



Ask About Travel

REAL ANSWERS FROM PAMELA HURLEY-MOSER
HURLEYTRAVELEXPERTS.COM

PRESIDENT & CEO WITH A PASSION FOR TRAVEL

Question: Where is one of the best places to visit in the Caribbean?

The Real Answers: Jamaica Mon! Beth Skypeck is a certified Caribbean Preferred Specialist at Hurley Travel Experts, and she has just returned from Jamaica so I asked her to share her personal experience about visiting this island paradise with my readers at Best Ever You.



Question: Why Jamaica? Jamaica is a unique place to visit with “something for everyone” from honeymooners and adventure travelers to spa vacationers and multi-generational family travelers.
Simply put: I love Jamaica.

Question: What makes it so special? The Tourist Board slogan “Jamaica once you go, you know” is so apropos and its recent marketing campaign has resonated because of its wide appeal as a Caribbean destination. It’s easy to see why—you can jump on a plane in Portland, Maine and be sipping rum punch in Montego Bay by early afternoon. Flights are inexpensive now and there are a wide range of new accommodations and many activities once you arrive.

With its world-class beaches, soft adventure activities, crystal clear warm ocean waters, mountains and rivers it appeals to everyone. It is a fabulous wedding and honeymoon destination as well as a multi-generational vacation getaway. Visitors to Jamaica can enjoy a nice mix of adventures including zip lines, swimming with dolphins, horseback riding from the mountains to the beach, hiking the rain forest and climbing waterfalls—most notably Dunns River Falls. Golf courses abound on the island and water sports—from sailing to snorkeling, to diving to swimming—are “must do” island activities.

Question: What about the local cuisine and culture? As for food there is a lot to savor in Jamaica: freshly caught fish, fabulous tropical fruits like mango and pineapple as well as Jamaican specialties such as jerk chicken and patties, which are spicy turnovers filled with chicken or beef and veggies. Visitors also enjoy a culture that is rich with tradition along with the island’s stunning geography including spectacular sunsets, swaying palm trees and beautiful blue/green waters. With its many festivals including Reggae Half Marathon and 10K in December and the Reggae Sunfest in July and the Epicurean Escape in June anytime of year is a good time to visit.

Question: How is it for a family destination? Over the past 15 years I have made numerous visits to Jamaica and for me the best part of visiting is meeting the warm friendly island hosts who welcome me as their guest time and again as an honorary “Jamerican” and not a tourist. The people are friendly and proud as they love their country and welcome everyone with the “King’s English” in a charming accent.

My family, like many returning guests, has wonderful life-long memories of their time on this island. I have seen the Jamaican’s devotion to children many times at the Kids Camp at Beaches resorts over the years. My son, Mike, learned to snorkel with the Kids Camp at Beaches and loved this experience. I had tried several times to teach Mike and he was afraid, so off he went with his counselor, Patrick and an hour later he came back to the dock with a giant smile on his face and tales of how he saw sea turtles and fed beautiful colored fish. Now at 17 he just learned

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to scuba dive at Beaches, Negril and danced Reggae at Liquid, the Disco at Beaches with his favorite counselors, Orion and Roxanne! And he still keeps in touch with friends from all over the world that he met in Jamaica via Facebook.

Question: What is the exchange program? I was excited to learn about an exchange program sponsored by the Jamaican Tourism Board that links visitors to the Caribbean Island to citizens with similar interests. Before my trip, I completed a simple questionnaire and was matched up for a dinner experience with a local restaurateur, a tourism official, and a teacher. We came together to share authentic Jamaican fare and wonderful conversation at a home overlooking Montego Bay. What a fabulous travel experience—next time I want to include my entire family in the exchange!

Question: Where should you stay? There is a wide range of accommodations on the island to meet every vacation budget. A new wave of development includes a number of high-end hotels including the Ritz Carlton, which is known for Ritz quality service with a Caribbean touch.

Gordon “Butch” Steward, the owner of the luxury included all-inclusive Sandals and Beaches who has brought much attention to the island, now also operates a five-star destination resort property, the Royal Plantation as well as several private villas perfect for family reunions and small groups. His Grand Pineapple property is more moderately priced and has plenty of warmth and charm for those seeking a less expensive and simpler alternative.

Jamaica Inn and the Half Moon Resort are other luxury options—perfect for a spa vacation and relaxing getaway. These hotels coupled with the growth in tourism have attracted Spanish hoteliers, Iberostar, to build moderate luxury hotels on the island. Many travelers to Mexico who may have enjoyed Iberostar properties on the Mayan Riviera, Cancun or in the Dominican Republic, now have a new place to stay in Jamaica. Newer hotels, in particular, appeal to ecotourists by sustainable practices such as utilizing solar power to heat water and protecting trees during construction.

Sandals and Beaches, the all-inclusive resorts are perhaps the most familiar accommodations in Jamaica, with seven properties on the island. Sandals is popular with honeymooners and for destination weddings. Getting married in Jamaica is easy and resorts offer great wedding packages—many even do free “basic” weddings. A new trend we’re seeing is intergenerational family travel and family reunion vacations; an ideal fit for the Beaches all-inclusive resorts, where food, lodging, beverages and many activities are all one “inclusive” price.

For a secluded and unique romantic destination, look no further than the Caves Resort. Nestled high on a cliff, over the ocean, all of the suites are open-air. Guests can dine on a patio under the stars or opt for dinner in a cave drenched in candlelight complete with personal butler service – an unforgettable experience.

By Beth Skypeck, certified Caribbean Preferred Specialist, Hurley Travel Experts