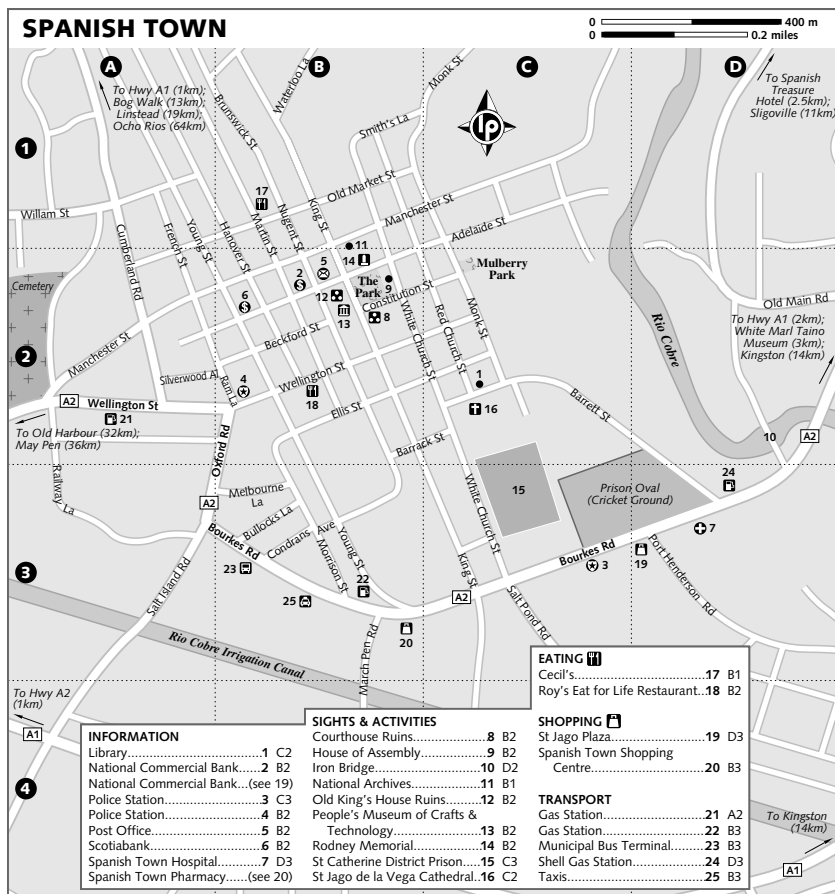
This vital habitat for birds, iguanas, crocodiles, manatees, marine turtles and fish – and 50,000 human beings – is managed by the **Caribbean Coastal Area Management** (CCAM; ☎ 986-3344; pespeut@infochan.com) and **Natural Resources Conservation Authority** (NRCA; ☎ 754-7546; 10 Caledonia Ave).

The CCAM is moving forward with ‘community tourism’ programs that utilize local fishermen to lead guided boat tours and hikes. An Eco-Heritage Trail beginning at the Hellshire beach and ending at Canoe Valley Wetland was in development at last visit, as was a visitor center to be part of a Biodiversity Conservation Centre and botanical garden (with trails) in the Hellshire Hills, where native plants will be propagated.

SPANISH TOWN

pop 130,000

Spanish Town, Jamaica's capital for more than 300 years, was once considered to boast exemplary town planning. Today, for visitors traveling from Kingston through the city's blighted outlying ghettos, it's somewhat of a stretch to envisage the former capital's erstwhile grandeur. However, this changes the moment one arrives at the evocative historic center, where you'll find the Caribbean's most extensive assortment of Georgian architecture



and its greatest cathedral (albeit in a sad state of repair). Few other places in Jamaica bring to life the historic sweep of centuries like Spanish Town.

The island's second-largest urban center and the capital of St Catherine parish, Spanish Town is frequently the locus of Jamaica's most wrenching urban strife. Few tourists spend the night, and those who do must contend with a paucity of safe lodging and services. By all means visit, but consider a day trip from Kingston.

History

After the settlement at Sevilla la Nueva failed in 1534, the Spanish established a new capital at Villa de la Vega – 'the Town on the Plain'

– atop foundations that had been laid down earlier by Christopher Columbus' son, Diego. The town grew modestly as the administrative capital, helped along by a silk-spinning industry. However, Villa de la Vega (later renamed St Jago de la Vega) languished, and at its peak had a population of only about 500 people.

The town was poorly defended and was ransacked several times by English pirates. Eventually, in 1655, an English invasion fleet landed and captured the city. The English destroyed much of the town, then they renamed it 'Spanish Town' and made it *their* capital.

For the next 217 years, the town prospered as Jamaica's administrative capital. The menacing Victorian prison and gallows were here. So, too, was a slave market, Jewish synagogues,

and theaters. Taverns served planters and their families and entourages, who flocked to Spanish Town from all over the island during the 'dead season' (October to December) on the sugar estates, when the legislature was also in session.

Eventually, Spanish Town was outpaced by Kingston, the mercantile capital, and decline set in. When novelist Anthony Trollope called on the governor in the 1850s, he described Spanish Town as 'stricken with eternal death.' Kingston was officially named the capital in 1872, and Spanish Town sank into a century of sloth.

The past decade has seen the establishment of light industrial factories on the outskirts of town, lending a certain commercial vitality.

Orientation

The town sits on the west bank of the Rio Cobre. At its center is the Georgian town square, the Park (formerly called the Parade), between King and White Church Sts, and Adelaide and Constitution Sts. The Spanish laid out the town on a quadrangular grid around the plaza (although it is easy to become confused and lose your sense of direction in the tight, convoluted one-way system).

Information

Spanish Town has no tourist information office.

National Commercial Bank (☎ 984-3017; 14 Nugent St) Has a couple of branches, including one at St Jago Plaza.

Police Town center (☎ 984-2775; cnr Oxford Rd & Wellington St); Highway (☎ 984-1683; 3 Bourkes Rd)

Post office (☎ 984-2409; cnr King & Adelaide Sts)

Public library (☎ 984-2356; 1 Red Church St) Opposite the cathedral.

Scotiabank (☎ 984-3024; 27 Adelaide St)

Spanish Town Hospital (☎ 984-3031; Bourkes Rd) Has a 24-hour emergency department.

Spanish Town Pharmacy (☎ 984-1314; Spanish Town Shopping Centre, 17 Bourkes Rd)

Dangers & Annoyances

Spanish Town is a very hard-edged city; as in Kingston, political gangs hold sway over parts of the city. You should be cautious, especially of petty theft and definitely avoid exploring away from main downtown streets. Also avoid driving near the market (at the western end of Adelaide St), where whole streets are blocked by stalls and piles of rotting, stinking garbage – a stomach-

turning sight – and the higglers are surly toward vehicles and foreigners.

Spanish Town is definitely a day trip.

Sights

THE PARK

Spanish Town's finest old buildings enfold **Parade Square**, the town square established by the Spanish as the center of Jamaica's capital city in 1534. Dominating the square on the north side is the elaborate **Rodney Memorial**, built in honor of Admiral George Rodney, who crowned his four-year service as commander-in-chief of the West Indian Naval Station in 1782 when he saved Jamaica from a combined French and Spanish invasion fleet at the Battle of the Saints. He stands within a cupola temple, with sculpted panel reliefs showing the battle scenes. The monument is fronted by two brass cannons from the French flagship.

The building behind the memorial is the **National Archives** (☎ 984-2581; admission free; ☎ 9:30am-3:30pm Mon-Fri), with national documents dating back centuries.

On the eastern side of the plaza is the redbrick **House of Assembly**, erected in 1762 and today housing the offices of the St Catherine Parish Council. It has a beautiful wooden upper story with a pillar-lined balcony. The Assembly and Supreme Court sat here in colonial days, when it was the setting for violent squabbles among feuding parliamentarians.

Moving to the south side of the square, you pass the fenced-off **Courthouse Ruins**, destroyed in 1986 by fire. The Georgian building dates from 1819, when it was used as a chapel and armory, with the town hall upstairs.

On the west side of the plaza is the porticoed Georgian redbrick facade of the ruins of the **Old King's House**, a once-grandiose building erected in 1762 as the official residence of Jamaica's governors. The building was destroyed by fire in 1925, leaving only the restored facade. Today the stables, to the rear, house the **People's Museum of Crafts & Technology** (☎ 922-0620; adult/child US\$1.75/0.75; ☎ 9:30am-4:30pm Mon-Thu, to 3:30pm Fri). A reconstructed smith's shop and an eclectic array of artifacts – from Indian corn grinders to coffee-making machinery – provide an entry point to early Jamaican culture. A model shows how Old King's House once looked.

ST JAGO DE LA VEGA CATHEDRAL

From the town square, take White Church St south for three blocks to **St Jago de la Vega Cathedral**, the oldest Anglican cathedral in the former British colonies. It's also one of the prettiest churches in Jamaica, boasting wooden fluted pillars, an impressive beamed ceiling, a magnificent stained-glass window behind the altar, and a large organ dating to 1849. The church stands on the site of one of the first Spanish cathedrals in the New World: the Franciscan Chapel of the Red Cross, built in 1525. English soldiers destroyed the Catholic church and used the original materials to build their cathedral. The current structure dates from 1714. Note the handsome octagonal steeple with faux-Corinthian columns, and gargoyles with African features, considered unique in the world, above the south window.

Many leading local personalities are buried within its precincts. The oldest tomb dates to 1662 and is inset in the black-and-white transept aisle laid by the Spanish.

ST CATHERINE DISTRICT PRISON

Walking southeast along Barrett St from the church, you'll pass behind the **St Catherine District Prison**. Hangings have been carried out here since 1714. Today, many prisoners are on death row in narrow cells that date back almost three centuries. Conditions in the prison, Jamaica's largest, were condemned in 1994 by the UN Human Rights Committee, and a British Member of Parliament described it during a recent visit as 'like something out of a nightmare.'

IRON BRIDGE

At the bottom of Barrett St, turn left onto Bourkes Rd and follow it east to the narrow **Iron Bridge** spanning the Rio Cobre. The span was made of cast iron prefabricated at Colebrookdale, England, and was erected in 1801 on a cut-stone foundation that dates to 1675. The only surviving bridge of its kind in the Americas, it is still used by pedestrians, if barely. A portion of the neglected structure finally collapsed in 2001.

WHITE MARL TAINO MUSEUM

Jamaica owes much to the influence of the Arawak Indians, whose history is on display at this meager **museum** (☎ 922-1287; admission US\$1.75; ☎ 8:30am-5pm Mon-Thu, to 4pm Fri) atop a large

pre-Columbian settlement. Archaeological research has been ongoing here since the 1940s. Hunting and agricultural implements, jewelry and carvings are featured. A reconstructed Arawak village is up the hill behind the museum. The museum is 200m north of the A1, about 3km east of Spanish Town. The museum is 200m north of the A1 on the Kingston-bound side of the highway, about 3km east of Spanish Town. Don't try to walk there; instead drive or take a taxi from the taxi stand east of Spanish Town's bus terminal.

Sleeping & Eating

Spanish Town has no hotels or guesthouses downtown, save for a few flophouses that are best avoided. The only decent choice is the motel-style **Spanish Treasure Hotel** (☎ 984-2474; Sligoville Rd; d US\$45, ste US\$67; ☎ ☎), 2.5km northeast of town, with 60 basic but clean rooms. It has a Jacuzzi, a restaurant and bar, and a pool area with nightly music. Also on the premises is a skating rink (per person US\$3).

Near the town center, you'll find several decent Jamaican restaurants serving local fare. **Cecil's** (☎ 984-1927; 35 Martin St; meals US\$3.50-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner), near the corner of Old Market St, is one of the nicer places to eat, serving brown stew, callaloo, oxtail, curried goat and steam fish. Another good option is **Roy's Eat for Life Restaurant** (☎ 984-0551; 12 Wellington St; mains US\$2.50-7.50; ☎ lunch & dinner), a vegetarian restaurant and health-food store selling 1-tal foods and juices.

Getting There & Away

In Kingston, buses depart frequently for Spanish Town from both the Parade and Half Way Tree (about US\$0.50). In Spanish Town, buses, minibuses and route taxis leave from the **municipal bus terminal** (Bourkes Rd).

A taxi ride between Kingston and Spanish Town will cost about US\$20. Taxis depart from the taxi stand to the east of the bus terminal on Bourkes Rd. By car from Kingston, take Washington Blvd from uptown or Marcus Garvey Blvd to Spanish Town Rd from downtown; both join the A1 for a straight shot.

**AROUND SPANISH TOWN
Caymanas Golf & Country Club**

This **club** (☎ 922-3386; play@caymanasgolfclub.com; green fees weekdays/weekends US\$45/60, cart/club rental US\$22/15), 10km west of Kingston in the hills north of Spanish Town Rd, is a 6295m, par-70,

18-hole course. Facilities include a pool, gym, squash and tennis courts, jogging trails, horse-back riding and a restaurant.

Sligoville

This peaceful village sits on the upper story of Montpelier Mountain (737m), 8km east of Bog Walk at a junction with roads for Kingston (via Red Hills) and Spanish Town.

During the colonial era the area was a popular summer retreat for white society, and the second Marquis of Sligo, the pro-emancipation governor of Jamaica from 1834 to 1836, had a home here. The house, **Highgate Park** (☎ 749-1845), has been recently restored by the National Heritage Trust with the help of US Peace Corps volunteers, who have stayed on to run an **environmental center** (☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri) and a **hostel** (dm US\$20) from its impressive halls. Meals and a communal kitchen are available.

Bog Walk Gorge

About 11km north of Spanish Town the A1 cuts through an impressive limestone canyon – **Bog Walk Gorge** – carved by the slow-moving Rio Cobre. You drop into the gorge and cross the river via the Flat Bridge, an 18th-century stone bridge.

Every rainy season, landslides block the road, disrupting traffic and adding to the damming effect of the narrow gorge. Flat Bridge is frequently under water after heavy rains; the high-water mark of August 16, 1933, when the river rose 8m above the bridge, is shown on the rock face.

Coleburns Gully

This off-the-beaten-track valley extends northwest from Spanish Town into the central highlands. The road via Guanaboa Vale leads 8km north to **Mountain River Cave**, a National Trust site of archaeological importance, 3km above Guanaboa Vale. Guides will lead you down 1.5km and across the river, where the cave entrance is barred by a grill gate; the steep track is sweaty going, but there's a good spot for swimming in a small river with a waterfall. Inside, you'll discover Arawak petroglyphs painted in black on the walls and ceiling. Many date back up to 1300 years.

Contact Lloyd Wright at the **Jamaica National Heritage Trust** (☎ 922-1287; 79 Duke St, Kingston) to arrange guided tours.

Old Harbour

This otherwise nondescript town is famous for its iron **clock tower** in the town square. The Victorian tower is marvelously preserved, as is the clock, which was installed shortly after the English invasion in 1655 and, amazingly, still keeps good time. Other points of interest are the **Church of St Dorothy**, one of the oldest on the island.

The ruins of the **Colbeck Castle great house** stand amid scrubby grounds 2.5km northwest of Old Harbour; to reach them, follow the road north from the clock tower.

Old Harbour Bay

This large fishing village, facing Portland Bight (p103), 3km south of Old Harbour, is the site of the south coast's largest fish market. Fishermen land their catch midmorning, and it makes a photogenic sight with the nets laid out and the colorful pirogues drawn up on the otherwise ugly shore. The village is a squalid place of tin and wood shacks and is prone to flooding in the rainy season.

The **Cockpit Salt Marsh**, an estuary near the mouth of the Bowers River, is good for bird-watching and spotting crocodiles. The CCAM (p103) offers nature trips by rowboat. Similar trips are offered to Salt Island and Black Creeks, navigable for several kilometers, and to the marsh and the Goat Islands.

You can catch a bus to the marsh from Old Harbour. From the Parade in Kingston, there's a daily bus to Old Harbour.

MAY PEN & AROUND

The A2 continues westward from Old Harbour to May Pen and continues across the flatlands of the Clarendon Plains to Toll Gate, marking the beginning of a 610m, 14.5km ascent of Melrose Hill en route to Mandeville (p260).

The B12 runs south from Toll Gate to several sites of modest interest.

**May Pen
pop 48,000**

The capital of Clarendon parish, 58km west of Kingston midway between Spanish Town and Mandeville, is a teeming market and agricultural town. It's bypassed by the A2 (Sir Alexander Bustamante Hwy), which runs about 1.5km south of town. If you venture into town, expect a degree of pandemonium, especially on Friday and Saturday when the market is held south of the main square.

Be prepared for terrible congestion, honking horns and pushy drivers who add to the general mayhem.

The annual **Denbigh Agricultural Show** is held on the Denbigh Showground, 3km west of town, on Independence weekend in early August. Farmers from each parish display the fruits of their labors, from yams to live-stock. Live entertainment and food vendors round out the bill. For information, contact the **Jamaica Agricultural Society** (☎ 922-0610, 967-4094; 67 Church St, Kingston).

There's really little to detain you after seeing Halse Hall.

INFORMATION

CIBC (☎ 986-2578; 50 Main St) You can exchange money and travelers checks here.

May Pen Hospital (☎ 986-2528; Muirhead Ave) Three kilometers west of the town center.

Police station (☎ 986-2208; Main St) Around 100m west of the main square.

Post office (☎ 986-2443) It's 100m northeast of the square.

Scotiabank (☎ 986-2212; 36 Main St)

SIGHTS

Halse Hall

This is a handsome **great house** (☎ 986-2561; tours by arrangement), on the B12, 5km south of May Pen, situated up on a hillock with commanding views. After the English invasion in 1655, the land was granted to Major Thomas Halse, who built the house on an old Spanish foundation and whose grave is behind the house in a small cemetery. For a time the house was occupied by Sir Hans Sloane, the famous doctor and botanist, whose collection of Jamaican flora and fauna formed the nucleus of what later became the Natural History Museum in London. Today, it is owned by the bauxite concern, Alcoa Minerals, which uses it for conferences and social functions. To take a tour call and ask for Mrs Chambers.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Versalles (☎ 986-2775; contact@jamaicahotelversalles.com; 42 Longbridge Ave; r US\$74, ste US\$81; 🚗 🚗 🚗) Over 1km southwest of town, it's the only accommodation of any worth. This expansive, modern hotel sports lush lawns nibbled by Shetland ponies. It has 27 modestly furnished rooms as well as 17 suites, six studios and eight apartments with phone and

bathrooms. The Versalles Disco has karaoke on Thursday, Latin music on Saturday and oldies night on Sunday.

Hot Pot (☎ 986-2586; 18A Manchester Ave; meals US\$2-6) is the place for inexpensive Jamaican fare.

There are plenty of fast-food joints and simple restaurants on Main St.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

The transportation center is on Main St, 200m southeast of the main square. You can catch buses, minibuses and route taxis here to Christiana, Spanish Town, Kingston, Ocho Rios, Mandeville, Negril, Milk River and most other destinations in the region.

Milk River Bath

This well-known **spa** (☎ 902-6902; fax 902-4974; adult/child per bath US\$1.75/0.85, free for hotel guests; 🕒 7am-9pm), 23km southwest of May Pen, is fed from a saline mineral hot spring that bubbles up at the foot of Round Hill, 3km from the sea. The waters are a near-constant 33°C (92°F). Immersion is said to cure an array of ailments ranging from gout and lumbago to rheumatism and nervous conditions.

The spa, which is attached to the Milk River Hotel, is owned by the government. The six timeworn public mineral baths and three private baths are cracked and chipped, though clean.

These are the most radioactive spa waters in the world; they're 50 times more so than Vichy in France and three times those of Karlsbad in Austria. Hence, bathers are limited to only 15 minutes, though you are allowed three baths a day. Imbibing the waters is also recommended by the spa staff as a stirring tonic. Kingstonians flock on weekends seeking treatments. Indulge yourself with the **Massages** (US\$35 per hour) on offer.

About 200m north of the spa is the **Milk River Spa Mineral Pool** (c/o Ministry of Tourism ☎ 920-4929; 🕒 10am-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays), an open-air swimming pool.

Beyond Milk River Bath, a dirt road lined with tall cacti leads 2.5km to **Farquhar Beach**, a funky fishing village at the river mouth. You can watch fishermen tending their nets and pirogues, and you can hire a boat and guide to take you to the mouth of the Alligator Hole River in search of crocodiles and elusive, endangered manatees.

A bus operates from May Pen three times daily.

SLEEPING & EATING

Milk River Hotel (☎ 902-4657; fax 986-4974; Clarendon; d without/with bathroom US\$110/117) A rambling, homey, white-porched hotel with shady verandas, louvered windows, etched wooden motifs above the doors, well-worn pine floors and 20 modestly furnished, pleasant rooms. Guests are not charged for using the mineral spa. Meals are served in a cozy dining room, where the menu includes Jamaican favorites such as mutton stew and stewed fish. Breakfasts include a health-food special for US\$8.

Diana's Seafood Bar (Farquhar Beach) A sky-blue shack serving steamed fish (US\$4) and basic Jamaican fare. Diana is a pleasant lady who also has Diana's Guest House; its one room has a double bed and an outside bathroom

and toilet, but no electricity (it's lit by a kerosene lamp). Rates here are negotiable.

Canoe Valley Wetland

This is a government-owned **wildlife reserve** (☎ 377-8264; admission free; 🕒 Mon-Sat), also known as Alligator Hole. It's notable for its family of three manatees (all females) that inhabits the diamond-clear water, in which crocodiles (called 'alligators' locally) also hover. They live amid dense, 1m-tall reeds in jade-blue pools fed by waters that emerge at the base of limestone cliffs. Herons, grebes, jacanas, gallinules and other waterfowl are abundant.

There's a small visitor center. You can take an hour-long trip by canoe with a guide. Don't forget to tip the guides. The turnoff is signed 1.5km north of Milk River Bath on the B12.

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