



A taste of the real Jamaica

SOUTH COAST

Go off the beaten track to explore the island's culinary side

Melissa Dunne
For Metro Canada



When most Canadians jet off to Jamaica they go straight from the airport to behind the gates of an all-inclusive resort.

Once behind the gates, people are usually served bad drinks with little umbrellas in them, reheated versions of the same food you can get back home and truly terrible stale coffee in the morning when you're nursing the hangover from all the umbrella drinks you drank the day before.

Aim higher. If you're going to stay behind the resort gates you might as well stay home and sip on cheap rum in your basement while watching the latest hockey game. Instead of heading to the crowded, kitschy resorts in Montego Bay and Kingston, get a taste of the real Jamaica by heading off the beaten (tourist) track.

Jake's Hotel in Treasure Beach, where staff can organize off-site adventures with local guides accompanying you, is a great option for those wanting to safely explore the Caribbean island.

Jake's is a bumpy two-and-a-half hours' drive from Sangster's International Airport in Montego Bay. It's well worth the



The salt-water pool at Jake's Hotel, where the water is pumped in straight from the bay. PHOTOS COURTESY MARY APESOS/FINN PARTNERS

commute. Contact the hotel to arrange a driver, for \$134 US, one way, for up to a group of four. The boutique hotel is actually a collection of colourful cottages, ranging from small rooms with garden views starting at about \$135 US (all prices not inclusive of taxes and service fees, for a minimum five-night stay) to a luxury villa with ocean views from \$1,110 US per night during the high season (from Dec. 15 to April 15).

Eat and drink local

Eat al fresco at Jake's with the sound of the salt-water crashing



A lobster feast courtesy of One Love Boat Tours with captain Joseph Brown.



A traditional Jamaican breakfast at Jake's Hotel with fresh, locally grown ingredients.

against the rocks in the background. The menu changes constantly, as it features local produce and seafood when it's in season. Be sure to try Jake's take on ackee and saltfish, Jamaica's national dish, for breakfast and pair it with a cup of famous Blue Mountain coffee.

To really get a sense of the St. Elizabeth Parish make sure to time your visit for the once-monthly farm-to-table event at Dool's Farm. The sunset dinner with the local farmer available to answer any questions is well worth the \$95 US, plus taxes and tips. Most people in the rural, relaxed parish will gladly talk your ear off, so don't be shy to ask about the provenance and importance of their local food and drink.

The warm staff at Jake's can also help set up a boat tour, including a private feast with freshly caught lobster on a secluded beach, followed by a visit to Pelican Bar. The picturesque bar is actually a shack in the middle of the sea where you'll likely sip on a few Red Stripe beers and Appleton Estate rums mixed with ginger beer.

Rum is in the running to become the next bourbon, so there's no better place to get educated about the good stuff than by taking a day trip to partake in the Appleton Estate Rum Tour.

Once you've ventured beyond the resort gates in Jamaica you'll wonder why you stayed behind them for so long in the first place.

The writer was a guest of Jamaica Tourist Board, which did not review nor approve the story.

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