101 "DID YOU KNOW" FACTS ABOUT JAMAICA

Intriguing, Insightful & Fun!

By Wellesley Gayle

www.my-island-jamaica.com
Jamaica is world renowned as still the most adored and desired vacation destination in the Caribbean.

Our delectable food, the alluring reggae music, the historical sites, the scintillating beaches, the majestic waterfalls, along with the warm spirit of our people, are just a few of the variables that keep our visitors keep coming back for more.

But wait, there are a lot more that are unique to Jamaica that are not necessarily on the tongues of every Jamaican you meet. With much detailed research and the help support and guidance of my family and friends in different spheres of Jamaican life, I have compiled this 101 'Did You Know' Facts About Jamaica... 

It includes stimulating and insightful facts about Jamaica from all areas of Jamaican life. Each is numbered, but I also categorized them for your convenience:

🌟 Culture
🌟 History
🌟 Nature
🌟 Politics
🌟 Society &
🌟 Sports.

I have no doubt they will open your imagination so you will appreciate, even more, this little rock we call home. Enjoy!

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Dedication

This publication is dedicated to you and other Jamaican interests, travelers, students, educators, Jamaican nationals & Jamaican enthusiasts around the globe.

Particularly to those of you who recognize and appreciate our deep cultural heritage and believe strongly in us- in light of our challenges, as a country with a bold and exciting future!
1. **that Jamaica has the largest number of churches per square mile in the world?**

   Many are beautiful, old, stone structures from the 1800s that remain a vital part of our Jamaican life.

2. **that Ginger Ale was first made in Jamaica?**

   Ginger Ale is an excellent remedy for indigestion and nausea, including motion sickness, and morning sickness. It prevents stomach flu and the nausea associated with chemotherapy.

3. **that the citrus fruit Ortanique, was first developed in Jamaica?**

   As the name implies, it is a cross between the orange and the tangerine?

4. **that the citrus, “Ugli Fruit”, is also native to Jamaica?**

   The fruit was first bred in Brown's Town Jamaica in 1914, hybridizing a grapefruit and a tangerine. It got its name from the unsightly appearance of its rough, wrinkled, greenish-yellow skin, wrapped loosely around the orange pulpy citrus inside. An ugli fruit is slightly smaller than a grapefruit and has fewer seeds.

5. **that in rural Jamaica, after the birth of a child, the placenta is buried?**

   A sapling is planted on top of it. That will eventually be awarded to the child and called the Baby’s tree.

6. **that Jamaica is the birth place of Robert ("Bob") Nesta Marley, renowned world Reggae Music superstar!**

   This is actually a giveaway to you!
Bob Marley took Jamaica's name to international heights with the message of peace and love in the reggae music. Reggae Music, particularly 'roots' reggae:

A little background to reggae music here:
More on Bob Marley here:
http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/bob_marley.html

7. that in Jamaica is found one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the Western Hemisphere?

It was founded by the Jews of Port Royal in the latter part of the seventeenth century when a Jewish community flourished there. Port Royal was an impressive commercial center then and the Jews who arrived there took a prominent part in its activities. The Jews excelled in the trade of gold and silver, and in money changing.

This old Jewish Cemetery is located at 1 Hunt's Bay in St. Andrew. The Jamaica National Heritage Trust declared it a national monument on July 15, 1993.

8. that Jamaica produces the widest varieties of rum in the world?

From the very light low ester rums, to the heavy, traditional continental-flavored rums? Jamaica has the capacity to produce up to 50 million litres of rum annually.

9. that Jamaica was the only place in the world that considers the fruit of the Ackee edible?

Also known as Blighia Sapida, it is the national fruit of our country. It was imported from West Africa, and it is believed to have arrived in Jamaica via a slave ship.
You can read more about our national symbols here:

10. that Jamaica is the only country in the world that packs its coffee in barrels rather than burlap bags? Well, that’s part of the nature of us, we had to be different :-)

11. That as of the date of this publication, Jamaica had a total of ten (10) national holidays?

This includes four (4) Christian holidays
Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day

and six (6) secular holidays:
& Boxing Day.
History

12. that Jamaica was the first country in the Western world to construct a railway? This happened even before the United States! Only 18 years after Britain.

13. that Port Royal in Jamaica was once known as the “wickedest city on earth”? Port Royal then, a wealthy haven for pirates, was devastated by an earthquake. It happened on June 7, 1692.

You can read about other famous places in Jamaica here: http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/famous_places_in_jamaica.html

14. that after the 1912 hurricane in Jamaica, a schooner (ship) named Latonia, ended up in the middle of Great George Street in Savanna-La-Mar, Westmoreland, Jamaica?

15. that around the time that the English defeated the Spaniards and claimed Jamaica (1655), there were not even 17,000 persons in Jamaica?

16. that town of Black River in St. Elizabeth was the first in Jamaica to have electricity?

This was supplied by the Leyden brothers in 1893. Power was generated from a plant which had a huge furnace and boiler. Logwood, which was a major export of the parish, was used to generate steam from the engine which provided the power.

17. that spanning the Rio Cobre river at the eastern end of Spanish Town in St. Catherine Jamaica, is a bridge considered to be the oldest of its kind in the western hemisphere? The Historic Cast Iron Bridge.

The abutment of the bridge is constructed with cut stone while the bridge is cast iron. It is
about 81ft long and 15ft wide. This bridge was erected in 1801, at a cost of four thousand pounds!

18. that it was on April 21, 1966 that His imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, visited Jamaica?

He came for a three day visit in which he addressed members of both houses of the Jamaican parliament, and at a special ceremony at the University of the West Indies, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

19. that in 1904, the Bog Walk Tube, that carried water from the Rio Cobre River to the then Bog Walk Power Station, was the largest pipe in the world?

It was 6,200 feet long, 8 feet in diameter, weighing 1,700,000 pounds, with 260,000 rivets holding it together. This same pipe however, accounted for one of the island's worst catastrophes, drowning over 300 men on June 24, 1904.

You can read it in this Gleaner article here.
http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/pages/history/story004.html

20. that Jamaica has a fascinating history which includes domination by the Spanish and English and their exploitation of the indigenous Indians and the African slaves?

All these influences are reflected in the rich culture apparent in the language, food and people themselves. More on Jamaica's history here:

21. that Jamaica is the first English-speaking Caribbean country to gain Independence?

This was on August 6, 1962 from Britain. This is a giveaway actually, I expected you to know this. :-(
22. That Jamaica was the first colony of England acquired by conquest?
   This was in the year 1655 when the Spanish were driven from the island.

23. That Jamaica was the first commercial producer of bananas in the Western Hemisphere?

24. That "Gallows Point" in Port Royal, Jamaica was the place where condemned persons were hung?
   The last of those executions which took place in 1831 is graphically described by Michael Scott in "Tom Cringle's Log".

25. That the highest point in Jamaica is the blue Mountain Peak, towering at 7,402 feet above sea level?
   On a clear day with clear skies, the outline of the island Cuba can be seen clearly from there. According to TripAdvisor.com, The Blue Mountains in Jamaica is a hiker's and camper's paradise!. You have to see it to believe it.
   If you visit Jamaica, the Blue Mountains is a must see.
   The famous Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee is cultivated on the lower slopes.

26. That Jamaican postage stamps were first issued in 1858?

27. That one John Leyden, a Scotsman, brought the first car to Jamaica?
   He brought it to the parish of St. Elizabeth.
   I can see you guessing what that car may have looked like back then!

28. That Kingston formally became the capital of Jamaica in 1872?
   Prior to this, Sante Jago De La Vega, now known as Spanish Town in St. Catherine was the
capital of Jamaica—which earlier took the capital status from Seville in St. Ann.

29. that Lucea, the capital of Hanover, Jamaica, was an old maritime town and famous sea-port where sailors spent brief periods before setting sail to other ports?

30. that our National Heroes Day, was established on October 20, 1969?

It replaced the national holiday for the queen of England's birthday, which was discontinued. Heroes Day is now celebrated on the third Monday in October each year.

31. that Martha Brae was the first capital of the parish of Trelawny?

In addition to the Rio Grande, situated in Portland, the Martha Brae River is used for rafting and it is a major tourist attraction here in Jamaica.

Other exciting tourist attractions in Jamaica here:


32. that Montego Bay became Jamaica's second City in 1982?

So right now, at the date of this publication, Jamaica has officially two cities; the capital Kingston, and Montego Bay. Portmore in St. Catherine is poised to become a city anytime now though.

33. that Morant Bay, the capital of St. Thomas in Jamaica, is one of the most historic towns in the island?

This is because of the its association with the Morant Bay Slave Rebellion in the year 1865

34. that Morgan's Valley in Clarendon Jamaica was named in honour of Sir Henry Morgan, the famous buccaneer Governor in Jamaica from 1675 to 1682?

35. that nickel coins were first used in Jamaica in 1869?
36. that on his second voyage to the New World in 1494, the tip of the Blue Mountain in Jamaica was the first land sighted by Christopher Columbus?

The Spaniards controlled the island until 1655 when the English conquered them to take the island.

37. that Seville in St. Ann, was the first capital of Jamaica?

38. that the parish of St. James in Jamaica was named after James, the Duke of York?

39. that Tessa Sanderson, the first British black woman to win an Olympic gold medal, is Jamaican born?

She won the gold medal at the 1984 Olympics in the javelin competition. Tessa was born in Saint Elizabeth and later became a British citizen.

40. that the author Ian Flemming, wrote some of his most well-known James Bond thrillers from his home in Goldeneye, Oracabessa, Jamaica?

The small but famous James Bond beach is a favourite for many of our island visitors.

41. that the islands of Turks & Caicos and the Cayman Islands were dependencies of Jamaica?

This they were until Jamaica became independent in 1962. Then they reverted to the charge of Britain. Jamaica however, still assisted in Judicial and police matters when invited.

42. that the Jamaica was the first of all British colonies to establish a postal service?

This was in the year 1688.

43. that the Manchester Golf Club in Jamaica is the oldest in the western hemisphere?

It was established in 1868.

A little more about Golf in Jamaica here:
44. that the Morant Point Light House in St. Thomas is the oldest lighthouse in Jamaica?

45. that the parish of Manchester is Jamaica's youngest parish?

   It was created on December 13, 1814, from the surrounding parishes of St. Elizabeth, Clarendon and Vere, which were then separate parishes.

46. that the slave trade has said to have taken between ten and twenty million Africans from their homelands, with approximately 600,000 coming to Jamaica?

47. that a railway disaster in Jamaica killed over 200 people on Sunday, September 1, 1957?

   It happened at approximately 11:30pm in Kendal Manchester. Hundreds of members of the Holy Name Society of St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church were returning to Kingston from an all day excursion in Montego Bay under the guidance of their pastor, the Reverend Father Charles Earle. Also on board were close to 100 known criminals, hooligans and pickpockets.
48. that over 952 caves have been identified in Jamaica?
   They are concentrated in the northern parishes of Trelawny and St. James and also the bordering parishes of St. Ann, Manchester and Clarendon. 380 have been located and registered.

49. that a 1970 survey by the University of the West Indies revealed that there are 271 different species of plants to be found here in Jamaica, of which 53 are endemic- found only in Jamaica.
   A little more on Jamaican Plants here:
   http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/plants_in_jamaica.html

50. that in Jamaica is found the second largest butterfly in the world?
   This is the Giant Swallowtail butterfly.

51. that Jamaica has eight different species of birds that are black in colour, most of which are commonly called black birds?
   One of these is the Antillean Grackle, popularly known as the "Kling Kling" bird.

52. that Jamaica has over 120 rivers?
   See a list of Jamaica's rivers here:
   http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/rivers_in_jamaica.html
53. that Jamaica's national bird, a species of hummingbird, the "Doctor Bird", is only found in Jamaica?

There are two types, the black billed, found in the east, and the red-billed, found throughout the rest of the island.

I dedicated a page to the hummingbird here. Take a look: http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/jamaica_hummingbird.html

54. that two-thirds of the western and central parts of Jamaica is covered by limestone? The remaining one-third is made up of alluvium.

55. that of all the Caribbean islands, Jamaica has the highest number of endemic species? This includes 27 endemic reptiles, and 28 endemic birds (Koenig 2000).


56. that real Jamaican jerk flavor comes from meat seasoned with pimento spice placed on top of a bed of pimento leaves, and pimento wood sticks?

Then, it is slowly barbecued over a fire. Pimento is the wood of the Jamaican allspice tree and is found only in Jamaica.

57. that several smaller islands, called Cays, lie at various points off the coast of Jamaica? The most notable ones are the Pedro Cays and the Morant Cays- four in total.

58. that the parish of St. Catherine is the most important cocoa area in Jamaica? It is sheltered from the trade winds by the central mountain range.

59. that Jamaica has some of the best natural mineral Spas in the world?

Some of which have high therapeutic value. The warm saline and radioactive Milk River and the hot sulphuous at Bath in St. Thomas are typical examples.
The radioactivity of the The Milk River Spa, for example, is:

- 9 times as active as Bath in England
- 50 times as active as Vichy in France
- 5 times as active as Karlsbad in Australia &
- 54 times as active as Baden in Switzerland

The Jamaica National Heritage Trust describes our four main mineral Spas here:


60. that the Peeny-Walley beetle is found only in Jamaica?

According to a newsletter from the University of the West Indies, Mona, a gene of the endemic Jamaican click beetle, Pyrophorus plagiophthalamus (Elateridae), is patented abroad and use for bioluminescence imaging in oncology, genetics and environmental sciences.

61. that Jamaica is blessed with a host of industrial and structural minerals?

These include gypsum, silica sand, clays, cement (from limestone), marble, lime, copper and even gold!
Politics

62. that as of April 2006, a record 13 female heads of state were in power around the world?
This included Portia Simpson-Miller who became the first female prime minister of Jamaica (2nd in the Caribbean) on March 30 the same year.

63. that Jamaica is the smallest member of the Group of Fifteen (G15)?
Which is a clear reflection of our role and influence in international affairs, demonstrating that size is not a limitation where there are clear policies and outstanding representation.

64. that Jamaica was the first Caricom country to liberalize the telecommunications sector?
Since then, other Caricom countries have opened up to competition.

65. that the Labour Day holiday was introduced in Jamaica by former Prime Minister, Michael Manley in 1972?
This, when the country was experiencing low growth and there was a dire need to correct problems of disrepair and lack of maintenance at public institutions.

66. that the People's National Party, one of the two dominant political parties in Jamaica was formed on September 18, 1938?
This was under the leadership of Normal W. Manley. Only five years later, in 1943, the Jamaica Labour Party was founded by Alexander Bustamante.

67. that the World Bank ranked Jamaica in the top 10, least-regulated economies in the world in 2004?
The other countries were Australia, Canada, Denmark, Hong Kong, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, and the UK. Jamaica however, was the only developing country.
Society

68. that Jamaica was honoured as both the ‘World’s Leading Cruise Destination’ and the ‘Caribbean’s Leading Cruise Destination’ for 2006?

This was at the 13th Annual World Travel Awards - the premier global event for the travel industry?

69. that Appleton Estate in Jamaica is the 5th largest producer of rum in the world?

Appleton Estate V/X rum is rich, dark gold, and aged in wood for five years. The top-of-the-line is the elegant Appleton Estate Extra which is aged oak casks for twelve years.

70. that an earthquake of 1907 claimed the lives of over 1,000 Jamaicans?

It lasted about 20 seconds and said to have demolished the city of Kingston. Damage was estimated to be over two million pounds sterling. It happened on January 14th that year.

71. that (sad to say) Jamaica has the highest per capita rate of police killings in the world?

72. that as of 2006, Jamaica stood strongly in joint 3rd place on the list of countries to win the Miss World title the most times?

The only countries to have won it more than Jamaica are India, Venezuela and the UK, but consider our size and resources and you realize we are truly world beaters!

Our 2007 national contest was historic, as it saw the first Rastafarian winner.

More of our beauties here:

73. that commercial radio broadcasting started on July 9, 1950 in Jamaica?

This was by the Jamaica Broadcasting Company. The name was later changed to Radio Jamaica and Rediffusion (RJR).

74. that Jamaica also was the first island in the Caribbean to produce rum on a commercial basis?

My belated father, who I loved dearly but was a very heavy drinker, probably could relate to this.

75. that Jamaica has more multiple (two or more) live births than anywhere else in the world?

This one I really found amazing!

76. that Jamaica has the highest incidence of prostate cancer in the world?

This is so, according to the website, cancerlineuk.

77. that Jamaica had the second highest level of life expectancy (74.8) at birth in the Caribbean?

This is so, according to an Inter Development Bank (IDP) Report in 2003.

78. that Jamaica has the highest level of teacher productivity in the world?

Well known Jamaican educator, Errol Miller said that surveys done, have repeatedly confirmed this fact.

Reflect on our size and scare resources and you even start to wonder what makes us so special.

79. that Jamaica has the highest population of cellular phone penetration per capita in the world?

No surprise here, even the honorable Roger Clarke, Minister of Agriculture then, boasted on this achievement at a political rally.
80. that Jamaica is called the *Land of Wood and Water*?

This meaning was actually derived from the word 'Xamayca' that was use by the Tainos.

The Tainos were the earliest recorded settlers in Jamaica. They were here from as early as 1,000 BC, until the Spanish arrived.

81. that Jamaica has the seventh largest natural harbour in the world?

This is the Kingston Harbour.

82. that Jamaica has the most fully developed accreditation system in the English-speaking Caribbean?

83. that Jamaica is one of the few locations in the world that boasts a completely digitized national telephone network?

The country also has a sophisticated digital teleport, the most advanced in the Region.

84. that Jamaica is the 3rd largest of 51 inhabited islands in the Caribbean?

Only Cuba and Hispaniola are bigger. This also is a giveaway, wouldn't you say?

You can get a profile of Jamaica here:


85. that Jamaica is the fourth largest producer of bauxite in the world?

Bauxite is the ore from which aluminum is made, which in turn is used in everything from packaging and transportation to building materials. By the way, Jamaica was once the number one producer of bauxite in world.

86. that Jamaica was the first Caribbean island to enact legislation, "The Motion Picture Industry (Encouragement) Act" to promote the making of films?
I can't help thinking that there are still many more opportunities for expansion and development in this area though.

87. that Jamaica was the first country in the Caribbean region to launch a web site, jamaicatravel.com? This was in 1994! The Jamaica Tourist Board has since changed the site to visitjamaica.com.

88. that Jamaica was the first country to impose economic sanctions against the apartheid regime of South Africa?
Served them right!

89. that Jamaicans first spoke to their relatives overseas (US, England, Canada, Mexico and Cuba) by telephone in 1936?
   
   This came as a result of the inauguration of the radio-telephone service.
   
   This is another good one!

90. that Jamaica's National Anthem is the only anthem in the world that is a prayer?

   Sing it, if you can, or can get the words here:
   
   http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/jamaica_national_anthem.html

91. that sadly, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization, Jamaica has the highest rate of deforestation in the world?
Also our waters are the most over fished in the Caribbean.

92. that the city of Kingston started out as a place of refuge for survivors of the great Port Royal earthquake in 1692 which sank two thirds of Port Royal and killed over 2000 people?

I am learning that many of the significant events that took place in Jamaica (historically and even present) have some association with Kingston. Are you realizing that?
93. that the first newspaper to be published in Jamaica was the 'Weekly Jamaica Courant'?

It was published in 1718 by Robert Baldwin but focused on European issues. It however, paved the way for other newspapers including 'The Daily Gleaner' which started in 1834 and is still operating in Jamaica.

Other newspapers that followed the Courant included the *Falmouth Post & General Advertiser*; and *The Cornwall Chronicle or Gazzette*, the first newspaper published in Montego Bay, St. James. There was also the *St. Jago de la Vega Gazzette*, the first newspaper to be published in Spanish Town, St. Catherine and *The Royal Gazzette*.

94. that the Jamaican Flag is the only flag in the world that doesn't have one of colors that's in the American flag?

I thought this one was really cool.

More about our Jamaican Flag here:

http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/jamaica_flag.html

95. that the now popular 'Farm Work Program' in Jamaica started in 1943?

This was at a time when agricultural laborers were recruited to temporarily meet the wartime needs of the USA. It was very successful and has continued since.

96. that the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew were amalgamated in 1923?

The union came into effect on May 1 that year.

97. that tourism is the largest foreign exchange earner for Jamaica?

This is a giveaway to you as well. Of course, you know that Jamaica is still the preferred Caribbean destination right?

http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/
98. That Jamaica has the prestigious honor of possessing the maximum success per capita of any country in the world of track and field? This honor started in 1948 Olympics, when Dr Arthur Wint won the 400 meters.

99. That Jamaica is the first team from the English-speaking Caribbean to qualify for the Football (Soccer) World Cup? This was the 1998 world championship. The team was led by coach Professor Rene' Simoes of Brazil.

100. That word-record holder, aviator Captain Barrington Irving Jr., who broke records flying solo around the world, is Jamaican-born? He is also the youngest man to do achieve this kind of feat at age 23.

101. That Jamaica is credited for perfecting the lovely game of Domino and taking it to the big world stage! More on domino in Jamaica here: [http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/domino_in_jamaica.html](http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/domino_in_jamaica.html)

**I'll give you a few bonuses as well!**

102. That apart from the United States, Jamaica won the most world and Olympic medals? Of course, this would mainly be in the field of Athletics, but you can read more about Sports in Jamaica here: [http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/sports_played_in_jamaica.html](http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/sports_played_in_jamaica.html)

103. That Jamaica was the first tropical country to enter the IOC Winter Olympics? The bobsleigh team's efforts inspired the film ‘Cool Runnings’, which was quite popular.

104. That the 2006-2007 world fastest man and woman- are Jamaicans? Asafa Powell and Sherone Simpson. You can read more about Asafa Powell here
Conclusion

I love the sport of cricket, but I love my country even more! So much so that I dedicated this website to it: www.my-island-jamaica.com

It is this passion for my country that inspired me to go even further to research and present to you these, the 101 'Did You Know' Facts About Jamaica.

But to be truthful to you, I could not do it by myself though. From putting up my website to producing this e-book, SBI has to take much of the kudos.

SBI provided me the simple tools that showed me step-by-step how I could can convert my passion into a money-making website! (Cha Ching!).

Their proven 10-day-guide is one of the most amazing tool I came across online.

SBI can help you too!

Is there something that you love, enjoy doing or look forward to right? And it doesn't matter if it is cake baking, teaching, a sport or comedy. That's all you need! The proven SBI 10 day guide will do the rest!

Go over and take a look now. Go ahead, I will wait! http://passion.sitesell.com/payday9.html


By the way, I have gotten some great feedback (from all over the world) on this book, but I need yours too. Not trying to be greedy but I do want to hear from each and every one who read this book if possible, including you.

I would like to hear how it helped you, or how I can make it better. You can contact me directly here: http://www.my-island-jamaica.com/contact.html

Much love and blessings to you from Jamaica, 'the land of wood and water'!

Regards,
Wellesley Gayle
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101 'Did you Knows' about Jamaica

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