



The Guide Jamaica

Breakfast for two with drinks and tip: Inexpensive Under \$20 Moderate \$20–\$80 Expensive Over \$80

For more information on travel in Jamaica, contact the Jamaican Tourist Board at 800/526-2422 or go to visitjamaica.com.

WHERE TO STAY

Wyndham Kingston Jamaica
77 Knutsford Boulevard, Kingston (876)926-5430; wyndhamkingston.com. Rates: \$139–\$189 double. This 303-room high-rise is located across the street from New Kingston's Emancipation Park. Don't miss the johnnycakes at the Terrace Cafe's extensive Sunday brunch buffet.

Jakes Hotel, Villas & Spa
Calabash Bay, Treasure Beach, St. Elizabeth (876)965-3000; jakeshotel.com. Rates: \$95–\$325 double. This eco-resort features 21 garden- or bay-view rooms, plus 6 cottages and 3 villas, many with verandas and large outdoor showers. Jakes Country Cuisine, one of its two restaurants, offers breakfast dishes like poached organic eggs and callaloo.

WHERE TO EAT

Anty's Homestyle Cooking
Old Gas Station, Pechon Street, Kingston (876)408-6658. Inexpensive. This

cheery stand serves hawkers, bus drivers, and other downtown Kingston denizens quick breakfasts like ackee and saltfish, along with dumplings, yams, and other filling sides.

Ashanti Oasis Vegetarian Restaurant
12 Breamar Avenue, Kingston (876)441-4312. Inexpensive. At Rasta chef Yvonne Peters-Hope's indoor-outdoor Ital restaurant, the day kicks off with meat-free, salt-free, yet flavorful dishes, such as vegetable run-up (a coconut milk-enriched vegetarian stew) and ackee with bean curd.

Charley Mattress Porridge Centre
65 Mall Wolmers Arcade, Church Street, Kingston (876)872-7391. Inexpensive. Not far from Coronation Market, this shopping-arcade stall serves morning customers hot, soupy porridges in flavors including plantain, cornmeal, and the popular peanut.

Contemporary Art Gallery & Café
7 Argyle Road, Kingston (876)927-9958. Moderate. Reserve a spot for the bimonthly Sunday brunch on the

veranda of the art-filled home of gallerist and caterer Dian Watson, who is famed for her hominy porridge, slowly cooked with coconut, condensed, and evaporated milks until it's rich and pudding-like.

Grog Shoppe
Devon House, 26 Hope Road, Kingston (876)906-7165; grogshoppejm.com. Expensive. Jamaica's most beloved chef, Norma Shirley (who died in 2010), opened this picturesque restaurant at the historic Devon House. The restaurant is currently not serving breakfast or brunch, but at other times of day, creative dishes like conch puffs with ginger-teriyaki sauce or callaloo-stuffed curried chicken breast are served in the mango tree-shaded courtyard.

Hot Pot Restaurant
2 Altamont Terrace, Kingston (876)929-3906; hotpotjamaica.com. Inexpensive. This colorful restaurant surrounded by New Kingston hotels offers covered courtyard seating. Dine on a breakfast of saltfish cooked with okra or ackee, or try braised liver or kidneys, washed down with a drink from the extensive juice bar. Dinner features seafood and tofu-based dishes.

M & D Grocery
Calabash Bay, Treasure Beach, St. Elizabeth (876)965-0070. Inexpensive. On weekends, grab a steaming cup of conch or goat soup, made fresh with local ingredients and cooked over an open fire outdoors at this modest grocery in St. Elizabeth.

Susie's Bakery and Coffee Bar
Shops 1 and 2, Southdale Plaza, 2 South Avenue, Kingston (876)968-5030; susiesbakery.com. Moderate. Jamaican celebrities hobnob over casual meals at this New Kingston café and bakery. Served al fresco, the weekend brunch buffet features traditional dishes like mackerel rundown, plus desserts including bread pudding and Susie's knockout plantain tarts.

Clockwise, from top left: Yvonne Peters-Hope, chef and owner of Ashanti Oasis Vegetarian Restaurant; conch soup (see page 80 for recipe); the crew of the *Avatar II* landing on Treasure Beach; bammy lady Imogene Falconer at her St. Elizabeth home; the weekend brunch buffet at Susie's Bakery and Coffee Bar.

TOP: CENTER: TODD COLEMAN; MAP: THE W FACTORY



of early risers, ladling out soupy hot cereals spiced with nutmeg and allspice. As a branding strategy, Holland's family named the shop after his grandfather, Egbert "Charley Mattrass" Jackson, a noted local fisherman who fathered 56 children. Ricky and Dameko make flavors from oats to cornmeal, but peanut porridge is their big seller.

"It's a mon r'ing," Holland says; it belongs to a seemingly endless category of foods valued for aiding virility. Reddish-brown with peanut skins, it is nutty, earthy, and sweet.

AFTER THE FRENETIC RHYTHM of Kingston, I'm curious to know more about the slower-paced, agrarian Jamaica where the roots of the rib-sticking morning meal lie. So I travel westward to St. Elizabeth parish, to visit the family of my friend Melissa Stephenson, who lives in Mount Vernon, New York. "St. Elizabeth is the breadbasket of the nation," she has told me. "Growing up, our lawn was scallion and thyme."

When Melissa's father, Delano Stephenson, a prominent St. Elizabeth farmer and businessman, and her cousin, Keisha Green, pick me up at my hotel in the morning, our first stop is M & D Grocery, where proprietor Delvin Powell is standing in his parking lot, stirring the steaming contents of an enormous cauldron set over a roaring fire.

"Soup ready?" a woman shouts from a car rolling by.

"No, mon," says Powell. He's just finished assembling the ingredients for his conch soup, which won't be ready to sell for another hour. Nevertheless, he offers me a spoonful. Loaded with fresh conch and flavored with scallion, thyme, and Scotch bonnets picked from St. Elizabeth's fields, it already tastes terrific.

Conch is not the only fresh seafood I sample this morning. St. Elizabeth is also a fishing community; curried or brown stew lobster and

fish soup are common breakfasts here, along with escovitch fish, fried whole and topped with a vinegary sauce. They're all eaten with a cassava flatbread called bammmy, which is made from scratch by women like Imogene Falconer, whose home we visit next.

The bespectacled Falconer had grated her cassava and let it sit overnight in a wicker bag pressed down with stones to leech out its poisonous juices. This morning she beats the grated root in a huge wooden mortar, then sifts it to attain a fine flour. Oneil, 30, the eldest of her three sons, begins to fry small whole snappers and to prepare the escovitch sauce, slicing onions, ginger, and chiles into a reduction of coconut milk and vinegar. A tart aroma fills the kitchen, while outside, Falconer smooths a fistful of cassava flour into a round mold set on a cast-iron plate over a wood fire. The heat binds and toasts the starchy flour into a chewy, wafer-thin bammmy. She hands it to me. It's smoky and has a creamy, wheatlike flavor. I've eaten escovitch fish and bammmy before, bought from a hawker in downtown Kingston. But I'm grateful now to know just how much work goes into its preparation. Falconer makes six dozen bammmys every morning to sell to farmers who snatch them up on their way to the fields.

We take a drive across Delano's scruffy land along an oceanside cliff, where he yanks a tentacled cassava from the ground and plucks some melons. We visit various Stephensons in their homes surrounded by banana plants and enormous rosemary bushes. As night falls, we wander down to Treasure Beach, where a fishing boat called the *Avatar II* has anchored. A crowd has formed with trucks and coolers. Driftwood fires dot the beach. The boat's crewmen, their muscles taut from hauling nets, row ashore and dump their catch: jackfish, grunts, parrot fish, yellowtail snappers, barracuda. Within an hour, all the fish is sold. By morning, much of it will be fried, doused in escovitch, and wrapped in paper along with fresh-made bammmy, to be purchased and eaten for breakfast in an open-air market, on a street corner, or on a waterfront somewhere in Jamaica, as the sun rises again. 🐟

A family walking from morning services at the Southfield Seventh-Day Adventist Church in St. Elizabeth Parish, Jamaica.