

■ Reggae Delights

BOB MARLEY EXPERIENCE

Half Moon Shopping Village
North Coast Highway
Hours: 10-6 daily
Free

This new attraction features a 68-seat theater where you can watch a documentary on the life and works of reggae great Bob Marley. The film runs several times daily. The largest part of the attraction is a huge shop filled with Marley memorabilia – CDs, books, T-shirts. The shop claims to have the largest collection of Marley gifts in the Caribbean.

Adventures

■ Adventures on Foot

Golf



Montego Bay has the best collection of golf courses in Jamaica; most take full advantage of the city's location, offering gorgeous views of the sea and hills. Fees include US \$10-30 for a golf cart and \$5-20 for clubs. Caddies are mandatory and will cost an additional US \$5-15.

HALF MOON GOLF CLUB

☎ 876-953-3105

This 18-hole course hosts the Red Stripe Pro Am and is considered one of the island's best. Rates run \$95. Facilities include a clubhouse, restaurant, bar and pro shop. Par 72.

IRONSHORE

☎ 876-953-2800

Links-style golf is the attraction of this 18-hole course. Rates run \$45; facilities include a clubhouse, restaurant, bar and pro shop. Par 72.

TRYALL

☎ 876-956-5681

This 18-hole course is one of the best in the Caribbean (some even say the world). Built on a 19th-century sugar plantation, it is an official PGA tour course and many tournaments are held here. Facilities include a club-

house, restaurant, bar and pro shop. Rates run \$40-60 for guests, \$100-125 for those not registered at Tryall. Par 70.

AUTHORS' TIP: *Even if you're not a golfer, don't miss the waterwheel next to the main road at Tryall. It's a great photo spot.*

WYNDHAM ROSE HALL

☎ 876-953-2650

This 18-hole course has hosted many invitational tournaments and is well known by golfers and non-golfers alike because of its location on the grounds of the historic Rose Hall great house. Rates run \$50-60. Facilities include a clubhouse, restaurant, bar and pro shop. Par 72.

FUTURE COURSE AT WHITE WITCH

At press time, construction was underway on the White Witch golf course, adjacent to the Wyndham Rose Hall course and the Rose Hall great house. It will be part of the new Ritz Carlton, and is expected to draw a lot of attention.

■ Adventures on Water

AGUASOL THEME PARK

Hip Strip, downtown Mo Bay

Hours: daily

Admission charged



Most of the larger properties offer a good selection of watersports fun. If your property isn't beachfront, consider a day at AguaSol, a theme park on Walter Fletcher Beach. This sand beach park has a full day's worth of activities aimed at travelers staying in downtown properties without beach access. The beach (which has lifeguards and security) includes water trampolines, jet skis, banana boat rides, Wave Runners, kayaks, pedal boats, glass-bottom boat rides and snorkeling. There's also tennis (a tennis pro is on staff for lessons), a GoKart racetrack, table tennis and an evening disco.

Beaches



Montego Bay is home to several beautiful beaches and almost any beachfront property will have a great slice of sand. Most vacationers use the beach at their property to avoid the numerous

vendors found on public beaches offering everything from hair braiding to jerk pork to “something special.”

Some of the most notable and best-known public beaches in the city are:

- **Cornwall Beach.** A favorite with locals. There’s plenty to do at this action-packed beach, including watersports. Located off Gloucester Avenue.
- **Doctor’s Cave Beach.** This downtown beach is really the birthplace of Montego Bay’s tourism. In 1906 Dr. Alexander James McCatty stated that the waters off this beach had all kinds of health benefits (there are minerals in the water). The doctor donated his property to start a bathing club. In the early twenties, the beach was the subject of an article by Sir Herbert Barker, a British osteopath, who claimed that the waters had curative powers. Soon the beach became a tourist attraction and visitors sought the healing waters. Hotels sprang up near the beach, which at that time was accessed through a cave that was destroyed by a hurricane in 1932. Today, this spot is still called Doctor’s Cave Beach and is a favorite with locals as well as with travelers staying in the downtown hotels. ☎ 876-952-2566. Open daily; admission charged. Off Gloucester Avenue, near downtown Montego Bay.
- **Walter Fletcher Beach.** Another downtown beach, Walter Fletcher is a favorite with local and vacationing families because of its calm waters. Off Gloucester Avenue, near downtown Montego Bay.

Sailing

CALICO SAILING

North Coast Hwy.

☎ 876-952-5860

www.montego-bay-jamaica.com/afal/calico/calico.htm



This operator offers snorkel trips and sunset cruises. Snorkel cruises stop in the Montego Bay Marine Park, which offers some of the island’s best snorkeling areas. Equipment and lessons (if needed) are provided. After the park, the vessel sails along the coast past Doctor’s Cave Beach and the party begins. There’s unlimited beer, rum punch and soft drinks. The sunset excursion also hugs the shoreline and drinks are provided.

RHAPSODY

204 Chatwick Plaza, Queen's Drive
 ☎ 876-979-0102

Sailing cruises can be booked through most hotel tour desks and you can also call the *Rhapsody* office directly. Cruises include day trips, snorkel excursions and sunset sails, as well as private charters.

CAPTAIN'S WATERSPORTS LTD.

White Sands P.O.
 Montego Bay
 ☎ 876-952-3624, fax 876-979-0843
 E-mail: captains@n5.com.jm

This 36-foot private charter company offers excursions to many beaches and reefs. The vessel has two double berths and is available for charter by the hour or day. Land and sea packages.

Fishing

Montego Bay is home to several sport fishing companies that offer you the chance to reel in marlin, sailfish, dolphin or wahoo.

With most operators, groups can charter the boat or opt to share the vessel with other travelers. Expect to pay about \$300 for a half-day cruise, and that includes just about everything your group will need for the excursion, including equipment. Many companies offer free hotel pick-up.

FISHING OPERATORS

Irie Lady, ☎ 876-953-9266 (phone and fax)
 E-mail wstephenson@cwjamaica.com

No Problem, ☎ 876-995-2912

North Coast Marine at Half Moon
 ☎ 876-953-9266

Rhapsody, ☎ 876-979-0104

Seaworld, ☎ 876-953-2188

Scuba Diving

The **Montego Bay Marine Park** (☎ 876-952-5619) was the first protective park in Jamaica. It was established to preserve the natural resources of this underwater wonderland. A quick look at the area and it's easy to see the treasures that lie beneath the surface. Several sites draw divers with their protected conditions.

- **Basket Reef.** Known for its basket sponges.
- **Airport Reef.** Just offshore near the Donald Sangster International Airport, this site includes coral caverns.
- **Chubb Reef.** This site is near the Holiday Inn east of town. It is known for its large schools of Bermuda chubbs.
- **Widowmaker's Cave.** Do you really want to dive at a site named Widowmaker's Cave? Well, many adventure travelers do. Many fish congregate here and you'll also see black coral.

DIVE OPERATORS

Fun Divers, Wyndham Rose Hall
☎ 876-953-2650

North Coast Marine Sports, Half Moon
☎ 876-953-2211

Resort Divers, ☎ 876-973-5750

Sandals Inn, ☎ 876-952-4140

Sandals Montego Bay, ☎ 876-979-9130

Sandals Royal Caribbean, ☎ 876-953-2231

Seaworld, Holiday Inn/Wyndham Rose Hall
☎ 876-953-2180

Snorkeling



Most Mo Bay resorts offer opportunities to take a boat just offshore and snorkel or dive among the reefs. Even first-time snorkelers can appreciate a look at colorful corals, graceful fans and fish that include friendly sergeant majors, butterfly fish and shy damselfish.

Underwater Exploration

MOBAY UNDERSEA TOURS

Gloucester Avenue, downtown Montego Bay
☎ 876-971-1049 or 952-2347 or 940-4465

Open daily

Admission charged



We especially enjoyed our tour aboard this semi-sub. If you aren't a diver or don't have the opportunity to snorkel at the Montego Bay Marine Park during your stay, a trip with MoBay is a good option, enabling you to catch a peek at the best-preserved reefs

in Jamaica. During our tour, we spotted a sea turtle as well as countless tropical fish and some very healthy sea fans and sponges. Highly recommended for families.

River Rafting & Cruises

EVENING ON THE GREAT RIVER

☎ 876-952-3732

Hours: Sunday and Thursday evenings

Admission charged



This quiet, romantic raft ride on the Great River includes dinner and a show. Price includes transportation from Montego Bay hotels as well as dinner and bar.

LETHE MOUNTAIN VALLEY RAFTING

20 minutes west of Montego Bay, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-956-4920/3/4/5/6

Hours: 9 am-5 pm daily

Admission charged

This is the epitome of relaxation. Climb aboard a bamboo raft and take a one-hour float down the tranquil Great River. The ride is quiet and hassle-free (no vendors here, in contrast to the Rio Grande rafting excursion) and you're welcome to take a dip in the river if you like. The ride isn't cheap, but it is very relaxing.

MARTHA BRAE RIVER RAFTING

☎ 876-954-5168 or book through your hotel tour desk

Hours: Opens daily at 9 am; closes at sunset

Admission charged

Like the mountain rafting at Lethe and the Rio Grande near Port Antonio, this attraction features rafting down a tranquil river, the Martha Brae. The ride lasts about one hour.

“MARTHA BRAE”

According to legend, the river is named for an Arawak who killed herself rather than tell the Spanish the location of a local gold mine. The Indian maiden took the Spanish upriver then used her magic to change the course of the waterway, drowning herself and the Spaniards in the process. Today her “duppy” or ghost is said to haunt the entrance to the mine.

■ Adventures on Horseback



Riding a horse through the surf is a favorite Mo Bay activity. There are also many beautiful trail rides.

AUTHORS' TIP: *We suggest morning rides. By midday, temperatures away from the beach trade winds can get high. Be sure to wear long pants and sneakers or boots for a ride.*

ROCKY POINT STABLES

North Coast Highway,
next to Half Moon Golf, Tennis and Beach Club

☎ 876-953-2286

fax 876-953-9489

Rocky Point is a full-service horseback riding facility near Half Moon Golf, Beach & Tennis Club on the North Coast Highway. You can ride on your own mount or participate in organized trail rides with a group. These range from the 45-minute Jungle Jaunt to the two-hour Trail and Treat option. Instruction is available in dressage, riding technique, show-jumping and even polo. Transportation can be arranged to and from Montego Bay area hotels.

■ Eco-Travel

Birding

ROCKLANDS FEEDING STATION

Anchovy

☎ 876-952-2009

Feeding times: 3:30 pm and 5 pm daily

Admission charged



Founded by Lisa Salmon, Jamaica's best-known ornithologist, this bird sanctuary is surrounded by clouds of grassquits, saffron finches and, most especially, hummingbirds.

Salmon moved to this verdant hillside in April 1952 and found the site, located a short drive from the beaches of Montego Bay, filled with feathered friends. "I went out every morning and gave them water to bathe in," recalled Salmon. The practice continued for six years and gradually she moved the bath up to her porch, put out sugar water for the hummingbirds, and slowly trained the tiny visitors to eat from her hands.

Through the years, Salmon worked as a bird advocate, achieving a limit on Jamaica's bird hunting season. In 1959 she opened the bird sanctuary and since that time travelers from around the world have hand-fed the regular guests of this bird diner. Tiny finches flutter around outstretched palms filled with birdseed, while fast-as-lightning hummingbirds drink from a hand-held bottle of sugar water.

■ Cultural Excursions

Interesting Communities

FALMOUTH

East of Montego Bay



The capital of Trelawny parish, Falmouth is almost untouched by tourism. It was once a bustling center of commerce and had many fine buildings; today the community is well worth a look for its Georgian homes, many, alas, in poor repair. One building exterior you should make an effort to see is the **Falmouth Parish Church**, built in 1795. Today craftsmen have an open-air market near the church.

AUTHORS' TIP: *The best market days in Falmouth are Wednesday, when clothing and crafts are sold, and Friday and Saturdays, when fruits and vegetables fill the stalls.*

Beyond Falmouth lies **Glistening Waters** and the **Luminous Lagoon** (some people call it Oyster Bay). This bioluminescent lagoon shimmers with microscopic organisms in the moonlight. When fish swim through the luminescent waters, they leave a streak of light. Night boat rides on these sparkling waters are offered by **Rose's by the Sea** (☎ 876-954-3427).

SEAFORD TOWN

South of Montego Bay on B8 to B6, which leads to Marchmont. Turn west at Marchmont and continue to Seaford Town.

Seaford Town is one of Jamaica's most unusual communities. It was founded by German settlers in the 1830s. Today descendants of those early residents populate the community. While here, stop by the **Seaford Town Historical Museum**, ☎ 876-995-9399, 9-5 daily, filled with artifacts from the town's early days.

Shopping

Montego Bay offers the best shopping on the island. If it glitters, glimmers, shines and sparkles, you'll find it here – gold jewelry, precious gems, watches, and less expensive goods such as coffees, liquors and crafts.

■ Shopping Districts



Top shopping areas in town are the **Half Moon Shopping Village** for very upscale items and the **Holiday Village Shopping Centre** for a little bit of everything. In the Half Moon Resort, the Shopping Village is one of the island's best, both for its high-end goods such as designer watches and fine jewelry, as well as for its clothing. The open-air village sits adjacent to the resort's conference center and is also home to several restaurants and the Bob Marley Experience (see page 131).

The Holiday Village Shopping Centre is across the road from the Holiday Inn and has a collection of inexpensive shops offering everything from Bob Marley T-shirts to rasta tams, woodcarvings to straw baskets. Liquor stores offer local rums, liqueurs and coffees.

■ Galleries



If you're looking for Jamaican artwork, an excellent stop is the **Gallery of West Indian Art**. The shop has an outlet in Montego Bay at 11 Fairfield Road, Catherine Hall (☎ 876-952-4547, fax 979-5156) and another at the Round Hill Hotel.

■ At the Airport



Forget something? Don't fret – you'll have one last “shop-portunity” at the airport. Unlike many Caribbean airports, Sangster has a good selection of shops. Beyond the security checkpoint you can buy duty-free goods and more at one of the many shops.

- **Bijoux Jewellers** sells duty-free jewelry (two shops).
- **Celebrate Jamaica** offers sweets (don't miss the Tia Maria-filled chocolates!).
- **Coffee and Spice** sells the taste of Jamaica to take home.
- **Sunshine Liquors, The Perfume Shop** and **Jamaica Farewell** all offer duty-free liquor and tobacco products.
- **Charlene's Books and Sundries** has a selection of local books.
- **Things Jamaican** sells weavings, ceramics, leather goods, bamboo souvenirs and other local crafts.

- **The Gallery of Caribbean Art** offers paintings and carvings.
- **Maid in Jamaica** has more locally produced crafts.
- **Flowers and Fruits** features a good selection of jams, jellies and juices made from tropical fruits.

■ Craft Market



Don't miss the opportunity to visit the craft market, an adventure in itself. Many travelers avoid the market because of the high-pressure sales people, but we have found it delightful. A friendly good morning, abstaining from photos until a purchase (no matter how small) is made, and general good manners will go far with the salespeople. Some smaller items available at the market include straw baskets (\$3), tiny straw purses (\$4), friendship bracelets in rasta colors (\$1), coffee bean necklaces (\$2) and bamboo bangles (\$4).

AUTHORS' TIP: *After shopping, take a break with a soft drink or sky juice (like our snow cone) sold from pushcarts beneath the shade trees.*

Where to Stay



There's something for everyone. Budget travelers and big spenders will both find something to suit.

PRICE CHART
<i>Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.</i>
ACCOMMODATIONS
Prices are per room, based on double occupancy. In the case of all-inclusive properties, prices are per person.
\$ = up to \$50 per day
\$\$ = \$51 to \$100 per day
\$\$\$ = \$101 to \$175 per day
\$\$\$\$ = over \$175 per day

■ Resorts, Hotels & Inns

THE ATRIUM AT IRONSHORE HOTEL

Morgan Road, Rose Hall

☎ 876-953-2605, fax 876-953-3683

\$-\$\$

This 33-villa, family-run property is air-conditioned. All accommodations have kitchen and dining facilities as well as a pool and satellite TV. Located near the airport. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program (see page 108).

BLUE HARBOUR HOTEL

6 Sewell Avenue

☎ 876-952-5445, fax 876-952-8930

\$-\$\$

This 24-room inn is air-conditioned and has access for the handicapped. Family-sized rooms can accommodate groups of up to 10 persons. Rooms have kitchen facilities and satellite TV. There's a saltwater pool or you can stroll down to the nearby beach. The inn is located on a hill. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

COMFORT INN AND SUITES MONTEGO BAY

Rose Hall

☎ 876-953-3250, fax 876-953-3062; reservations ☎ 800-228-5150

www.choicecaribbean.com

\$\$-\$\$\$

This 150-room hotel is the former SeaCastles and is a part of the Choice Hotels International group. It's situated on a small private beach. The recently renovated property includes one- and two-bedroom units as well as studios. The all-inclusive package features three buffet meals daily, supervised kids activities, non-motorized watersports, gratuities and taxes, house-brand liquors and soft drinks, tennis and daily entertainment. Every Friday the hotel offers a Jamaican night with local food and music.

CORAL CLIFF HOTEL

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-4130, fax 876-952-6532

\$\$

This 30-room Colonial-style inn is near Doctor's Cave beach and includes dining facilities and a pool. It's not far from Cornwall and Walter Fletcher beaches. The standard rooms have air conditioning, phone and individual bathrooms. Superior rooms have larger bathrooms and balconies with a pool view. The property has a good location for those interested in nightlife with its position along the Hip Strip. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

AUTHORS' TIP: *Gamblers should note that this hotel is home to the largest gaming facility in Jamaica.*

COYABA BEACH RESORT AND CLUB

North Coast Highway at Mahoe Bay

☎ 876-953-9150, fax 876-953-2244; reservations ☎ 800-237-3237

www.elegantresorts.com

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive optional)

This \$10 million resort has the feel of an intimate inn, but it offers the amenities of a larger resort. Located on a shady stretch of beach, Coyaba is a good option if you're seeking the niceties and luxuries of an exclusive retreat. The hotel offers all-inclusive deals or European Plan only. The plantation-style great house on the property houses the main restaurant. Amenities include a freshwater pool, hot tub, massage, tennis, watersports, recreation room, tennis, a dive shop, windsurfing and a playground.

Guest rooms are light and airy, decorated in an elegant tropical style with mahogany furniture. You'll be greeted by a basket of banana bread, a sweet introduction to this special property.

DOCTOR'S CAVE BEACH HOTEL

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-4355, fax 876-952-5204

\$\$\$

This 90-room hotel is near Doctor's Cave Beach (surprise, surprise!). It has air-conditioned rooms, kitchen facilities, handicapped access for some rooms, a pool, satellite TV and a fitness center. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program. The hotel is home to two restaurants, one casual and the other semi-formal.

HALF MOON GOLF, TENNIS AND BEACH CLUB

North Coast Highway, 7 miles east of Montego Bay

☎ 876-953-2211, fax 876-953-2731; reservations ☎ 800-237-3237

\$\$\$\$

Half Moon is one of the country's most elegant resorts, the place to be pampered. It offers a variety of room configurations, from large guest rooms and junior suites to villas that look like something right out of Beverly Hills, complete with sweeping staircases and maid and butler service. The black and white decor, like everything in the resort, is ultra-chic.

The resort is a favorite with well-to-do Japanese vacationers, who feel right at home in rooms that offer Japanese-language periodicals and Japanese television channels.

Half Moon sprawls out across the island's north coast and you'll never feel crowded. Along with 13 tennis courts, 39 swimming pools, croquet, horseback riding, bikes, squash, numerous restaurants, a dive shop, kids' program, ultra-pricey shopping center, and even a hospital, you'll find a quiet nature reserve. The resort also now offers the David Leadbetter Golf Plan, with daily instruction from a David Leadbetter-certified instructor.

HOLIDAY INN SUNSPREE RESORT

North Coast Highway, 6 miles east of Montego Bay

☎ 876-953-2485, fax 876-953-2840; reservations ☎ 800-HOLIDAY

\$\$\$ (All-inclusive)

Couples and families make up much of the clientele at this popular resort which has undergone many changes in the last several years. A \$13 million facelift in 1995 transformed it into an all-inclusive property. The 523 guest rooms have all received an overhaul. There is a variety of activities on offer, including watersports, tennis, volleyball, nearby golf, a kids programs and more.

HOTEL MONTEGO

Federal Avenue

☎ 876-952-3287, fax 876-979-0351

\$-\$\$

This 33-room inn is air-conditioned and includes dining, a pool and satellite TV. Set on a hill, the property offers good views of the sea and is convenient to the airport. The beach is a short ride away. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

HOTEL RIO BUENO

Rio Bueno

☎ 876-954-0046, fax 876-952-5911

\$-\$\$

This 20-room hotel has air-conditioned rooms and dining. All rooms have a view of the Caribbean Sea. The small property houses the Joe James Art Gallery (Joe offers art lessons too; joejames@in-site.com). Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

LETHE ESTATE

20 minutes west of Montego Bay on the North Coast Highway

☎ 876-956-4920, fax 876-956-4927

\$\$\$\$

Montego Bay is best known for its beachside getaways, but if you aren't looking for a stretch of sand on which to relax, consider a stay in the surrounding hills and valleys – or at least a daytrip into this charming region. Recently, we spent time at Lethe Estate, a serene hideaway tucked on the banks of the Great River near the village of Lethe. Quiet, except

for the sounds of singing birds in the surrounding forest, this 15-room inn is an ideal place to get away from it all. Despite its location, amenities are not lacking. The inn includes a gourmet restaurant, pool, tennis and plush rooms. A top daytime activity here is the float on a bamboo raft down the river under a canopy of forest. A free shuttle runs hotel guests to the beach and shopping areas daily.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS

Interview with Doreen Tulloch, Lethe Estate

Wife of Francis Tulloch, Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Doreen Tulloch is an innkeeper who's in sync with the needs of adventure travelers and those looking to get off the beaten path. We talked with her at the restaurant of her Lethe Estate, a property that is definitely aimed at travelers looking to escape the resort scene.

Q. Which travelers best enjoy a stay at the Lethe Estate?

A. I'm looking for the traveler who really wants to know Jamaica. It is not for the first-time traveler, unless they want to hibernate. I'm there for guests, but not in the way. I don't want to take your money as an all-inclusive because I want you to go out and see Jamaica.

Q. What are your goals for Lethe?

A. Travelers need to understand the culture and the heritage of a place. Lethe Estate is trying to get back to how tourism was yesterday. The property is done in an old style to capture the old great house look. The big hotels have to buy the flowers for their arrangements. I just go out and pick them.

RICHMOND HILL INN

Union Street

☎ 876-952-3859, fax 876-925-6106; reservations ☎ 800-423-4095

\$\$\$

A trip to Richmond Hill Inn is like visiting your grandmother's house: you're a little afraid that you're going to knock something over; you really wish it weren't so fussy, but you love the way you get treated. The rooms here have seen fresher days, but still the view is special – straight out over Montego Bay and the sea from high atop the hill.

Richmond Hill has a long history, dating back to the 1790s when it was the property of the Dewars of Scotch whisky fame. Guests can take advantage of a free shuttle to MoBay shops as well as the beach. Facilities here include an excellent restaurant, coffee shop, pool and laundry service.

READING REEF

Reading, St. James

☎ 876-952-5909, fax 876-952-7217

\$\$\$

This 28-room inn has air-conditioned rooms, kitchen facilities, a pool, satellite TV, beach, watersports and restaurant. It sits alongside Bogue Lagoon just 15 minutes from Montego Bay. The hotel has several features of special interest to adventure travelers, including Reading Reefs (photographed by Jacques Cousteau) and the Bogue Islands (nesting site for birds). Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

RELAX RESORT

26 Hobbs Avenue

☎ 876-952-7218, fax 876-952-7218

\$\$

This 41-room inn offers a complimentary airport shuttle as well as a restaurant, pool, satellite TV and ocean views. All rooms have king-sized beds, a fully equipped kitchenette and air conditioning. Along with guest rooms, visitors can also select from one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. A complimentary shuttle bus runs to the beaches. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

ROUND HILL HOTEL AND VILLAS

North Coast Highway, 8 miles west of Montego Bay

☎ 876-956-7050, fax 876-956-7505; reservations ☎ 800-237-3237

www.roundhilljamaica.com

\$\$\$\$

A favorite of the rich and famous set, Round Hill offers suites, traditional hotel rooms and 27 villas. Expensive and lavish, the villas include maid service (cook service is available as well), and many have a private pool. The resort includes numerous amenities, from tennis courts to a dive shop to windsurfing.

INTERESTING FACT: *If Round Hill looks familiar, there's a good reason: the property was the location of many scenes in How Stella Got Her Groove Back.*

ROYAL COURT HEALTH RESORT

Sewell Avenue

☎ 876-952-4531, fax 876-952-4532

\$-\$\$

Of special interest to vegetarians, this 25-room resort has a vegetarian restaurant and a fresh fruit and vegetable juice bar. It offers a free air-

port shuttle, beach shuttle and shopping transportation. All rooms are air conditioned. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

SANDALS MONTEGO BAY

Kent Avenue, near the airport

☎ 876-952-5510, fax 876-952-0816; reservations ☎ 800-726-3257

www.sandals.com

\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive)

This popular (heterosexual) couples-only resort does a huge amount of repeat business and is a great choice for those who want to be close to the airport (you can't get much closer than this). Planes buzz overhead, but that doesn't seem to deter people. Like other Sandals resorts, guests at Sandals Montego Bay enjoy a Stay at One, Dine at Six policy, where they can dine at any of the 23 eating establishments in the Sandals chain. A desk at Sandals Montego Bay handles reservations for the sister resorts, and free shuttles are available to other Sandals located in Montego Bay.

Amenities here include five restaurants, numerous pools, tennis, racquetball, a dive shop, windsurfing and more. The resort's Sunshine Tennis program includes two hours of complimentary instruction per week with the visiting professional.

ECO-TIP

The Sandals properties have in place an elaborate system of environmental initiatives. "We must conserve the environment," says owner Gordon "Butch" Stewart. "We depend on it for our livelihood – tourism – and we also owe it to future generations to keep the earth healthy." Sandals' environmental program establishes water and energy conservation measures, including solar-heated water and innovative recycling efforts such as use of discarded copper pipes to create original sculptures. Energy-saving light bulbs, environmentally-friendly chemicals and in-house paper recycling are part of the resort's efforts. The dive program includes environmental education focusing on protecting marine life and a "no picking, no touching" policy is enforced on all dive and snorkel trips.

SANDALS ROYAL CARIBBEAN

North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-2231, fax 876-953-2788; reservations ☎ 800-726-3257

www.sandals.com

\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive)

What's the difference between Sandals Royal Caribbean and Sandals Montego Bay? Quite a bit. While Sandals Montego Bay boasts more of a party atmosphere, Sandals Royal Jamaican takes an elegant, laid-back approach. In general, this property is much quieter than its sister.

We recently stayed in an oceanfront deluxe room with a mahogany four-poster bed and two-level floor plan. On another visit, we came for dinner at Sandals private island restaurant, Bali Hai, known for its Indonesian fare and unbeatable night view of the city. It was a great dining experience. Amenities at the resort include four restaurants, numerous pools, tennis, a dive shop, windsurfing and concierge service.

SANDALS INN

Gloucester Avenue, in town

☎ 876-952-4140, fax 876-952-6913; reservations ☎ 800-726-3257

www.sandals.com

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive)

The Sandals Inn is great for the budget-conscious traveler who wants to enjoy the luxuries of a Sandals property. This small hotel isn't the sprawling beachfront resort usually associated with the Sandals chain, but it does have many of the same amenities. An all-inclusive package here takes care of transfers, activities, drinks and dining. Guests can also partake in the Sandals Stay at One, Dine at Six policy (with free transportation to the Mo Bay resorts). There's also a free shuttle that runs throughout the day to take you and yours (remember, this is a heterosexual couples-only resort) from the inn to the larger Sandals Montego Bay or Sandals Royal Jamaican to enjoy beach fun. On-property facilities include tennis, pool and concierge service.

SUNDANCE RESORT

1 Kent Avenue

☎ 876-952-4370, fax 876-952-6591

\$-\$\$

The 73 rooms here all have air conditioning and some are handicapped-accessible. All rooms have either a garden or pool view and private bath. Located in the heart of Montego Bay near the Doctor's Cave Beach. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

SUNSET BEACH RESORT AND SPA

Montego Freeport

☎ 876-979-8800, fax 876-953-6744

www.sunsetbeachjamaica.com

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive)

This new 420-room resort sits on the Freeport peninsula. The property is divided into two sections: the 120-room, low-rise Beach Inn and the 300-room, 11-story Sunrise and Sunset Towers. The resort has an impressive list of facilities, with three private beaches, three swimming pools, snorkeling, Sunfish, sailing, kayaking, windsurfing, paddle boats, Hobie Cats, jogging trails, beach volleyball, a fitness center and a supervised kids program.

For late-night fun, there's a disco as well as an electronic game casino. All meals are part of the package and guests have their choice of four dining establishments, including Asian and Italian specialty restaurants. Six bars are located throughout the property. There's also a spa, although treatments are not part of the all-inclusive program.

TRYALL GOLF, TENNIS AND BEACH CLUB

North Coast Highway, 15 miles west of Montego Bay

☎ 876-956-5660, fax 876-956-5658; reservations ☎ 800-238-5290

\$\$\$\$

If you're a golfer, you're probably already familiar with Tryall, a celebrity resort that has hosted many tournament games. This posh getaway includes everything you need to hole up and never leave, if you so choose. There's a golf course, private villas with their own pools, tennis courts, dive shops, a driving range and more. You'll never feel crowded at this 2,200-acre property.

VERNEY'S TROPICAL RESORT

Leader Avenue, in town

☎ 876-952-2875 or 876-952-8628, fax 876-979-2944

\$

This 27-room inn is an excellent place to find true Jamaican hospitality. Rooms are nothing fancy, but owners Kathleen and Earnest Sterling are on-property like round-the-clock concierges. Need a babysitter? Kathleen will find you one. Want to know where to shop for spices? Just ask. You'll feel like part of the family. "We really believe in personal service because once you are away from home it is good to know someone cares," says Kathleen.

The hotel's Kit Kat restaurant is a favorite. Whenever the hotels in Montego Bay are asked to recommend a restaurant serving real Jamaican cooking, they refer people here. A free shuttle runs to Doctor's Cave Beach on weekdays; there's also a pool on the property. Part of the Insider's Jamaica program.

WYNDHAM ROSE HALL

North Coast Highway, east of Montego Bay

☎ 876-953-2650, fax 876-953-2617; reservations ☎ 800-996-3426

www.wyndham.com

\$\$\$\$ (All-inclusive optional)

You can enjoy Wyndham Rose Hall on either a room-only basis or as an all-inclusive property. This sprawling resort is just a short drive from the airport, a real boon to those on a short vacation or traveling with restless kids. Once you arrive, there's no need to worry about those kids remaining restless for long. Wyndham Rose Hall is home to a massive waterpark, a recent addition to the property. This 110,000-square-foot, \$7 million water complex is called Sugar Mill Falls and comes complete with lagoons and a towering waterslide. Guests can enjoy lazy river rafting among waterfalls scattered throughout the park.

This resort is presently undergoing a major upgrade, equipping its guest rooms with new furniture, carpeting, 27-inch TVs, movie channels and more. The golf course is located directly across the street and soon golfers will be able to also use the nearby White Witch golf course, presently under construction by the Ritz-Carlton.

Where to Eat



After a day of watersports or beach fun, many travelers look forward to enjoying the island's fine dining as the evening's entertainment. In the restaurant department, Mo Bay has definitely got something for everyone, whether your tastes run toward fresh island seafood or cuisines from around the world. Some of Jamaica's restaurants have received many accolades over the last few years and gained quite a following. Others are new on the scene. Certain places are especially well suited to couples looking for a romantic evening, while others welcome families with dishes that please even the pickiest eater in the group.

Expect to pay about US \$35-55 per person for a three-course meal with wine in one of the finer restaurants. A casual lunch or dinner will run about US \$6-10. Fast food lunches or snacks are about US \$3-7 per person.

AUTHORS' TIP: *Most restaurants add a 15% gratuity to the bill, so make sure you don't inadvertently tip twice.*

PRICE CHART
<i>Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.</i>
RESTAURANTS
Restaurant prices indicate the price of a meal, drink and gratuity for one person.
\$ = up to \$15 per person
\$\$ = \$15 to \$30 per person
\$\$\$ = \$30 to \$45 per person
\$\$\$\$ = over \$45 per person

■ All-Inclusive Dining

If we designate a restaurant as “all-inclusive” in the price listing, this establishment is part of an all-inclusive resort. Guests at the resort can dine there as part of their package, but what if you’re not staying there? Have no fear. Most all-inclusives sell both day and evening passes which allow non-guests to enjoy the amenities. Everyone comes out a winner. You get to try a new restaurant and the resort tempts you to book your next vacation with them. Our price scale based on a three-course dinner, including appetizer or soup, an entrée, dessert and coffee. Cocktails and wine are extra.

■ American Dining

MARGUERITAVILLE CARIBBEAN BAR AND GRILL

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-4777

\$\$

We visited Margueritaville one sunny afternoon and found it packed with partiers. Casual dining is the order of the day: American favorites like burgers and pizza top the list. But the food is just an excuse to come use the extensive facilities, which include giant TV screens and a waterslide that plummets from the upstairs bar right into the sea.

■ Asian Restaurants

TOKYO JOE'S

Sandals Montego Bay, Kent Avenue

☎ 876-952-5510

All-inclusive

Start with miso soup or dim sum (select from beef satay, crispy wonton, pork dumplings or shrimp) or create a specialty salad at the salad bar. Entrees are cooked to order. This dinner-only restaurant is closed on Fridays.

SAKURA JAPANESE RESTAURANT

Half Moon Village, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-9686

\$\$\$\$

The black and white decor of this restaurant, in keeping with that throughout Half Moon, hints at the elegance found inside. This restaurant features hibachi grill-top cooking right at your table. With his flying knives, the chef will prepare a meal of seafood, steak or chicken that's as good as the show itself.

Round-trip transportation from your local hotel is provided free of charge. Reservations required.

■ Bars

THE ROYAL STOCKS ENGLISH PUB AND STEAKHOUSE

Half Moon Village, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-9770

\$\$-\$\$\$

We recently enjoyed a lunch here while attending a Jamaican tourism convention held at the Half Moon Conference Centre, just steps away. Both indoor and outside seating are available in this traditional English pub that serves steaks, lobster and seafood as well as pub fare. The bar has a full selection of traditional ales. When you're ready for fun, there's a sports bar (with darts and skittles).

AUTHOR'S TIP: *Call ahead for free transportation to the Royal Stocks if you're not staying at Half Moon Village.*

■ Caribbean Restaurants

SEAGRAPE TERRACE

Half Moon Hotel, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-2211

\$\$\$

This open-air eatery sits right on the beach. Both buffet and à la carte service are available at lunch; dinner is à la carte only. In the evenings, the atmosphere is lively, with dancing and floor shows. A Jamaican beach barbecue is offered on Monday and Friday nights, when you can try local specialties, then dance to the sounds of a steel pan band.

■ Continental Cuisine

AMBROSIA

Wyndham Rose Hall

☎ 876-953-2605

\$\$\$\$

Located at the golf club across the street from Wyndham Rose Hall, this elegant eatery features Mediterranean cuisine served in a beautiful garden setting. Set off with tiny white lights, the dining area is a good spot for a romantic meal. House specialties are lobster Provençale and lamb kebabs. Closed Wednesdays.

BELFIELD 1794

Barnett Estate. Granville Main Road

☎ 876-952-2382

\$\$\$\$

This elegant restaurant is set on the 3,000-acre Barnett Estate and is operated by Elegant Resorts International. The open-air restaurant features a view of the city and a menu that combines a taste of both Jamaica and the Caribbean. Menu selections include spicy ackee-tomato salsa on smoked marlin, plantation salad, jerk pork Belfield, steamed fish Port Royal and sweet potato pudding.

After your meal, enjoy a leisurely stroll over to the great house. The restored historic house is open to visitors; guided tours are available before or after dinner.

LETHE ESTATE

20 minutes west of Montego Bay, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-956-4920

\$\$\$\$

Gourmet dining on dishes that include many local ingredients. A relaxing meal here is the perfect end to a day at the Lethe Estate. Dress is casually elegant.

MARGUERITE'S

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-4777

\$\$\$\$

For all the casualness of its next-door neighbor, Margueritaville, Marguerite's offers something elegant and special. The two eateries may be only yards apart, but in atmosphere they are complete opposites. The specialty of the house at this seaside restaurant are the flambéed dishes, such as Tijuana shrimp flambéed in tequila and Grand Marnier. Reservations suggested.

NORMA'S AT THE WHARF HOUSE

Reading, west of Montego Bay

☎ 876-979-2745

\$\$\$\$

Norma's (like the Kingston restaurant of the same name) is known for its nouvelle Jamaica cuisine, all served in an historic setting. The restaurant is the creation of Norma Shirley, one of Jamaica's most noted chefs. The restaurant has been featured in *Bon Appetit* and *Food & Wine* magazines.

RICHMOND HILL INN

Union Street

☎ 876-952-3859

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

The view from this open-air restaurant alone makes the trip to Richmond Hill Inn worthwhile. Diners look out over the city lights and the bay. On offer is a variety of continental and Jamaican fare. Wear something dressy.

ROUND HILL

West of Montego Bay on North Coast Highway

☎ 876-956-7050

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Dining at Round Hill is an elegant experience in which you dine by candlelight under the stars. Dishes include such delights as grilled mahi mahi with fennel and orange salad, duck and sausage cassoulet, and crab salad with fresh coconut. Fresh seafood is featured nightly.

Saturday is the dressiest night at Round Hill; jacket and tie are required. Mondays are casual, with a beach barbecue and bonfire. On Wednesdays, dinner is à la carte, while on Friday it's Jamaican, followed by a folkloric performance. After dinner on Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday nights, guests enjoy dancing to Billy Cook's Jazz, the house band. Round Hill is one of the island's dressiest establishments.

■ Indonesian Restaurants

BALI HAI

Sandals Royal Jamaican, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-2231

All-inclusive

We've dined several times at this restaurant, located on a small island off the beach from Sandals Royal Jamaica. At night, Bali Hai offers one of the best views of Montego Bay's city lights. After a quick ride aboard the launch for one of the two nightly seatings, diners are treated to a fixed menu featuring spicy Indonesian dishes.

Appetizer offerings include lumpia goreng, a spring roll stuffed with cabbage, bamboo shoots and shrimp, and soto ayam dawa, a Javanese-style chicken broth with chicken and scallions. Multiple entrées are served on hot bricks and include tjap tjai (chicken with mixed vegetables), daging bali (spiced beef cooked in soya sauce), fkan kuning (trout fillet steamed in coconut milk), sambal goreng kentang (spicy potato sticks), babi ketjap (pork loin simmered in a ginger sauce) and tumis buncis (stringbean stewed in coconut milk). A dinner here is a memorable experience and one we highly recommend.

■ Italian Restaurants

CUCINA ROMANA

Sandals Montego Bay, Kent Avenue

☎ 876-952-5510

All-inclusive

This fine dining restaurant serves Italian cuisine in an Italian setting. Start with antipasti from the buffet, but save room for such entrées as pan-grilled swordfish steak, chicken roasted in olive oil, onion, rosemary, potatoes and red wine, and ossobuco Milanese (veal shank served with saffron rice).

JULIA'S

Bogue Hill

☎ 876-952-1772

\$\$\$\$

One of Jamaica's most lauded eateries, Julia's is a favorite with the celebrity set. A taste of the offerings and it's easy to see why. Italian dishes fill the menu and often the owner comes out to sing. Reservations are required and dressy clothing is recommended.

TOWN HOUSE

16 Church Street

☎ 876-952-2660

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Built in 1765, this restaurant and tavern features brick walls decorated with local artwork. You can dine inside or on the verandah. Offerings run the gamut from red snapper papillot, spare ribs and stuffed lobster to shrimp, steaks, pastas and Jamaican dishes, including many curried entrées. Open from Monday through Saturday for lunch and daily for dinner. Free round-trip transportation is offered from local hotels. Reservations are required.

THE VINEYARD

Coyaba Beach Resort and Club

☎ 876-953-9150

\$\$-\$\$\$

This restaurant, decorated like a trellised garden, features Caribbean and continental dishes for breakfast and dinner. Advance reservations recommended.

■ Jamaican Restaurants

THE OLEANDER ROOM

Sandals Montego Bay, Kent Avenue

☎ 876-952-5510

All-inclusive

This is the most elegant eatery at Sandals Montego Bay, a Georgian-style restaurant that serves Jamaican cuisine with a gourmet twist, all in a refined white-glove atmosphere. Seatings are 6 pm to 9 pm. Long pants and collared shirts are required; reservations are also necessary.

Menu selections at the Oleander Room include red snapper escovitch, pork cutlet grilled with pimento seeds and Jamaican steamed fish.

THE PAVILLION

Sandals Royal Jamaican, North Coast Highway

☎ 876-953-2231

All-inclusive

We enjoyed an elegant, open-air dinner at this restaurant many years ago on one of our first trips to the island. It still provides an excellent dining experience for couples today. Long pants and collared shirts are required; reservations are also necessary.

Menu selections at The Pavillion include Chef Wood's jerk chicken, poached filet of tilapia filled with callaloo and roast porkloin escovitch.

KIT KAT RESTAURANT

Verney's Tropical Resort, Leader Avenue

☎ 876-952-2875

\$

This delightful restaurant offers wholesome home cooking. It is located in the modest Verney's Tropical Resort, a small property with a hilltop view of the city. The open-air restaurant features genuine Jamaican dishes (with real amounts of Jamaican spice, not watered-down versions for tourist tastes).

Menu selections include curried goat, breadfruit and jerk chicken.

THE NATIVE

29 Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-979-2769

\$-\$\$

Tucked under a sprawling poinciana tree, this open-air eatery is a wonderful place to step away from the packaged fun of the resorts and watch Montego Bay life roll by. We came to The Native for a lunch buffet, an impressive spread of salads, rice and peas, jerk chicken, snapper and other island delights. Offered every Friday and Sunday, this noon buffet is popular with vacationers and locals alike. And if you can't make it for the buffet, order up the Boonoononos Platter for a sample of lots of local specialties. Reservations are required for dinner here.

THE PELICAN

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-3171

\$\$

This popular restaurant has attracted diners for over three decades and many local business people start their workday with a traditional Jamaican breakfast right here. Lunch and dinner are also served.

THE PORK PIT

27 Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-1046

\$

Jerk chicken, spare ribs, steam roast fish, sweet potatoes, roast yam, festival and cold coconut water star at this fast-food eatery that's a favorite with locals. Located across from Walter Fletcher Beach. Order up a plate and then grab a place at one of the picnic tables on the patio. Like the menu here, seating is simple with no frills. This is the best place in Montego Bay for traditional island jerk.

RICHMOND HILL INN

Union Street, ☎ 876-952-3859, \$\$-\$\$\$

See listing under *Contintal Cuisine*, above.**TOWN HOUSE**

16 Church Street, ☎ 876-952-2660, \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

See listing under *Italian Restaurants*, above.**THE VINEYARD**

Coyaba Beach Resort and Club, ☎ 876-953-9150, \$\$-\$\$\$

See listing under *Italian Restaurants*, above.

Nightlife



Your nights in Montego Bay can be as exciting or as peaceful as you wish. Try your luck at poker. Dance the night away to the reggae rhythm. Or take in a local dance show.

■ Casino

CORAL CLIFF CASINO

Gloucester Avenue

☎ 876-952-4130

11 am - 3 am

You'll find slot machines in some of the larger resorts on the island, but the most extensive gambling site is at the Coral Cliff Casino on the Hip Strip. You can't miss it – just look for the flashing neon lights. Only slot machine gambling is found here, but jackpots do get quite large. Free draft beer, sodas and rum punch are served at the slot machines.

■ Discos

PLANET X

Half Moon Shopping Centre

☎ 876-953-3840

The black and white decor of the Half Moon Resort is carried out in this disco as well. Located in the shopping village, Planet Xaymaka, or Planet X, features all types of dance tunes and plenty of reggae. There is a cover charge, which includes one drink. On Sunday nights, Planet X features oldies. Nightclub action begins at about 11 pm most nights.

■ Shows

MONTEGO BAY LITTLE THEATRE

Fairfield Hotel

☎ 876-953-9573

This local theatrical group produces a variety of shows. Call for show days (shows always start at 8 pm); admission is a very reasonable JA \$250.

