

The Changing Economic World: Tourism in Jamaica

Jamaica is a small **Caribbean island** between North and South America. It is in the middle of the Caribbean sea, meaning it is only accessible by **boat or plane**.



Source: Lonely Planet



Source: Jamaican Journal

Jamaica Before Tourism

Historically, Jamaica was taken over and ruled by the UK as part of the **British Empire**. Jamaica became part of the **Slave Trade** - The British shipped slaves from Africa to grow crops such as sugar. This meant Jamaica wasn't an **independent** country, so the economy didn't grow and the country relied on Britain for leadership and investment.

When Jamaica gained independence from Britain, the industry and agriculture that once was very productive struggled to run. In addition, the **world wars** and **crop diseases** meant Jamaica couldn't trade with other countries in the world. This led to **high unemployment** and **debts** for the country.

The Importance of Tourism

Tourism is hugely important to Jamaica's economy:

- In 2018, **30%** of Jamaica's economy is in tourism.
- **One in four** Jamaicans are employed in tourism - within hotels, running restaurants, gift shops and tourist experiences.
- **4.3 million** tourists visited Jamaica in 2017!

In addition, areas that receive many tourists tend to **develop quicker**: new building developments, **larger ports** for boats and cruise ships, some **transport links** between cities and nearby towns.

Take a look at some of the regions of Jamaica that have benefited from tourism:



Kingston - The **capital city** of Jamaica. One of the island's two **airports** is located here, so many tourists travel through Kingston to their holiday resorts.

Many new **hotel developments** have been constructed, as well as **museums** celebrating local heroes such as Bob Marley and Usain Bolt.

Source: Visit Jamaica

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Montego Bay - A very popular **tourist resort**, attractive for its **sandy beaches**. Tourists can take part in water sports, sea fishing or just sunbathing!

The region has many **cultural attractions**, as well as being extremely **accessible** to visitors both staying on the island and those visiting for the day from **cruise ships**.

Source: *Designer Travel*



Cockpit Country - More of a **natural** tourist location, Cockpit Country is home to 500 square miles of **rainforest** containing **exotic species** such as mangoes, Skipper butterflies and orchids. Nearby the region are several **cave systems**, for the more adventurous adventurer!

Source: *Jamaican.com*

Environmental Impacts

However, the **economic gains** of tourism tends to come at a **cost** to the **environment**. This is the case for many countries around the world, not just Jamaica. Even though tourism brings:

👍 **Job opportunities** for locals, both directly - working at the hotels, owning restaurants, running tourist attractions - or indirectly - through construction of new resorts, customs & airport staff. This gives Jamaican families quite a **stable income**.

👍 The global **reputation** of Jamaica grows, which in turn could benefit **politics** and **future investment** opportunities.

The **environment** of Jamaica is suffering because of tourism:

🗨️ Large resort construction uses vast volumes of **concrete**, which releases **carbon dioxide** when produced. This contributes to **global warming**, which affects Jamaica and the rest of the world.

🗨️ Natural **fragile ecosystems** - such as Cockpit Country - are under threat from **FDI** (for example, bauxite mining). Even though this is not tourism directly, tourism has attracted foreign attention to the island.

🗨️ Finally, there is a relationship between tourism season and **air pollution** levels. This is because many tourists want to travel around the island using taxis, trains and boats - all of which produce **emissions**.

Some tourists to Jamaica are trying to minimise their impact to the island, by choosing **ecotourism providers**. These companies offer small guest houses or tourist experiences that leave **minimal damage** to the environment.



Source: *prlog.com*

