

Montego Bay & Northwest Coast



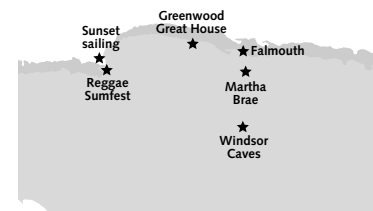
Gateway to Jamaica for the vast majority of its visitors, Montego Bay forms most first impressions of the island. For some, the vision is celestial, and they embrace 'MoBay' from the catered comfort of an all-inclusive beachside resort. For others, it's simply a tourist trap en route to the 'real Jamaica,' and they flee as soon as they get their bearings.

In truth, the attractions of Montego Bay and the surrounding northwest coast offer enough variety to repay deeper exploration. In addition to its celebrated beaches, MoBay's 'Hip Strip' boasts enough fine restaurants for a pleasurable tour de fork followed by some of the most pulsating nightlife on the island. Pockets of downtown will pique interest in St James Parrish's vibrant (and violent) past, a historical thirst that can be slaked with visits to the great estates of Greenwood and Rose Hall, or to the fading Georgian marvel of Falmouth.

Some of Jamaica's most remarkable nature spots are within easy striking distance. The snorkeling and scuba diving in the limpid waters of the Montego Bay Marine Park are world class, and the rafting on the Great and Martha Brae Rivers is truly unforgettable. And barely an hour from the resorts – though truly a world away – rolls the eerie hillscape of Cockpit country, Jamaica's most unspoilt (and often impenetrable) region, where the hiking and caving are terrific, and you can take exhilarating horseback rides straight into the sea.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Reggae Sumfest** Dance until dawn to Jamaica's most renowned musicians at this world-class midsummer reggae festival (p189)
- **Sunset sailing trips** Party hearty on a cocktail-propelled jaunt across the bay and toast the sun as it plops into the sea (p188)
- **Falmouth** Lose yourself among the faded Georgian splendor of this compelling historic market town (p202)
- **Greenwood Great House** Explore the exquisite period furnishings of this well-preserved great house with a remarkable view of the sea (p201)
- **Rafting the Martha Brae** Serenade your beloved or splash your pal as you glide down one of Jamaica's loveliest rivers on a bamboo raft (p205)
- **Windsor Caves** See what Cockpit Country looks like from down below in one of the island's most expansive and accessible caves (p214)



■ AREA: 1480 SQ KM

■ MONTEGO BAY DEC AVERAGE HIGH TEMPERATURE: 28.3°C

HISTORY

In 1494 Christopher Columbus dropped anchor in the harbor of what is today known as Montego Bay. The Spanish put down roots here in 1510, and the English took control in 1655, transforming the town into an affluent sugar-production and trading center. The plantation culture came crashing down in the 1831 slave revolts, when nearly all of the plantations and estates were razed. Post-emancipation, Montego Bay languished until the early 20th century, when it took its place as Jamaica's most popular tourist destination. For more details of the region's history, see right.

CLIMATE

MoBay's balmy weather is world famous. The most pleasant months are December to February, when the temperature hovers between 22° and 28°C and the coast enjoys the cooling effects of the northeasterly trade winds. October is the wettest month with average rainfall of 188mm; winter is generally the driest season.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Montego Bay is home to Jamaica's busiest airport and cruise-ship port. Buses, minibuses and route taxis arrive and depart from the busy transportation station off Barnett St, downtown.

MONTEGO BAY

pop 110,000

A bustling town with a turbulent history, a thriving port and a hopping 'hip strip,' Montego Bay is Jamaica's most charged city. While spring-breakers descend on MoBay each year for bouts of ritualized raucousness, being host to the island's busiest airport and cruise-ship port assures the town a steady stream of visitors, many of whom pop down from North America for long weekends.

Most never make it off Gloucester Ave, which has attained the wince-inducing title of 'hip strip.' Most of the hotels, restaurants, bars and souvenir emporia line this parade, which runs parallel to the beach; everything is here – and a loose confederacy of hustlers patrols the strip ready to offer guidance (and other services) should you find it all overwhelming. Despite its gaudiness, the strip

boasts some of the best eating options on the island.

Streetlife of another, more genuine, order courses through downtown. Centered on pedestrian Sam Sharpe Sq, the town fans out over a grid, its streets tilting to the beats pulsing from competing storefronts while pushcart peddlers lurch in and out of routes they alone know. Downtown features a selection of decaying Georgian buildings that hint at earlier prosperity and the excellent Museum of St James, which bears poignant testament to the city's brutal slave history.

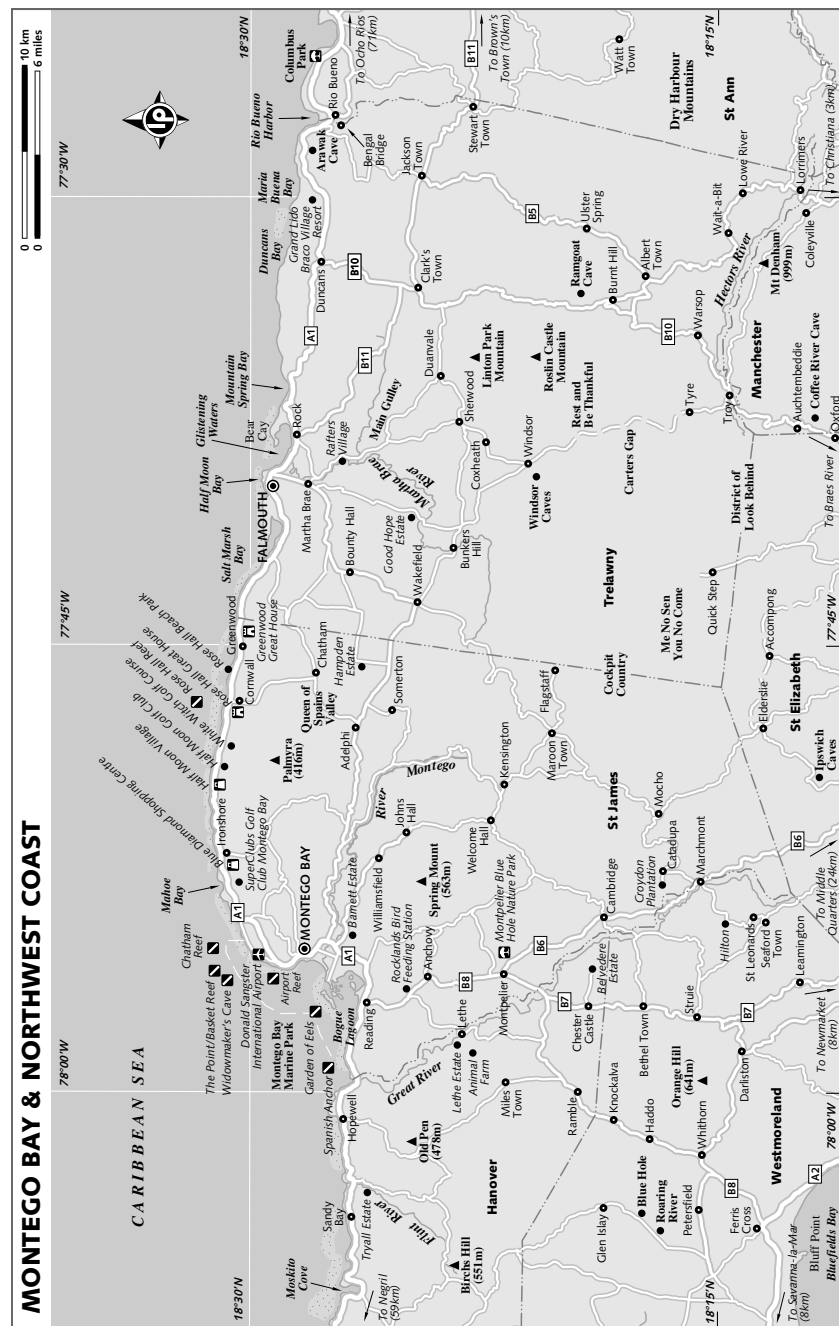
Montego Bay is also a major port city, based on the container-shipping trade at the Montego Freeport. The town spreads tentacles of light industry west as far as Reading, 6km away. An equal distance to the east, Ironshore (p198) marks the beginning of a series of swanky all-inclusive resorts.

HISTORY

Columbus anchored in Montego Bay in 1494 and called it Gulf of Good Weather. In 1655 a settlement appeared on Spanish maps: Manterias, after the Spanish word *manteca*, or lard, from the days when the Spanish shipped 'pig's butter' derived from the herds of wild hogs that flourished in the nearby hills. Following the British takeover that year, the parish of St James was established. As sugar was planted, Montego Bay took on new importance, and St James became the most important sugar-producing parish on the island. Wealthy planters and merchants erected lavish townhouses and a parish church. Many original buildings perished in fires and hurricanes, which also destroyed valuable records in the western part of the island, obscuring this early history.

Montego Bay and its hinterland were the setting for the slave rebellion of Christmas 1831, when estates throughout St James were put to the torch. Militia and regular troops stationed in Montego Bay quickly quelled the revolt, and the courthouse became a center for savage retribution (see the boxed text, p188).

After emancipation in 1834 the sugar trade slipped into decline. The city once again languished until it was revived by the development of the banana trade, and by the tourist trade that developed in the late 1880s when Dr Alexander G McCatty founded a sanitarium at what is today Doctor's Cave Beach. Rich Americans and Britons flocked



onto the banana boats to 'take the waters.' Many later bought homes here, adding luster to Montego Bay.

During WWII the US Air Force built an airstrip east of town, which in the postwar years served to open up Montego Bay to tourism on a larger scale. Round Hill and Tryall resorts were built west of town, cementing MoBay's chic reputation.

In the late 1960s the bay was dredged, and Montego Freeport was constructed (the port is now a center of light industry). Later, a separate cruise-ship terminal appeared, launching a new breed of visitor.

In the 1990s the resort became somewhat jaded, but in recent years it has been revived and spruced up with a discernible makeover. Gloucester Ave is safer than ever, the cruise ships are back en masse, and even downtown has been revived to the point where timid cruise-ship passengers dare to walk off their sea legs while taking in some of the splendid Georgian architecture.

ORIENTATION

The tourist quarter, north of the town center, arcs along Gloucester Ave, a narrow shoreline strip lined with hotels, restaurants and public beaches. Northward, Gloucester Ave becomes Kent Ave, which stretches for about a kilometer and ends at tiny Dead-End Beach. The airport is accessed from Sunset Blvd, which stretches east from the junction of Gloucester and Kent Aves and continues east, beyond the airport, as the A1 to Ironshore and the north coast.

Queen's Dr traverses the steep Miranda Hill, which rises behind the tourist strip, linking the airport with the southern end of Gloucester Ave, forming a roundabout. The town center lies south of this junction and is accessed by Fort St, a bustling thoroughfare that leads to the vibrant heart of MoBay, Sam Sharpe Sq.

The compact historic center is laid out as a rough grid of narrow and chaotically crowded streets. St James St, the bustling main street, runs south from Sam Sharpe Sq and ends at Barnett St, which is one-way heading into town but becomes two-way after its intersection with Cottage Rd. Barnett St turns into the A1 heading west to Reading and Negril.

Howard Cooke Dr begins at the Gloucester Ave roundabout and runs south

along the bayfront, linking the A1 with Montego Freeport.

Maps

The *Discover Jamaica* map published by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) includes a detailed map of Montego Bay. You can get a free copy at any JTB office (see opposite).

INFORMATION

Bookstores

Sangster's Bookshop (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-0319; 2 St James St) The largest bookstore in town, but it's only modestly stocked.

Emergency

Police stations Barnett St (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2333, 952-1557; 14 Barnett St); Union St (Map pp186-7; ☎ 940-3500; 49 Union St); Church St (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-4396, 952-5310; 29 Church St); Catherine Hall (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-4997, 953-6309; cnr Southern Cross Rd & Howard Cooke Dr)

Police Tourism Liaison Unit (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-1540; Summit Police Station, Sunset Blvd)

Internet Access

Cyber Shores (Map pp182-3; ☎ 971-8907; Gloucester Ave; per 15 min/1 hr US\$2/7.50; ☎ 8am-8:30pm) At Doctor's Cave Beach, with a wi-fi network serving the beach.

Internet Place (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-2460; Shop 8, A&B's Complex, 11 Market St; per 30 min/1 hr US\$1.70/3.40) A downtown option with attractive rates.

Internet Resources

Official Visitors Guide (www.montego-bay-jamaica.com) An up-to-date online resource to MoBay and environs.

Mobay Tourist (mobaytourist.com) The official visitors guide to Montego Bay.

What's On Jamaica (www.whatsonjamaica.com) Entertainment and culture listings.

Laundry

Brown's Laundromat (Map pp186-7; ☎ 971-9224; 36 Church St; per load US\$1) Coin-operated machines.

Fabricare Centre (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-6897; 4 Corner Lane; per load US\$1.25) Offers one-hour dry cleaning plus laundry and drop-off service.

Wonder Wash (Map pp182-3; ☎ 971-4739; Westgate Shopping Centre; per load US\$1) On the A1, south of downtown.

Library

Parish library (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-4185; North St) An impressive collection of books on Jamaica, but the building itself is in a state of disrepair.

Medical Services

Downtown, you'll find plenty of pharmacies.

Corwall Medical Centre (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-6107; 19 Orange St) Private clinic.

Corwall Regional Hospital (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-5100; Mt Salem Rd) Has a 24-hour emergency ward.

Doctor's Hospital (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-1616; Fairfield Rd) Private hospital southeast of town.

Fontana Pharmacy (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-3860; Fairview Shopping Centre) The best-stocked and largest pharmacy in town.

Montego Bay Dental Clinic (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2338; 11 Dome St)

Money

There's a 24-hour money-exchange bureau and a branch of **National Commercial Bank** (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-2354) in the arrivals hall at Donald Sangster International Airport. You'll need local currency to take the bus into town, but taxis accept US dollars.

Money-exchange bureaus on the main strip include **FX Trader** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-3171; 37 Gloucester Ave; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) upstairs at the Pelican restaurant, and **Cambio King** (Map p184; ☎ 971-5260; Gloucester Ave) at the northern end. Downtown, several bureaus can be found on St James St; look for 'cambio' signs.

Banks on Gloucester Ave include a branch of **First Global Bank** (Map p184; ☎ 971-5260; 53 Gloucester Ave), and flanking the Doctor's Cave Beach Club are ATMs operated by National Commercial Bank and Scotiabank.

Downtown, banks on Sam Sharpe Sq and in the Bay West Centre all have 24-hour ATMs. The cruise-ship terminal is served by a branch of **National Commercial Bank** (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8060) in the Montego Freeport Shopping Centre.

Western Union (☎ 926-2454) has branches at the Pelican restaurant on Gloucester Ave (Map p184); at 19 Church St (Map pp186-7); and in Shop 9, Overton Plaza (Map pp186-7), at the top of Dome St.

Post

FedEx (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-0411, 888-991-9081; Chatwick Plaza, 10 Queen's Dr)

DHL (☎ 979-0543; 34 Queens Dr)

Post office Fort St (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-7016); White Sands Beach (Map p184; ☎ 979-5137; Gloucester Ave)

Telephone

Most hotels offer international call service.

Cable & Wireless Telecommunications (C&W; Map

pp186-7; ☎ 952-5440, 888-952-9700; 20 Church St) Has public phones outside its offices downtown, on either side of Church St.

Tourist Information

Jamaica Tourist Board booth (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-3009; ☎ concurrent with flight arrivals) In the arrivals hall at Donald Sangster International Airport.

Jamaica Tourist Board office (Map p184; ☎ 952-4425; fax 952-3587; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Off Gloucester Ave, opposite the entrance to the now-closed Cornwall Beach.

TPDCo information booth (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-7987; ☎ 9am-5pm) At the downtown craft market.

Travel Agencies

Many of the larger hotels operate travel offices. Downtown, some reputable agencies include the following:

Trafalgar Travel (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-1556; Sam Sharpe Sq)

Tropical Travel Service (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-5822; 7 Church St)

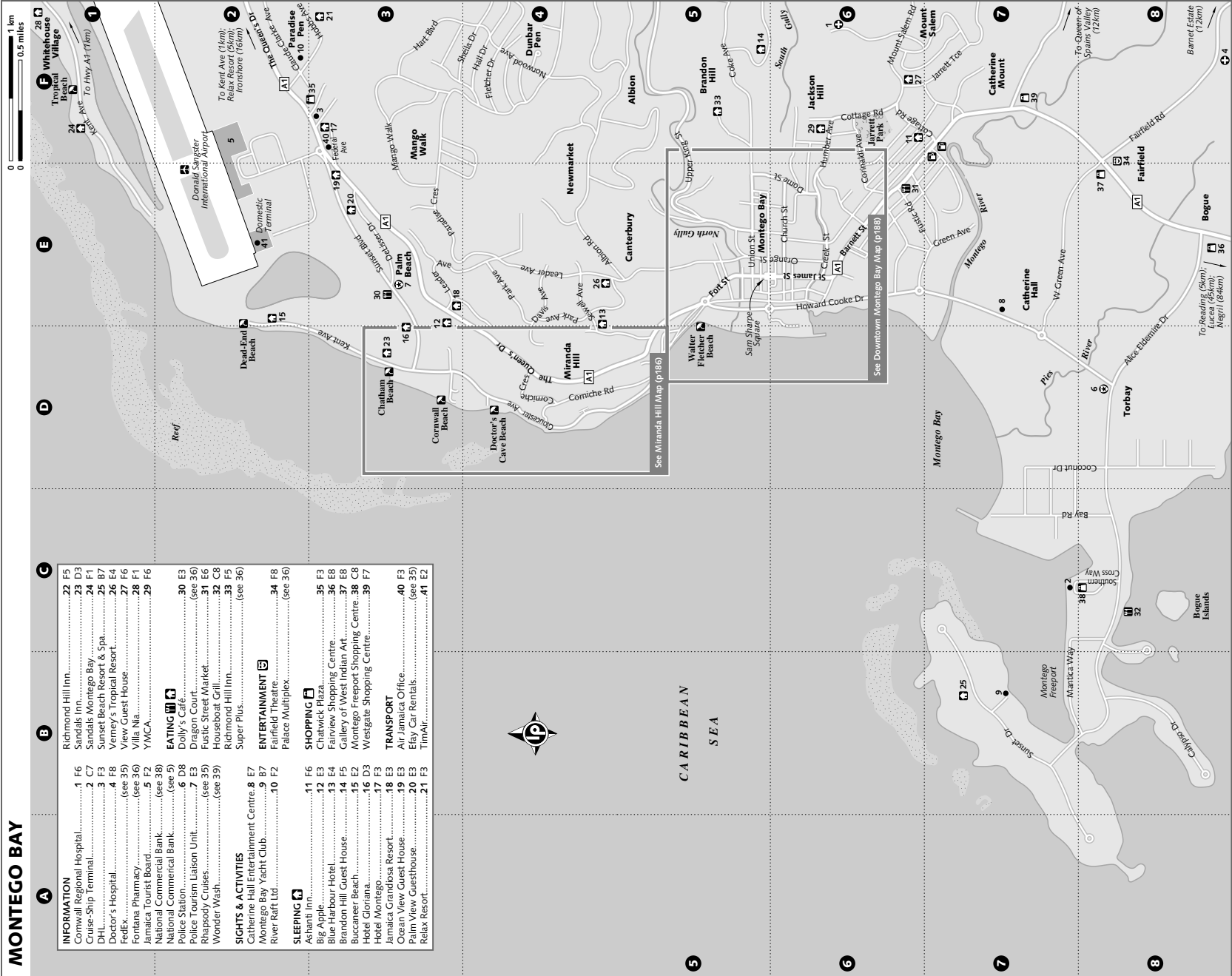
DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Things have dramatically improved along Gloucester Ave in recent years, although harassment of tourists by hustlers remains an annoyance. By day, visitors get up close and personal with street-level entrepreneurs offering ganja, transportation and even services of a decidedly more intimate nature. A common approach is for a hustler to claim he knows you from your hotel, and many visitors just off the plane are not savvy enough to see through it. As always it's best to respond with a polite but firm 'no thanks' and keep moving; simply ignoring them only aggravates hustlers – and makes them more aggravating.

Keeping the hustlers (mostly) in line are the beat-walking men and women of the Montego Bay Resort Patrol wearing trim bulletproof vests.

Downtown is not patrolled; it's safe to walk in the historic center during daylight hours but stick to the main streets and stay alert. At night downtown is not the best place for a solo stroll. Avoid the dangerous Flankers area across the highway from the airport.

Beware traffic! Cars are often driven at a breakneck pace; don't expect the driver to give way. Even 'tourist-friendly' Gloucester Ave can be a hazard. Use caution when crossing streets and watch for deep gutters and potholes.



MONTEGO BAY

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|
| A | B | C |
| INFORMATION | Richmond Hill Inn..... | 22 F5 |
| Conwall Regional Hospital..... | 1 F6 | 23 D3 |
| Cruise-Ship Terminal..... | 2 C7 | 24 F1 |
| DHL..... | 3 F3 | 25 B7 |
| Doctor's Hospital..... | 4 F8 | 26 E4 |
| FedEx..... | (see 35) | 27 F6 |
| Fontana Pharmacy..... | (see 36) | 28 F1 |
| Jamaica Tourist Board..... | 5 F2 | 29 F6 |
| National Commercial Bank..... | (see 38) | |
| Police Station..... | 6 D8 | 30 E3 |
| Rhappody Cruises..... | 7 E3 | (see 36) |
| Wonder Wash..... | (see 35) | 31 E6 |
| | (see 39) | 32 C8 |
| | | 33 F5 |
| | | (see 36) |
| SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | Catherine Hall Entertainment Centre..... | 8 E7 |
| Montego Bay Yacht Club..... | 9 B7 | |
| River Raft Ltd..... | 10 F2 | |
| SLEEPING | Ashanti Inn..... | 11 F6 |
| Big Apple..... | 12 E3 | 13 E4 |
| Blue Harbour Hotel..... | 13 E4 | 14 F5 |
| Brandon Hill Guest House..... | 14 F5 | 15 E2 |
| Buccanner Beach..... | 15 E2 | 16 E3 |
| Hotel Gioriana..... | 16 E3 | 17 E3 |
| Hotel Montego..... | 17 E3 | 18 E3 |
| Imperial Montego Resort..... | 18 E3 | 19 E3 |
| Oliver's Guest House..... | 19 E3 | 20 E3 |
| Palm View Guesthouse..... | 20 E3 | (see 35) |
| Relax Resort..... | 21 F3 | 41 E2 |
| | | (see 36) |
| | | 34 F8 |
| | | (see 36) |
| SHOPPING | Chatwick Plaza..... | 35 F3 |
| Fairview Shopping Centre..... | 36 E8 | 37 E8 |
| Gallery of West Indian Art..... | 37 E8 | 38 C8 |
| Montego Freeport Shopping Centre..... | 38 C8 | 39 F7 |
| Wesgate Shopping Centre..... | 39 F7 | |
| TRANSPORT | Albion Taxi Office..... | 40 F3 |
| Elly Car Rentals..... | (see 35) | |
| TimAir..... | 41 E2 | |

SIGHTS

Downtown

Downtown MoBay – crowded, colorful and gritty – has several historic sites and buildings well worth a visit.

FORT MONTEGO

At the southern end of Gloucester Ave is this inauspicious **fort** (Map pp186-7; Fort St), of which virtually nothing remains. Built in the late 18th century by the British, its cannons were fired only twice. The sole remnant is a small battery with three brass cannons on rails.

SAM SHARPE SQUARE

This bustling cobbled **square** (Map pp186-7), formerly called the Parade, is named for national hero the Right Excellent Samuel Sharpe (1801-32), the leader of the 1831 Christmas Rebellion (see the boxed text, p188). At the square's northwest corner is the **National Heroes Monument**, an impressive bronze statue of Paul Bogle and Sam Sharpe, Bible in hand, speaking to three admirers. Also on the northwest corner is the **Cage**, a tiny cut-stone and brick building built in 1806 as a lockup, now a small souvenir shop.

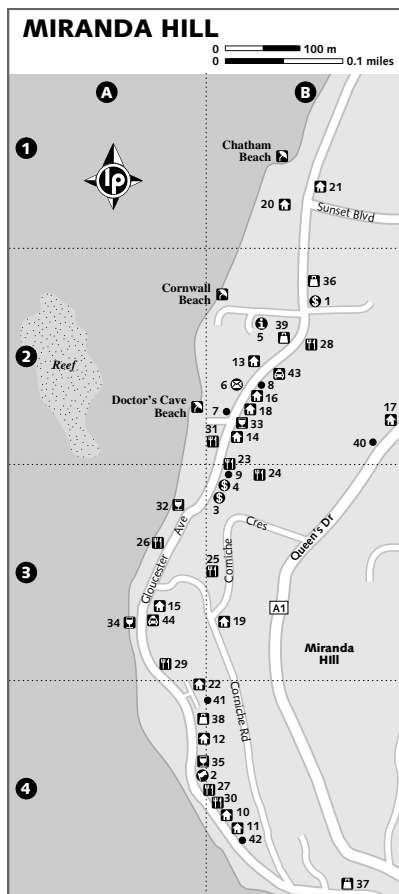
At the southwest corner is the copper-domed **Civic Centre**, a handsome colonial-style cut-stone building on the site of the ruined colonial courthouse. It contains the small yet highly informative **Museum of St James** (☎ 971-9417; admission US\$3; 🕒 9:30am-4:30pm Tue-Thu, to 3:30pm Fri, 10:30am-2:30pm Sat) with relics and other exhibits tracing the history of St James parish from Arawak days through the slave rebellions to the more recent past. An art gallery and 200-seat theater are also here.

BURCHELL MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Two blocks east of Sam Sharpe Sq, **Burchell Memorial Baptist Church** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-6351; Market St) is a brick structure dating to 1835. Sam Sharpe was a deacon here. The original church was founded in 1824 by Rev Thomas Burchell. An angry mob destroyed the church in reprisal for Burchell's support of the emancipation cause, but the missionary escaped to sea. Sam Sharpe's remains are buried in the vault.

CREEK DOME

Lurking at the end of Creek St is the bizarre-looking **Creek Dome** (Map pp186-7; cnr Dome St & Creek St), built in 1837 above the underground spring



that supplied drinking water for Montego Bay. The structure is actually a hexagon with a crenellated castle turret in which the 'Keeper of the Creek' lived and collected a toll.

CHURCH ST

Many of the most interesting buildings in town are clustered along Church St, the most picturesque street in MoBay. At the corner of Water Lane is a plantation-style octagonal structure that today houses a police station. About 50m west, at the corner of King St, is a redbrick Georgian building harboring the **National Housing Trust** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-0063; 1 King St). Equally impressive is the three-story Georgian building at 25 Church St – headquarters of Cable & Wireless Jamaica.

| INFORMATION | | EATING 🍴 | |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Cambio King.....1 B2 | Canadian Consulate.....2 A4 | Brewery.....(see 38) | |
| Citibank.....3 B3 | Cyber Shores.....(see 7) | Calyпсо Gelato.....23 B2 | |
| First Global Bank.....4 B3 | FX Trader.....(see 29) | Doctor's Cave Beach Club.....7 B2 | |
| Jamaica Tourist Board.....5 B2 | Post Office.....6 B2 | Irie Tours.....(see 14) | |
| US Consulate.....(see 39) | Western Union.....(see 29) | Sunflower Travel & Tours.....8 B2 | |
| | | Tropical Tours.....9 B3 | |
| SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES | | SLEEPING 🛏 | |
| Caribbean Vacations.....(see 14) | Doctor's Cave Beach Club.....7 B2 | Altamont West.....10 B4 | |
| Irie Tours.....(see 14) | Sunflower Travel & Tours.....8 B2 | Bayshore Inn.....11 B4 | |
| Tropical Tours.....9 B3 | | Beach View Apartments.....12 A4 | |
| | | Breezes.....13 B2 | |
| | | Caribbean House.....14 B2 | |
| | | Coral Cliff Hotel.....15 A3 | |
| | | Doctor's Cave Beach Hotel.....16 B2 | |
| | | El Greco Resort.....17 B2 | |
| | | Gloucestershire Hotel.....18 B2 | |
| | | Knightwick House.....19 B3 | |
| | | Montego Bay Club Resort.....(see 17) | |
| | | Royal Decameron Montego Beach Resort.....20 B1 | |
| | | Toby Resorts.....21 B1 | |
| | | Wexford.....22 A4 | |
| | | | |
| ENTERTAINMENT | | SHOPPING 🛍 | |
| Coral Cliff Gaming Lounge.....(see 15) | | Fantasy Craft Market.....36 B2 | |
| | | Fort Montego Craft Market.....37 B4 | |
| | | Miranda Ridge Plaza.....38 A4 | |
| | | St James Plaza.....39 B2 | |
| | | TRANSPORT | |
| | | Air Jamaica.....40 B2 | |
| | | Sun Cruise Bike Rental.....41 B4 | |
| | | Sunbird Car Rentals.....42 B4 | |
| | | Taxis.....43 A3 | |
| | | Taxis.....44 B2 | |
| | | Taxis.....(see 18) | |

The highlight, however, is **St James Parish Church** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2775; Church St), regarded as the finest church on the island. The current church was built between 1775 and 1782 in the shape of a Greek cross, but was so damaged by the earthquake of March 1, 1957, that it had to be rebuilt.

With luck, the tall church doors will be open and you can view the beautiful interior, which contains among other things a stunning stained-glass window behind the altar. Note the marble monuments, including some fine works by John Bacon, the foremost English sculptor of the late 18th century. One is a memorial to Anne May Palmer, whose virtuous life was up-ended in literature to create the legend of the White Witch of Rose Hall. Look carefully at her neck and you'll detect faint purple marks. Locals consider this proof of the fable that the 'witch' was strangled.

Facing the church is the **Town House** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2660; 16 Church St), with a handsome redbrick frontage buried under a cascade of bougainvillea and laburnum. It dates from 1765, when it was the home of a wealthy merchant. It has since served as a church manse and later as a townhouse for the mistress of the Earl of Hereford, Governor of Jamaica. In the years that followed it was used as a hotel, warehouse, Masonic lodge, lawyer's office and synagogue. Its current incarnation is a clothes store.

Further Afield

BARNETT ESTATE

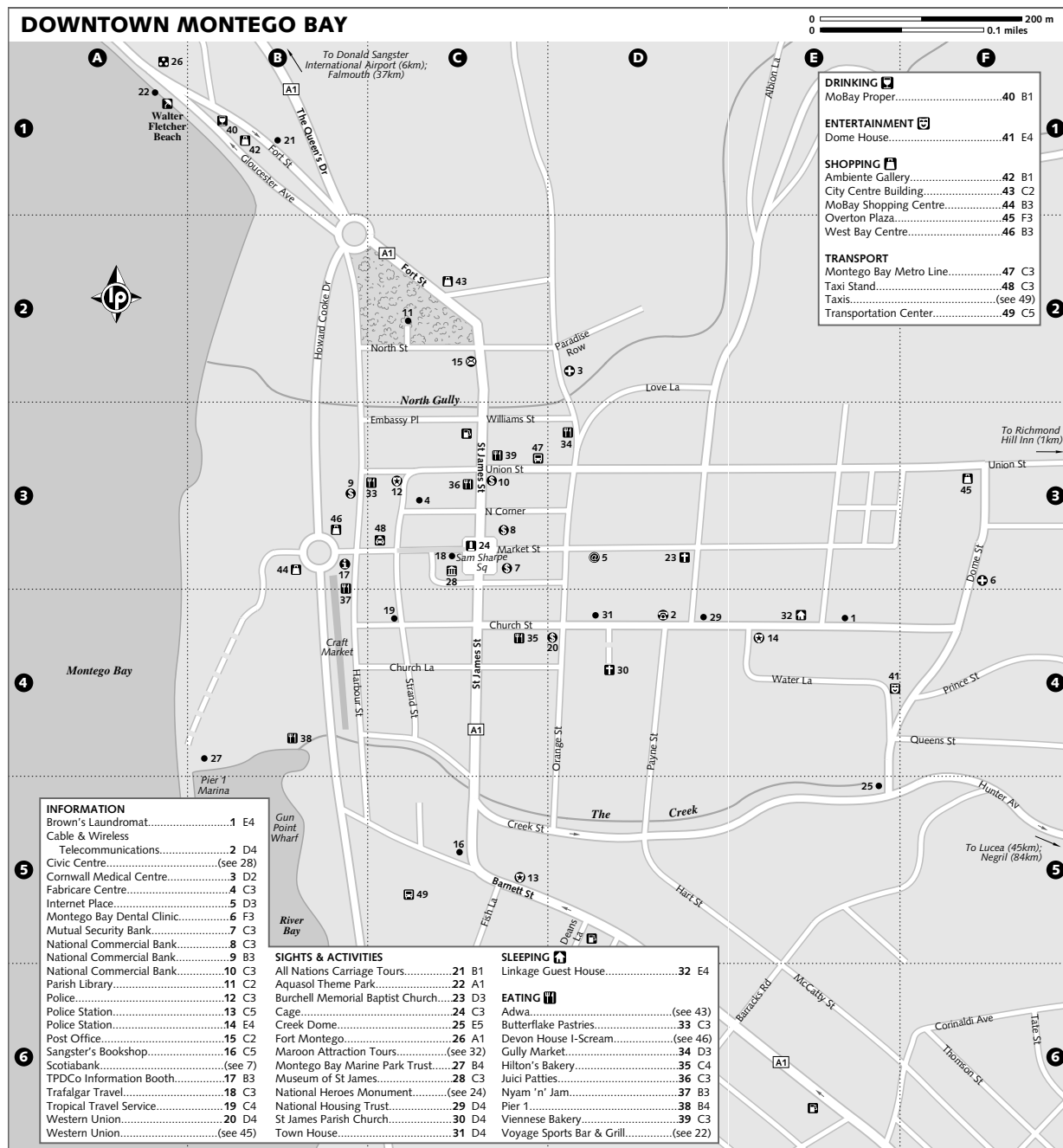
The sea of sugarcane south of Montego Bay is part of the **Barnett Estate** (Fairfield Rd), a plantation owned and operated since 1755 by the Kerr-Jarretts, one of Jamaica's preeminent families; their holdings once included most of the Montego Bay area. Today the family (now in its 11th generation) holds the land in trust for the government and manages it accordingly.

The **Belfield Great House** (☎ 952-2382; lunch tour adult/child US\$40/20, as part of hotel-sponsored tour US\$60/30, basic tour without lunch US\$20; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), built in 1735, has been restored and is now a showcase of 18th-century colonial living. The former plantation manager's house doubles as a museum charting the development of the area since the day that Colonel Nicholas Jarrett arrived with Cromwell's invasion army in 1655.

The estate is about 800m to the east of Doctor's Hospital. It's poorly signed: take the right turn at the Y-fork marked for Day-O Plantation, then the signed right turn at Granville Police Station.

MONTEGO BAY MARINE PARK & BOGUE LAGOON

The waters of Montego Bay are gorgeous to behold both above and below the surface, but they have long been compromised by the effects of fishing, water sports and pollution. With the creation in 1991 of the **Montego Bay**



Marine Park, Jamaica's first national park, environmental regulations at last began to be strictly enforced to protect the area's coral reefs, rich flora and fauna, and shoreline mangroves. The park extends from the eastern end of the airport westward (almost 10km) to the Great River, encompassing the mangroves of **Bogue Lagoon**.

You can hire canoes or set out with a guide to spot herons, egrets, pelicans and waterfowl, while swimming and crawling below are barracudas, tarpon, snapper, crabs and lobsters. Request a guide two days in advance; there's no charge but donations are gladly accepted. Authority is vested in the **Montego Bay Marine Park Trust** (MBMPT; Map pp186-7; ☎ 971-8082; www.mbmp.org; Pier 1, off Howard Cooke Dr). MBMPT maintains a meager **resource centre** (☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) with a library on the vital ecosystem.

ACTIVITIES

MoBay boasts two public beaches, each offering **water sports**. Some of the resort hotels have private beaches and many have their own water-sports operators.

If you want to play **golf**, the area offers three championship courses east of Montego Bay (see p199). A fourth course at Tryall is a 30-minute journey west (p208).

For **tennis**, there are courts at Walter Fletcher Beach, and some resort hotels have courts for guests.

Beaches

Visiting Montego Bay without parking yourself for an hour or a day on a stunning white-sand beach would just be *wrong*. Know in advance that these are not places to enjoy solitude, however, but rather to celebrate the fun-loving throng.

Private **Cornwall Beach** has been closed for renovation for several years now, but the two main beaches remain open, with facilities that include changing rooms, snack bars and water-sports providers.

DOCTOR'S CAVE BEACH

Founded as a bathing club in 1906, this world-famous stretch of sand with a perpetual party vibe is now owned by **Doctor's Cave Beach Club** (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-2566; www.doctorscavebathingclub.com; adult/child US\$5/2.50; ☎ 8:30am-6pm). It can get ridiculously crowded during the winter months, so if you're going to make a day of it, arrive early to stake out your turf. Facilities

PREACHING RESISTANCE

The weeklong Christmas Rebellion, which began on Kensington Estate on December 27, 1831 and engulfed much of the Montego Bay region, was the most serious slave revolt to rock colonial Jamaica. Its impact and the public outcry over the terrible retribution that followed were catalysts for the British parliament passing the Abolition Act in 1834.

The instigator of the revolt was Samuel Sharpe (1801–32), the slave of a Montego Bay solicitor. Sharpe acted as a deacon of Montego Bay's Burchell Baptist Church and became a 'daddy,' or leader, of the church. Sharpe used his pulpit as a forum to encourage passive rebellion.

In 1831 Sharpe counseled fellow slaves to refuse to work during the Christmas holidays. Word of the secret, passive rebellion spread throughout St James and neighboring parishes. Inevitably, word leaked out and war ships and extra troops were sent to Montego Bay.

The rebellion turned into a violent conflict when the Kensington Estate was set on fire. Soon plantations and great houses throughout northwest Jamaica were ablaze, and Sharpe's noble plan was usurped by wholesale violence. Fourteen colonialists were murdered before colonial authorities suppressed the revolt. Swift and cruel retribution followed.

As part of the colonialists' retribution, more than a thousand slaves were killed. Day after day for six weeks following the revolt's suppression, magistrates of the Montego Bay Courthouse handed down death sentences to scores of slaves, who were hanged two at a time on the Parade, among them 'Daddy' Sam Sharpe. He was later named a national hero and the Parade was renamed Sam Sharp Sq.

include a food court, grill bar, internet café and water sports, plus changing rooms. You can rent shade umbrellas and inflatable air mattresses (lilos) for US\$5, snorkel gear for US\$5 and chairs for US\$4.

WALTER FLETCHER BEACH

An attraction for both locals and tourists alike, this beach is a long sliver of white sand down at the south end of Gloucester Ave, and the venue for the **Aquasol Theme Park** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 940-1344; www.aquasoljamaica.com; adult/child US\$5/3; ☎ 9am-10pm), which offers netball, volleyball, tennis courts, water sports, the MoBay 500 go-cart track and Voyage Sports Bar & Grill. You can rent lockers, beach mats, chairs and umbrellas.

DEAD END BEACH

Aligning Kent Rd just north of Gloucester Rd, this narrow strip, also known as Buccaneer Beach, is popular with locals. There are no facilities here (beyond those at a few hotels over the road), but the lack of crowds seems to make the sunsets over the bay all the more gorgeous.

Sailing & Cruising

Several yachts and cruise boats run party cruises. Most companies charge US\$45 to

US\$60 for three-hour party cruises with open bars, and US\$35 to US\$45 for sunset and dinner cruises.

Rhapsody Cruises (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-0102; Shop 204, Chatwick Plaza) offers a **'wet 'n' wild cruise party'** (admission US\$60; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) aboard *Day Dreamer* and *Tropical Dreamer*, two swift catamarans specially designed as party boats, with an open bar and a snorkeling stop in the marine park. Cruises depart from Doctor's Cave Beach Club. A bus will pick you up at your hotel.

Also recommended are the following: **Calico Pirate Cruises** (☎ 940-2493; www.calicopiratecruises.com; party cruise per person US\$60) Operates *Calico*, a 55ft ketch resembling an old pirate ship. Cruises depart from Pier 1 Marina at 10am every day except Wednesday. **Intimidator** (☎ 468-5773; sunset/snorkel cruise US\$48/40) A catamaran departing from Doctor's Cave beach.

Mobay Undersea Tours (☎ 940-4465; www.mobayunderseatours.com; tours per person US\$60) Has tours over the reefs in partially glass-bottomed 'semi-submarines'.

Montrose (☎ 852-6884; party cruise or snorkeling cruise per person US\$45; ☎ 10am-1pm) A catamaran setting forth daily from Pier 1 Marina.

You can charter yachts for private group sailing trips from any of the companies above, or from the **Montego Bay Yacht Club** (☎ 979-8038; mby@cwjamaica.com) at Montego Freeport.

Scuba Diving

MoBay offers first-rate dive sites. Most are close to shore and range from teeming patch reefs to awe-inspiring walls that begin in as little as 10m of water.

For advanced divers, **The Point** north of the airport is considered 'the ultimate wall dive,' due to the dense corals and fish, sharks and rays that are fed by crystal-clear waters scoured by currents. The wall here starts at 20m and drops to at least 90m. **Airport Reef**, off the southwestern edge of the airport, is considered by many to be the best site on the island, with masses of coral canyons, caves and tunnels, and even a DC-3 wreck.

Most companies providing diving also offer snorkeling trips. Resort Divers (p198) offers dives and certification courses and rents equipment.

Northeast of Montego Bay, recommended companies are Dive Seaworld (p198), **Fun Divers** (☎ 953-3268; Wyndham Rose Hall Hotel, Rose Hall) and **Jamaica Scuba Divers** (G66; Half Moon Hotel, Ironshore).

Sport Fishing

The waters off Jamaica's north coast offer spectacular game fishing. Deep-water game fish like blue marlin, sailfish, wahoo, kingfish, dolphin and yellowfin tuna use the abyss known as 'Marlin Alley' as a migratory freeway (June and August are peak months for marlin). The **Montego Bay Marlin Tournament** is held in late September; contact the **Montego Bay Yacht Club** (☎ 979-8038; mby@cwjamaica.com).

Half- and full-day charters can be booked through hotels, from the company **No Problem** (☎ 381-3229; Pier 1 Marina; half-/full-day charter US\$360/690), which is equipped to reel in big-game fish.

TOURS

Barrett Adventures (☎ 382-6384; www.barrettadventures.com; Rose Hall) organizes customized minivan tours around Montego Bay as well as islandwide.

Johns Hall Adventure Tours (☎ 971-7776; www.johnshalladventuretour.com; 26 Hobbs Ave) picks you up from your hotel and offers a variety of local historical plantation tours (US\$50 including lunch) as well as a tour of its own Bird Sanctuary (US\$50 including lunch).

Tropical Tours (Map p184; ☎ 952-0400; www.tropicaltours-ja.com; 49 Gloucester Ave) offers a guided tour (US\$40) of Montego Bay and environs, including visits to Rose Hall Great House, a

working sugar plantation, the Bob Marley Experience and a blessedly brief stop at a craft market.

Sunflower Travel & Tours (Map p184; ☎ 952-1418; www.sunflowertraveltours.com; fax 979-6771; Montego Bay Club Resort, Gloucester Ave) provides a full-day 'Black River Special' tour (US\$95 per person) to the Appleton Rum Estate and YS Falls, which includes a brief excursion by boat into the Black River wetlands. Other offerings include Dunn's River Falls (US\$45), Blue Mountains via Kingston (US\$110), Nine Mile (US\$85) and Rose Hall Great House (US\$60). All tours include transportation.

Caribic Vacations (Map p184; ☎ 953-9896; www.caribicvacations.com; 69 Gloucester Ave) runs a wide range of tours islandwide, including a package tour to Appleton Rum Estate, Black River and YS Falls every Tuesday and Wednesday (US\$95). It specializes in excursions to Cuba.

Irie Tours (Map p184; ☎ 971-5886; irietoursltd@cwjamaica.com; 33 Gloucester Ave) is Caribic's affiliate and also has a broad range of island tours, including a jeep safari (US\$75) and a Montego Bay highlight tour on Monday and Friday (US\$35).

All Nations Carriage Tours (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-2514; 10 Fort St) offers 40-minute, horse-drawn carriage tours to many MoBay historic sites spread between Gloucester Ave and the old town (US\$15/25/35 per child/adult/couple). You can even arrange to have a carriage pick you up at the airport. If you don't have a reservation, you can find the carriages parked by the Fantasy Craft Market on the 'hip strip,' or across from Sandals Inn.

Maroon Attraction Tours (Map pp186-7; ☎ 971-3900, 700-8805; 32 Church St) runs a cultural, educational and historic tour (US\$60; ☎ 8am-3:30pm Tue, Thu & Sat) to Maroon Town (p211). This excellent educational excursion, which includes breakfast and lunch, takes visitors to historical sites, into private homes and to a local school. The intricacies of community, history and folklore are engagingly presented by an authoritative guide. By arrangement, you can also hire a guide to take you to Accompong (p257).

Other tour agencies post advertisements around town.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Montego Bay's most celebrated annual events are its two high-profile music festivals, the Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival, held in late January and Reggae Sumfest, held in July. See

the events calendar on p17 for information on those festivals.

The Pineapple Cup Montego Bay Race (p17) is another notable Montego Bay celebration.

Contact the Montego Bay Yacht Club (p188), which also hosts an **Easter Regatta**, or Jamaica Sailing Week, each March or April. It also sponsors the **Jam-Am Yacht Race** (☎ 979-8262) in December.

SLEEPING

Montego Bay boasts 40% of the hotels in Jamaica, most of them are clustered along Gloucester Ave; deluxe resorts nestle on their own beaches east of town around Ironshore (p198).

Properties listed under the Miranda Hill heading are accessed from Queens Dr, the Gloucester Ave bypass road, and are generally removed from the beaches.

If you arrive without reservations the Jamaica Tourist Board information booth in the arrivals hall at Donald Sangster International Airport can assist.

Montego Bay is the birthplace of the all-inclusive resort concept and the area offers several options for those seeking a hassle-free vacation. Prices quoted here are for the high season (December 15 to April 15); low-season rates can be considerably lower. Rates presented are guidelines; they vary considerably depending on source of booking, season and current specials. See p275 for general information about all-inclusive resorts in Jamaica.

Downtown

Linkage Guest House (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-4546, 979-0308; 32 Church St; s US\$18-25, d US\$25) Providing somewhat of an adventure, a night in this backpackers' haunt will give you a flavor of life in downtown Jamaica. Here you'll find 15 rooms in an old wooden house; they're simple and serviceably clean, with fans, louvered windows and hot water in the shared bathrooms. The doors lack reliable locks, however, so secure your belongings.

YMCA (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-5368, 832-8017; 28 Humber Ave; s/d US\$20/30) On the south side of town at the east end of Humber Ave, this bare-bones hostel has 15 basic rooms with shared cold-water bathrooms and fans. There's a TV lounge, plus ping-pong.

Ashanti Inn (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-7300; 50 Thompson St, cnr Cottage Rd; r US\$25-50; 🍷) On the east side

of town, this pleasant small inn is well kept with tasteful albeit modest furnishings. It has 15 rooms with cable TV and phones, opening to shaded patios. There's a small, quality restaurant serving local favorites, and a veranda providing a privileged view of bustling downtown.

Gloucester Ave

BUDGET

Hotel Gloriana (Map pp182-3; ☎ 970-0669; www.hotelgloriana.com; 1-2 Sunset Ave; s US\$40-55, d US\$45-60, ste US\$60-99; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Just east of the end of Gloucester Ave en route to the airport, this large family-run option has well-worn, somewhat dark rooms with cable TV for a fair price. There's a large pool and no-nonsense restaurant, but for meals you'll fare better at Dolly's Café next door.

Caribb House (Map p184; ☎ 979-6073; fax 979-0322; 69 Gloucester Ave; standard s US\$45-59, d US\$51-69; 🍷) This compact, no-frills option across the street from Doctor's Cave Beach (and right above the Jamaica Bobsled Café) is a favorite of the budget-minded. It has 17 basic rooms with fridges and large bathrooms, including one 'superior' room with kitchen, dining room and three beds.

MIDRANGE

Ourpick Knightwick House (Map p184; ☎ 952-2988; tapas 45@hotmail.com; Corniche Rd; s US\$45, d US\$65-70; 🍷 🍷) Behind and above the Coral Cliff Hotel, this wonderful B&B is close to the action without being submerged by it. Run by a charming couple, Jean and Stanley Magnus, the colonial structure – boasting terra-cotta floors, wrought-iron railings and abundant artwork – has three modest yet appealingly furnished bedrooms with one, two and three beds. All are well lit and airy, and each has a balcony.

Baysshore Inn (Map p184; ☎ 952-1046; theporkpit@hotmail.com; 27 Gloucester Ave; r US\$60; 🍷 🍷) Attached to the Pork Pit restaurant and facing Walter Fletcher Beach, this is a pleasant, modern place with 15 modestly furnished rooms with fans, air-con and cable TV.

Buccaneer Beach (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-6489; fax 979-2580; 7 Kent Ave; s/d US\$69/89; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A small, modest property with a homey feel. Rooms have tile floors, phone, cable TV and safety box, plus large balconies. There's a plunge pool in each of the front and back courtyards, plus a piano bar with large-screen TV. Its exclusive location at the end of Kent Ave is a five-minute walk from Gloucester Ave.

Beach View Apartments (Map Map p184; ☎ 952-8784, 997-2342; www.marzouca.com/villa_hsp.html; 39 Gloucester Ave; d/tr apt US\$69/120; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Not a bad option, with spacious if dark apartments equipped with microwaves and fridges. Apartments have one or two bedrooms with a total of three or four beds; additional guests are charged US\$15. When the sounds of the traffic on Gloucester Ave subside, a well-populated coop of white-wing doves provides cooing ambience.

Toby Resorts (Map p184; ☎ 952-4370; fax 952-6591; www.tobyresorts.com; cnr Gloucester Ave & Sunset Blvd; s US\$80-100, d US\$90-110; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This pleasant favorite offers 72 air-conditioned rooms in two-story units surrounding a pool and sundeck with bar. Rooms are nicely furnished with faux-marble floors and pine and rattan furniture, plus phones. Most have small verandas. Facilities include a gameroom, Toby's Good Eats restaurant, a pool bar, and elevated bar with a lounge and large-screen TV. When there's demand, the hotel offers yoga classes.

Altamont West (Map p184; ☎ 952-9087; www.altamontwesthotel.com; 33 Gloucester Ave; s/d US\$90/120, ste US\$280-420; 🍷 🍷 🍷) For guests who can't route themselves to cross the street for Walter Fletcher Beach, this MoBay newcomer offers a sundeck as well as an outdoor pool. Rooms are modern and gold-accented and come with cable TV, radio and hairdryers. Children under 12 stay for free.

Montego Bay Club Resort (Map p184; ☎ 952-4310, 212-840-6636, in the USA ☎ 800-223-9815; Queen's Dr; s/d from US\$100/125; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A good option for self-caterers, this 14-story highrise condominium complex is above Gloucester Ave. The rental units are clean, spacious and clinically white, with kitchenettes and balconies with good views. There's a restaurant. An elevator provides direct access to Gloucester Ave.

Gloustershire Hotel (Map p184; ☎ 952-4420, in North America 877-574-8497, in the UK 0800-169-7103; www.gloustershire.com; Gloucester Ave; s US\$110-125, d US\$115-130, ste US\$125-130; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A faded, service-oriented 95-room hotel across the street from Doctor's Cave Beach, this MoBay veteran nestled against the cliff offers rooms with direct-dial phones, safes, satellite TV and a pastel décor that could use some attention. Most rooms feature a balcony. It offers a pool deck with Jacuzzi, a restaurant and a helpful tour desk.

Doctor's Cave Beach Hotel (Map p184; ☎ 952-4355; www.doctorscave.com; Gloucester Ave; s US\$120-135,

d US\$125-140, ste US\$159; 🍷 🍷 🍷) If convenient beach access is a priority, this large hotel across the street from the main beach is a fine choice. Its labyrinthine corridors lead to well-appointed rooms and suites decorated in tropical themes. The lush gardens at the back are tight up against the cliff face, where there's a whirlpool. A splendid restaurant opens onto a small swimming pool and has live entertainment. The Grotto Bar here hosts a cocktail party on Tuesday and Saturday (6pm to 7pm).

Coral Cliff Hotel (Map p184; ☎ 952-4130; www.coralcliffjamaica.com; 165 Gloucester Ave; s/d/tr US\$110/130/140, ste d/tr US\$180/200; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This 21-room hotel attached to the Coral Cliff Gaming Lounge offers nine centenary rooms with a yesteryear charm, 10 modern rooms furnished with appealing tropical decor, and two suites in elegant plantation style with spacious balconies. All rooms have air-con, cable TV and phones. There's a swimming pool, gym, library and TV lounge, and an atmospheric restaurant plus flamboyant video-slot lounge.

Wexford (Map p184; ☎ 952-2854; www.thewexfordhotel.com; 39 Gloucester Ave; s US\$120-125, d US\$125-130, apt US\$150-175; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This recently revamped, efficient option offers 60 spacious rooms, modestly furnished, with balconies, telephones and cable TV. One wing has one-bedroom apartments with kitchenettes. A small bar and the Wexford Grill are onsite. The Wexford is convenient for Aquasol Beach, to which guests have free access.

Royal Decameron Montego Beach Resort (Map p184; ☎ 952-4340, 888-790-5264; 2 Gloucester Ave; all-inclusive d US\$130; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This reinvented place (formerly Jack Tar Village) gets high marks in the all-inclusive section. A welcoming low-rise beachfront resort, it has 128 rooms with lively tropical decor and its own private beach overlooked by a competent restaurant. Rooms all have ocean views and balconies. The range of activities includes tennis, golf and water sports.

TOP END

Breezes (Map p184; ☎ 940-1150; fax 940-1160; www.breezes.com/resort_montegobay; all-inclusive d US\$254-400; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This soulless but efficient SuperClubs all-inclusive towers over Doctor's Cave Beach, where guests have free access. It has 124 graciously appointed but cramped rooms and suites around an L-shaped pool that forms the foreground for a

fruit juices and smoothies. Grab a vegetable or soy patty to go.

Nyam 'n' Jam (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-1922; 17 Harbour St; mains US\$5-9; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This local fave, adjoining the downtown craft market, has real-deal Jamaican fare and daily specials including standards like jerked meat, and callaloo and saltfish – but also more adventurous choices like cow mouth, cow foot and oxtail.

Pier One (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2452; Howard Cooke Dr; mains US\$5-15; ☎ lunch & dinner) Although primarily known for being a nightclub, the waterfront setting away from the strip makes this a relaxing place to come for sandwiches, burgers or Jamaican seafood dishes like jerked conch with papaya.

Butterflake Pastries (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-0070; 2 Union St; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) and nearby **Juici Patties** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-3733; 36 St James St; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) are good for cheap meat and vegetable patties.

For bakeries, try the **Viennese Bakery** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-3711; 43 St James St) or **Hilton's Bakery** (Map pp186-7; ☎ 979-3128; 5 Church St).

Gloucester Ave

BUDGET

Raine's Burger Bar (Map p184; St James Plaza; breakfast US\$3-8; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This popular breakfast spot serves it up all day, including homemade muffins, omelettes, and ackee and saltfish. Fish and chips and burgers are also available.

Pork Pit (Map p184; ☎ 952-1046; 27 Gloucester Ave; mains US\$4-8; ☎ 11am-11pm) Searing tongues for decades, this jumping jerk joint is MoBay's best. Eat at open-air picnic tables shaded by a gargantuan silk-cotton tree that the chef reckons to be 300 years old. Finger-lickin' jerk chicken, pork, fish and shrimp are ordered by the pound, with yams, 'festival' and sweet potatoes as sides.

Hillside Restaurant & Lounge (Map p184; ☎ 328-0147; Corniche Rd; mains US\$4-13; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This small, friendly eatery tucked behind the Coral Cliff Hotel serves daily specials like curried conch and oxtail stew, all made to order, hot and fresh. On most afternoons and evenings there is a fierce dominoes competition on the small terrace.

Dolly's Café (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-0045; Hotel Gloriana Plaza, 1 Sunset Blvd; mains US\$6-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This cozy pub-style dining room is the place for *real* Jamaican cooking. The menu features time-honored favorites like pepperpot soup, roast pumpkin and a unique, delectable snack that you'll want to take along

for the ride: baked coconut chips. You can't do much better than Dolly's hearty Jamaican breakfasts; standout selections include 'steam fish and bananas' and 'mackerel rundown' (salted fish stewed in coconut milk).

MIDRANGE

Pelican (Map p184; ☎ 952-3171; Gloucester Ave; mains US\$6-12; ☎ 7am-11:30pm; ☎) Don't be mistaken by the roadside diner appearance of this good-value local favorite. Its menu of Jamaican dishes is outstanding, highlighted by red snapper in parchment paper, cooked in wine and béchamel sauce. Other dishes include stew peas with rice and stuffed conch with rice and peas, but the Pelican also serves sirloin steaks and seafood. Sunday buffet is US\$12.

Groovy Grouper (Map p184; ☎ 952-3680; mains US\$6-14; ☎ 9am-1:30am) Location is the attraction of this spot on Doctor's Cave Beach. The food – from burgers to lobster – is average, but on a beautiful breezy evening you may not notice.

El Campay Gallo (Map p184; ☎ 531-0637; 47 Gloucester Ave; mains US\$7-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) You'll be warmly welcomed as if you're one of the family. This exuberant family-run place serves traditional Cuban dishes like *empanadillas* (meat-filled pastry) and potent cocktails. If you're lucky, the owner will display his considerable talent as a jazz violinist.

Toby's Good Eats (Map p184; ☎ 952-4370; Toby Resorts, cnr Gloucester Ave & Sunset Blvd; mains US\$8-12; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This casual hotel eatery is a good place for a decent meal followed by a game of pool. The menu features red snapper prepared the local way – steamed in foil with Jamaican veggies and spices – and vegetable dishes plus pasta.

Brewery (Map p184; ☎ 979-2613; Miranda Ridge Plaza; mains US\$8-16; ☎ 11am-2am) Grab a seat in the roomy dining room or out on the patio overlooking the strip and sample the large portions of Jamaican, Mexican and American dishes that lure visitors and locals, many of whom stick around as the bar takes over. Wednesday has a lobster special.

our pick Native Restaurant & Bar (Map p184; ☎ 979-2769; mains US\$8-25; 29 Gloucester Ave; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An excellent place to learn about Jamaican cuisine, this modest yet engaging spot features an extensive menu and open-air veranda. Try 'goat in a boat' (curried goat in a pineapple half) or 'yard man fish' (whole fish escoveitched or steamed). If you're really hungry, consider the 'Boonoonoonos' sampler (composed of ackee

and saltfish, jerk chicken, curried goat, escoveitched fish, plantains and pineapple) – it's like taking a crash course in Jamaican food.

Guangzhou Restaurant (Map p184; ☎ 952-6200; Miranda Ridge Plaza, 39 Gloucester Ave; meals US\$9-21; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun) With an impressive view of the bay and a menu strong on seafood, this old favorite serves up a huge variety of Chinese, Thai and Mongolian dishes. Sample the scrumptious curried squid (US\$12).

TOP END

Marguerite's (Map p184; ☎ 952-4777; Gloucester Ave; mains US\$12-33; ☎ 6-10:30pm) Adjoining Margaritaville, this celebrated restaurant provides a lovely setting from which to watch the sunset while drinking cocktails, followed by dinner on the elegant clifftop patio. The pricey menu edges toward nouvelle Jamaican and fresh seafood, but also includes sirloin steak and inventive pasta dishes. The chef displays his culinary chops at a central flambé grill.

Ma Lou's (Map p184; ☎ 952-4130; Coral Cliff Casino, 165 Gloucester Ave; mains US\$14-31; ☎ dinner) With African-themed decor and exciting nouvelle-Jamaican cuisine, this small place tucked away in the Coral Cliff Casino is one of the nicest restaurants in town. The adventurous menu features delicacies such as roasted Peking chicken, curry with coconut and fried plantain, and specialty jerks. A nice touch is the large window open to the kitchen by the front door, where you can chew the fat with the garrulous chef.

Town House by the Sea (Map p184; ☎ 952-2660; Gloucester Ave; mains US\$14-35; ☎ lunch & dinner) This elegant dining room overlooking the beach takes food seriously, so come seriously hungry. If you've been craving snails – and who hasn't? – you'll find escargot with a Jamaican twist. Equally rich is the stuffed lobster, red snapper or the filet mignon. If you're merely peckish, choose from the pasta, curry and Jamaican dishes. The smoked marlin is one of the best on the island.

Richmond Hill (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-3859; Richmond Hill Inn, Union St; mains US\$20-45; ☎ lunch & dinner) The terrace restaurant 150m above town offers amazing views of the bay, as well as an upscale selection of seafood and steaks. Lunch is a lighter affair, with sandwiches and fish 'n' chips. Worth the trek uphill, even if only for a drink.

Nikkita's (Map p184; ☎ 979-6473; Gloucester Ave; mains US\$28-50; ☎ dinner) Outstanding French-Caribbean fare that lives up to its expensiveness.

In an elegant if dark dining room with marble floors and wrought-iron chairs, you can feast on mouthwatering mahi-mahi, broiled or baked lobster and an array of steak dishes. The perfect spot for a last-night-in-Jamaica send-off bash.

Further Afield

TOP END

Dragon Court (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8822; Fairview Shopping Centre, Alice Eldemire Dr; meals US\$8-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is the best fine-dining option for Chinese cuisine in MoBay, located in the modern Fairview Shopping Centre. The menu is replete with Chinese standards with a few standouts including the tempting crispy duckling with plum sauce and 'reggae fish,' with pimentos and other Jamaican spices.

our pick Houseboat Grill (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8845; mains US\$15-30; Southern Cross Blvd; ☎ 6-10pm Tue-Sun) Moored in Bogue Bay at Montego Bay Freeport, this converted houseboat is one of Jamaica's top-notch restaurants. The changing menu offers eclectic Caribbean fusion cuisine such as spicy conch fritters with a *rémoulade* dipping sauce, or honey-soy-glazed, grilled tenderloin of beef with Chinese oyster sauce, and homemade ice cream. You can dine inside, or exclusively out on the moondeck. The bar draws the local middle class and is open until the last guest goes home. Reservations are strongly recommended on weekends.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Compared to Negril, Montego Bay has a surprisingly lethargic nightlife. Upscale hotels mostly have lackluster live bands, carnival-style floor shows and yawn-inducing limbo contests. Those staying at all-inclusive resorts or upmarket hotels may never be tempted to prowl outside the compound at night. The others can make do with a decent selection of lively bars and the always engaging street theater.

Details of opening and closing hours for bars and clubs are hard to pin down. Most venues insist that they don't close until the last person leaves, and you're welcome to text that claim.

For listings, check **What's On Jamaica** (www.whatsonjamaica.com).

MoBay Proper (Map pp186-7; ☎ 940-1233; Fort St) Attracting a young local crowd, this exuberant bar serves libations on the terrace and has decent Jamaican cooking. Beneath a 'chandelier' of Heineken bottles, the pool table generates

considerable heat, while dominoes are the rage with an older crowd out on the patio. On Friday night there's a fish fry and vintage reggae, and live jazz rings in each new month on the first Sunday.

Jamaican Bobsled Café (Map p184; ☎ 952-1448; 69 Gloucester Ave; ☎ 10am-2am) This watering hole makes a good-natured attempt to capitalize on everybody's favorite fish-out-of-water story – the Jamaican bobsled team immortalized in the film *Cool Runnings*, which is in a perpetual loop on a corner screen. It's a good spot for grabbing one of the many rum-based concoctions and watching the hullabaloo along the strip, a sight more engaging than watching John Candy.

El Campay Gallo (Map p184; ☎ 531-0637; 47 Gloucester Ave; ☎ closes 3am) This Cuban restaurant is also perhaps the friendliest bar in town...so much so that the bartender, who makes a truly fine mojito, will often join you for a drink.

Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville (Map p184; ☎ 952-4777; Gloucester Ave; cover after 10pm US\$5) This popular place claims to have 'put the hip into the Hip Strip'. Who would have thought that anything to do with Jimmy Buffett could obtain a cachet of cool? Ignoring the sleeping patterns of the strip's many hotel guests, outrageously loud music is pumped into the air until the moment before dawn. Four open-air bars, 15 big-screen TVs and dance floors on decks that overhang the water offer plenty of diversion until the wee hours. If that's not enough excitement, there's a waterslide to carry revelers through the plumbing to flush them ignominiously into the ocean near a floating trampoline.

Rose's Bar (Map p184; ☎ 952-9391; 39 Gloucester Ave) This two-story joint has a low-key bar with a pool table and a patio on the bottom floor. Upstairs is a disco that plays 'all styles' every night of the week.

Blue Beat Jazz & Blues Bar (Map p184; ☎ 952-4777; Gloucester Ave; ☎ closes 2am) Located next to Marguerite's restaurant, Montego Bay's first jazz and blues martini bar offers live music nightly and Asian-Caribbean fusion cuisine.

Groovy Grouper (Map p184; ☎ 952-3680; Doctor's Cave Beach Club) Its stunning beachside location is its best feature, but the cocktails cost a small fortune.

Montego Bay Yacht Club (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8038; Montego Bay Freeport) This rum-happy haunt attracts an eclectic crowd that includes crusty

old sea-salts and expats eager to talk about their new boats. Nonmembers must be signed in as guests.

Rum Jungle (Map p184; ☎ 952-4130; Coral Cliff Gaming Lounge) The atmospheric bar boasts imaginative African decor...great if you don't mind the constant background noise of slot machines. There's a nightly cabaret.

Voyage Sports Bar & Grill (Map pp186-7; Aquasol Theme Park, Walter Fletcher Beach) Overlooking the sea, with large-screen TVs, well-crafted margaritas and DJs on Tuesday night.

Brewery (Map p184; ☎ 979-2613; Miranda Ridge Plaza) This is a popular sports bar with fiercely competitive karaoke on Thursday and talented DJs on the weekends.

Beach Parties & Stage Shows

The Bob Marley Entertainment Centre (Map pp182-3; Howard Cooke Dr), sometimes called the Catherine Hall Entertainment Centre, occasionally hosts sound systems in addition to being the main venue for Reggae Sumfest.

Live reggae shows are infrequently staged on the beaches; events are publicized on posters placed around town and on IRIE FM (107.7 on your radio dial).

Nightclubs

Pier One (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2452; Howard Cooke Dr; admission US\$5, ladies free) throws a big dance party on Friday night. Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville competes with World Beat Night on Friday and DJs most other nights. The Brewery has well-known DJs who rock the house on Friday and Saturday nights, while Aquasol Theme Park occasionally stages big-name DJs; check local listings.

Other Venues

Coral Cliff Gaming Lounge (p184; ☎ 952-4130; Gloucester Ave; ☎ 24hr) Over 100 video slot machines, plus a big-screen TV and free drinks, with nightly floor shows, cabarets and/or live jazz.

Dome House (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-2571; Dome St) Dance and theater performances.

Fairfield Theatre (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-0182; Fairfield Rd) The home stage of MoBay's Little Theatre Company.

Palace Multiplex (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8359; Fairview Shopping Centre, Alice Eldemire Dr) First-run Hollywood flicks.

SHOPPING

Cashing in on the droves of tourists intent on taking home a souvenir, Gloucester Ave is lined with shops containing indistinguishable

inventories of rum, cigars, T-shirts and the like. There are three craft markets offering the usual choices as well as a few buried treasures. Duty-free shopping is also big business, offering bargains on consumer items such as jewelry, perfume and leather goods.

Some of the shopping centers around town include Chatwick Plaza, Fairview Shopping Centre and Westgate Shopping Centre (all on Map pp182-3); the West Bay Centre, MoBay Shopping Centre and Overton Plaza (Map pp186-7); and Miranda Ridge Plaza and St James Plaza (Map p184). For good arts and crafts, visit the Gallery of West Indian Art (see below).

Galleries

Gallery of West Indian Art (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-4547; www.galleryofwestindianart.com; 11 Fairfield Rd) In the suburb of Catherine Hall, this is a quality gallery that sells arts and crafts from around the Caribbean including Cuban canvases, hand-painted wooden animals, masks and handmade jewelry. Most of the work here is for sale.

Ambiente Gallery (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-7747; 10 Fort St) Fine-art prints by regional artists.

Craft Markets

For the largest selection head to the **Harbour Street Craft Market** (Map pp186-7; Harbour St; ☎ 7am-7pm), which extends for three blocks between Barnett and Market Sts. **Fort Montego Craft Market** (Map p184; ☎ 8am-7pm), behind the fort, and **Fantasy Craft Market** (Map p184; ☎ 8am-7pm), at the southern end of Gloucester Ave, offer less variety and quality.

Duty-Free Goods

City Centre Building (Map pp186-7) – a shopping plaza opposite the library on Fort St – has several duty-free shops including **Bijoux** (☎ 952-2630), **Chulani** (☎ 952-2158) and **Casa de Oro** (☎ 952-3502), all with jewelry, ceramics and so on. Most duty-free stores open at 10am.

Record Stores

Clapper's Music (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-5836; 27 Gloucester Ave) Located behind the Pork Pit, this place is the best-stocked reggae music shop in town.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air
Air Jamaica (Map p184; ☎ 922-4661, 888-359-2475, in the USA 800-523-5585; www.airjamaica.com; 9 Queen's Dr; ☎ 8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) operates jet and prop-

plane services between MoBay's Donald Sangster International Airport and Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport and Tinson Pen (US\$60 each way, several flights daily). Get tickets at the Montego Bay office or at the airport.

TimAir (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-2516, 979-1114; www.timair.net; domestic terminal, Donald Sangster International Airport), an 'air taxi' service, offers charter flights to Negril (US\$179), Ocho Rios (US\$362), Port Antonio (US\$599) and Kingston (US\$483).

See p292 for more details on domestic charter service. See p285 for information about international air service.

Boat

Cruise ships berth at the Montego Free-port, about 3km south of town. Taxis to downtown MoBay cost US\$10. See p290 for details on cruise companies serving Montego Bay.

Montego Bay Yacht Club (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-8038; fax 979-8262; Montego Freeport) has hookups, gasoline and diesel.

Car

Avis (☎ 952-0762), **Budget** (☎ 952-3838), **Hertz** (☎ 979-0438) and **Island Rental Car** (☎ 952-5771) all have offices at Donald Sangster International Airport.

Companies with offices in Montego Bay include **Efay Car Rentals** (Map pp182-3; ☎ 952-8280; Shop 6, Chatwick Plaza) and **Sunbird Car Rentals** (Map p184; ☎ 952-4975; 19 Gloucester Ave).

Public Transportation

Buses, minibuses and route taxis arrive and depart from the transportation station off Barnett St at the south end of St James St. There's an **inspector's office** (☎ 7am-6pm) inside the gate where you can ask for the departure point of the bus you're seeking.

The following approximate fares apply for minibuses and route taxis:

| Destination | Duration | Cost |
|---------------------|----------|----------|
| Duncans | 1hr | US\$2 |
| Falmouth | 30min | US\$2 |
| Kingston | 3½hr | US\$7.50 |
| Lucea | 1¼hr | US\$1.50 |
| Negril | | |
| (transfer at Lucea) | 1½hr | US\$3 |
| Ocho Rios | 2hr | US\$3.50 |

Montego Bay Metro Line (Map pp186-7; ☎ 952-5500; 19A Union St) bus service was introduced in 2001, linking MoBay with the suburbs and outlying towns (a flat fare of US\$0.35 applies).

Taxi

Jamaica Union of Travelers Association (JUTA) (☎ 952-0813) has taxi stands on Gloucester Ave at the Gloucestershire and Coral Cliff hotels and at Doctor's Cave Beach Hotel, downtown at the junction of Market and Strand Sts, and by the bus station. Identify JUTA members by the red plates and JTB decal emblazoned on their vehicles.

A list of official JUTA fares from Montego Bay is posted at the airport. At last visit, certified fares from the airport for up to four passengers were US\$40 to Falmouth, US\$100 to Negril, US\$100 to Ocho Rios, US\$200 to Kingston and US\$250 to Port Antonio.

GETTING AROUND

You can walk between any place along Gloucester Ave and downtown (it's about 2.5km from Kent Ave to Sam Sharpe Sq). You'll need a vehicle for anywhere further.

To/From the Airport

You'll find taxis waiting outside the arrivals lounge at the airport. There is an official taxi booth immediately outside customs. Your taxi driver will probably call for a porter...who'll expect a tip for taking your luggage the 10m to your car! A tourist taxi to Gloucester Ave costs US\$8. Alternatively, you can catch a minibus or route taxi from the gas station at the entrance to the airport (US\$0.50).

Scooter & Bicycle

Sun Cruise Bike Rental (Map pp182-3; ☎ 979-0614; 32 Gloucester Ave) is next to the Wexford hotel. Here you can rent bicycles for US\$20 per day with a US\$200 credit-card slip deposit. Scooters cost US\$40 to US\$45 with a US\$1000 deposit.

Public Transportation

There is no in-town bus service. Montego Bay Metro Line buses (p197) operate to the suburbs, as do minibuses and route taxis. All depart and arrive at the transportation station near the junction of St James and Barnett Sts.

Taxi

Licensed JUTA taxis cruise Gloucester Ave; they charge a steep US\$8 minimum. See left for a list of taxi stands. Published fares from Gloucester Ave are US\$8 to the airport, US\$20 to Greenwood, US\$10 to Ironshore, US\$10 to Montego Freeport and US\$10 to Rose Hall.

THE EAST COAST TOWARD RIO BUENO

East of Montego Bay the A1 hugs the coast, which here is not particularly scenic, all the way to Falmouth, 37km away.

IRONSHORE

This residential suburb about 8km east of Montego Bay is a center for deluxe resorts and villas, several of which line the shoreline of the scintillating Mahoe Bay.

The Blue Diamond Shopping Centre, near the highway at Ironshore, has a **Scotiabank** (☎ 953-8451), as well as **Diamond Drugs Pharmacy** (☎ 953-9184), **Express Laundromat** (☎ 953-8918) and **Shopper's Fair** (☎ 953-3926), a well-stocked supermarket.

In the midst of all the resorts east of Ironshore, the Half Moon Village shopping center has a National Commercial Bank and the **MoBay Hope Medical Center** (☎ 953-3649; ☎ 24hr emergency).

Activities

Most all-inclusive resorts have scuba facilities and snorkeling gear for guests. The most established provider on the north coast is **Resort Divers** (☎ 953-9699, 940-1183; www.resortdivers.com; Holiday Inn Sunspree, Rose Hall Rd; 4-/5-dive package US\$140/180, certification US\$395, 'discover scuba' package US\$90; single dive with own equipment US\$40; ☎ dives 9am, 11am, 1:30pm), which offers dives, certification courses and rental equipment.

Dive Seaworld (☎ 953-2180; diveseaworld.com; Caribblue Beach Resort; 1-tank dive US\$45; ☎ dives 9am, 11am, 12:30pm, 2pm, 6pm) also offers scuba diving and rents snorkeling gear (day use US\$30).

For horseback trail rides, you can't do better than **Rocky Point Stables** (☎ 953-2286; www.horsebackridingjamaica.com) just west of Half Moon Village. This full-blown equestrian center leads **excursions** (US\$60; ☎ 10am) into the mountains rising from the Rose Hall

Estate and a classic bareback **beach ride** (US\$60; ☎ 7am & 4pm) during which you and your horse splash straight into the turquoise sea. For the kiddies there's also a **pony ride** (US\$15; ☎ 10:30am & 3:30pm). Riding lessons cost US\$50 per 45 minutes. Transportation from your hotel can be arranged.

Rocky Point Stables also offers a **mountain-biking tour** (US\$40; ☎ 9:30am) on the Mount Zion trail through scenic countryside.

GOLF

The alluring **White Witch Golf Course** (☎ 953-2800; Ritz-Carlton Rose Hall; green fees Ritz-Carlton guests/visitors US\$189/209, US\$109 2.30-4.30pm), a 6143m par-71 championship course, is perhaps the most splendid option. Green fees cover caddy and cart. A well-situated restaurant serves lunch and dinner.

Also noteworthy is **Half Moon Golf Club** (☎ 953-2560, 953-3105), about 5km east of Ironshore; this Robert Trent Jones–designed, 6506m, par-72 course (green fees US\$150, plus US\$35 for cart rental and US\$20 for a caddy). The **David Leadbetter Golf Academy** (☎ 953-9767; fax 953-9369) is here; private lessons are offered (hour/half-day/full day US\$125/275/525).

SuperClubs Golf Club Montego Bay at Ironshore (☎ 953-2800; green fees guests/visitors US\$189/209, US\$109 after 2pm) is a links-type course (6065m and par 72) known for its blind-shot holes. Green fees cover cart and caddy.

Sleeping

Cocomo's Guest House (☎ 953-9437, 831-7584; cocomos1@aol.com; Coral Gardens; r US\$50; ☎ ☎) A no-frills place on the A1 with seven rooms with cable TV and well-worn furniture. Some share a toilet and shower. There's also a communal kitchen. Meals are prepared on request.

Caribblue Beach Resort (☎ 953-2022; www.caribbluehotel.com; Rose Hall; s US\$65-95, d US\$95-110; ☎ ☎) This fading resort on the A1 offers 22 spacious though meagerly furnished rooms with phones and TVs. Most have a balcony. It has a restaurant, the Dive Seaworld dive shop (opposite) and a wide range of water sports.

All Seasons Beach Resort (☎ 953-1448; allseasons68@hotmail.com; St James; townhouse US\$122-180; ☎ ☎ ☎) A quiet seafront property offering spacious two- and three-bedroom townhouses priced attractively for families and groups traveling en masse. Each unit has a well-equipped kitchen and cable TV. The Furnishings are a tad chintzy but overall the

buildings and grounds are attractive and well kept. Equipment for sea kayaking and snorkeling is available.

Coyaba Beach Resort & Club (☎ 953-9150, 800-237-3237; www.coyabajamaica.com; r US\$320-400; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) At Mahoe Bay, this tranquil family-run resort offers contemporary elegance. It has 50 recently refurbished luxurious rooms and junior suites furnished 'plantation style' with hand-carved beds, floral drapes and rich mahogany reproduction antiques. Some rooms have direct beach access but all feature in-room safe, telephone, satellite TV/VCR and marble bathrooms. Water sports are offered, and there's a sundeck. The elegant Vineyard Restaurant offers splendid nouvelle-Jamaican cuisine. The resort also has an ocean-side bar and grill and a second bar with a warm, clubby feel. The full-service SpaSerenity (open 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday and by appointment Sunday) is here.

Half Moon (☎ 953-2211, in the USA 800-626-0592; www.halfmoon-resort.com; s US\$355-425, d US\$400-470, ste US\$425-725, villas US\$1520-1650; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) One of the great Caribbean resorts, the Half Moon is an exclusive colonial-style affair named for its private, 1.5km-long crescent beach, behind which are 160 hectares of beautifully landscaped gardens containing an 8-hectare nature reserve. With a staff of 750, the place feels more like a utopian village than a resort. It has 420 rooms and suites with Georgian plantation-era decor, and villas that have hosted the likes of the Queen of England and Prince Ranier. Facilities include gourmet restaurants, squash courts, 13 tennis courts, equestrian center, full-service spa, conference center, championship golf course (left) and the Half Moon Village. Unlike some other Jamaican resorts, Half Moon takes its environmental responsibilities seriously; a new state-of-the-art US\$1.6 million water-treatment plant earned it the 'Green Hotel of the Year' award given by the Caribbean Hotel Association.

Ritz-Carlton Rose Hall (☎ 953-2800, in North America 800-241-3333; www.ritzcarlton.com/resorts/rose_hall_jamaica; 1 Ritz-Carlton Dr, Rose Hall; d US\$309-509, ste US\$519-2500; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) With nearly half a kilometer of prime beachfront and 427 resplendent rooms and sumptuous suites, this luxury resort mixes up-to-the-minute amenities with refined old-world charm. Rich fabrics and mahogany abound, tastefully blended with fresh tropical colors. Each unit is equipped with cable TV, three telephones,

safety deposit box, computer hook-up and ritzy marble bathrooms with terry robes. The 51 executive suites and 36 'club rooms' are regal indeed. There are six restaurants and lounges, a tennis center and two courts, a business center, championship golf course, full service spa and fitness center and full convention facilities.

ALL-INCLUSIVES

Holiday Inn Sunspree (☎ 953-2485, in North America 800-465-4329; Rose Hall; 3 nights all-inclusive d US\$1050-1200, ste US\$1350; (P) (X) (2) (3) (4) (5)) Well-run but never exciting, this all-inclusive offers 524 tastefully appointed rooms and 26 family suites in ungainly seven-story buildings around a handsome sundeck and vast free-form pool. It has special facilities for children. Mom and dad are also catered for with a fitness spa, tennis and volleyball courts, miniature golf, glass-bottom boats, a disco, and four restaurants and bars.

Sandals Royal Caribbean (☎ 953-2231; fax 953-2788; 3 nights all-inclusive d US\$1800-2250, ste US\$2400-2730; (P) (X) (2) (3) (4) (5)) This remodeled upscale couples-only all-inclusive at Mahoe Bay offers 187 rooms in six categories, all in Sandals' trademark plantation style. Its beach is relatively small but water sports, land sports, entertainment and cuisine are up to par. Highlights include Sandals Cay, with the Royal Thai restaurant (one of four restaurants) and its own swimming pool and Jacuzzi.

Eating & Drinking

Traditionally, most visitors to Ironshore dined at the upscale restaurants in the resorts, but in the last decade, a handful of new arrivals have brought some culinary zest to the area.

our pick Scotchies (☎ 953-8041; Hwy A1; ½ pound portion US\$5; (X) lunch & dinner) Widely regarded as the best jerk shack in Jamaica (hence the world), this roadside yard with thatched-covered tables doles out impeccable portions of chicken, pork and fish accompanied by sides of yams, festival or breadfruit. Cool your tongue off with a Red Stripe...and then go back for more.

Live Bait (☎ 953-8293; Hwy A1; mains US\$5-16; (X) lunch & dinner) When it opened in 2003, this bright-yellow jazz bar was an instant favorite among local hipsters. Classic jazz posters inform the proceedings, and there's a not-bad selection of wine on the offer. Outside, a breezy terrace overlooks the bay. Open late.

Country Style Bar (☎ 953-8791, 883-6214; Hwy A1; mains US\$6-15; (X) breakfast, lunch & dinner) This brand-new place looks like it's been around for eons. Owner/curator, Ansel Barrett, has filled every available nook and cranny with his delightful collection of bric-a-brac ranging from portraits of Robert Kennedy to preserved insects. The building itself is a casual masterpiece, extensively embellished with tile fragments and an offbeat assemblage of found objects. The main lounge is stylishly comfortable with a collection of vintage easy chairs and tables. A small beach looks out on an island to which you can kayak. The menu includes hearty breakfasts and a typical roster of Jamaican fare. You'll find it just east of Coyaba Beach Resort.

Akbar/Thai Gardens (953-9770; Half Moon Village; mains US\$12-26; (X) lunch & dinner) Occupying a single dining room, this venue is served by two distinct kitchens. Both are recommended for superb Indian and Thai cuisine, tremendous atmosphere, and a reasonably priced and broad menu including several vegetarian options.

Royal Stocks (☎ 953-9770; Half Moon Village; mains US\$12-26; (X) lunch & dinner) This pub affects an olde-English feel, serving pricey burgers and steaks, Jamaican favorites and an authentic steak-and-kidney pie (US\$12). TVs broadcasting English football enhance the anglophile ambience.

Sugar Mill Restaurant (☎ 953-2228; Half Moon Golf Club; mains US\$30-40; (X) 11am-11pm) Beautifully situated overlooking the green expanses of a golf course and adjacent to a 200-year-old working watermill, this is a fine restaurant serving seafood, steak and Jamaican specialties that are as superb as the setting. Reservations are required.

Entertainment

Bob Marley Experience (☎ 953-3449; www.reggaeexperience.com; Half Moon Village; admission free) Shows hourly screenings of an engaging documentary on Marley's life in a 68-seat theater.

Blue Diamond Cinema (☎ 953-9020) Screens the latest releases in the Blue Diamond Shopping Centre.

Shopping

The Half Moon Village is an upscale and pleasant shopping center with pristine grounds that has become a destination in itself for guests at area resorts.

THE WHITE WITCH OF ROSE HALL

John Rose Palmer, grandnephew of John Palmer, who built Rose Hall, married Anne May Patterson in 1820. Although the young woman was half English and half Irish, legend has it that she was raised in Haiti, where she learned voodoo. Legend also says that Anne May was a murderous vixen. The lascivious lady allegedly practiced witchcraft, poisoned John Palmer, stabbed a second husband and strangled her third. Her fourth husband escaped, leaving her to dispose of several slave lovers before she was strangled in her bed.

This famous legend is actually based on a series of distorted half-truths. The inspiration for the story, originally told in writing in 1868 by John Costello, editor of the *Falmouth Post*, was Rose Palmer, the initial lady of Rose Hall. She did have four husbands, the last being John Palmer, to whom she was happily wed for 23 years (she died before her husband, at age 72). Anne Palmer, wife of John Rose Palmer, died peacefully in 1846 after a long, loving marriage.

In 1929 novelist HG DeLisser developed the fable into a marvelous suspenseful romance, *The White Witch of Rose Hall*.

You will find that the A1 is lined with makeshift stalls selling wood carvings and crafts.

Getting There & Away

A great number of minibuses and route taxis ply the A1 road, traveling to and from Donald Sangster International Airport and Montego Bay's transportation center, Gloucester Ave and downtown. You'll pay about US\$1 to travel from MoBay to Ironshore.

ROSE HALL TO GREENWOOD

East of Ironshore the A1 dips and rises past coastal scrubland, residential estates and several colonial-era great houses.

Sights

ROSE HALL GREAT HOUSE

This **mansion** (☎ 953-2323; rosehall@cwjamaica.com; adult/child under 12 US\$20/10; (X) 9am-6pm), with its commanding hilltop position 3km east of Ironshore, is the most famous great house in Jamaica.

Construction of the imposing house was begun by George Ashe in the 1750s and was completed in the 1770s by John Palmer, a wealthy plantation owner. Palmer and his wife Rose (after whom the house was named) hosted some of the most elaborate social gatherings on the island. Slaves destroyed the house in the Christmas Rebellion of 1831 and it was left in ruins for over a century. In 1966 the three-story building was restored to haughty grandeur.

Beyond the Palladian portico the house is a bastion of 18th-century style, with a magnificent mahogany staircase and doors, and silk wall fabric that is a reproduction of the original designed for Marie Antoinette during

the reign of Louis XVI. *Don't touch!* Many of the antiques are the works of leading English master carpenters of the day.

Much of the attraction is the legend of Annie Palmer, a multiple murderer said to haunt the house (see the boxed text, above). Her bedroom upstairs is decorated in crimson silk brocades. The cellars now house an English-style pub and a well-stocked gift shop. There's also a snack bar.

Tours of the house are mandatory and commence every 15 minutes till 5:15pm.

GREENWOOD GREAT HOUSE

This marvelous **estate** (☎ 953-1077; www.greenwoodgreathouse.com; admission US\$14; (X) 9am-6pm) sits high on a hill 8km east of Rose Hall, and is a far more intimate property. Construction began on the two-story, stone-and-timber structure in 1780 by the Honorable Richard Barrett, whose family arrived in Jamaica in the 1660s and amassed a fortune from its sugar plantations. (Barrett was a cousin of the famous English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning.) In an unusual move for his times, Barrett educated his slaves.

Unique among local plantation houses, Greenwood survived unscathed during the slave rebellion of Christmas 1831. The original library is still intact, as are oil paintings, Dresden china, a court jester's chair and plentiful antiques, including a mantrap used for catching runaway slaves. Among the highlights is the rare collection of musical instruments, containing a barrel organ and two polyphones, which the guide is happy to bring to life. The view from the front balcony down to the sea is quite stunning.

After exploring the house you can drink a cold one at the atmospheric **Level Crossing** (☎ 953-1077), a bar situated near the entrance to the house.

Buses traveling between Montego Bay and Falmouth will drop you off anywhere along the A1; ask to be let off across from the Total gas station on the seaside of the road and take the road up the hill. It's a good 20-minute slog to the top.

ROSE HALL BEACH PARK

This private **beach** (☎ 680-0969; adult/child US\$6/3; ☎ 9am-5pm) 3km east of the Wyndham Rose Hall Resort is a white-sand paradise offering water sports including PADI-certified diving, banana-boat rides, jet-skiing and parasailing. There's a restaurant and bar.

Activities

Wyndham Rose Hall Resort & Country Club (☎ 953-2650) has a 6033m par-72 golf course known for its superb coastal vistas. Green fees are US\$135 including cart rental and a caddy.

Sleeping & Eating

Dunn's Villa Resort Hotel (☎ 953-7459, in the USA 718-882-3917; www.dunnsvillaresort.com; Cornwall; d from US\$85, incl breakfast US\$113; P ☎ ☎) In the hills, in the village of Cornwall 3km inland (follow the signs from the highway), this well-kept, homey hotel has 11 rooms with satellite TV and wide balconies. The spacious public areas are minimally but attractively furnished. There's a Jacuzzi on a raised sundeck. The hosts rent mountain bikes (US\$8) and offer lunch, dinner and weekend brunch poolside.

Royal Reef Hotel & Restaurant (☎ 953-1700; www.royalreefja.com; r US\$75-177; P ☎ ☎) On the A1 at Greenwood, this gracious, modern Mediterranean-style hotel has 19 rooms. Its decor includes classical wrought-iron furnishings and exquisite tropical murals. An elevated amoeba-shaped pool is inset in the terra-cotta terrace, which has an outside grill overlooking a tiny beach overgrown by mangroves. The excellent continental cuisine, mostly prepared with Jamaican flavor, is served both alfresco and in an intimate dining room (meals US\$20 to US\$35).

Wyndham Rose Hall Resort & Country Club (☎ 953-2650, in the USA 800-996-3426, in the UK 020-8367-5175; www.wyndham.com; d US\$235-315, 3 nights all-inclusive d US\$1330-1450; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This 488-room resort just west of Rose Hall Great

House offers both all-inclusive and traditional pay-as-you-go lodging. Fronted by a beautiful 300m-long beach, the two unsightly highrise buildings contain spacious rooms with one king-size or two queen-size beds. The amenities include six restaurants, four bars, three pools, an impeccable 18-hole golf course and six tennis courts. Services for families include a kid's club (open from 9am to 5pm) and nannies for hire. A major water park – Sugar Mill Falls – has three terraced pools, an 85m waterslide, meandering canals complete with waterfalls, and the obligatory swim-up bar.

White Witch's Hideaway Pub & Grill (☎ 953-2323; Rose Hall Great House; meals US\$3-7) An atmospheric dungeonlike pub beneath the Rose Hall Great House that once served as a dungeon of sorts. The barkeeps will tell you all about it in gruesome detail. It serves typical Jamaican meals, plus fish and chips, sandwiches and other snacks.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses and route taxis ply the A1 road. You'll pay about US\$2 to travel from MoBay to Rose Hall.

FALMOUTH

pop 9500

Falmouth's early history is one of sugar and slavery. Few other towns in Jamaica have retained their original architecture to quite the same degree as Falmouth, which has a faded Georgian splendor. The city, 37km east of Montego Bay, has been the capital of Trelawny parish since 1790.

To walk among the cut-stone warehouses at the eastern end of town – places where human beings were inventoried, awaiting sale – is a disquieting experience. Plans for a monument and museum devoted to slavery and its legacy continue to inch forward; in the meantime, the spooky old buildings bear silent witness.

There have been several plans to restore the town, but very little effort has been undertaken and many historic buildings are now decrepit. However, several individuals have done fine restoration work, as has the **Georgian Society** (☎ 952-4089; fax 979-8013).

Wednesday and Saturday are market days, when everything from bootleg underpants to fresh ginger to homemade root tonics are up for grabs. Much of Trelawny parish shows up for good deals on produce, baby chick-

CHANGING THE COASTLINE

Formerly ignored by developers, the stretch of coastline between Falmouth and Rio Bueno has caught their rapacious eyes over the past decade. Indeed, as the A1 heads east, there are spots where the sea struggles to peak through the mass of hotels, resorts and villas under construction.

Following the May 2005 ground-breaking for a US\$400 million water project on the Martha Brae River, a period of unprecedented development began. East of Falmouth a US\$1.2 billion 'resort colony' called Harmony Cove was planned to include six hotels, two golf courses and 200 posh villas. Another behemoth project by a Spanish hotel chain, the Oyster Bay Resort, broke ground to add a whopping 1700 rooms.

Falmouth itself was bound to be affected. In 2008, construction began in the port on a marina for cruise ships, which are expected to begin arriving in the winter of 2009. The influx of cruise-ship day-trippers, disembarking for a few hours of souvenir shopping while en route between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, will dilute the town's frayed charm. To accommodate them, the development of Hampden Wharf is expected to include, among other things, a concert hall, restaurants and duty-free shopping malls. There's still no word on whether the long-proposed slavery museum will be part of the complex.

Further controversy surrounds the 10,000-seat Greenfield Stadium, which was completed in time to host the opening ceremony for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. Built with a loan from the Chinese government that stipulated only Chinese engineers and workers could be employed on its construction – quite a blow given the scarcity of jobs in the area – it has been largely out of use since the tournament. Perhaps it will be revived for the cruise-shippers.

ens, yam sprouts, coffee beans, bars of soap and...you name it.

History

Falmouth was laid out in 1790 and named for the English birthplace of Sir William Trelawny, then the governor of the island. The streets were planned as a grid and patriotically named after members of the royal family and English heroes. Planters erected their townhouses using Georgian elements adapted to Jamaican conditions.

With its advantageous position, Falmouth became the busiest port on the north coast. Outbound trade consisted mainly of hogsheads (large casks) of wet sugar and puncheons (casks) of rum, while slaves were off-loaded for sale in the slave market.

The town's fortunes degenerated when the sugar industry went into decline during the 19th century and it was dealt a further blow with the advent of steamships, which the harbor was incapable of handling. By 1890 the port was essentially dead. The city has struggled along ever since.

Old-timers still wax poetic about the filming of the Steve McQueen movie *Papillon*, which was shot in Falmouth in 1972. Locals were hired en masse for the production. McQueen is remembered by a de facto tour

guide named Moses as 'a nice guy who smoked a lot of cigarettes.'

Orientation & Information

The A1 from Montego Bay runs along Duke St into Water Sq, the town's node. It then zigzags east, continuing to Ocho Rios. Market St, one block west of Water Sq, runs south to Martha Brae and Good Hope.

Ambulance (☎ 954-3250)

Cable & Wireless (☎ 954-5910; 23 Market St; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Telephone and fax services.

Cambio King (☎ 954-4082; cnr Market & Duke Sts) Currency exchange at good rates. Located upstairs from Marguerite's Supermarket.

Falmouth Hospital (☎ 954-3250; Rodney St) Emergency services.

Island Internet (☎ 954-7936; 6 Thorpe St; per 30 min/1 hr US\$1.75/2.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat) High-speed internet and overseas calls for US\$0.20 per minute.

Library (☎ 954-3306; Rodney St; internet access per 30 min US\$1)

National Commercial Bank (☎ 954-3232; Water Sq) **Police station** (☎ 119, 954-3222; cnr Rodney St & Market St)

Post office (☎ 954-3050; cnr Cornwall St & Market St) **Scotiabank** (☎ 954-3357; cnr Market St & Lower Harbour St) Scotiabank also operates an ATM in the shopping center near the eastern edge of town.

Trelawny Pharmacy (☎ 954-3189; 19 Market St)

Sights & Activities

The best place to orient yourself is **Water Sq**, at the east end of Duke St. Named for an old circular stone reservoir dating to 1798, the square (actually a triangle) has a fountain topped by an old waterwheel. Today it forms a traffic roundabout.

The market, on the east side of Water Sq, was once the site of slave auctions. The current structure was built in 1894 and named for two of Queen Victoria's grandsons. Today, as the **Albert George Shopping & Historical Centre**, it still functions as a market with craft stores and contains a very small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) with a motley collection of colonial-era artifacts.

One block east of Walter Sq is Seaboard St and the grandiose Georgian **courthouse** in Palladian style, fronted by a double curling staircase and Doric columns, with cannons to the side. The current building, dating from 1926, is a replica of the original 1815 structure that was destroyed by fire. The town council presides here.

Some 50m east along Seaboard St, **Tharp House** sags from age yet is still one of the best examples of an elegant period townhouse. Today housing the tax office, it was formerly the residence of John Tharp, at one time the largest slaveholder in Jamaica.

Continue along Seaboard St to the **Phoenix Foundry**, built in 1810 at the corner of Tharpe and Lower Harbour Sts, with its strange-looking conical roof. Behind the foundry, guarded by locked gates, is the **Central Wharf** where slaves were brought ashore, to be replaced in the holds by sugar, rum and other victuals born of their back-breaking labor. The crumbling warehouses are on their last legs. The property has been purchased with plans to transform it into a visitors center chronicling the barbarous history of slavery. At the time of writing, there's still no word when the museum might open.

Retrace your steps to Water Sq and cut down Cornwall St. One of the most stately edifices is the restored **Baptist Manse** (nr Market & Cornwall Sts), formerly the residence of non-conformist Baptist preacher William Knibb, who was instrumental in lobbying for passage of the Abolition Bill that ended slavery. The porticoed **post office** is adjacent.

At the bottom of colonnaded Market St stands the **Methodist Manse**, a stone-and-wood building with wrought-iron balconies and

Adam friezes above the doorways. A diversion along Trelawny St leads one block west to **Barrett House**, the handsome restored former home of wealthy planter Edward Barrett.

On Rodney St, which runs west along the shore, is the historic **police station**, constructed in 1814. The prison here once contained a 'treadmill,' a huge wooden cylinder with steps on the outside. Shackled above the mill, slaves had to keep treading the steps as the cylinder turned. If they faltered, the revolving steps battered their bodies and legs. The ancient lockups are still in use.

On July 31, 1838, slaves gathered outside **William Knibb Memorial Church** (nr King & George Sts) for an all-night vigil, awaiting midnight and then the dawn of full freedom, when slave shackles, a whip and an iron collar were symbolically buried in a coffin. Knibb and his wife are buried in the graveyard, which also holds a memorial to him erected by emancipated slaves.

The oldest extant building in town is **St Peter's Anglican Church**, built in 1785 and enlarged in 1842, lies four blocks west along Duke St. The graveyard tombstones are spookily sun-bleached, like bones.

Sleeping & Eating

Greenside Villa Inn (☎ 954-3127, 865-6894; studios US\$34-40, plus each additional person US\$6) This inn is about 3km west of Falmouth and features studio apartments. The rooms are simple but spacious and clean and have private bathrooms and ceiling fans. The units with kitchenettes have small gas stoves. Meals are cooked on request.

Falmouth Resort (☎ 954-3391; 22 Newton St; r US\$35; ☎ ☎) The only accommodation in the center of town. If you want to get a feel for bustling Jamaican downtown life, this is a good option. It's not really a resort in the classic sense, but it does have 12 clean, modest rooms with private bathrooms and cable TV, and welcoming, helpful staff. Meals are prepared on request. Take an upstairs room for privacy and a view.

Golden Pagoda (☎ 617-5482; 24 Duke St; mains US\$3-7; ☎ lunch & dinner) On the main road west of Water Sq, Golden Pagoda serves inexpensive Chinese and is a good place for people-watching.

Peter's Highway Bar (☎ 836-8872; mains US\$4-6; ☎ lunch & dinner) On the A1 heading east out of town, an airy roadside rum dispen-

sary and kitchen that doles out good jerk chicken and pork. Welcoming travelers are the flags of many nations hand-painted on the walls, along with a proverb 'Who God Bless No Man Curse' above the image of Bob Marley.

Irie Life (☎ 454-3094; 2-4 Tharpe St; mains US\$4-7; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Thu, 7am-4pm Fri) A good choice of vegetarian and seafood dishes as well as natural juices.

de Nest Lounge (☎ 617-5308; Tharpe St; ☎ 4pm-dose) An engaging watering hole next to Irie Life, this is a comfortable air-conditioned pub and disco that occasionally stages live acts.

Spicy Nice Bakery (☎ 954-3197; Water Sq) Spice is nice at this bakery, where you can buy fresh baked breads, pastries and spicy meat and vegetable patties.

Getting There & Away

Buses, minibuses and route taxis arrive and depart on opposite sides of Water Sq for Martha Brae (US\$50), Montego Bay (US\$1.25) and Ocho Rios (US\$2.50).

MARTHA BRAE

Situated on a small hill and nearly encircled by the emerald-green waters of the scenic Martha Brae River, this small village 3km due south of Falmouth is justly famous for rafting. The river rises at Windsor Caves (p214) in the Cockpit Country and spills into the sea at Glistening Waters, east of Falmouth.

Activities

RAFTING

A rafting trip down a 4.8km stretch of the Martha Brae River is a quiet thrill. The journey takes 90 minutes on 9m-long bamboo rafts, each carrying one or two passengers, poled by a skilled guide. The upper reaches tumble at a good pace before slowing further downriver, where you stop at 'Tarzan's Corner' for a swing and swim in a calm pool. At the end, after being plied with rum punch, you'll be driven back to your car or tour bus.

Trips begin from Rafters Village, about 1.5km south of Martha Brae. There you'll find an itinerant mento band and a picnic area, bar, restaurant, swimming pool, bathrooms, changing rooms and a secure parking lot. Your captain will pause on request so that you can take a dip or climb a tree.

You can book your adventure at Rafters Village or with the **River Raft Ltd** (☎ 952-0889,

940-6398; www.jamaicarrafting.com; 66 Claude Clarke Ave, Montego Bay; per raft 1-2 people US\$60, with hotel transfer per person US\$50) office in Montego Bay. You can also book the trip in advance from tour desks at area hotels. Remember to tip your raft guide.

Getting There & Away

From Martha Brae a well-maintained road winds through the river gorge to Sherwood. Another rougher road leads southwest to Good Hope Estate (p213) and links with a rough road that leads west from Sherwood to the Queen of Spains Valley (p211).

Minibuses and route taxis regularly run to Martha Brae from Falmouth (US\$0.75).

GLISTENING WATERS

At night, Glistening Waters (also known as Luminous Lagoon), a large bay at Rock about 1.6 km east of Falmouth, boasts a singular charm – it glows an eerie green when the water is disturbed. The green glow is due to the presence of microorganisms that produce photochemical reactions when disturbed. The concentrations of microorganisms is so thick that fish swimming by look like green lanterns.

Half-hour boat trips are offered from **Glistening Waters Marina** (☎ 954-3229, 888-991-9901; per person US\$15; ☎ 7-9pm).

Sights & Activities

BEAR CAY & WORLD BEACH

A curlicue spit, **Bear Cay**, hooks around the north side of the bay. **World Beach**, the lonesome 3km-long, white-sand beach on the north side, has long been appreciated by savvy travelers for its good snorkeling, sunbathing and solitude. At the time of research, 75% of Bear Cay remained undeveloped. Hawksbill sea turtles – an endangered species – are regularly sighted coming to shore to lay eggs in the deep, soft sand. The gorgeous beach, lined with casuarina pines, is an unheralded Jamaican treasure that ought to qualify for protected-area status. But change is coming fast to this area. Construction is apparently set to begin on a 1700-room resort, and few here are speculating on the fate of the turtles.

You can access World Beach from Time 'n Place, or you can rent a boat at Glistening Waters Marina or Fisherman's Inn; picnic meals are available.

SPORT FISHING & BOATING

The river mouth in Glistening Waters is one of the few places in Jamaica that still offers good **fishing** for tarpon, known as the 'silver bullet' for its feisty defense on a line. No license is required.

In Rock, next to Herbie's Restaurant (a local favorite for succulent roast fish), you can charter a **fishing excursion** (☎ 422-4439; half-/full-day charter US\$250/400, drop-line per hr US\$40, minimum 2 hr) with 'Kojak' Mowatt and hit the waters in search of marlin, kingfish and mahi mahi.

Glistening Waters Marina charters spiffy sport-fishing **boats** (half-day from US\$380) with captain and crew.

Sleeping

our pick **Time 'n Place** (☎ /fax 954-4371, 843-3625; www.mytimenplace.com; cottages without/with air-con US\$75/80; Ⓟ Ⓜ) This delightful spot has three quaint all-hardwood cottages (each housing up to three people) for rent right on World Beach. The cottages have louvered windows, hot water, coffee makers and radios. The rustic beach bar and restaurant is a truly great place to hang out – it was a setting in the movie *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* and has been the backdrop for many a photo shoot. Owner Tony knows about a secret local cavern – he calls it the 'Bottomless Blue Therapeutic Cave' – where you can swim beneath stalagmites by candlelight. Make friends with him and he just might take you there.

Fisherman's Inn (☎ 954-3427; fax 954-3078; s/d US\$120/125; Ⓟ Ⓜ) This well-run, charming hotel at Rock Wharf near Glistening Waters, 2km east of Falmouth, offers 12 spacious and pleasingly furnished rooms with big bathrooms and private patios. There are two restaurants. Water sports and Glistening Waters tours are offered.

ALL-INCLUSIVES

FDR Pebbles (☎ 617-2500, in North America 800-337-5437; www.fdrholidays.com/pebbles; 4 nights all-inclusive family of 4 US\$1300-1500; Ⓟ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) A good sense of fun pervades this efficiently run, attractive all-inclusive family resort right on the beach. Walkways lined with frangipani, hibiscus and bougainvillea, course through the grounds, while the pine and cedar two-story units feature 96 suites. Each has a king and day bed, TV, telephone, mini-refrigerator and balcony. Facilities include a full range of water sports, three restaurants, fitness

center, tennis, disco and a panoply of facilities and activities for children. A well-trained group of nannies looks after the kids.

Starfish Trelawny Beach & Fun Resort (☎ 954-2450, in North America 800-467-8737; www.superclubs.com/brand_starfish/resort_trelawny; 4 nights all-inclusive family of 4 US\$1300-1756, cottage US\$1540-1740; Ⓟ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ) Also focusing on families but less visually appealing than FDR Pebbles, this high-rise, 350-room all-inclusive resort offers predictably appointed rooms, five restaurants, tennis courts, circus-skating rink, gym, rock-climbing wall, circus workshop and a full range of water sports. Kids' facilities include a castle with a moat for a pool.

Eating

Time 'n Place (☎ /fax 954-4371; www.mytimenplace.com; meals US\$5-15; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This is a fun and funky beachside hut with tables on the sand, swings and hammocks at the bar, and charming service. Take your pick from burgers with fries to an array of Jamaican dishes, including coconut shrimp and grilled garlic lobster. The proprietor's favorite cocktail – a concoction blended from rum cream, Tía Maria and vodka – is called The Beyond, and that's just where it takes you.

Fisherman's Inn (☎ 954-3427; mains from US\$10; ☺ 7am-10:30pm) Offers stylish dining indoors or on the terrace overlooking Glistening Waters. The menu ranges from salads, seafood and steaks to Creole specialties such as brown stew.

Glistening Waters Marina Restaurant & Lounge (☎ 954-3229; mains US\$11-31; ☺ 8am-11pm) A clean, modern place that offers Jamaican and continental fare, from onion rings and steamed fish to lobster and pepper steak. It has killer cocktails in a tall sundae glass. Diners on a budget should consider the jerk center next door.

Getting There & Away

Minibuses and route taxis travel the A1 road to and from Falmouth (US\$0.50).

DUNCANS

This small town on a hillside 11km east of Falmouth is centered on an old stone clock tower in the middle of a three-way junction. The new highway now diverts ongoing traffic around the town; keep watch for the turnoff from the A1. Minibuses and route taxis pick up and drop off passengers to/from Duncans at the clock tower in the town center.

Kettering Baptist Church, built in 1893, commemorates William Knibb, a Baptist missionary and a leading abolitionist who founded an emancipation village for freed slaves here in 1840.

During his childhood, singer and activist Harry Belafonte was a frequent visitor to the **Sober Religion** (☎ /fax 954-2202; r with fan/air-con US\$18/30; Ⓟ Ⓜ Ⓜ), an interesting hotel situated on the old road that enters Duncans from the west. The lobby and lounge are cheerfully atmospheric with framed photos of classic movie stars, a small bar with table tennis and a pool table, and plenty of books lying about. The rooms are a little threadbare but are priced accordingly. Less-expensive rooms have a fan but lack TV and hot water. Breakfast is prepared to order.

The personable Victoria has recently returned to Jamaica from a long furlough in Connecticut to fulfill her dream of constructing a great house in her image **Victoria's Villa B&B** (☎ 954-9353, 805-5092, in the USA 256-782-2787; s incl breakfast & dinner US\$60, d incl breakfast & dinner US\$80-85; Ⓟ) This brand-new, imposing house stands out among the as-yet undeveloped lands to the west of the Silver Sands in Duncans Bay. The decor reflects the tastes and personality of the owner. Five large guest rooms with fans have cable TV and balconies but no phone. They can get a little warm. The grounds are peaceful and exuberantly gardened.

Silver Sands Villa Resort (☎ 954-2001, 888-745-7245; www.silversands-jamaica.com; cottage 1/2 bedroom from US\$130/230, villas per week US\$1300-2500; Ⓟ Ⓜ Ⓜ), 1.5km west of Duncans, has more than 40 upscale one- to five-bedroom villas and cottages spread over 90 hectares. The cottages require a minimum three nights booking. The enclosed estate backs a private 300m-long, white-sand beach. Each unique villa is privately owned and individually decorated, and has a cook, housekeeper and gardener. Most have TVs and their own pools. Weekly rates offer savings and include airport transfers. Facilities include a bar-grill.

Just west of the Silver Sands is the public **Jacob Taylor Beach**, where you'll find a small, mellow craft market and a rum shop.

RIO BUENO

Rio Bueno is a tumbledown fishing village where fishermen still tend their nets and their lobster pots in front of ramshackle Georgian cut-stone buildings. These are featured in the

1964 movie *A High Wind in Jamaica*, which was filmed here.

The town, 52km east of Montego Bay, is set on the west side of a deep, narrow bay that may be the site where Columbus first set foot in Jamaica on May 4, 1494, after anchoring his caravels *Nina*, *San Juan* and *Cardera*.

Sites of interest include the 18th-century ruins of **Fort Dundas**, an **Anglican church** that dates to 1833 and a **Baptist church** erected in 1901 to replace another destroyed in anti-missionary riots of the abolitionist era.

Minibuses and route taxis pick up and drop off passengers along the A1 as it passes through town. The stretch of coastal road from here to Discovery Bay is known as the Queen's Hwy.

Activities

If riding a horse bareback into the sea sounds like your cup of tea, **Braco Stables** (☎ 954-0185; www.bracostables.com; per person with/without transportation US\$70/60; ☺ rides 10:30am & 2:30pm) offers excellent group rides through sugarcane country that culminate in a bareback ride into the turquoise surf. The ride ends with refreshments at the Braco Great House (clothing required). The stables are well signed from the main road.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Rio Bueno (☎ /fax 954-0048; Main St; s/d/ste US\$95/120/250; Ⓟ Ⓜ) Converted from a Georgian wharfside warehouse, this old place is infused with a unique ambience. The hotel is a museum of Joe James' artwork (and includes a gallery of his exuberant paintings and carvings). It has 20 rooms, most with French doors opening onto balconies that overlook the bay. The huge, atmospheric suite has hardwood floors, open-plan layout and lots of light. Rates for double rooms and the suite include breakfast.

Lobster Bowl Restaurant (☎ 954-0048; Hotel Rio Bueno, Main St; 3-course dinner US\$15-35, lunch US\$7-19; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This spacious restaurant has an old-time nightclub feel and features the artwork of Joe James. As the name suggests, lobster and seafood figure prominently on the menu. The property also includes Joe's Bar, with tons of character.

Rio Brac Rest Stop (☎ 954-0269; Queens Hwy; meals US\$5-10; ☺ from 7am) An upscale roadside restaurant and jerk center about 400m east of Grand Lido Braco Village Resort.

THE WEST COAST TOWARD TRYALL ESTATE

West from Montego Bay the A1 follows the coast, offering little in the way of nice beaches or attractions. Eight kilometers west of town the road crosses the mouth of the Great River, then sweeps past Round Hill Hotel & Villa and, further along the A1, Tryall Estate and the world championship Tryall Golf Course.

HOPEWELL

This small wayside village 15km west of Montego Bay has a bustling daily market; on Saturday the streets are cacophonous with the sounds of higglers from the hills.

If you've got money to burn – or a sky-high limit on your credit card – time spent at the 45-hectare **Round Hill Hotel & Villas** (☎ 956-7050, in the USA 800-972-2159; www.roundhilljamaica.com; d US\$550, ste US\$600-900, villa US\$1200-3700, daily meal plan per person US\$90-110; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) resort is worth every penny. Having celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2003, this hotel still commands a prestige and allure that few others can match. The 36 rooms are in the beachfront Pineapple House, redesigned by Ralph Lauren. With access to an infinity pool, each has a kitchen and is exquisitely decorated with antique furniture and stately four-poster bamboo beds. The 28 privately owned villas are furnished to their owners' tastes – Lauren owns one. Many have private pools. Facilities include a gym, tennis courts, water sports (including scuba diving that's open to the public), a beauty salon and a wellness center, which offers all manner of therapies. Live jazz is offered thrice weekly.

Also at Round Hill, **Georgian Dining Pavilion & Almond Tree Terrace** (lunch/dinner from US\$12/28) serves continental and Jamaican dishes. Dining on the terrace is a romantic indulgence and worth the splurge for the setting. Afternoon tea is a bargain at US\$3. Nonguests should call ahead.

Sports Club Restaurant & Bar (meals US\$6-11), beside the entrance to Round Hill, offers Jamaican fare served in modestly elegant surroundings.

TRYALL ESTATE

The **Tryall Water Wheel**, 5km west of Hopewell, stands amid the ruins of the old Tryall sugar

plantation. Much of the estate, including the huge wheel (beside the A1) that drove the cane-crushing mill, was destroyed in the slave rebellion of Christmas 1831 (see the boxed text, p188). Restored to working condition in the late 1950s, the wheel is still turned by water carried by a 3km-long aqueduct from the Flint River.

The hilltop great house is today the hub of one of Jamaica's most exclusive resort properties: the Tryall Club, built atop the remains of a small fort that is still guarded by cannons. The great house and 890-hectare resort complex are closed to nonguests.

Activities

The championship, 6328m par-71 **Tryall Golf Course** (☎ 956-5660) is one of the world's finest courses. Green fees for guests cost US\$40 in summer, US\$65 in winter (nonguests pay US\$125 year-round). Caddies cost US\$15 and cart rental costs US\$27.

Sleeping

Tryall Club (☎ 956-5660, in North America 800-336-4571; www.tryallclub.com; 1-bedroom ste US\$400-500, 2-bedroom ste US\$675-860, 2-bedroom villa US\$860, 7-bedroom villa US\$1480-1700; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒ ☒) Magnificently situated amid 890 hectares of lush hillside greenery, this old hilltop great house offers 13 villa suites, each fully staffed and including kitchen, living room, dining room and oversized marble bathroom. A new wing includes 52 gracious junior suites. More than 55 privately owned, sumptuous estate villas are scattered throughout the estate, each uniquely decorated by individual owners and staffed with a cook, housekeeper and gardener. Other facilities include a gourmet restaurant and bar, tennis, water sports and golf.

INLAND: SOUTH OF MONTEGO BAY

The hill country inland of MoBay offers working plantations, great houses, eco-resorts and a village of poor white farmers that is one of Jamaica's strangest anomalies. Most points of interest are reached either via the B8, which winds south from Reading and crosses a broad upland plateau before dropping onto the plains of Westmoreland, or the B6, which

leads southeast from Montpelier (10km south of Reading).

The southeast quarter of St James parish culminates in the wild Cockpit Country.

LETHE

This small village is the starting point for raft trips on the Great River. The turnoff for Lethe is 3km south of Reading off the B8; signs show the way. If you pass the sign for Rocklands Bird Feeding Station, you've gone too far. The graceful stone bridge spanning the Great River was built in 1828. The overgrown remains of an old sugar mill stand on the riverbank.

Driving west to Lethe, about 3km from the B8, you'll arrive at a Y-junction. The fork to the left leads to Lethe; the one to the right leads to **Nature Village Farm** (☎ 912-0281; ☹ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-11pm Sun), a farm turned family resort and restaurant that offers fishing and other attractions.

Sights & Activities

A perfect spot to take the kids, **Animal Farm** (☎ 953-3583; animalfarm@mailcity.com; adult/child US\$4/2.50; ☹ tours by arrangement Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) at Copse, 3km west of Lethe, is dedicated to aviculture and has hundreds of birds. It also has a petting zoo, donkey rides, a playground, hiking and birding.

Rhea's World (☎ 956-4920; lethe@cwjamaica.com), on the west bank of the river on the north side of Lethe, features a water garden and mini-botanical gardens where anthuriums are grown for export. Alas, they're not particularly appealing. A jitney tour (US\$6 to US\$11) leads into the adjacent banana plantation. More-adventurous souls seeking an authentic bush experience can hire a guide (US\$10) and hike into the hills. A restaurant provides hot lunches (US\$12).

Mountain Valley Rafting (☎ 956-4920), headquartered at Lethe Estate, offers tranquil one-hour river trips on the Great River from Lethe. You're piloted 3km downstream aboard long, narrow bamboo rafts poled by an expert rafter, who waxes poetic about the birds, flora and fauna as you glide along. Trips cost US\$80 for two passengers (children under 12 are half price), including lunch and transfers. For an extra US\$15 per person, you'll get lunch, a plantation tour and a fresh piña colada at the end of the excursion. If you show up under your own steam, you'll pay US\$40 for the raft trip alone.

Lethe Estate can arrange special river-raft wedding celebrations where the bride, groom and guests are carried down the river in specially decorated rafts to the plantation.

Sleeping

Lethe Estate (☎ 956-4920; letheestate@cwjamaica.com; ste per person US\$65; P ☑ ☒ ☒) Located on resplendently gardened grounds about 1km from the town center. It's a terrifically relaxing place that offers spacious two- and three-bedroom suites with balconies that overlook the river. The suites are painted in earthy tones, are nicely decorated and come with a fully equipped kitchen and satellite TV. Cooking and nanny services are available.

ROCKLANDS BIRD FEEDING STATION

Rocklands (☎ 952-2009; admission US\$10; ☹ 9am-5pm) is a favorite of birders. They have flocked here since 1958, when it was founded by Lisa Salmon, who tamed and trained over 20 bird species to come and feed from your hand (over 140 bird species have been recorded here). Every songbird and hummingbird on the island seems to know about the place. You'll see ground doves, orange and banana quits, the Jamaican woodpecker (a flicker) and oriole, and, of course, hummingbirds, including the deep purple Jamaican mango hummingbird and the ever-popular 'doctorbird.'

The 'station' was also the longtime home of Miss Salmon. She went to bird heaven in 2000 but her replacement, Fritz Beckford, is also a passionate champion of birds. He has a beatific air about him; he'll pour birdseed into your hand or provide you with a sugar-water feeder with which to tempt birds. Guests sit agog as hummingbirds streak in to hover like tiny helicopters before finally perching on their outstretched fingers. Fritz estimates that his feathered friends devour nearly 900kg of seed each year...so much for 'bird-sized' appetites. If you need more bird action, Fritz leads tours from the house into the bush (US\$20 per person).

A tremendous way to enjoy the bird feeding station is to spend the night in **Rocklands Bird Sanctuary Cottage** (☎ 952-2009; whole house per night US\$120; P ☑ ☒), a nicely appointed three-bedroom, two-bathroom home that sleeps up to six people. The house has a fully equipped kitchen and dining area. One of the bedrooms has a Jacuzzi tub.

Just up the road from Rockland's is **Allspice Villa** (☎ 912-3623; www.allspicevilla.com; Rock Pleasant Mt; ste US\$400; 📍 🚗 🚰), a glorious recent addition to the area's thriving villa rental scene. This reclusive and romantic getaway has it all: jaw-dropping panoramic views, a lovely pool and spacious Jacuzzi on the veranda, a state-of-the-art kitchen and even a pool table. Rates include a full breakfast; other meals are made by arrangement. The owners, who live on the property, require a three-day minimum stay and advance reservations. Airport transfers and island transportation are offered.

By car, Rocklands is a 30-minute drive from Montego Bay. Take the B8 (Long Hill Rd) from Reading toward Anchovy; turn left about 200m south of the signed turnoff for Lethe on Rock Pleasant Rd. The road leading to Rocklands is agonizingly steep and narrow in places.

Alternatively, you can take a bus or route taxi from Montego Bay bound for Savanna-Mar or Black River, but be prepared for a tough 30-minute hike to and from your destination. If a taxi sounds better, be prepared to shell out US\$50 for the round-trip journey.

MONTPELIER

Passing through Anchovy, you drop south into a broad valley, planted in citrus but formerly an important sugar estate. The great house of the old Montpelier sugar plantation burned down a few years back but **St Mary's Anglican Church** (1847) still stands on a knoll overlooking the remains of the sugar factory.

The B8 splits at a gas station just south of the church. The main road continues southwest. The road to the southeast (the B6) leads toward Seaford Town.

With all Jamaica's roiling waterways, you'd think that white-water rafting would be a staple of tour operators. Not so. **Caliche Rainforest Park & Adventure Tour** (☎ 940-1745; calicheadventuretours@yahoo.com; rain forest/canyon white-water rafting trip per person US\$70/80; 🕒 9am & 1pm) takes full advantage of the Great River's big water, which grows progressively more tranquil as it approaches the sea. Two 2½-hour trips are offered: one over a quiet stretch of river through a tropical rain forest that is appropriate for small children, and a wet and wild romp through Class III-IV waters with internationally trained and experienced guides. The experience concludes at a waterfall and swimming hole.

Barrett Adventures (☎ 382-6384; www.barrettadventures.com; Rose Hall) offers tours including transfer.

CATADUPA

Twenty years ago locals had a thriving trade selling crafts and making clothing to order for train passengers heading to the Appleton Rum Estate (you were measured en route to Appleton and clothes were finished and ready to pick up on the way back). Today Catadupa, 3km east of the B6 from the hamlet of Marchmont, is a collection of aging buildings around the disused railroad station. Locals eke out a living growing coffee and bananas. The village is named for nearby cascades and reflects the Greek name for the Nile cataracts in Egypt.

Croydon in the Mountains Plantation

Reached via a side road 1.5km from Catadupa, this 54-hectare working **plantation** (☎ 979-8267; www.croydonplantation.com) was also the birthplace of national hero Sam Sharpe. It's a gorgeous place with terraces planted in coffee, citrus and pineapples. A 'see, hear, touch and taste' tour is offered from 10:30am to 3pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; the fee is US\$65 including lunch and transfers. Advance reservations are required.

Caribic Vacations (p189) and Tropical Tours (p189) offer tours from Montego Bay.

HILTON

Overgrown with thumbergia, the beautiful hilltop plantation home of **Hilton** (☎ 952-3343; hiltonhiday@n5.com.jm) near St Leonards, 3km southwest of Marchmont, is the venue for the all-day **Hilton High Day Tour** (call-in visitors US\$56, incl transfers from Montego Bay US\$64; 🕒 Tue, Wed, Fri & Sun). The day begins with a Jamaican breakfast in the house, where antiques abound. You then take a guided walk to Seaford Town (1.5km) and the village of St Leonards. The walk should create an appetite for a roast-suckling-pig luncheon prepared in a brick oven back at Hilton. The meal also features a choice of homemade lemonade, shandy (half lemonade, half beer) or rum punch. For the rest of the afternoon you're free to relax or roam the 40-hectare plantation or lounge around listening to the mento band.

SEAFORD TOWN

This sprawling hillside village of scattered tumbledown cottages has a singular history. It

was settled between 1834 and 1838, when more than 1200 Germans arrived in Jamaica; an initial group of 251 settled Seaford. The land was donated by Lord Seaford (the Germans were promised that they would receive title after five years' labor; they toiled for 15 before the land became theirs). The initial community was a mix of Protestants and Catholics but most were converted to Catholicism by Father Tauer, an energetic Austrian priest who settled here in the 1870s.

The farmland turned out to be a tangled wilderness. Few of the settlers were farmers; most were tradespeople or former soldiers. Fortunately, the immigrants received free rations for the first 18 months, but even before the rations ran out the Germans had settled into a life of poverty. Tropical diseases and social isolation soon reduced the population and only a fraction of the original settlers stayed.

Today fewer than 200 Seaford inhabitants claim German ancestry, and white people are only 20% of the population. Still, after 150 years there are relatively few mulattos in evidence. Socially, Seaford remains segregated in key ways. Its white residents remain practicing Catholics and they still observe a few folk customs.

The red, zinc-roofed, old stone **Church of the Sacred Heart** sits atop a rise overlooking Seaford. Its precursor was built by Father Tauer in the late-19th century, but was totally demolished in the hurricane of 1912. Take time to browse the graveyard.

In front of the church is the tiny, somewhat dilapidated **Seaford Town Historical Mini-Museum** (☎ 640-6486, 333-1507; admission US\$2), which tells the fascinating tale of Seaford's German origins. There are maps and photographs of the early settlement, plus artifacts spanning 150 years, including such curiosities as cricket bats made from the stems of coconut leaves. There are no set hours; ask around town for the good Mrs Shakes, who keeps the key to the museum.

KNOCKALVA & AROUND

Following the B8 southwest from Montpelier leads to Knockalva, the center of an agricultural-training farm and cattle-breeding center.

The hills to the south of Knockalva are festooned with groves of bamboo. Eight kilometers south of Knockalva you pass through

the village of Whithorn. As you round a bend immediately beyond it, the sugarcane plains of Westmoreland are suddenly laid out below.

Mount Tambrin Retreat (☎ 357-6363, 437-4353; www.mountambrin.com; per person incl breakfast US\$130, 3-night minimum), at Darliston, about 10km east of Whithorn, is an incredible mountain refuge where American artist Rus Gruhlke has created a fabulous garden and artists' retreat. Sculptures abound. It has six modestly furnished rooms (four with shared bathroom) plus a library-lounge and an architecturally grand gallery-theater. The property grants fabulous views over the southwest coast. Meals are served family style.

QUEEN OF SPAINS VALLEY

About 3km south of Montego Bay the Montego River twists through a narrow, thickly wooded gorge that deposits you at **Adelphi**, 21km east of Montego Bay, at the head of the Queen of Spains Valley. The valley is as flat and green as a billiard table, with sugarcane rippling as far as the eye can see. It runs east as far as Good Hope Estate (p213).

A bus travels through the Queen of Spains Valley via Hampden from Montego Bay (US\$1).

MORTEGO BAY TO MAROON TOWN

Few travelers venture into the hills to the southeast of Montego Bay, accessed by Fairfield Rd, 2.5km south of town. The pot-holed road ascends to the western flanks of Cockpit Country.

The hamlet of **Kensington**, 21km southeast of Montego Bay, is famous as the site where, in 1831, slaves set fire to the ridgetop plantation and initiated the devastating Christmas Rebellion (see the boxed text, p188). A roadside plaque commemorates the event.

Maroon Town lies 5km to the southeast of Kensington, on the edge of the rugged Cockpit Country. Guides will tout themselves to lead you to caves and supposed battle sites from the Maroon Wars, but there's little to see. **Maroon Attraction Tours** (☎ 971-3900, 700-8805; fax 979-0308; 32 Church St) offers a 'cultural, educational, and historic tour' to Maroon Town on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (US\$55, 8am to 3:30pm).

Johns Hall Plantation (☎ 952-6944; www.johnshalladventuretour.com; tour US\$50; 🕒 11am-2pm Mon, Wed & Sat), at Johns Hall about 10km southeast

GOING GREEN IN COCKPIT COUNTRY

A vital watershed and home to several endangered species, including the Jamaican blackbird, the black-billed parrot and the giant swallow-tail butterfly, as well as more than 60 endemic plants, **Cockpit Country** has long been earmarked for national-park status (it is currently a national reserve). Complicating the issue is the staunch opposition of local Maroons, who fear giving the area increased federal protection will infringe on their hard-won autonomy. With the help of the Nature Conservancy, the Jamaica Forestry Department is conducting a landmark biodiversity conservation project in the area and is educating local communities about the benefits of conservation and ecotourism. In another promising development, in 2004 Jamaica and the US signed a US\$16 million agreement under a debt-for-nature swap program, aimed at supporting Jamaica's forest-conservation activities.

of Montego Bay, is open for the 'town and country tour' from Montego Bay; a hot Jamaican lunch is included.

NORTH COCKPIT COUNTRY

Jamaica's most rugged quarter is a 1295-sq-km limestone plateau taking up the whole of southwest Trelawny, inland of Falmouth. The area of eroded limestone features is studded with thousands of conical hummocks divided by precipitous ravines. From the air, Cockpit Country resembles a bright-green egg carton.

Conical hummocks? Precipitous ravines? If it sounds daunting, it is. Overgrown with luxuriant greenery, most of the region remains still unexplored and uninhabited. No roads penetrate the region (although a rough dirt road cuts across the eastern edge between Clark's Town and Albert Town) and only a few tracks make even half-hearted forays into its interior.

The nearly impenetrable region proved a perfect hideout for the Maroons who, through their ferocity, maintained an uneasy sovereignty from the English colonialists. The southern section is known as 'District of Look Behind,' an allusion to the Maroon practice of ambushing English soldiers.

Much of the vegetation around the perimeter has been cleared in recent years by charcoal burners, and a few valley bottoms are cultivated by smallholders who grow bananas, yams, corn, manioc and ganja. It's unwise for foreigners to explore here unless accompanied by someone known in the area. You could easily get lost or worse

– if you stumble upon a major ganja plot, you're likely to be considered a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agent and the consequences could be serious.

The southern portion of Cockpit Country lies in St Elizabeth parish and is accessed from the south by side roads from the B6. See p255

Information

Nature Conservancy (☎ 978-0766; www.nature.org; Unit 5, 32 Lady Musgrave Rd, Kingston 5) Working with Cockpit Country residents to develop stable long-term protection for the region's fragile ecosystem.

Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency (☎ 610-0818; www.stea.net; 3 Grants Office Complex, Albert Town) Concerns itself with the social aspects of Cockpit Country communities and can arrange private lodging and guides for visitors.

Windsor Research Centre (☎ 997-3832; www.cockpitcountry.com; Windsor Great House) A science-based operation at the Windsor Great House, devoted to monitoring Cockpit Country's fragile environment. The website, replete with up-to-date information about regional ecology, is a joy for nature geeks.

Wildlife

Most of the Cockpits are still clad in primary vegetation that in places includes rare cacti and other endemic species known only in that specific locale. The northern slopes are typically more lush. The hilltops are relatively sparsely vegetated due to soil erosion. The Cockpits are generally covered in tall scrub, including brambles and scratchbush.

Most of Jamaica's 27 endemic bird species are found in the Cockpits, including black- and yellow-billed parrots, todies and the endangered golden swallow. The Jamaican boa and giant swallowtail butterfly are among other

rare species, which include 37 of Jamaica's 62 amphibian and reptile species.

Activities HIKING

A few hunters' tracks lead into and even across the Cockpit Country. Most are faint tracks, often overgrown. Hiking away from these trails can be dangerous going. The rocks are razor sharp and sinkholes are everywhere, often covered by decayed vegetation and ready to crumble underfoot. Never travel alone. There is no one to hear you call for help should you break a leg or fall into a sinkhole. Take lots of water: there is none to be had locally.

Hire a local guide who knows the way. You'll need a machete, stout walking shoes, rain gear and a powerful flashlight in the event of a delay past sunset. Take warm clothing if you plan on overnighing, as nights can get cold.

The easiest – but by no means easy – trail across the Cockpits is an old military trail connecting Windsor (in the north) with Troy (in the south), about 16km as the crow flies. It's an arduous full day's hike with a guide. It is a more difficult hike southbound, leading gradually uphill; an easier option is to begin in Troy (p258) and take the downhill route. For more information, consult www.jamaicancaves.org/g/hiking-jamaica.htm.

In Windsor, you can hire Martell or Franklyn (Dango) Taylor as guides (from US\$10, depending on distance).

Albert Town, on the east flank of the Cockpits, is evolving as a base for organized hikes. Contact the Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency in Albert Town for recommended guides.

SPELUNKING

The Cockpits are laced with mostly uncharted caves. Guides lead trips into the better-known caverns. Elsewhere, exploring is for experienced and properly outfitted spelunkers only. There is no rescue organization, and you enter caves at your own risk. The most accessible are Windsor Caves at Windsor (p214).

The **Jamaican Caves Organization** (www.jamaicancaves.org/main.htm) provides resources for the exploration of Jamaican caves, sinkholes and underground rivers. In 2005 the group completed a project to formally classify and evaluate over 70 caves within the Cockpit Country.

Jamaica Underground by Alan Fincham is a rare but essential compendium providing the most thorough information available on the island's charted caves.

Tours

Cockpit Country Adventure Tours (☎ 610-0818; www.stea.net/ccat_main.htm; 3 Grants Office Complex, Albert Town; tours US\$55-70) Sponsored by the Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency, local guides are used to lead hikes and cave exploration in the rugged Freeman's Hall district. The most arduous visits the Quashie River and the Quashie Cave, featuring a 'cathedral room' and an underground waterfall.

Sun Venture Tours (☎ in Kingston 960-6685, in Ocho Rios 920-8348; www.sunventuretours.com; 30 Balmoral Ave, Kingston 10) Runs guided hikes and birding trips into the Cockpits for US\$85.

GOOD HOPE ESTATE

This great house and working plantation is 13km south of Falmouth, at the western end of Queen of Spains Valley. The property is set on the northern edge of Cockpit Country and the views have no rival.

The estate was owned by John Tharp (1744-1804), who became the richest man in Jamaica. At one time he owned more than 4000 hectares and 3000 slaves in Trelawny and St James parishes. The house was built around 1755 and the collection of 18th-century Jamaican Georgian cut-stone buildings includes sugar works and a waterwheel.

The great house first became a hotel in the early 1900s when an American banker came to Jamaica looking for antiques and happened upon Good Hope. Today **Good Hope Country House & River Cottage** (☎ 469-3443; www.goodhopejamaica.com; 10-bedroom house per week US\$14,500, 3-bedroom cottage per week US\$4400; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) is one of Jamaica's most opulent villa rentals.

The 10-bedroom 'country house,' with spectacular views, is popular for weddings and special events. Here the architecture and mood are fabulous, with high ceilings, gleaming hardwood floors and a two-story cut-stone 'counting house' that is now the honeymoon suite. The house is fully furnished with 18th- and 19th-century antiques and a fine collection of maps and paintings. Meals, cooked to order, average US\$50 per person per day.

The three-bedroom river cottage is a restored 19th-century house set in extensive gardens and perched above an idyllic swimming hole. There are three bedrooms with an-

tique four-poster beds and private bathrooms, a full kitchen, a comfortable living room and an enormous shaded veranda.

David Pinto, an acclaimed ceramist, operates a **pottery studio** (☎ 954-4635) open to the public. Pottery workshops are offered through **Anderson Ranch Arts Center** (☎ in the USA 970-923-3181).

WINDSOR

A narrow 3km-long valley southeast of Good Hope Estate is surrounded by towering cliffs. It is most easily accessed from Sherwood at the north end. The paved road through here dead-ends at Windsor near the head of the valley; from here you can hike across the Cockpits to Troy. This is as far as you can go into this wild country without hiking, and here the natural beauty of the wild Cockpit Country interior is on display in its truest form.

Windsor is reached by traveling the road from Falmouth to Martha Brae, then crossing the bridge to the east and turning right to follow the valley south into the hills. Minibuses and route taxis operate between Montego Bay and Brown's Town via Sherwood, from where you can walk or hitchhike the remaining 5km to Windsor.

Sights

WINDSOR GREAT HOUSE

Built in 1705 by John Tharp, **Windsor Great House** now serves as a hostelry and scientific research center. Early evening is the best time to visit. Take insect repellent. It's not marked by a sign; to find it, take a left at the junction at the end of the paved road.

WINDSOR CAVES

These off-the-beaten-track **caverns** were donated to the World Wildlife Fund in 1995 with the proviso that they never be developed. The entrance is a 1km hike from the road, ending with a clamber up a narrow rocky path. Beyond the narrow entrance, you'll pass into a large gallery full of stalactites and a huge chamber with a dramatically arched ceiling. In rainy season you can hear the roar of the Martha Brae River flowing deep underground.

About 50,000 bats inhabit the caves; their egress at dusk is an amazing sight!

You'll need a local guide, who can usually be found at Dango's shop at the end of the

road. It's emblazoned with the epitaph 'Jah Love is a Burning Flame'; here you'll likely find cave wardens Martell or Franklyn 'Dango' Taylor. One of them will lead the way with a flashlight or bamboo torch to visit Rat Bat Cave and the Royal Flat Chamber. Depending on how deep into the cave you wish to go and the size of your group, the fee is US\$5 to US\$20 per person.

For experienced cavers who arrive with spelunking gear, Martell or Franklyn will lead the way on a remarkable four-hour subterranean excursion through Windsor Cave all the way to its 'back door' at Bamboo Batam. You'll need to bring 30m of rope and basic rappelling equipment, and a desire to wade for an extended period with water up to your waist in total darkness. Eventually, you will emerge and make the return journey in the blessed daylight. For this you'll be charged only US\$25 per person, but most people are inclined to tack on a substantial tip.

See p56 for general information about spelunking in Jamaica.

Sleeping & Eating

Last Resort (☎ 931-6070, 700-7128; iscapc@cwjamaica.com; per person US\$15; 📍) With Spartan single and double rooms, shared bathrooms and a communal kitchen, this back-to-basics place is the perfect locale from which to enjoy the singular scenery. It's also the current headquarters of the Jamaican Caves Organization. Because farming takes place on the property, delicious fresh produce can often be purchased at a very low price. Look for the sign at the terminus of the incoming road.

Miss Lilly's (☎ 788-1022; Coxheath; r US\$30) In Coxheath at the northern entrance to Windsor Valley, and marked by a sign reading 'Lilly's Bar,' is this simple guesthouse run by a welcoming and jovial lady. Two simply appointed rooms share a bathroom (cold water only) and have fans. A small bar and a grocery are attached, and Miss Lily cooks meals.

Windsor Great House (☎ 997-3832; www.cockpitcountry.com; r incl breakfast US\$30-40, lunch US\$10, dinner US\$15) Budget travelers can stay inexpensively at this colonial mansion with several no-frills cut-stone rooms with shared bathroom (cold water only). The place is first and foremost a research center, and resident naturalists Mike Schwartz and Susan Koenig occasionally stage four-course 'Meet the Biologist' dinners (US\$25); call for a schedule and reservations.

A bird-banding effort happens the last week-end of each month; to participate you must first become a member (US\$20).

A Texan, Patrick Childres, offers two rooms in a **two-story house** (campsites US\$10, rooms US\$10). You can also camp by the river. The simple place has water from a spring, plus solar panels to power the radio and a battery for lighting. You can cook over a fire or simple stove. Well-known guides Martell and Franklyn 'Dango' Taylor act as caretakers and will provide food and even cook lunch or dinner for US\$5. The house is unsigned; look for one of the Taylor brothers at the shop at the crossroads.

ALBERT TOWN

This small market center lies high in the mountains about 24km inland of Rio Bueno. The B5 climbs through the Cockpits with dramatic views en route. Albert Town is a base for guided hikes into the Cockpit Country, immediately to the west (see p213).

The B5 rises southeast from Albert Town to the spine of Jamaica, with vistas of lush, rolling agricultural land interspersed with

pine forest. You'll crest the mountains (and the boundary with Manchester parish) just south of Lorrimers, about 14km south of Albert Town. Christiana (p258) is about 3km further south.

West of Albert Town, the B10 climbs along the eastern edge of Cockpit Country and beyond Warsop drops dramatically to Troy (p258), a gateway to the Cockpits.

Every year, on Easter Monday, the wildly entertaining **Trelawny Yam Festival** features such highlights as the yam-balancing races, best-dressed goat and donkey, and crowning of the Yam King and Queen.

The **Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency** (☎ 610-0818; www.stea.net; 3 Grants Office Complex) is on the west side of the town square. If you're looking for lodging, its staff can recommend local B&Bs.

Global Telefax (☎ 610-1853; 📠 8:30am-4pm) is on the south side of the square.

Buses and minibuses operate between Albert Town and Falmouth, Mandeville, Kingston and Spaldings. There is a gas station in town (closed Sunday).

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